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# PIONEER VALLEY MPO PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN



Prepared by

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

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## **Federal “Title VI/Nondiscrimination” Protections**

The Pioneer Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (PVMPO) operates its programs, services, and activities in compliance with federal nondiscrimination laws including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987, and related statutes and regulations. Title VI prohibits discrimination in federally assisted programs and requires that no person in the United States of America shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin (including limited English proficiency), be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal assistance. Related federal nondiscrimination laws administered by the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, or both prohibit discrimination on the basis of age, sex, and disability. These protected categories are contemplated within Title VI Programs consistent with federal interpretation and administration. Additionally, the PVMPO provides meaningful access to its programs, services, and activities to individuals with limited English proficiency, in compliance with US Department of Transportation policy and guidance on federal Executive Order 13166.

## **State Nondiscrimination Protections**

PVMPO also complies with the Massachusetts Public Accommodation Law, M.G.L. c 272 §§ 92a, 98, 98a, prohibiting making any distinction, discrimination, or restriction in admission to or treatment in a place of public accommodation based on race, color, religious creed, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability, or ancestry. Likewise, PVMPO complies with the Governor’s Executive Order 526, section 4 requiring all programs, activities, and services provided, performed, licensed, chartered, funded, regulated, or contracted for by the state shall be conducted without unlawful discrimination based on race, color, age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, creed, ancestry, national origin, disability, veteran's status (including Vietnam-era veterans), or background.

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## 1.0 Introduction

This 2022 revision to the Pioneer Valley MPO’s Public Participation Plan incorporates updates and consideration for virtual meetings and outreach that were not previously include in the plan. On July 16, 2022, Governor Baker signed into Law an Act Relative to Extending Certain State of Emergency Accommodations, which, among other things, extends the expiration of the provisions pertaining to the Open Meeting Law to March 31, 2023. These revisions are consistent with these provisions. It is anticipated that in 2023 the PVMPO will be revisiting this plan to incorporation measures that will allow for “hybrid meeting” as the PVMPO recognizes the importance of operating in concert with MassDOT and as such adopts the values, goals, and principles, as included in their Public Participation Plan.

This Plan serves to guide agency public participation efforts to include those populations that have been underserved by the transportation system and/or have lacked access to the decision-making process. This Plan guides the PVMPO in its efforts to offer early, continuous, and meaningful opportunities for the public to help identify social, economic, and environmental impacts of proposed transportation policies, projects and initiatives. This Plan shapes all public engagement, from instances of simply disseminating information to the formalized instances of public involvement in the transportation project development and decision making process.

The Plan is based on federal and state requirements and guidance for encouraging and ensuring community participation.<sup>1</sup> It describes the overall goals, guiding principles, and strategic approach to achieving stated objectives. The Plan also defines how the PVMPO incorporates public participation into its transportation decision-making processes, and how the agency ensures access for people with disabilities and the inclusion of low income and minority stakeholders. Specifically, the Plan states the methods that will use to reach out to persons who are low-income, minority, Limited English Proficient (LEP), or have a disability, and other traditionally underrepresented populations. Because different transportation decisions to be made require different techniques for reaching the public, this Plan provides a toolbox of techniques to be applied, as appropriate, to achieve effective participation.

This Plan is a living document which will change and grow to help deepen and sustain its work to engage diverse community members throughout the state. Therefore, the PVMPO will modify its public participation methods and activities over time, based on ideas and feedback from community members and evaluation of our public participation effectiveness. The PVMPO released this revision for the required public comment period. All changes and improvements on this Plan and related protocols and policies are intended to improve our ability to provide an equal opportunity for public input in our transportation decision making processes.

### 1.1 PVMPO’s Structure, Mission, and Values

The Pioneer Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (PVMPO) is responsible for carrying out the continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process in the Pioneer Valley Region

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<sup>1</sup> This includes drawing from and adapting the FHWA’s “Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making” document. [http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/public\\_involvement/publications/techniques/](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/public_involvement/publications/techniques/)

that results in plans and programs that consider all transportation modes and supports metropolitan community development and social goals. This planning process is designed to ensure early and continuing opportunities for the public to express their views on transportation issues and to promote active participation in the transportation decision-making process. This input is valuable in accomplishing the following:

- Maintaining on-going dialogue with stakeholders so that information about projects is provided early in the planning process when potential mitigation can be addressed most efficiently.
- Incorporating stakeholder data into the planning process at the early stages of project development.
- Communicating in a manner that meets the requirements of stakeholders, such as using visualization to translate technical issues to be easily understood by lay individuals or providing more technical information to those who require it.
- Providing information in a format that allows the stakeholders to compare projects geographically and to understand the impacts of historical projects within an area.

## **1.2 PVMPO's Public Participation Goals**

PVMPO has the following public participation goals which agency representatives and those working in concert with PVMPO on transportation projects and initiatives should strive to achieve:

### *1. Obtain Quality Input and Participation*

Comments received by PVMPO are to be encouraged and reviewed to the extent they can be useful, relevant, and constructive, and contribute to better plans, projects, programs, and decisions.

### *2. Establish Consistent Commitment*

PVMPO strives to communicate regularly and develop trust with communities, while helping build community capacity to provide public input, as needed.

### *3. Increase Diversity*

Participants who are encouraged to participate in public engagement processes should represent, as appropriate to a project or those impacted, a range of socioeconomic, ethnic, and cultural perspectives and include people from low-income and minority neighborhoods, people with limited English proficiency, and other traditionally underserved people.

### *4. Ensure Accessibility*

Every effort should be made to ensure that participation opportunities are physically, geographically, temporally, linguistically and culturally accessible.

5. *Provide Relevance*

Issues should be framed clearly and simply such that the significance and potential effect may be understood by the greatest number of participants.

6. *Foster Participant Satisfaction*

PVMPO should encourage the public to participate in project and initiative related discussions, recognizing that people who take the time to participate feel it is worth the effort to join the discussion and provide feedback.

7. *Clearly Define Potential for Influence*

The process should clearly identify and communicate where and how participants can have influence and direct impact on decision making.

8. *Establish and Maintain Partnerships*

PVMPO develops and maintains partnerships with communities and community-based organizations through the activities described in the PPP.

9. *Provide Opportunities to Build Trust and Compromise*

PVMPO should ensure that discussions, particularly where there are conflicting views, are structured to allow for levels of compromise and consensus that will satisfy the greatest number of community concerns and objectives. PVMPO recognizes that processes which allow for consensus to be achieved are critical to enable public support for recommended actions.

### **1.3 Guiding Principles for Public Participation at PVMPO**

To help PVMPO achieve its goals for public participation, the following principles have been adopted:

1. *Promote Respect*

All transportation constituents and the views they promote should be respected. All feedback received should be given careful and respectful consideration. Members of the public should have opportunities to debate issues, frame alternative solutions, and affect final decisions.

2. *Provide Proactive and Timely Opportunities for Involvement*

Avenues for involvement should be open, meaningful, and organized to let people participate comfortably, taking into consideration accessibility, language, scheduling, location and the format of informational materials. Meetings should be structured to allow informed, constructive dialogue, be promoted broadly and affirmatively; and be clearly defined in the early stages of plan or project development. Participation activities should allow for early involvement and be ongoing and proactive, so participants can have a fair opportunity to influence PVMPO decisions.

3. *Offer Authentic and Meaningful Participation*

PVMPO should support public participation as a dynamic and meaningful activity that requires teamwork and commitment at all levels. Public processes should provide participants with purposeful involvement, allowing useful feedback and guidance. Participants should be encouraged to understand and speak with awareness of the many competing interests, issues, and needs that lead to transportation ideas and projects.

4. *Provide a Clear, Focused, and Predictable Process*

The participation process should be understandable and known well in advance. This clarity should be structured to allow members of the public and officials to plan their time and use their resources to provide input effectively. Activities should have a clear purpose, the intended use of input received made clear, and all explanations described in language that is easy to understand.

5. *Foster Diversity and Inclusiveness*

PVMPO should proactively reach out to and engage people with disabilities, as well as low-income, minority, limited English proficient, persons with disabilities and other traditionally underserved populations.

6. *Be Responsive to Participants*

PVMPO meetings should facilitate discussion that addresses participants' interests and concerns. Scheduling should be designed to meet the greatest number of participants possible and be considerate of their schedules and availability. Informational materials provided should be clear, concise and responsive to known community concerns, while avoiding misleading or biased suggestions or solutions.

7. *Record, Share and Respond to Public Comments*

Public comments, written and verbal, should be given consideration in PVMPO decision making processes and reported in relevant documents. Specifically, public comments provide an opportunity for shared knowledge among PVMPO departments and transportation partners, but also require clear responses that are documented to demonstrate that community input was in fact addressed. PVMPO should communicate the impact of the public input on decisions at a broad summary level, describing the major themes, the decisions reached, and the rationales for the decisions.

8. *Self-evaluation and Plan Modification*



The effectiveness of this Plan will be reviewed periodically to ensure it meets the needs of the public, and will be revised to include new strategies and approaches.

## **2.0 PVMPO's APPROACH TO PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Transportation decision making and project development processes are regulated and follow set procedures, including the need to give the public opportunities to participate. These public involvement objectives are further shaped by PVMPO's commitment to civil rights related obligations, such as removal of barriers to participation, diversity, and inclusive outreach. This Public Participation Plan describes participation opportunities generally and includes specific protocols and resources that are designed to facilitate diverse and inclusive public outreach and involvement. The plan is a flexible and evolving document. As necessary, PVMPO will revise the PPP based on recurring assessments of successes and/or challenges associated with outreach, as well as suggestions made and the results of public engagement processes.

In this chapter, a general description of PVMPO's public participation activities is presented. Chapter 3 contains the specific civil rights protocols utilized by PVMPO for all public outreach activities, categorized by types of communication formats, including large group discussions, targeted group engagement and one-on-one interactions. Chapter 3 also contains the PVMPO Accessible Meeting Policy. Our view is that if these objectives and standards are consistently applied to the different types of public meetings PVMPO convenes or participates in, the resulting discussions and resolution of issues will be inclusive and accessible to all.

In the subsequent chapters, specific opportunities to participate are described in the context of the development of:

- Long-term transportation plans
- Regional Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP)
- Unified Planning Work Programs and their relevant tasks

These outreach described for these specific activities should be read in concert with the civil rights protocols set forth in Chapter 3, as they are both congruent with and structured to facilitate inclusion in all PVMPO public participation efforts.

In addition, relevant federal policy guidance, principles and techniques are referenced that enhance the potential for successful public participation processes. These ideas are derived from the U.S. DOT-sponsored guidance for systematically setting up and implementing a public participation program for a specific plan, program, or project.

## **2.1 Public Participation Techniques**

PVMPO takes pride in its work to maintain a collaborative relationship with community and municipal stakeholders and has strategically developed this Public Participation Plan to foster collaboration in an all-inclusive manner. The PVMPO public outreach effort rests on utilizing multiple communication channels to distribute information to, and solicit input from, affected constituencies. PVMPO typically communicates with the general public through one or more of the following methods:

- PVMPO website
- Public media (including local minority and non-English newspapers, radio stations, and television stations)
- Press releases
- Posters, display boards, and flyers
- Project fact sheets
- Brochures
- Newsletters
- Public service announcements
- Mailing and email lists
- Information stands at local events
- Social media tools, including Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, email distribution lists, and other new media venues
- Legislative briefings
- Presentations, public meetings, public hearings, open houses, and workshops
- Civic advisory committees and working groups

### *PVMPO Website Specifics:*

Many people use the Internet as their main source of data and information. The PVMPO website is a comprehensive resource for people wanting information about PVMPO programs, projects, and activities. Public notices of all PVMPO meetings, public hearings, and public comment periods are posted on this site, along with information about PVMPO programs, projects, and activities. Some programs and projects have dedicated web pages on the PVMPO website that include:

- Information about upcoming meetings

- Project presentations and fact sheets
- Summary notes for meetings/workshops on the project
- A way to be added to the project’s electronic distribution list

Project websites are important tools for people who cannot attend meetings. Members of the public can review presentations and meeting summaries and provide comments through emails and letters to the project team. People with disabilities that limit their ability to attend meetings can also review project information and provide comments on the website, and thereby have an alternative to physically attending a meeting.

*Meeting Notice Content and Distribution:*

PVMPO announces all meetings, public presentation, open houses, workshops, and public comment periods through press releases, mailings, and/or the distribution of informational meeting flyers as well as placing meeting information on the PVMPO website. Notices are published in local English newspapers, and if the project has an impact on low income or minority populations, an effort is made to place notices in media that serves local, minority and non-English communities in regions across the Region. In the Springfield/Holyoke area, such publications include El Pueblo Latino among others. Meeting notices will include information about getting to a meeting location using public transportation, when transit is available. PVMPO notices also let people know they can request foreign language assistance, and that sign-language interpreters and other accommodations are available on request for people with disabilities (with timely notification).

There is also information that lets people know who they can contact with questions or concerns. The information for these meetings and the informational materials provided at the meetings are translated into languages other than English, as needed.

### **2.1.1 Public Meetings, Open Houses, and Workshops**

#### **1) Public Meetings**

Public meetings are held to present information to the public and obtain input from community residents. Meetings provide a time and place for face-to-face contact and two-way communication. They are generally tailored to specific issues or community groups and can be either informal or formal. Public meetings are used to disseminate information, provide a setting for public discussion, and receive feedback from the community.

#### **2) Open Houses**

Open houses are informal settings where people can obtain information about a plan, program, or project. They do not have formal agendas, and no formal discussions or presentations take place. At open houses, people receive information informally from exhibits and staff, and they are encouraged to give opinions, make comments, and state preferences to staff, orally or in writing. Informal presentations, slide shows, and one-on-one discussions take place continuously throughout the event, which usually includes a series of stations: a reception area; a presentation area for slide shows or short talks; areas for one-on-one discussions between community people and agency staff members; and displays of background information, activities to date, work flow, and anticipated next steps, accompanied by an array of primary subject panels. Since there is no fixed agenda, open houses are usually scheduled for substantial portions of a day or evening, so that people can drop in at their convenience and fully participate.

Note that Open Houses often involve one-on-one discussion of issues or concerns between meeting participants and project engineers or other PVMPO representatives. The content and nature of these informal exchanges is not easily captured in documents such as meeting summaries or notes. Thus, those PVMPO representatives that have such an exchange are instructed to relay the content to the Project Manager so that these issues are catalogued and tracked, as needed.

#### **3) Workshops**

Workshops are organized around a particular topic or activity and typically involve a relatively small group of people who want to participate intensively. These events are usually one to three hours in duration, and small groups work on a specific agenda. PVMPO staff members provide information, answer questions, and participate as individuals in workshops. Workshops are inherently participatory and encourage a “working together” atmosphere.

### **2.1.2 Public Hearings**

A public hearing is more formal than a public meeting. The public hearing is an opportunity for members of the public to make recorded statements of their views immediately before project decision making and, in the case of an environmental impact statement (EIS), preparation of the final environmental impact statement (FEIS). PVMPO views the hearing as a specific, observable administrative benchmark for public involvement.

A public hearing is held near the end of a project development process or if required by state or federal law, prior to a decision point, to gather community comments and hear the positions of all interested parties for the public record and input into decisions. Public hearings are required by the federal government for many transportation projects and have specific legal requirements.

### **2.1.3 Meeting Facilities and Accessibility**

PVMPO is required to hold public hearings, meetings, open houses, and workshops in accessible facilities that are, wherever possible, at locations close to or served by fixed-route transit service, to let people know that the meeting location is accessible. Meeting planners must conduct an analysis of the demographics of the area where the meeting is to be held to determine when notices should be translated into languages other than English. The availability of handout materials in alternative formats—Braille, large print, and/or audio cassette, and languages other than English—as well as other accommodations (language interpreters, sign language interpreters, CART translators, etc.) must be indicated in the meeting notices along with specific information on how to request these accommodations.

PVMPO meeting planners should research and make every effort to select the location, size, and setup of meeting facilities based on the specific characteristics of the audience and the type of information to be presented. Whenever possible, hearings, meetings, and workshops should be held in places that are centrally located to the project and likely to attract a cross section of the people and businesses representative of the community stakeholders. Public libraries, public schools, and community centers are often used.

PVMPO meeting planners should strive to create a welcoming environment. The staff members charged with the coordination of any meeting are responsible for providing resources, including free accessibility assistance and language assistance, to ensure that the event is accessible to all people and to provide the greatest opportunity for participation by interested parties.

#### **2.1.4 Virtual Meetings**

The use of virtual meeting formats is a critical component of the PVMPO's public outreach and planning strategy. It is estimated that over 40% of the population has some barrier to access and participation in meetings, such as: ability, language, time, travel, and technology. The use of virtual meetings through 3<sup>rd</sup> party applications such as Zoom continue to expand the effectiveness of public engagement and also created new challenges. To assure a coordinated process the MPO has established a criterion for virtual meetings.

- If a public meeting is to be held virtually or have a virtual component, all meeting materials will be presented via video stream and can be downloaded via the virtual meeting platform's chat or document transfer medium.
- Virtual meetings must be recorded, and those recordings reviewed for public input.
- To better understand how the MPO is meeting its commitment to fostering public engagement in all MPO planning activities, it is important to have a series of measurements to better understand the effectiveness of the public outreach efforts. It is through the tracking of public engagements, whether in person, via email, through social media or through utilizing virtual public engagement that the MPO can discern if its public outreach efforts are delivering the desired results. The results of these public outreach efforts can be viewed in the Measurements of Effectiveness (MOE) Report.
- If meeting is also being held virtual, appropriate technology will be deployed to receive participants virtually adequately trained staff will be assigned to manage the virtual engagement portion of the meeting.
- Upon request PVPC will use a 3rd party API for closed captioning (MAPC uses Rev.com for interpretation). Third party captions should be monitored for errors. If possible, have a chat line open, to post clarifications and to allow participants relying on the captions to ask for clarification.
- The MPO will explore hybrid meeting formats with in-person and virtual engagement for future MPO meetings and MPO committee meetings. MPO-sponsored events will take place either virtually or in-person. Virtual access is available through Zoom links on the MPO meeting calendar.
- Livestreaming meetings on YouTube, Facebook, or another service (like the local cable access to make meetings more accessible to people in your community and ensure that folks without internet access can view.
- MPO staff will communicate with participants, providing reminders about the recording and information on how it will be shared and that they have provided permission to use the recording.

- MPO staff will request feedback regarding the meeting and provide any important information for future events or meetings.
- Virtual public meetings should be publicized as early as possible—ideally, a minimum of 21 calendar days in advance, but never less than 14 days in advance. This allows attendees time to submit requests for reasonable accommodations and for meeting planners to set deadlines for accommodation requests to be made in a timely manner.

## **2.2 Tailoring Outreach to Underserved People**

Meeting planners should not only schedule a room, post notices and ensure that accommodations are in place for a meeting to be well attended. There is also an obligation to conduct outreach to encourage attendance, particularly among groups protected by the anti-discrimination laws with which PVMPO has promised to comply.

Many people in minority and low-income communities, as well as those with low literacy and/or limited English proficiency, have traditionally been underserved by conventional outreach methods. Outreach to traditionally underserved groups helps ensure that all constituents have opportunities to affect the decision-making process. It sets the tone for subsequent project activities and promotes a spirit of inclusion. The greater the consensus among all community members, the more likely the position agreed upon will aid in decision making for the plan, program, or project.

Inclusive outreach efforts are particularly useful because they:

- Provide fresh perspectives to project planners and developers
- Give PVMPO firsthand information about community-specific issues and concerns
- Allow PVMPO to understand potential controversies
- Provide feedback to PVMPO on how to get these communities involved
- Ensure that the solutions ultimately selected will be those that best meet all of the communities' needs

PVMPO staff should strive to understand the full range of a community's needs in order to create more responsive and more innovative plans. By interacting with community members, PVMPO staff will gain insight into the reasons why community members agree or disagree with proposed plans or projects. The perspective of traditionally underserved people can inform the goals and outcomes of planning and project development, and ignoring this input can seriously threaten a project from being approved. Such individuals can suggest fresh approaches to transportation issues that otherwise might not be raised.

PVMPO's public outreach efforts are designed to address the needs of low-income, minority, Limited English Proficiency, and other traditionally underserved people throughout all phases of any public participation process. PVMPO staff should recognize that traditional techniques are not always the most effective with these populations. Staff and managers employ a variety of public involvement techniques when working with underserved populations and communicates with community leaders to find out the best techniques for working with a particular group (e.g., which approaches to use, where and when to hold events, how to recruit people, and what to avoid doing).



### **3.0 Title VI and ADA PROTOCOLS, POLICIES, AND RESOURCES**

The civil rights protocols set forth in this document are a baseline for holding inclusive, accessible and responsive public meetings, hearings and the like. There are two primary sections in this chapter. Section 3.1 contains protocols and resources for ensuring diversity and inclusivity in public engagement. Section 3.2 contains protocols and resources for ensuring the accessibility of PVMPO's public activities. These efforts are related and appropriate references are made between these sections, as needed.

#### **3.1 Civil Rights Protocols for Public Engagement**

Many PVMPO departments and units conduct and participate in unique types of meetings and hearings within the course of their day to day operations. These Protocols have been designed with the intention of supporting and not supplanting the basic form and structure of existing operations. Further, these Protocols will provide links, resources and contacts for the purpose of achieving public engagement that is compliant with civil rights law. It is anticipated that these Protocols should be considered part of existing Standard Operating Procedures, Guidelines and Manuals, and that as these document are revised, these Protocols will be incorporated into the relevant portions of these documents.

The obligation to comply with these Protocols begins with the person(s) responsible for organizing and/or conducting the meeting or hearing, and because of the shared nature of many public processes between units, should be viewed as a shared responsibility. For example, in the 25% Design Public Hearing, there are multiple units involved in presenting information to the public, and each unit has specific civil rights obligations to ensure that Title VI/Nondiscrimination populations, including people with limited English proficiency and/or disabilities are able to participate equally in these meetings.

These Protocols include steps and strategies to implement prior to holding a public meeting or other such activity and during the course of the public process. Due to the varied nature of PVMPO's engagement with the public, it is not the intention within these Protocols to include all required actions specific to varying stages of the planning process, or varying departmental standard operation procedures. However, where a Project Manager or other staff member encounters a difficult public involvement situation, he/she is advised to contact the Title VI Specialist at the PVPC to identify strategies and alternatives to address such situations. Should a need arise for further clarification the Title VI Specialist for the MassDOT Office of Diversity and Civil Rights may be consulted.

Similarly, these Protocols should not be woodenly applied to every meeting/hearing. Meetings should be tailored to the special needs of the community, and/or the target audience and subject matter to be addressed. Effective public participation from a civil rights perspective includes awareness of the local population (demographics) or individuals to be engaged, including languages spoken, represented

cultural groups, community organizations and leaders and key players. Equally critical to an effective meeting are well communicated (effectively circulated across types of media, and translated when needed) and timely notices, early response, and coordination on requests for language assistance for limited English proficient individuals or reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities.

Federal nondiscrimination obligations, through Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), reach the categories of race, color, national origin (including LEP), age, sex, and disability. These protocols are designed to ensure that sufficient consideration of outreach to and inclusion of these groups is incorporated into PVMPO's public engagement procedures. Adherence to these protocols will also sufficiently address State-level nondiscrimination obligations<sup>2</sup>.

While the following protocols endeavor to highlight specific resources where available, past experience with the public can and should be considered a resource to identify individual and community needs, including civil rights related considerations such as language assistance needs, accessibility accommodations and inclusive public participation. Please use these Protocols as a guide and use good professional judgment in the decisions you make as you implement them.

### **3.1.1 Civil Rights Protocols by Type of Public Engagement**

The following represent the four types of public engagement most commonly encountered by PVMPO employees:

- Meetings for the general public
- Targeted outreach gatherings
- Open houses
- One-on-one interactions

An introduction to each of these four types of public engagement is provided below. Familiarity with the following descriptions will help inform the user on how they should navigate the protocols set forth in this document.

#### **Meetings for the General Public (Sec 2.1)**

Public meetings and hearings, both at the project level and more broadly, are an opportunity for members of the public to engage in the transportation decision making process. The civil rights considerations described in this section are designed to inform and guide all PVMPO staff involved in planning and conducting such events. Incorporation of these processes and utilization of these resources when planning or participating in public meetings/hearings will help ensure that these events are Title VI compliant.

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<sup>2</sup> State level protections include the federal protections plus ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, creed, ancestry, veteran's status (including Vietnam-era veterans), and background

## **Open Houses (Sec 2.2)**

In the case that you are planning an open house session as a standalone event (such as a public information session) that will not precede a public meeting or hearing, see Sections 2.1.1 to 2.1.4.

PVMPO staff and consultants regularly interact with members of the public through “open house” sessions prior to meetings/hearings. These sessions afford members of the public an opportunity to view design plans for projects that will be discussed at the formal public outreach event. PVMPO staff, and local officials are on hand to discuss particular details of interest with members of the public. While the interactions during these sessions are informal, critical issues are often raised. PVMPO staff strive to address these issues accurately and effectively during these sessions. *[Practice Tip: Some attendees choose to forego the meeting/hearing satisfied with the information gained or with the opportunity to express concerns at the open house session.]* Due to the direct nature of interaction with members of the public at these open houses, there exist civil rights risk factors. These risks can be mitigated by adhering to the principles outlined in this section.

## **Targeted Outreach Gatherings (Sec 2.3)**

At times, the complexity of a project, controversial issues, or the reality of having multiple large Title VI groups to address may require engaging targeted audiences of stakeholders. Similarly, PVMPO may at times convene selected people within advisory committees, research efforts, focus groups and the like. The general work of understanding the demographics of people in a locality or project area still apply to determine what Title VI groups are impacted by an initiative, as described above. However, there may be a need to include strong and possibly visible community leaders within Title VI populations; this can require more subtle and challenging efforts to secure their participation and needed contribution to discussions or deliberations.

## **One-on-One Interactions (Sec 2.4)**

PVMPO staff members interact directly with the public by virtue of the public facing programs, services, and activities the organization provides. These interactions can include planned meetings, such as those with property and business owners directly impacted by transportation projects, and spontaneous interactions with members of the public. These interactions, whether in person, over the phone, or electronic, present particular civil rights related risk factors that can be mitigated through the strategies articulated in Section 2.4.

### **3.1.2 Meetings for the General Public**

#### **3.1.2.1 Preliminary/Ongoing Considerations**

- 1) Identify the population and composition of the individuals/communities impacted by the PVMPO program, service, or activity by considering the following:
  - a. Project parameters, such as location, areas that will be impacted by construction phases, areas that may benefit from the completed project, and the areas that may be burdened by the completed project
  - b. The nature of the program, service, or activity (is it connected to the project development process? is it statewide, regional or local?)

- 2) Determine the Title VI features of the community to be engaged by reference to PVMPO's Title VI maps, which include the limited English proficient (LEP) and minority populations across the Commonwealth. Consult the following maps and additional resources.
  - a. PVPC Low Income and Minority Maps  
<http://pvpc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/StorytellingTextLegend/index.html?appid=f54bf3b6dfd04033980dcd9a898b85a3>
  - b. PVPC Demographic Data  
<http://pvpc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/OnePane/basicviewer/index.html?appid=72e06c61d02b4ad386157f24168c8542#>
  - c. Neighborhood Specific Data  
<http://pvpc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/OnePane/basicviewer/index.html?appid=b6239cfb2f494476b1c0dde986055286>
  - d. PVPC Means to Work Data  
[http://pvpc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Compare/storytelling\\_compare/index.html?appid=eaa13c0539b444f984de5b7777cebf98](http://pvpc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Compare/storytelling_compare/index.html?appid=eaa13c0539b444f984de5b7777cebf98)
  - e. MassDOT LEP Maps  
[http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/Portals/0/docs/CivilRights/TitleVI/fta\\_lap/FTA\\_LAP\\_AppendixB.pdf](http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/Portals/0/docs/CivilRights/TitleVI/fta_lap/FTA_LAP_AppendixB.pdf)
  - f. MassDOT Minority Populations Map *[Practice Tip: This map shows the concentration of minority populations. This information can help you develop a strategy for publicizing public engagement opportunities and disseminating materials that effectively reaches representative and diverse stakeholders.]*<S:\Civil Rights\Title VI\Website Content>
  - g. US Census Bureau Language Mapper  
[http://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/language/data/language\\_map.html?eml=gd](http://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/language/data/language_map.html?eml=gd)
  - h. MassDOT Public Engagement Online Tool  
<http://gis.massdot.state.ma.us/maptemplate/languagetracts> (please note this tool is still in beta)
- 3) Identify key Title VI-related and other community based organizations and community leaders. *[Practice Tip: You may already have well established connections with individuals and groups throughout the Commonwealth. You are encouraged to continue reaching out to those. These instructions provide you with steps to identify previously unknown points of contact to diversify outreach.]* There are several approaches meeting planners can take to accomplish this step:
  - a. Use the Transportation Equity Database that has been developed for this purpose.
  - b. Contact the adjoining MPOs (Franklin, Berkshire, Central Mass) for the local area for a list of organizations by county and key leaders when situation warrants.

- c. Consult the Office of Transportation Planning MPO Liaison who works with the PVMPO and can support the effort to identify groups and individuals.
- d. Consult the PVPC Public Relations staff has conducted a variety of meeting outreach efforts across the region and can identify key groups and individuals in every community.

### 3.1.2.2 Meeting Location and Time

#### 1) Title VI Considerations

- a. Consult with community leaders and community based organizations to identify any aspects of the community which may be central in determining the time and location of the public engagement activity. *[Practice Tip: These individuals can help you understand the cultural, ethnic, religious, gender, and political histories/experiences of the demographic groups in the locale to better inform meeting planning.]*
- b. Consider factors such as cultural sensitivities and/or professional and academic commitments in setting the number of meetings. Multiple meetings can be held at various locations and times if doing so promotes meaningful access to the public engagement opportunity.
- c. Where possible, select a meeting location near public transportation options. *[Practice Tip: A general rule of thumb is within ½ mile walking distance.]*

#### 2) ADA Considerations

- a. Identify a venue for the public meeting that is ADA compliant and accessible to people with disabilities.
  - i. MassDOT maintains an Accessible Facilities Database that contains updated information regarding venues that have been previously assessed for ADA compliance. Note: the database is currently being incorporated into MassDOT’s Public Engagement Online Tool (<http://gis.massdot.state.ma.us/maptemplate/languagetracts>)
- b. If an appropriate venue cannot be identified in the database, the following resources can identify public meeting venues that may be accessible:
  - i. The Massachusetts Office on Disability <http://www.mass.gov/anf/employment-equal-access-disability/oversight-agencies/mod/>
  - ii. The Disability Commissions (<S:\Civil Rights\ADA\Disability Commissions>)
  - iii. The Independent Living Centers <http://www.masilc.org/membership/cils>
- c. Take the opportunity afforded by early communication with venue staff to identify pre-existing accessibility accommodations, such as assistive listening devices and Communication Access Real-Time Translation (CART) equipment. *[Practice Tip: Even though you don’t know if such devices will be needed yet, this is a good opportunity to*

take stock of what is available should the need arise.] The need for these accommodations will be addressed in Section 2.1.4, below.

- d. For a full treatment regarding ADA obligations in the public outreach context, consult the PVMPO (MassDOT) Accessible Meeting Policy in Section 3.2 below or online at: [http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/Portals/0/docs/CivilRights/ADA/Attachment\\_13.pdf](http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/Portals/0/docs/CivilRights/ADA/Attachment_13.pdf). The policy enumerates ADA obligations in the public meeting context and provides a checklist for holding an ADA accessible public meeting. *[Practice Tip: If you are planning on using a venue for the first time, this checklist can help you verify its accessibility. The completed checklist should be shared with ODCR's Manager of Federal Programs for incorporation into the database.]*

### 3.1.2.3 Coordinating Public Notice

- 1) Draft the public meeting notice document, either utilizing existing approved templates or creating a new one, ensuring that the following civil rights related components are included:
  - a. Notice of Nondiscrimination
  - b. Availability of language services and reasonable accommodations
  - c. Contact information and procedures for requesting the above services, additional information, or to express a concern
  - d. International Symbol of Accessibility  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International\\_Symbol\\_of\\_Access](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Symbol_of_Access)
- 2) Public meeting notices must be accessible. For guidance, please refer to Section 2.1.4 §§ 3. *[Practice Tip: Since public meeting notices are disseminated in a variety of ways, including physical postings, website postings, and email blasts, it is important that the appropriate font and font size be used and that the electronic document be compatible for use with screen readers.]*
- 3) Address language needs and utilize non-English language outreach resources in the dissemination area if individuals who have limited proficiency in English are present.
  - a. Identify non-English language media (print, TV, radio, online, etc.) and sites with a strong presence of individuals who have limited proficiency in English (transportation facilities, community centers, libraries, commercial/employment/educational establishments, places of worship, cultural centers, etc.) that may be effective in communicating notice to individuals who have limited proficiency in English. *[Practice Tip: The reason you are identifying these resources first is to know what services actually exist to provide translated materials to.]* Consider consulting the following resources:
    - i. MassDOT Office of Diversity and Civil Rights  
<http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/OfficeofCivilRights.aspx>
    - ii. PVMPO Public Relations Staff

- iii. Community Leaders
  - iv. Other Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)  
<http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/Portals/17/Images/DataMaps/boundary/MPOs-RPAs-Statewide.pdf>
  - v. Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA)  
<http://www.pvta.com/>
  - vi. Public Libraries <http://www.publiclibraries.com/massachusetts.htm>
  - vii. Schools/Universities  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_colleges\\_and\\_universities\\_in\\_Massachusetts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_colleges_and_universities_in_Massachusetts)
  - viii. Chambers of Commerce <http://masshome.com/cofc.html>
  - ix. Local Legislators
- b. Develop translated version(s) of the notice document or other related announcements, as needed, based on the extent of LEP need and available media sources. *[Practice Tip: If you've identified a large population of individuals who are LEP in the meeting or project locale, consider translating the meeting notice in full. If you are less likely to encounter individuals who are LEP, you can consider including the single line of text into the languages other than English you may encounter.]* This could include:
- i. Full translation of the notice into the languages indicated
  - ii. The inclusion of the following statement translated into the appropriate languages into the English language version of the notice.
    - 1. *"This notice describes the date, time, and location of a public meeting or hearing on a transportation project in this area. If you need this notice translated, contact PVMPO's Title VI Specialist at 413-781-6045."*
  - iii. Translated versions of print, TV, radio, and online announcements related to the meeting, as applicable.
- c. Consult the following resources for translation needs:
- i. UMass Translation Center
    - 1. Request Procedure: <http://www.umasstranslation.com/services/request-an-estimate/>
    - 2. Rates: <http://www.umasstranslation.com/services/rates/>
  - ii. Statewide Language Services Contract
    - 1. Search COMMBUYS website <https://www.commbuys.com/bsol/> for contract "PRF48"

- a. Entities eligible to utilize this contract:
  - i. Cities, towns, districts, counties and other political subdivisions;
  - ii. Executive, Legislative and Judicial Branches, including all Departments and elected offices therein;
  - iii. Independent public authorities, commissions and quasi-public agencies;
  - iv. Local public libraries, public school districts and charter schools;
  - v. Public hospitals, owned by the Commonwealth;
  - vi. Public institutions of high education;
  - vii. Public purchasing cooperatives;
  - viii. Non-profit, UFR-certified organizations that are doing business with the Commonwealth;
  - ix. Other states and territories with no prior approval by the State Purchasing Agent required; and
  - x. Other entities when designated in writing by the State Purchasing Agent.
  
- 4) The final dissemination of public notice should incorporate the following:
  - a. The dissemination of public notice has occurred sufficiently in advance of meeting to ensure adequate processing time for language and accessibility accommodation requests. *[Practice Tip: Distributing notice three weeks in advance of a public engagement opportunity is generally regarded as appropriate, with two weeks or 10 business days considered the minimum limit for reasonable notice.]*
  - b. The public notice/announcement materials have been delivered to non-English language outreach resources and sites identified in Section 2.1.3 §§ 3; a.
  - c. The public notice has been delivered directly to individuals, organizations, and other stakeholders that represent Title VI populations in the region. You should consider sending notice to the entities below with the instruction that they forward the notice among their own distribution lists and/or post it.
    - i. PVMPO Transportation Section (Maintains a distribution list)
    - ii. PVPC Public Relations Specialist
    - iii. Local Community Leaders



- iv. Other Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)  
<http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/Portals/17/Images/DataMaps/boundary/MPOs-RPAs-Statewide.pdf>
- v. PVTA and Regional Transit Agencies (RTAs)  
<http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/Portals/17/docs/MapCatalog/Maps/RTAs-Statewide.pdf>
- vi. Public Libraries <http://www.publiclibraries.com/massachusetts.htm>
- vii. Schools/Universities  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_colleges\\_and\\_universities\\_in\\_Massachusetts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_colleges_and_universities_in_Massachusetts)
- viii. Chambers of Commerce <http://masshome.com/cofc.html>
- ix. Local Legislators
- x. Boston Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Services  
[http://www.cityofboston.gov/ons/coor\\_list.asp](http://www.cityofboston.gov/ons/coor_list.asp)

#### **3.1.2.4 Preparation for the Meeting**

- 1) While preparing for the meeting, consider the following questions: (1) Are there civil rights implications in the background/history of the project? (2) What public involvement has already been accomplished and did it illuminate civil rights concerns? and (3) What are the known benefits and burdens of the PVMPO program, service, or activity on Title VI populations? Consult the following resources:
  - a. Public meeting/hearing transcripts
  - b. Written public comments
  - c. PVMPO staff involved in planning and/or conducting prior related meetings
  - d. Project INFO comments
  - e. Public meeting demographics surveys
- 2) Meeting planners should maintain an ongoing dialogue with the individuals and organizations identified in Sections 2.1.3 §§ 3; a; i and 2.1.3 §§ 3; c; i in order to remain well informed on the level of community interest and likely involvement in the public outreach event.
- 3) The subject matter of transportation-related public engagement can often be based on highly technical studies, project designs that address difficult engineering requirements, multi-faceted long range plans, and other complex documents. In such instances, project managers and meeting planners should create summary documents to present complex information in as simple and clear manner as possible to members of the public who have widely varying backgrounds, including varied education levels. This guidance document produced by the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center gives pointers on writing effective executive summaries of highly technical documents

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[http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/Documents/environmental-programs/risk-communication/Appendix\\_E\\_AGuideToWritingAnEffectiveExecutiveSummary.pdf](http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/Documents/environmental-programs/risk-communication/Appendix_E_AGuideToWritingAnEffectiveExecutiveSummary.pdf) . The key points and tips, such as avoiding industry jargon, replacing complex words with simple words, and using acronyms carefully, apply not only to the development of executive summaries, but also the development of documents that effectively convey information to the public.

- 4) Similarly to #3 above, any spoken presentation of complex topics should be as simple as possible to effectively communicate the subject matter across the varying background of meeting attendees. The guidance document below describes good strategies for presenting technical information to nontechnical audiences [http://www.cedma-europe.org/newsletter%20articles/WorkplaceXpert/Presenting%20Technical%20Information%20to%20Nontechnical%20Audiences%20\(Aug%2008\).pdf](http://www.cedma-europe.org/newsletter%20articles/WorkplaceXpert/Presenting%20Technical%20Information%20to%20Nontechnical%20Audiences%20(Aug%2008).pdf) .
- 5) Ensure that electronic documents related to the subject of the public meeting and intended for public dissemination and review are accessible, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 508 of The Rehabilitation Act of 1973. [*Practice Tip: Adobe Acrobat Professional and Microsoft Word have built-in “accessibility checkers.”*] This applies to documents produced by PVMPO staff as well as consultants. Consult the following for instructions on developing accessible documents:
  - a. Best practices for text and color contrast considerations when preparing hardcopy and electronic visual aids (such as maps, posters, plans, PowerPoint templates/graphics, charts, graphs, etc.) <http://li129-107.members.linode.com/accessibility/design/accessible-print-design/>
  - b. Creating accessible Word documents: <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/word-help/creating-accessible-word-documents-HA101999993.aspx>
  - c. Creating accessible Excel workbooks: <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/excel-help/creating-accessible-excel-workbooks-HA102013545.aspx?CTT=3>
  - d. Creating accessible PowerPoint presentations: <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/powerpoint-help/creating-accessible-powerpoint-presentations-HA102013555.aspx?CTT=3>
  - e. Creating accessible PDFs with Microsoft Office products through “Tagging”: <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/excel-help/create-accessible-pdfs-HA102478227.aspx?CTT=3>
  - f. General information on accessibility from Adobe: <http://www.adobe.com/accessibility/>
  - g. Adobe Acrobat X Accessibility Guide: <http://www.adobe.com/content/dam/Adobe/en/accessibility/products/acrobat/pdfs/acrobat-x-accessible-pdf-from-word.pdf>
  - h. Adobe Acrobat 9 Pro Accessibility Guide: <http://www.adobe.com/content/dam/Adobe/en/accessibility/products/acrobat/pdfs/A9-accessible-pdf-from-word.pdf>

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- i. Video on preparing accessible InDesign files: <http://tv.adobe.com/watch/accessibility-adobe/preparing-indesign-files-for-accessibility/>
  - 6) The period between notice dissemination and the meeting date should be used to identify and arrange accommodations and produce meeting materials in alternate languages and formats (such as Braille and large-print), if requested.
    - a. Alternate formats can be obtained by contacting:
      - i. Massachusetts Office on Disability <http://www.mass.gov/anf/employment-equal-access-disability/oversight-agencies/mod/>
    - b. The nature and extent of accommodations that may be needed can be identified through the following:
      - i. Direct requests
      - ii. Past experiences, both within the community and at specific meeting locations which can include previously encountered reasonable accommodation and language service requests
        1. Meeting coordinators are required to submit demographic and accommodation summaries to ODCR. You can request this information from ODCR to better understand the past experiences of other meeting planners in the locale of your meeting.
      - iii. An understanding of community demographics
      - iv. Feedback from community leaders, CBOs, stakeholders, advocacy groups, etc.
      - v. PVMPO Accessible Meeting Checklist
    - c. Foreign language document translation can be provided by:
      - i. UMass Translation Center
        1. Request Procedure: <http://www.umasstranslation.com/services/request-an-estimate/>
        2. Rates: <http://www.umasstranslation.com/services/rates/>
      - ii. Statewide Language Services Contract
        1. Search COMMBUYS website <https://www.commbuys.com/bsol/> for contract “PRF48”
          - a. Entities eligible to utilize this contract:
            - i. Cities, towns, districts, counties and other political subdivisions;
            - ii. Executive, Legislative and Judicial Branches, including all Departments and elected offices therein;

- iii. Independent public authorities, commissions and quasi-public agencies;
  - iv. Local public libraries, public school districts and charter schools;
  - v. Public hospitals, owned by the Commonwealth;
  - vi. Public institutions of high education;
  - vii. Public purchasing cooperatives;
  - viii. Non-profit, UFR-certified organizations that are doing business with the Commonwealth;
  - ix. Other states and territories with no prior approval by the State Purchasing Agent required; and
  - x. Other entities when designated in writing by the State Purchasing Agent.
- d. To obtain accessibility accommodations not provided by the venue (Section 2.1.2 §§ 2; c), contact:
- i. MassDOT Facilities
    - 1. Phone: (857) 368-9560
    - 2. Email: dotgeneralservices@dot.state.ma.us
  - ii. Metropolitan Planning Organizations  
<http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/Portals/17/Images/DataMaps/boundry/MPOs-RPAs-Statewide.pdf>
  - iii. Massachusetts Office on Disability <http://www.mass.gov/anf/employment-equal-access-disability/oversight-agencies/mod/>
- e. If unsure how to provide a particular accommodation or for guidance on recommended accommodations, consult:
- i. PVPC Title VI Specialist or if needed the MassDOT Office of Diversity and Civil Rights <http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/OfficeofCivilRights.aspx>
  - ii. PVPC Public Relations Specialist
  - iii. The Massachusetts Office on Disability  
<http://www.mass.gov/anf/employment-equal-access-disability/oversight-agencies/mod/>
  - iv. The Disability Commissions (S:\Civil Rights\ADA\Disability Commissions)
  - v. The Independent Living Centers <http://www.masilc.org/membership/cils>
- f. Funding Considerations

- i. All accommodations must be provided to the public free of charge.
- ii. For public outreach events which are necessitated by the project development process, each project contains an administration budget that should be utilized, if available.

### 3.1.2.5 Meeting Set-Up

- 1) ADA considerations in public outreach are fully articulated in the PVMPO Accessible Meeting Policy (same as MassDOT) in Section 3.2 below and online at: [http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/Portals/0/docs/CivilRights/ADA/Attachment\\_13.pdf](http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/Portals/0/docs/CivilRights/ADA/Attachment_13.pdf). Meeting setup is addressed in the “Accessibility Checklist for Meeting Planners” which should be used in order to verify the following:
  - a. If the main entrance to the building is not accessible, is the accessible entrance unlocked?
  - b. Are there integrated seating areas for individuals who use a wheeled mobility device in the meeting room? [*Practice Tip: Seating areas for individuals with disabilities should not be segregated from the rest of the audience or limited to just one area.*]
  - c. Is there seating available for attendees who are deaf or hard of hearing, and have requested an accommodation, near the front of the meeting room so that attendees may see the interpreter/captioner, or lip read?
  - d. Is the space allotted to sign language interpreters and/or the CART screen or monitor clearly visible?
  - e. Are the aisles at least three feet wide and clear of obstacles or tripping hazards?
  - f. If microphones are used during the public meeting, are adjustable microphone stands available for attendees? Can staff be used as floaters with microphones as an alternative?
  - g. If the main entrance to the building is not accessible, is there directional signage towards the accessible entrance?
  - h. Is the accessible entrance unlocked and able to be used independently? If the meeting is taking place at night, is the path leading to the alternate entrance well lit?
  - i. If a stage or platform will be used during the public meeting, is it accessible?
  - j. If a podium will be used during the public meeting, is the podium height adjustable? If not, is there a small table (between 28 and 34 inches in height) provided to the side of the podium?
  - k. Have assistive devices been tested for full functionality immediately prior to the start of the event?
  - l. Is there directional signage for accessible restrooms and/or emergency exits, if applicable?
- 2) Title VI considerations can be addressed through the following:

- a. Based on identified or likely-to-be-encountered language needs, has signage in other languages been posted?
- b. Is the space allotted to foreign language interpreters clearly visible to the entire audience?
- c. Has space been given to foreign language interpreters to sit with individuals who need language assistance?
- d. Have Title VI related materials been made available at the welcome desk and/or in the meeting packet? *[Practice Tip: Assistance is provided at the welcome desk, paying special attention to indications that meeting attendees may have literacy or non-English speaking issues.]* This should include:
  - i. “I speak” language cards <http://www.lep.gov/ISpeakCards2004.pdf>
  - ii. Translated versions of the written comment form, as applicable
  - iii. Demographics survey (insert link)

#### 3.1.2.6 *During the Meeting*

- 1) In the event that this public meeting/hearing is preceded by an open house, please refer to Section 2.2 regarding civil rights considerations in that setting.
- 2) At the official start of the meeting, make the following statements. If a foreign language translator(s) is present, instruct them to repeat.
  - a. (Insert language here when finalized by Title VI Working Group, address: general statement regarding nondiscrimination and availability of language and accessibility accommodations, including assistance in providing written comments and/or filing in forms such as the demographics survey)
  - b. Include instructions on site-specific accessibility considerations, such as accessible emergency exits.
  - c. Encourage attendees to complete the Demographics Survey, which can be either turned in during the event or mailed to PVMPO after the fact.
- 3) PVMPO is required to “demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input” ([23 CFR 450.210](#)). During a public outreach event, this requires affording attendees with opportunities to voice comments, questions, and concerns and provide an adequate response at the event or by following up in writing (see Section 2.1.7) or at subsequent public outreach opportunities. *[Practice Tip: All PVMPO staff in attendance at open houses and similar informal meetings should take written note of any oral comments made by the public during the meeting and during one-on-one interactions and give this information to the Project Manager as part of post-meeting followup.]*

### 3.1.2.7 Post Meeting

- 1) All public comments (written and oral), testimonials, and sentiments expressed during the public outreach event have been gathered/documentated by PVMPO staff that attended the meeting and passed on to the Project Manager (or designee). *[Practice Tip: This can be accomplished through in-person debriefing sessions following the meeting or reviewing the meeting transcript, if available.]*
- 2) Once received, the Project Manager (or designee) catalogues all public comments.
- 3) The Project Manager is responsible for coordinating responses to public comments. *[Practice Tip: Remember: direct impacts require direct communication. [23 CFR 450.210](#)]*
  - a. Methods of responses can include:
    - i. Individualized written responses
    - ii. General distribution written statements (web, email, newsletter, newspaper, etc.)
    - iii. Postings to project specific website, if available
    - iv. In-person or telephonic follow-ups with individuals/organizations regarding the topics of discussion at the public outreach event *[Practice Tip: The protocols and tips found in Section 2.4 regarding one-on-one interactions can help you eliminate communication barriers you may encounter.]*
  - b. The Project Manager (or designee) reviews the public comments to determine which PVMPO staff should be consulted with or assigned the responsibility of drafting a response that “demonstrate[s] explicit consideration... to public input” ([23 CFR 450.210](#)).
- 4) In instances where PVMPO will draft a written response to a public comment, the content of the response itself can “demonstrate explicit consideration” by:
  - a. Describing changes to the recommended design prompted/requested by the comment and how they will be considered
  - b. Describing alternate designs prompted/requested by the comment and how they will be considered
  - c. Describing mitigation measures prompted/requested by the comment and how they will be considered
  - d. Describing the PVMPO program areas that were consulted in formulating the response
  - e. Noting whether the comment is novel or previously encountered
  - f. Noting whether the comment has been received from a multitude of sources
- 5) Responses should also contain:
  - a. Contact information for additional information and follow-up

- b. Notice of upcoming related public engagement opportunities
- 6) The Project Manager should note, through Project INFO “comments,” civil rights considerations encountered through the planning and conducting of the outreach event, such as translation requests or foreign languages encountered. *[Practice Tip: For projects that have received a Project INFO number, the “comments” section can be used to highlight civil rights related comments or concerns from the public. The document database for these projects can also be used to store scans of comment forms.]*
- 7) The community leaders identified in Section 2.1.1 §§ 3 should be thanked for their assistance/efforts with a call or written correspondence.

### 3.1.3 Open Houses

#### 3.1.3.1 Title VI Considerations

- 1) “I Speak” language cards have been provided at the welcome desk.  
<http://www.lep.gov/ISpeakCards2004.pdf>
- 2) If PVMPO is providing interpretive services at the public meeting/hearing session, then they should also be available during the open house session and their availability should be made clear through signage and/or announcements. *[Practice Tip: Those running the meeting should ask interpreters to announce their presence and the availability of their services several times during the open house.]*
- 3) After the session, PVMPO staff and consultants in attendance should relay the nature of questions and concerns identified through interaction with the public to the Project Manager (or designee). *[Practice Tip: It is important for PVMPO staff working on all stages of project development to know community concerns. Sometimes these are made evident during informal open house interactions. Just because they don't make it onto a public hearing transcript doesn't mean we don't have an obligation to be aware of them and respond accordingly.]*
- 4) Written descriptions of items on display may need to be translated depending on requests received and/or the anticipated level of LEP participation.

#### 3.1.3.2 ADA Considerations

- 1) The open house should be set up in an ADA compliant manner. Please see the PVMPO Accessible Meeting Policy in Section 3.2 below or online at:  
[http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/Portals/0/docs/CivilRights/ADA/Attachment\\_13.pdf](http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/Portals/0/docs/CivilRights/ADA/Attachment_13.pdf)
- 2) Consider the following when setting up the open house venue:
  - a. Consult the following guide on best practices for text and color contrast considerations when preparing hardcopy and electronic visual aids (such as maps, posters, plans, PowerPoint templates/graphics, charts, graphs, etc.) <http://li129-107.members.linode.com/accessibility/design/accessible-print-design/> *[Practice*



*Tip: Choose color schemes that are least likely to be problematic for individuals with common types of color blindness and visual impairments.]*

- b. Pathways that guide attendees to display materials or PVMPO staff and consultants should be clear of obstructions. *[Practice Tip: Rule of Thumb: remove tripping hazards (such as electrical cords) and keep the pathway at least 3' wide.]*
  - c. Proper heights and viewing angles of display materials to make them accessible. *[Practice Tip: Rules of Thumb: For display materials mounted on the wall, they should be no higher than 48" from the floor and provide clear floor space 30" wide and 48" wide. For tabletop displays, the table should be between 28 and 34" inches in height and there should be at least 27" of knee space from the floor to the underside of the table.]*
  - d. Horizontal surfaces used for display should be at a height accessible to individuals that are short of stature and/or rely on assistive mobility devices.
  - e. Similarly, materials displayed vertically should not be at an excessive height nor at an angle that makes them difficult to view.
- 3) PVMPO staff and consultants should be prepared to describe displays to blind or visually impaired attendees.
  - 4) Alternate versions (Braille, large print, etc.) of public documents (such as informational packets) should be available if requested.

### **3.1.4 Targeted Outreach Gatherings (Small Group Meetings/Committees/Task Forces/Studies)**

#### **3.1.4.1 Strategic Planning for Title VI Group and Individual Inclusion**

Strategic planning for the involvement of Title VI community members on special purpose meeting groups or committees is essential to an inclusive and successful effort. Engaging the public in a targeted context is complex, political and always challenging, and ensuring diverse participation adds even more difficulty to meeting this objective.

Preliminary Steps:

- 1) Identify and analyze the location affected by the project or initiative at issue to determine the Title VI populations in the area.
- 2) Establish a clear objective and role for the envisioned targeted group, including the nature of community involvement and particular skills which may be needed for fruitful discussion or deliberations.
- 3) Create an outline or public participation matrix to identify the different types of community representation and interests that reflect the community affected by a project or initiative with careful attention to Title VI populations. Types of organizations or interests that may include representatives of Title VI populations:
  - a. transit-dependent community

- b. affected businesses
- c. civic organizations (women, seniors, youth, people with disabilities)
- d. freight interests
- e. the disability community
- f. neighborhood association
- g. schools
- h. churches

Beyond demographic data and identification of the types of Title VI related groups or individuals in the community, there are certain key questions to help define the individuals or groups to invite. Consider meeting with a small group of internal staff and/or managers from among key PVMPO departments who know the community and who can help answer these key questions:

- 1) Who can represent these diverse groups and constituencies in a credible and responsible way?
- 2) Who needs to be at the table for the work to be accomplished?
- 3) What is the history of relationships between stakeholder representatives and groups? Is there any past tension that may be a deterrent to participation? If so, are there other community leaders who could help mediate to encourage participation despite differences?
- 4) If known from past experience, are there stakeholders critical to the process who may be reluctant to participate? How can this reluctance be alleviated? What would be the impact of their refusal to participate in the process? Is there an alternative to their participation?
- 5) What commitments do you want from participants?
- 6) Other than known stakeholders, what other individuals or groups could have an interest in the project that are not in the immediate project area, and/or are not otherwise represented in the outreach strategy?
- 7) Do any necessary parties have possible concerns about participating? How can those concerns be alleviated?
- 8) Do you have natural allies on an issue? Natural adversaries?

#### **3.1.4.2 Consult MassDOT Resources**

MassDOT vast prior experience in communities across the Commonwealth, and significant corporate knowledge of local groups, key individuals and community issues or concerns that can help answer these questions. The following should be considered a resource for consultation when needed:

- 1) Office of Diversity and Civil Rights (which does a range of outreach across the Commonwealth, responds to complaints and works with key Title VI leadership on transportation matters in contracting and employment)

- 2) MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning (which conducts significant long-range studies that engage the public and builds knowledge of communities and has access to, and key relationships with, the Metropolitan Planning Organizations in all regions of Massachusetts)
- 3) MassDOT District 1 and District 2 Offices. (D1 and D2 work directly with project proponents, especially municipally proposed projects)
- 4) Use the MassDOT Title VI interactive mapping tool (currently under development) to identify community organizations that are associated with Title VI community members and interests

There may be other sources of contact in additional departments or Divisions that may have had experience with a location and or community representatives, which could also be helpful to explore.

#### **3.1.4.3 Consult Statewide Resources**

- 1) Reach out at the state level for help in identifying and possibly supporting our outreach to potential Title VI related groups and individuals to contact. These resources may also have particular information that is important to know about the locality, its history and community challenges or controversy which may be critical to support your outreach:

- a. Administration and Finance – Office of Access and Opportunity

Office of Access & Opportunities  
State House, Room 373, Boston, MA 02133  
Phone: (617) 727-2040

- b. Massachusetts Office on Disability

One Ashburton Place #1305  
Boston, MA 02108  
(617) 727-7440 or (800) 322-2020 toll free (both V/TTY)

#### **3.1.4.4 Conduct Targeted Research on the Leads you Gather**

Conduct a Google-type search on the communities involved and the groups and individuals who have been identified. This effort is potentially time consuming, but will both educate the meeting convener and potentially identify “landmines” that could complicate the effort to organize a group.

Tip: In carrying out this task, it is useful to limit searches which can be done through linking key words to a query such as a year, a past issue or individual words like “bio,” “biography,” “background,” “transportation,” “complaint” and the like.

If a meeting planner is not aware of the racial, ethnic or national origin background of the individual or group being engaged, it is similarly possible to research Title VI groups individually, using query strings to the group or individuals and Massachusetts, the regional area or the locality where the group or individual is based. This information is useful in gaining a basic understanding of traditions

and holidays which may impact participation, through to a more thorough understanding of complex considerations like values, beliefs and relationship to government and/or transportation.

**3.1.4.5 Reaching out to Potential Title VI Group Members – Anticipating Potential Obstacles to Participation**

- 1) Outreach approaches:
  - i. Look for formal and informal opportunities to engage, collaborate, and build relationships, including calls of introduction made by volunteers you identify who are trusted in the community.
  - ii. Use multiple outreach methods and do not rely on e-mail or websites alone
  - iii. Tailor materials to the audience, including translations
  - iv. Identify existing channels of communication through communities
  - v. Experiment and reflect on the effectiveness of new approaches

In Title VI communities, there are a range of factors leading to reluctance to participate for individuals and groups that could be helpful in a transportation planning or development process. For example, many times natural leaders are either the heads or well-placed leaders of agencies or community groups; this limits their ability to participate because there are many demands on their time, resources and commitment.

- 2) Think through and identify the factors which would encourage participation and involvement before reaching out, to be in the best position to explain how it is important for this individual or group to participate. If there is a possibility of grant funding to support participating groups, this can certainly provide an incentive for participation, but such ideas should only be shared if the possibility is real.
- 3) The following are some common barriers to participation, and reasonable responses that a meeting planner should anticipate, understand and be able to articulate to encourage potential participants to get involved:
  - a. **Limited English language skills and/or limited literacy** – it is first important to know that PVMPO has the ability and obligation to fund translation and interpretation support and to convey this message. It would be ideal to have a colleague or staff person who speaks the language or is of the culture in question to support the outreach effort, or to use a translator as an intermediary.
  - b. **Lack of trust due to past experiences** - it is important to be in a position to respond with as much information as will demonstrate that both participation and the project are being honestly and openly addressed.
  - c. **Lack of experience with transportation decision making processes** – if this process is not well understood or the meeting convener has a difficult time explaining the process, it is important to have a representative from Planning involved to explain the process.

- d. **Economic barriers** – (such as transportation costs and work schedules) meetings should be sited in the community to avoid cost factors, and they should be timed to meet the schedule of the majority of participants, after due consideration of all schedules, alternatives and needs.
- e. **Cultural barriers** – there may be intergroup dynamics that make bringing groups together problematic due to class, racial ethnic or political differences. Early research will help build understanding of this possibility, and suggest whether a mediated way of bringing the groups together is an option, or there is a need to have separate meetings.
- f. **Common barriers** – time, other demands. The key to this element is making sure that the importance of an effort is clear and well stated to the candidate, including the benefit to an individual or group representative being recruited.

#### *3.1.4.6 Responding to a Refusal to Participate from a Potential Title VI Participant*

- 1) If a person or group declines to participate in a particular effort, it is important not to get frustrated but instead to handle the refusal diplomatically because that same group might be the subject of an outreach effort in the future, and may wish to participate on another occasion.
- 2) In responding to a decision not to participate, thank the person or group for considering the invitation and suggest that they might accept an invitation for a different opportunity in the future. In this way, no feelings are hurt, doors are left open and the person or group remains feeling that they are valued in the future.
- 3) Consider sending the individual or organizations updates on the effort that are sent to others. This effort could be informative and demonstrate a good faith effort to be inclusive.

#### *3.1.4.7 Documenting the Effort to Achieve Diversity and Next Steps*

It may be impossible to achieve a perfectly diverse committee for purposes of transportation planning, given the difficulty of recruitment and obstacles to participation. Simply put, the concept of diversity in transportation planning is elastic - it will change based on the geographic location, the issue under study or discussion or the nature of the need for input. Nonetheless, our federal partners, and even community members will expect to know about our efforts and may wish to question whether PVMPO truly conducted outreach for Title VI inclusion purposes. For Title VI purposes, this documentation is good evidence of the opportunity that was given to the public, such that complaints after the fact about the lack of inclusion can be responded to. Our Title VI obligation requires us to provide an equal opportunity to participate in transportation planning exercises and ultimately, it is an exercise in trying and proving that PVMPO has been thoughtful and reached out effectively to increase diversity in our community engagement.

For purposes of proving that an outreach effort was genuine and reached out to diverse communities, there are steps that the meeting convener or planner should take:

- 1) The meeting planner should keep a file on available resources and methods used to identify individuals and groups, the nature of the outreach effort, the people invited and the results of a recruitment effort. Possible resources:
  - a. Lists of potential invitees who were considered and/or accepted
  - b. Samples of research conducted and/or consultations made for recruitment
  - c. Copies of invitation e-mails or other correspondence
  - d. Group membership lists, with indications of the Title VI communities represented
  - e. Meeting sign in sheets
  - f. Correspondence from invited individuals
- 2) The meeting planner should make the list of actual participants easily available and strive to secure a means for the public to reach out to these individuals should they have questions, comments or concerns that they may not be willing to air publicly.
- 3) Meeting planners should plan to discuss with the members of the group that is ultimately recruited the efforts made to reach out and recruit individuals, including the potential need that may remain after the fact for additional participation by certain Title VI group members or related organizations.
- 4) Effective management of the group that is ultimately formed is key to the productivity and longevity of relationships with Title VI community members. Following-through with stakeholders to demonstrate that input was considered and/or had an impact on project parameters, study outcomes, and planned activities can demonstrate to participants the value added to their interests and communities through continued involvement in these activities.

### **3.1.5 One-on-One Interactions**

#### ***3.1.5.1 Communicating with Individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP)***

If a member of the public is attempting to interact with you but there is a language barrier, the following procedures are recommended based on the types of interactions.

- 1) In-person (such as PVMPO reception areas)
  - a. The first step is to identify the preferred language of the individual. The following resources are available:
    - i. “I Speak” cards, <http://www.lep.gov/ISpeakCards2004.pdf>
    - ii. Google Translate (<http://translate.google.com/>) or a similar real-time free online language translator can be used to identify the language. *[Practice Tip: If the member*

*of the public is directed to type (or speak into the computer's microphone, if available) on the webpage in a language other than English, the software can "Auto-Detect" which language is being used and provide real-time translations. Please note that the accuracy and effectiveness of these translation systems is not complete and should not be relied on as an exclusive means of providing language access to LEP individuals.]*

- iii. Assistance from co-workers in your unit that may be able to identify the language.
  - iv. (Note: MassDOT is currently procuring the services of a firm that will be providing telephonic real-time interpretation. When finalized, that information will be included here for use in this context.)
- b. Once the language has been identified, the methods you use to address the needs of the individual will change depending on the circumstances.
- i. You may be able to address simple inquires informally on-the-spot with the aid of multi-lingual staff or Google Translate (<http://translate.google.com/>) or a similar product. *[Example: providing directions around the building/office to an LEP individual.]*
    - 1. If you work in one of the PVPC sections that has been surveyed for multi-lingual staff refer to the corresponding database to identify a co-worker that can assist. *[Practice Tip: Assisting in this way is purely voluntary and the nature of the communication should be incidental.]*
      - a. DC3\transportation\MPO\Title VI\PVPC\_staff directory
    - 2. An employee and an LEP individual can type or speak into Google Translate software and carry out a rudimentary conversation. This should remain limited to incidental interactions.
  - ii. If the conversation turns to more complex issues or you have reached the limitations of the technology or your knowledge of the subject at issue, the PVMPO staffer providing informal translations or Google Translate should inform them that professional language services are available that may be better suited to meeting their need. More complex issues may require professional translators/interpreters. *[Example: An LEP individual who needs assistance to engage in the complaint resolution process or to participate in a PVMPO program, service, or activity that requires an application process. Complex issues are those that affect the legal rights of the individual and therefore depend on the accuracy of translations/interpretations. The following services are available in those instances:*
    - 1. (Note: MassDOT is currently procuring the services of a firm that will be providing telephonic real-time interpretation. When finalized, PVPC staff will inquire as to availability of use for PVMPO related tasks)
    - 2. Statewide Language Services Contract

- a. Search COMMBUYS website <https://www.commbuys.com/bs/> for contract “PRF48”
  - b. Entities eligible to utilize this contract:
    - i. Cities, towns, districts, counties and other political subdivisions;
    - ii. Executive, Legislative and Judicial Branches, including all Departments and elected offices therein;
    - iii. Independent public authorities, commissions and quasi-public agencies;
    - iv. Local public libraries, public school districts and charter schools;
    - v. Public hospitals, owned by the Commonwealth;
    - vi. Public institutions of high education;
    - vii. Public purchasing cooperatives;
    - viii. Non-profit, UFR-certified organizations that are doing business with the Commonwealth;
    - ix. Other states and territories with no prior approval by the State Purchasing Agent required; and
    - x. Other entities when designated in writing by the State Purchasing Agent.
  - iii. Should you require time to secure professional language services (such as scheduling a meeting with an interpreter or sending out documents to be translated) then you should try to make this clear to the individual on-the-spot with the aid of multi-lingual staff or Google Translate. *[Practice Tip: Using Google Translate to convey this information allows you to include details such as expected turnaround times, meeting dates and locations, and contact information.]*
- 2) Over the Phone
  - 3) If you are unable to identify the language of the caller and/or you do not work in a fellow staff person that can provide a translation, contact the Title VI Specialist.
  - 4) Electronically (includes email, website comment form, etc.)
    - a. If you receive such correspondence in a language other than English, use Google Translate (<http://translate.google.com/>) or similar product to determine the language and nature of the interaction
    - b. Once the language and the nature of the interaction has been identified, the methods you use to address the needs of the individual will change depending on the circumstances.



- i. You may be able to address simple inquiries informally with the aid of multi-lingual staff or Google Translate (<http://translate.google.com/>) or a similar product. *[Example: emailing a link to requested web content.]*
  1. Refer to the corresponding database to identify a co-worker that can assist.
- ii. If the conversation turns to more complex issues or you have reached the limitations of the technology or your knowledge of the subject at issue, the PVMPO staffer providing informal translations or Google Translate should inform them that professional language services are available that may be better suited to meeting their need. More complex issues may require professional translators/interpreters. *[Practice Tip:Complex issues are those that affect the legal rights of the individual and therefore depend on the accuracy of translations/interpretations.] [Example: An LEP individual who needs assistance to engage in the complaint resolution process or to participate in an activity that requires an application process. The following services are available in those instances:*
  1. Statewide Language Services Contract
    - a. Search COMMBUYS website <https://www.commbuys.com/bsol/> for contract “PRF48”
    - b. Entities eligible to utilize this contract:
      - i. Cities, towns, districts, counties and other political subdivisions;
      - ii. Executive, Legislative and Judicial Branches, including all Departments and elected offices therein;
      - iii. Independent public authorities, commissions and quasi-public agencies;
      - iv. Local public libraries, public school districts and charter schools;
      - v. Public hospitals, owned by the Commonwealth;
      - vi. Public institutions of high education;
      - vii. Public purchasing cooperatives;
      - viii. Non-profit, UFR-certified organizations that are doing business with the Commonwealth;
      - ix. Other states and territories with no prior approval by the State Purchasing Agent required; and
      - x. Other entities when designated in writing by the State Purchasing Agent.

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### 3.1.5.2 Communicating with People with Disabilities

- 1) Outlined below are tips to help you in communicating with persons with disabilities. *[Practice Tip: For more information visit:*

<http://www.labor.state.ny.us/workforcenypartners/forms/communication.pdf>.]

a. General Tips:

- i. When introduced to a person with a disability, it is appropriate to offer to shake hands. People with limited hand use or who wear an artificial limb can usually shake hands. (Shaking hands with the left hand is an acceptable greeting.)
- ii. If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted. Then listen to or ask for instructions.
- iii. Relax. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use common expressions such as "See you later," or "Did you hear about that?" that seem to relate to a person's disability.
- iv. Don't be afraid to ask questions when you're unsure of what to do.

b. Tips for Communicating with Individuals who are Blind or Visually Impaired:

- i. Speak to the individual when you approach him or her.
- ii. State clearly who you are; speak in a normal tone of voice.
- iii. When conversing in a group, remember to identify yourself and the person to whom you are speaking.
- iv. Never touch or distract a service dog without first asking the owner.
- v. Tell the individual when you are leaving.
- vi. Do not attempt to lead the individual without first asking; allow the person to hold your arm and control her or his own movements.
- vii. Be descriptive when giving directions; verbally give the person information that is visually obvious to individuals who can see. For example, if you are approaching steps, mention how many steps.
- viii. If you are offering a seat, gently place the individual's hand on the back or arm of the chair so that the person can locate the seat.

c. Tips for Communicating with Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing:

- i. Gain the person's attention before starting a conversation (i.e., tap the person gently on the shoulder or arm).
- ii. Look directly at the individual, face the light, speak clearly, in a normal tone of voice, and keep your hands away from your face. Use short, simple sentences.

- iii. If the individual uses a sign language interpreter, speak directly to the person, not the interpreter.
  - iv. If you telephone an individual who is hard of hearing, let the phone ring longer than usual. Speak clearly and be prepared to repeat the reason for the call and who you are.
  - d. Tips for Communicating with Individuals with Mobility Impairments:
    - i. If possible, put yourself at the wheelchair user's eye level.
    - ii. Do not lean on a wheelchair or any other assistive device.
    - iii. Never patronize people who use wheelchairs by patting them on the head or shoulder.
    - iv. Do not assume the individual wants to be pushed —ask first.
    - v. Offer assistance if the individual appears to be having difficulty opening a door.
    - vi. If you telephone the individual, allow the phone to ring longer than usual to allow extra time for the person to reach the telephone.
  - e. Tips for Communicating with Individuals with Speech Impairments:
    - i. If you do not understand something the individual says, do not pretend that you do. Ask the individual to repeat what he or she said and then repeat it back.
    - ii. Be patient. Take as much time as necessary.
    - iii. Concentrate on what the individual is saying.
    - iv. Do not speak for the individual or attempt to finish her or his sentences.
    - v. If you are having difficulty understanding the individual, consider writing as an alternative means of communicating, but first ask the individual if this is acceptable.
  - f. Tips for Communicating with Individuals with Cognitive Disabilities:
    - i. If you are in a public area with many distractions, consider moving to a quiet or private location.
    - ii. Offer assistance completing forms or understanding written instructions and provide extra time for decision-making. Wait for the individual to accept the offer of assistance; do not "over-assist" or be patronizing.
    - iii. Be patient, flexible and supportive. Take time to understand the individual and make sure the individual understands you.
- 2) Additional information can be provided by:
- a. PVMPO Specialist, Transportation Planning Section

- b. MassDOT Office of Diversity and Civil Rights  
<http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/OfficeofCivilRights.aspx>
- c. Massachusetts Office on Disability <http://www.mass.gov/anf/employment-equal-access-disability/oversight-agencies/mod/>
- d. Commonwealth of Massachusetts - Office of Access and Opportunity  
<http://www.mass.gov/governor/administration/groups/oa/>

## **3.2 PVMPO Accessible Meeting Policy**

### **3.2.1 Purpose**

This policy outlines criteria that must be fulfilled in order to ensure that all PVMPO public meetings are fully accessible to persons with disabilities. This document will also address issues related to attendees with limited English proficiency.

The ability to access and participate in state government, including participating in public meetings, is a fundamental right protected by both State and Federal law. The Massachusetts Public Accommodation Law and the Americans with Disabilities Act mandate that persons with disabilities must not be denied participation in public meetings, and that reasonable accommodation requests made by attendees shall be honored. For these reasons, when planning and executing public meetings, PVMPO personnel must ensure that all aspects of the meeting are accessible to persons with disabilities.

Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Commonwealth Executive Order 526, PVMPO must also ensure that programs and activities do not discriminate based on race, color or national origin, age, disability and sex, among other protected categories. A public participation plan is being developed for Title VI purposes, which should be consulted by meeting planners in coordination with this Accessible Meeting Policy to ensure that PVMPO includes Title VI constituencies in transportation programs and activities. The method for determining whether and/or what non-English languages need to be translated or interpreted is called a “four factor analysis.” See 2.1.6. Essentially, to determine whether translation is needed, meeting planners must analyze the number of limited English proficiency persons (LEP) by language group where a meeting will be held, the frequency of contacts with the program, the importance of the program and cost factors.

This document will provide guidelines for ensuring the accessibility of public meetings hosted by PVMPO. Components such as the meeting location, room setup, alternate formats and translations of handouts, and the requirement to provide CART and/or sign language and/or foreign language interpreters upon request will be discussed.

### **3.2.2 Definitions**

#### **3.2.2.1 Public Meeting**

Any meeting open to the general public, hosted by or on behalf of the PVMPO, during which information is shared.

#### **3.2.2.2 Attendee**

An individual attending a public meeting.

#### **3.2.2.3 Reasonable Accommodation**

Any reasonable service, aid, modification or adjustment to the public meeting that gives a person with a disability the opportunity to be an active participant in the meeting process.

#### **3.2.2.4 Path of Travel**

A continuous, unobstructed way of pedestrian passage by means of which an area may be approached, entered, and exited.

#### **3.2.2.5 TTY (Text Telephone)**

An electronic device for text communication via a telephone line, used when one or more of the parties has a hearing or speech-related disability. Public payphones equipped with TTY have a small keyboard that pulls out underneath the phone. Note: TTYs are gradually phasing out for many people due to the increased use of voice and video relay, but they will remain in use for some period into the future.

#### **3.2.2.6 Clear floor space**

The minimum unobstructed floor or ground space required to accommodate a single, stationary wheelchair and occupant.

#### **3.2.2.7 Wheeled mobility device**

Means by which some individuals with physical disabilities travel throughout their environment. Commonly refers to such devices as wheelchairs (manual and motorized) and scooters. Non-traditional wheeled mobility devices may include Segways and bicycles.

#### **3.2.2.8 American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreter**

An individual trained to facilitate communication between a deaf American Sign Language user and hearing individuals via American Sign Language.

#### **3.2.2.9 Assistive Listening Device**

An electronic device used by individuals who are hard of hearing to amplify sound. The assistive listening device is usually used as a system where the audio source is broadcast wirelessly over an FM frequency. The person who is listening may use a small FM Receiver to tune into the signal and listen at their preferred volume. There are other forms of Assistive Listening Devices that exist and could be used as alternatives.

#### **3.2.2.10 CART (Computer Assisted Real-time Transcription)**

A trained operator uses keyboard or stenography methods to transcribe spoken speech into written text. This may be done either on site or remotely by using a voice connection such as a telephone, cell phone, or computer microphone to send the voice to the operator and the real-time text is transmitted back over an Internet connection. For meeting rooms without an internet connection, it is possible to establish connectivity via a WIFI router connection or by using a wireless “hot spot.”

#### **3.2.2.11 Video Remote Interpreting**

A contracted video service that allows individuals who are Deaf to communicate over webcams/video phones with hearing people in real-time, via a sign language interpreter.

### **3.2.2.12 Video and Telecommunication (Voice) Relay Services**

Video Relay Service (VRS) is a form of Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) that enables persons with hearing disabilities who use American Sign Language (ASL) to communicate with voice telephone users through video equipment, rather than through typed text. Video equipment links the VRS user with a TRS operator – called a “communications assistant” (CA) – so that the VRS user and the CA can see and communicate with each other in signed conversation. The VRS caller, using a television or a computer with a video camera device and a broadband (high speed) Internet connection, contacts a VRS CA, who is a qualified sign language interpreter. They communicate with each other in sign language through a video link. The VRS CA then places a telephone call to the party the VRS user wishes to call. The VRS CA relays the conversation back and forth between the parties – in sign language with the VRS user, and by voice with the called party. No typing or text is involved.

Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) is a telephone service that allows persons with hearing or speech disabilities to place and receive telephone calls. TRS uses operators, called communications assistants (CAs), to facilitate telephone calls between people with hearing and speech disabilities and other individuals. A TRS call may be initiated by either a person with a hearing or speech disability, or a person without such disability. When a person with a hearing or speech disability initiates a TRS call, the person uses a teletypewriter (TTY) or other text input device to call the TRS relay center, and gives a CA the number of the party that he or she wants to call. The CA in turn places an outbound traditional voice call to that person. The CA then serves as a link for the call, relaying the text of the calling party in voice to the called party, and converting to text what the called party voices back to the calling party. VRS and TRS are overseen by the Federal Communications Commission and private contractors who perform the intermediary communication service are reimbursed for this service.

### **3.2.2.13 Closed Captioning**

A term describing several systems developed to display text on a television, computer or video screen to provide additional or interpretive information to viewers/listeners who wish to access it. Closed captions typically display a transcription of the audio portion of a program (either verbatim or in edited form), sometimes including non-speech elements.

### **3.2.2.14 Descriptive Video/Described Narration**

A feature that makes television programs, videos, films, and other visual media accessible to people who are blind or visually impaired by providing descriptive narration of key visual elements in programs. Key visual elements in a program that a viewer who is visually impaired would ordinarily miss are described by voice. Actions, costumes, gestures and scene changes are just a few of the elements that, when described, engage the blind or visually impaired viewer with the story.

### **3.2.2.15 Limited English Proficient (LEP)**

Individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English can be limited English proficient, or “LEP.” These individuals may be entitled to language assistance with respect to a particular type of service, benefit, or encounter.

### 3.2.2.16 *Four Factor Analysis*

Federal DOT guidance outlines four factors recipients should consider to assess language needs and decide what steps they should take to ensure meaningful access for LEP persons:

- 1) The number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by a program, activity, or service of the recipient or grantee.
- 2) The frequency with which LEP individuals come in contact with the program.
- 3) The nature and importance of the program, activity, or service provided by the recipient to the LEP community.
- 4) The resources available to the PVMPO and overall cost.

In each instance, this analysis will enable PVMPO staff to determine the extent of language assistance that must be provided to enable LEP individuals to participate in a program or activity. For further information, including answers to specific situations that meeting planners may encounter, planners should consult the ADA Coordinator, the Title VI Specialist and/or the Language Access Plan.

### 3.2.2.17 *Vital Document*

A vital document is determined by the context of a program, service or activity, and can include but not be limited to an application, notice, complaint form, legal contract, and outreach material published by a covered entity in a tangible format that informs individuals about their rights or eligibility requirements for benefits and participation.

### 3.2.2.18 *Language Access Plan*

Under Federal Executive Order Executive Order 13166, each Federal agency is required to prepare a plan to improve access to its federally conducted programs and activities by eligible LEP persons. Each plan is required to be consistent with the standards set forth in related guidance, and shall include the steps the agency will take to ensure that eligible LEP persons can meaningfully access the agency's programs and activities. Just as federal agencies must have LEP Plans, as a condition of receiving federal financial assistance, they must establish guidelines for recipients such as PVMPO to comply with Title VI and LEP requirements, including the provision of language assistance, as needed.

## 3.2.3 *Scope*

All public meetings hosted by, or on behalf of, PVMPO.

## 3.2.4 *Responsibilities*

It is the responsibility of the PVMPO staff or Department(s) charged with the coordination of the public meeting to ensure that the public meeting is accessible to all. The local contacts for the meeting facility, in conjunction with the responsible PVMPO staff, are responsible for filling out the “Accessibility Checklist for Meeting Planners” in Attachment 6.1 to ensure the space is accessible prior to the meeting.



### 3.2.5 Policy

#### 1.1 General Considerations

- 1.1.1 Public meeting planners shall identify at least one person who is responsible for making sure that the public meeting is accessible for all attendees. This individual shall serve as the contact for attendees requesting reasonable accommodations. See, Attachment 6.1 for a Checklist for Meeting Planners.
- 1.1.2 Public meetings should be planned and publicized as early as possible—ideally, at least 30 calendar days, but no less than 14 days in advance.
  - 1.1.2.1 Meeting notices should include a date by which attendees should request reasonable accommodations—typically ten days before the meeting.

Note: After the cutoff date, staff must still try to provide an accommodation but should not guarantee the provision of the requested accommodation. Since it is so difficult to schedule CART and/or sign language interpreters with less than 2-3 weeks' notice, most meetings should be publicized with 30 days' notice. This allows attendees ample opportunity to request and receive appropriate reasonable accommodations.

- 1.1.3 Attendees shall not be charged for any reasonable accommodation provided.

#### 1.2 Choosing a Location

- 1.2.1 Access to Nearby Transportation. All public meetings shall be within ¼ mile of an accessible bus stop or rail station, where feasible.
  - 1.2.1.1 The path of travel from the transit stop to the meeting location shall be accessible. Specifically, it should be:
    - 1.2.1.1.1 At least three feet wide
    - 1.2.1.1.2 Unobstructed (not blocked by trash cans, light poles, etc.)
    - 1.2.1.1.3 Free of steps, drop-offs or curbs
- 1.2.2 Parking. If parking is available to meeting attendees, meeting planners shall ensure that the number of accessible parking spaces available complies with state and Federal regulations. See, Attachment 6.2 for state and Federal regulations regarding accessible parking.
  - 1.2.2.1 The path of travel from the accessible parking to the meeting location shall be accessible. Specifically, it shall be:
    - 1.2.2.1.1 At least three feet wide
    - 1.2.2.1.2 Unobstructed (no trash cans, light poles, etc.)
    - 1.2.2.1.3 Free of steps, drop-offs or curbs

- 1.2.3** Identifying the Accessible Entrance. If the main entrance to the building (in which the public meeting is being held) is not the accessible entrance, a sign containing the universal symbol of accessibility with an arrow appropriately pointing to the accessible entrance shall be posted at the main entrance.
- 1.2.4** Ensure the alternate accessible entrance is unlocked and available to be used independently and that the path of travel to the alternate entrance is well lit (if the meeting is taking place at night). If the door is locked and intercom service or another format is used to gain access, an attendant must be at the door to accommodate deaf or hard of hearing individuals, as well as others with disabilities.
- 1.2.5** Accessible Restrooms. If restrooms are available for use by the public then all public meetings shall have at least one accessible restroom for men and one accessible restroom for women, or one accessible gender neutral restroom. See, Attachment 6.3 for state and Federal regulations regarding accessible restrooms.
  - 1.2.5.1 The accessible restrooms shall be within reasonable proximity to the meeting room.
- 1.2.6** Accessible Telephones. If two or more public payphones are available at the meeting facility, at least one should be:
  - 1.2.6.1 Equipped with TTY
  - 1.2.6.2 Mounted no higher than 48” from the floor and provide clear floor space 30” wide and 48” wide (so that attendees using wheeled mobility can properly access the phone).
  - 1.2.6.3 PVMPO should notify the facility owner if the facility does not comply with the accessible telephone requirement.
- 1.2.7** The Meeting Room: The meeting room in which the public meeting will take place shall be made accessible for persons with disabilities. The following shall be provided:
  - 1.2.7.1 An integrated seating area for wheeled mobility device users shall be made available.
    - 1.2.7.1.1 If possible, meeting planners should remove several chairs to accommodate potential attendees who use wheeled mobility devices.

Note: Remove a chair to the side and to the rear of the designated space to ensure enough room for the wheeled mobility device.

- 1.2.7.1.2 Such spaces for wheeled mobility device users shall be dispersed throughout the room, and not clustered all in one section (e.g. all in the front or all in the back). This allows attendees using wheeled mobility a variety of seating/viewing options.

- 1.2.7.2 Space for Sign Language, CART and Foreign Language Interpreters
  - 1.2.7.2.1 A well-lit area and chairs facing the audience shall be made available for sign language interpreters at the front of the room (likely just off to one side of the main presentation area). If a CART provider is to be used, a small table for the laptop and space for a screen and projector should be provided near an electrical outlet.
  - 1.2.7.2.2 Priority seating at the front of the audience and in direct line of sight of the interpreters/CART provider shall be provided for attendees who are deaf/hard of hearing.
  - 1.2.7.2.3 For foreign language interpreters, there is a need for space where they can sit with the individuals who require language assistance.
- 1.2.7.3 Aisles within the meeting room shall be
  - 1.2.7.3.1 Clear of tripping hazards (e.g. electric cords).
  - 1.2.7.3.2 At least 3 feet wide.
- 1.2.7.4 Microphones. The microphones used at public meetings shall be available on a stand that is adjustable in height.

Note: While wireless microphones have become popular, some attendees with disabilities will not be able to hold a microphone independently. In this situation, allowing an attendee use of a microphone stand adjusted to their height is almost always preferable to holding the microphone for them. Alternatively, and particularly for larger meetings, staff with a floating microphone would be preferable to facilitate communication.

- 1.2.7.5 Podiums. If any attendee may have an opportunity to speak at a podium, meeting planners shall ensure that either:
  - 1.2.7.5.1 The podium is height adjustable, or
  - 1.2.7.5.2 A small table is provided to the side of the podium.
    - 1.2.7.5.2.1 The table shall be between 28 and 34" inches in height.
    - 1.2.7.5.2.2 There shall be at least 27" of knee space from the floor to the underside of the table.
    - 1.2.7.5.2.3 If a microphone is provided at the podium, one shall also be provided at the small table.
- 1.2.7.6 Raised Platforms. If any attendee may have an opportunity to move onto a raised platform or stage during the meeting, the raised platform or stage shall be accessible by:
  - 1.2.7.6.1 A ramp that
    - 1.2.7.6.1.1 Is at least 3 feet wide.
    - 1.2.7.6.1.2 Does not have a slope that exceeds 1/12.

1.2.7.6.2 Platform lift

- 1.2.7.7 High Speed internet Connection. Public meeting rooms shall provide for a high speed internet connection to allow attendees who rely on video remote interpreting or CART. There should also be a conference capable telephone with a speakerphone function available.

**1.3 American Sign Language and Foreign Language Interpreters, Assistive Listening Devices, CART and Video Remote Interpreting.**

- 1.3.1** American Sign Language and/or foreign language interpreters shall be provided at all public meetings upon request. See, Attachment 6.4 for information on how to request an interpreter.
- 1.3.1.1 To ensure their availability, interpreters should be requested at least two weeks in advance of the public meeting.
- 1.3.1.2 The cost associated with providing sign language or foreign language interpreters shall be paid for by the Department hosting the event.
- 1.3.2** Assistive Listening Devices. Assistive Listening Devices for attendees who are hard of hearing shall be provided at all public meetings upon request. See, Attachment 6.5 for information on how to provide assistive listening devices.
- 1.3.3** CART services shall be provided at all public meetings upon request (See Attachment 6.6 for information on how to provide CART services.). Staff should schedule or make requests for CART services at least two weeks in advance of the meeting, and preferably as soon as an attendee makes this need known. When remote CART services are to be used (the CART reporter is not in the room), staff should try to provide the reporter any technical terms or acronyms to be used, as well as the names of key meeting attendees before the meeting date.
- 1.3.4** Video Remote Interpreting shall be provided at all public meetings upon request via a computer/laptop with a webcam and high speed internet connection.

Note: Video Remote Interpreting is a relatively new form of technology and may be an adequate alternative to providing ASL interpreters in certain situations. However, if an attendee requests Video Remote Interpreting, ASL interpreters will be an adequate substitute, if the meeting planner cannot secure the requested technology.

**1.4 Alternative Formats and Translation of Handouts/Presentation Material**

Large print versions of all printed material shall be available at all public meetings. If requests for additional alternative formats are made in advance of the meeting (within the timeframes below), these formats must be available for the start of the meeting. If requests for alternative formats are made at or following the meeting, the alternative format must be provided within seven days of the request.

These requirements are the same with respect to translation into foreign languages, where the language requested is identified through application of the four factor analysis process, set forth in the PVMPO Title VI Language Assistance Plan. When a language group is small, defined as 5% or 1,000, whichever is less, of the population of persons eligible to be served or likely to be affected or encountered, foreign language translations of “vital documents” should be provided, and non-vital documents may be orally translated. This requirement does not affect the requirement to provide meaningful translation to one or more in a small group of LEP individuals through competent oral interpreters or translation where language services are needed and are reasonable.

**1.4.1** Creating Alternative Formats

See attachment 6.7 for step by step instructions on creating alternative formats.

**1.4.2** Large Print Version

- 1.4.2.1 At least five copies of any text-based printed material to be handed out during the meeting shall be in large print.
- 1.4.2.2 Large print meeting materials shall:
  - 1.4.2.2.1 Be created using "Arial" font with a font size of 16 pt.
  - 1.4.2.2.2 Have the same information as the original handout.
  - 1.4.2.2.3 Have the highest contrast possible (e.g. black on white).
  - 1.4.2.2.4 If graphics (such as images, tables, or graphs) are used in the original document, the same graphics shall be included in the large print version of the document.
    - 1.4.2.2.4.1 If graphics are used in the large print document, a brief description of the image shall be provided. Image descriptions shall be brief and provide the viewer of the document with a general idea of what is in the image.
    - 1.4.2.2.4.2 If tables or graphs are used in the large print document, a summary of the table or graph shall be provided.

**1.4.3** Electronic Version

- 1.4.3.1 If an electronic version of materials is requested within 24 hours in advance of the meeting, this version shall be available for the meeting, if no advance request is made but rather is requested at or after the meeting, then meeting materials shall be made available electronically, within 7 calendar days of the request.

Note: Whenever possible, meeting planners should bring several copies of an electronic accessible version of the meeting material to the public meeting. Some individuals with visual impairments or other disabilities may attend with portable screen reading software that would allow them to access electronic material during the meeting.

**1.4.4** Braille Version

1.4.4.1 If a Braille version of materials is requested within one week in advance of the meeting, this version shall be available for the meeting, if no advance request is made but rather is requested at or after the meeting, then Meeting materials shall be made available in Braille within 7 calendar days of the request.

**1.4.5 Audible Version**

1.4.5.1 If an audible version of materials is requested within one week in advance of the meeting, this version shall be available for the meeting, if no advance request is made but rather is requested at or after the meeting, then meeting materials shall be made audible, within 7 calendar days of the request.

**1.4.6 Foreign Language Version**

1.4.6.1 If a common foreign language version of materials is requested within one week in advance of the meeting, this version shall be available for the meeting, if no advance request is made but rather is requested at or after the meeting, then Meeting materials shall be made available in the language requested within 7 calendar days of the request.

**1.4.7 Other requests for alternate formats**

1.4.7.1 Individual attendees may have unique specifications for alternate formats. All reasonable requests for alternate formats shall be honored upon request, within 7 calendar days of the request.

**1.4.8** Meeting attendees will not be charged for any cost affiliated with the creation of alternate formats of meeting material.

**1.5 Publicizing the Meeting**

**1.5.1** Public meetings shall be publicized as early as possible—ideally, at least 30 calendar days in advance, but never less than 14 days in advance. This allows attendees time to submit requests for reasonable accommodations and for meeting planners to set deadlines for accommodation requests to be made in a timely manner. The meeting publicity also needs to be translated into the languages that are identified through application of the four factor analysis set forth in the PVMPO Title VI Language Assistance Plan.

**1.5.2** In addition to any other means, all public meetings shall be posted on [www.pvta.com](http://www.pvta.com) or [www.pvpc.org](http://www.pvpc.org)

**1.5.3** All meeting notices shall include:

- 1.5.3.1 The statement “This location is accessible to persons with disabilities”
- 1.5.3.2 A brief listing of accessibility features that either are available or may be made available upon request during the public meeting (e.g. sign language, CART, assistive listening devices and/or foreign language interpreters).
- 1.5.3.3 Information on how to request reasonable accommodations by phone, e-mail or fax and the deadline for requests.
- 1.5.3.4 Information on how to request foreign language interpreter assistance.
- 1.5.3.5 See Attachment at section 6.7 for a sample meeting posting.

## **1.6 Additional Considerations**

- 1.6.1** Within 48 hours, meeting planners shall follow-up with attendees who have requested reasonable accommodations to let them know their request has been received and will be honored to the extent possible.

Note: Especially in the case of ASL interpreters, the meeting planner may not know of their availability until 24 hours prior to the meeting. It is reasonable to let people know their request has been received and that it is in the process of being put in place, however if no interpreter is available people need to be notified and alternate plans must be made – such as CART or Video Relay.

- 1.6.2** Emergency Preparedness

- 1.6.2.1 In the event of an emergency, some attendees with disabilities may not be able to evacuate independently. Meeting planners shall familiarize themselves with the evacuation plan for the meeting space.
- 1.6.2.2 At the beginning of each meeting, meeting presenters shall announce the safety briefing--including information regarding where those attendees who would require assistance should wait during an emergency.

- 1.6.3** When opening a public meeting, presenters shall announce:

- 1.6.3.1 The presence and function of sign language interpreters (if interpreters are in the room), and/or CART providers
- 1.6.3.2 That assistive listening equipment is available
- 1.6.3.3 The location of accessible restrooms
- 1.6.3.4 The safety briefing (see 5.6.2.2).

- 1.6.4** When presenting, presenters at public meetings shall:

- 1.6.4.1 Speak slowly and clearly so that the sign language interpreters have time to interpret.
- 1.6.4.2 Verbally describe information presented visually (e.g. PowerPoint) so that attendees with visual impairments can access the information.

1.6.4.3 Ensure that any videos/DVDs shown during the meeting are encoded with closed captioning and are shown on a closed caption compatible device. Subtitles are an acceptable alternative.

1.6.4.3.1.1 Provide an alternate version of the video/DVD with descriptive video/described narration. (See Attachment 6.9 for captioning resources.)

Note: It may not always be a good choice to use a described video in an open meeting as this can be a problem for other viewers.

## 2.0 Attachments

### 2.1 Accessibility Checklist for Meeting Planners

Meeting Date:

Meeting Time:

Subject of Meeting:

Location:

PVMPO Attendees:

Is there at least one person or Department who is responsible for ensuring that the public meeting is accessible for all attendees?

Print Name/Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Publicizing Meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

Has the public meeting been publicized at least 3 weeks in advance?

Has the meeting been publicized on the PVMPO or PVTA website?

Has the meeting been publicized in the required foreign languages and ethnic newspapers for the relevant populations in the community where the meeting is to be held?

Does the public meeting notice include accessibility information, how to request a reasonable accommodation, relevant dates for making requests and information on whom to contact to request a reasonable accommodation?

Does the public meeting notice include information on how to request foreign language interpreters?

Facility:

Date of Facility Assessment: \_\_\_\_\_

Where applicable (in areas where public transportation is available), is the meeting location 1/4 mile or



less from the nearest accessible bus stop or rail station?

- Where applicable, is there an accessible path of travel provided from the public transportation stop to the meeting location and meeting room?
- If parking will be available at the meeting location, are there accessible parking spaces available (review # of car and van accessible spaces)?
- Is there an accessible path of travel provided from the accessible parking area to the meeting area?
- If the main entrance to the building is not accessible, is there directional signage towards the accessible entrance?
- Is the accessible entrance unlocked and able to be used independently? If the meeting is taking place at night, is the path leading to the alternate entrance well lit?
- If there are restrooms that are open to the public, is there a pair of accessible restrooms available within close proximity of the meeting area? If not, is there at least one accessible gender neutral restroom?
- If there are public phones, is there at least one accessible (TTY and within appropriate height range) telephone available?
- If a stage or platform will be used during the public meeting, is it accessible?
- If a podium will be used during the public meeting, is the podium height- adjustable? If not, is there a small table (between 28 and 34 inches in height) provided to the side of the podium?
- Is there a high speed internet connection within the meeting space?

Ensuring Appropriate Accommodations:

- Have sign language and foreign language interpreters, if requested, been reserved for the public meeting?
- Have CART services, if requested, been reserved for the public meeting?
- Are Assistive Listening Devices available for the public meeting? Does someone know how to use the device? Have you checked the devices at least 24 to 48 hours before the meeting and rechecked immediately before the meeting starts? (Note: For large meetings, to avoid the loss of equipment, it is reasonable to ask for a driver's license or other ID as collateral.)
- Are at least five large print copies of meeting handouts available?

- Are printed materials available upon request, in alternative formats and/or relevant foreign languages?
- Are film or video presentations closed captioned and audio described?

Facility/Room Setup (prior to meeting):

- If the main entrance to the building is not accessible, is the accessible entrance unlocked?
- Is there an integrated seating area for individuals who use a wheeled mobility device in the meeting room?
- Is there seating available for attendees who are deaf or hard of hearing, and have requested an accommodation, near the front of the meeting room so that attendees may see the interpreter/captioner, or lip read?
- Is there an appropriately lit area in the front of the room for sign/foreign language interpreters and/or CART providers?
- Are the aisles at least three feet wide and clear of obstacles or tripping hazards?
- If microphones are used during the public meeting, are adjustable microphone stands available for attendees? Can staff be used as floaters with microphones as an alternative?

For recordkeeping and reporting purposes, please submit a copy of this completed checklist to the Title VI Specialist.

## 2.2 Ensuring adequate accessible parking

- 2.2.1 See <http://www.mass.gov/eopss/docs/dps/aab-regs/521023.pdf> for Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB) regulations
- 2.2.2 See <http://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/buildings-and-sites/about-the-ada-standards/ada-standards/chapter-5-general-site-and-building-elements> for Americans with Disabilities Act Architectural Guidelines (ADAAG)

## 2.3 Accessible Restrooms

- 2.3.1 See <http://www.mass.gov/eopss/docs/dps/aab-regs/521030.pdf> for Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB) regulations
- 2.3.2 See <http://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/buildings-and-sites/about-the-ada-standards/ada-standards/chapter-6-plumbing-elements-and-facilities#603> for Americans with Disabilities Act Architectural Guidelines (ADAAG)

## 2.4 How to request sign language, CART Providers or foreign language interpreters

### 6.4.1 Sign Language Interpreters

- Complete and submit an on-line request for interpreting services through the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing's (MCDHH) website
  - Go to <http://mass.gov/mcdhh>
  - Click on "Interpreter/CART referral services"
  - Select "Request an Interpreter on-line"
  - Note: A copy of the Request Form is attached at 6.7, for reference.
- Requests should be submitted within 30 days, but no later than 14 calendar days in advance of the meeting to ensure interpreter availability.
- If the meeting is cancelled or rescheduled, interpreter requests must be canceled at least 48 hours advance in order to avoid being billed for the service. CART providers must be cancelled no later than 72 hours in advance of the event.
- Interpreters invoices are billed as a minimum of two hours.

- For meetings that are anticipated to last more than 75 minutes, two interpreters shall be provided. In most situations, one CART provider is sufficient if the meeting is no longer than three hours.

#### **6.4.2 Sign Language Interpreters**

- Complete and submit an on-line request for interpreting services through the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing's (MCDHH) website
  - Go to <http://mass.gov/mcdhh>
  - Click on "Interpreter/CART referral services"
  - Click on "[CART \(Communication Access Realtime Translation\) Providers](#)"
  - Click on "Request a CART Provider" and follow listed directions
  - Note: A copy of the Request Form is attached at 6.7, for reference.

#### **6.4.3 Foreign Language Interpreters/Translators**

- PVMPO's policy combines the use of bilingual staff, interpreter services and translated materials to communicate effectively with persons who are not fluent in English. When a request for oral interpretation is made, or a significant language speaking population is expected to attend a public meeting, the following steps should be reviewed and carried out to ensure compliance with Title VI requirements.
- Conduct a four-factor analysis as to the kind of meeting in question and the populations that are in the affected communities, using the language group maps that are contained in the Language Assistance Plan. Identify the languages that are likely to be needed and consult with the Office of Diversity and Civil Rights Title VI Coordinator and/or Specialist for assistance with any problems concerning the language groups that may require interpreter services.
- Identify the source for interpreter services, recognizing that most providers require one-two weeks advance notice of a meeting, based on the language(s) to be interpreted.

#### **6.4.4 Interpreter Resources**

- Projects should have a line item in the budget allocating funds for translation/interpretive services for public meetings. When additional resources are needed for unexpected or unanticipated documents or meetings, there may be funds available. Please contact your department manager to make a request through Budget to secure state or federal funds, as needed.
- Request and cancellation timeframes
  - Requests should be submitted at least 14 calendar days in advance of the meeting to ensure interpreter availability

- If the meeting is cancelled or rescheduled, interpreter requests must be canceled at least 48 hours advance in order to avoid being billed for the service
- Interpreter invoices vary by provider but may have a minimum of two to three hours.
- For meetings that are anticipated to last more than 75 minutes, two interpreters shall be provided.

## 6.5 How to reserve assistive listening devices

6.5.3 Contact the Transportation Planning staff at 413-781-6045.

6.5.4 Other Sections that frequently host public meetings off-site are encouraged to bring Assistive Listening Devices so that they are readily available.

6.5.5 Currently the Transportation Section owns Assistive Listening Devices that other departments can reserve and sign out for a public meeting.

### Contact:

Andrew McCaul at extension 321 (413-781-6045)

or [AMccaul@pvpc.org](mailto:AMccaul@pvpc.org)

## 6.6 How to Create Alternate Formats

### 6.6.3 Electronic Version

**6.6.3.1** Accessible electronic formats include email, and Microsoft Word Document (DOC or DOCX), a text file (TXT), or Rich Text Format (RTF).

Note: Some attendees requesting material electronically may have a visual impairment and use screen reading software. The formats referenced above are most compatible with such software.

**6.6.3.2** Public meeting materials that are created electronically shall:

**6.6.3.2.1** Be created using “Arial” font and a font size of 16 pt.

**6.6.3.2.2** Shall have the same information as the original document and shall have the highest contrast possible.

**6.6.3.2.3** If graphics (such as images, tables, or graphs) are used in the original document, the same graphics shall be included in the electronic version of the document.

**6.6.3.2.4** If images are used in the electronic document, a brief description (providing the viewer of the document with a general idea of what’s in the image) shall be provided.

**6.6.3.2.5** If tables or graphs are used in the electronic document, a summary of the table or graph shall be provided.

6.6.4 Braille Version

**6.6.4.1** Meeting materials that are in Braille shall:

**6.6.4.1.1** Be created using contracted Braille (Grade 2) and single-spaced.

**6.6.4.1.2** Braille documents shall have the same information as the non-accessible handout.

**6.6.4.1.3** If tables or graphs are used in the regular document, a summary of the table or graph shall be provided in the Braille document.

**6.6.4.2** Requests for creation of a Braille document should be made to the Massachusetts Office of Disabilities.

6.6.5 Audible Version

**6.6.5.1** Public meeting material that is recorded audibly shall:

**6.6.5.1.1** Have the same information that's printed on the original handout.

**6.6.5.1.2** Be spoken clearly.

**6.6.5.1.3** Shall describe images used in the original handout.

**6.6.5.1.4** Shall provide an explanation of any table or graph is used in a meeting document. The meeting planner shall ensure that the audible explanation of the table/graph is clearly explained and represents the table or graph on the printed document.

6.7 Sample meeting posting

Meeting Date	December 1, 20__
Meeting Time	1:00 P.M.-3:00 P.M.
Subject of Meeting	Update on PVTA Bus Purchase
Location	Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, 2nd Floor, Conference Room
PVPC Attendees	Transportation

Sample Text

Meeting Purpose - PVTA will be hosting a public meeting to discuss his assessment of the progress towards purchase a new bus. Please come to share your questions and comments regarding

accessibility at the PVTA.

Notice: This location is accessible to people with disabilities. PVMPO provides reasonable accommodations and/or language assistance free of charge upon request (including but not limited to interpreters in American Sign Language and languages other than English, open or closed captioning for videos, assistive listening devices and alternate material formats, such as audio tapes, Braille and large print), as available. For accommodation or language assistance, please contact PVPC Title VI Specialist at (413) 781-6045, TTD/TTY at (413) 781-7168, fax (413) 732-2593 or by email to gmroux@pvpc.org. Requests should be made as soon as possible prior to the meeting, and for more difficult to arrange services including sign-language, CART or language translation or interpretation, requests should be made at least ten business days before the meeting.

**(Note: This notice should be translated into the languages other than English that are identified to be necessary for the Limited English Proficient populations represented in the area of the project or initiative to be invited to participate.)**

6.8 Resources for adding closed captioning and/or described narration to your video

- 3 Play Media - <http://www.3playmedia.com/>
- Line 21 - <http://www.line21.tv/>
- TelePrint Digital Media - <http://www.tele-print.com/>
- Broadcast Captioning & Consulting Services - <http://www.closedcaptioning.com/>

## **4.0 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCEDURES FOR TRANSPORTATION PLANNING**

Federal and state regulations require that each MPO document public involvement processes be proactive and provide complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and opportunities for early and continuing involvement; they leave the choice of methods for facilitating participation to the discretion of each MPO. The PVMPO principal mechanisms for public participation are frequent open public meetings, letters, emails and phone calls. For specific MPO documents, the MPO has tailored its outreach methods to achieve the most effective public participation.

### **4.1 Pioneer Valley Regional Transportation Plan**

The Pioneer Valley Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is the long-range transportation planning document that describes the region's current transportation system and how that system should be maintained and modified over the next 20 or more years. The

LRTP needs to be updated every four years by the Pioneer Valley Metropolitan Planning

Organization as required by MAP-21. It addresses each of the major modes of transportation within the Pioneer Valley region. It is considered both a multimodal and an intermodal document by providing an inventory of the major modes, identifies challenges and needs, and also provides a series of recommendations. Project-specific, and major transportation improvements need to be reflected in the RTP in order to be eligible for Federal-Aid funding through the region's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

The most current RTP, included several public participation outreach methods. Staff used diverse approaches to educate and inform the public about the long-range transportation plan process and encourage interested parties to express their views and provide input on transportation issues in the Pioneer Valley region.

### **4.2 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

The PVMPO Transportation Improvement Program, commonly referred to as the "TIP", is a federally required planning document that lists all highway, bridge, transit and intermodal projects in the Pioneer Valley planning region that are programmed to receive federal-

aid funding. Projects of regional & statewide significance, non-federal-aid (NFA), or state-funded projects, as well as projects that improve air quality and safety are also included in the TIP document. Cognizant of limited statewide transportation funding resources, the annual program of projects must demonstrate financial constraint within the federal-aid funding targets established for each of the state's MPOs by the Office of Transportation Planning.

The PVMPO TIP development process is designed to guarantee early involvement of local legislators, chief



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local officials, stakeholders, individuals and other interested parties through the PVMPO's formal Public Participation Program (PPP) with full consideration of the principles of Environmental Justice, including special meetings such as community-targeted TIP information sessions. Moreover, the TIP document customarily includes a comprehensive overview of the proactive public outreach process used throughout the development of the TIP.

### **4.3 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)**

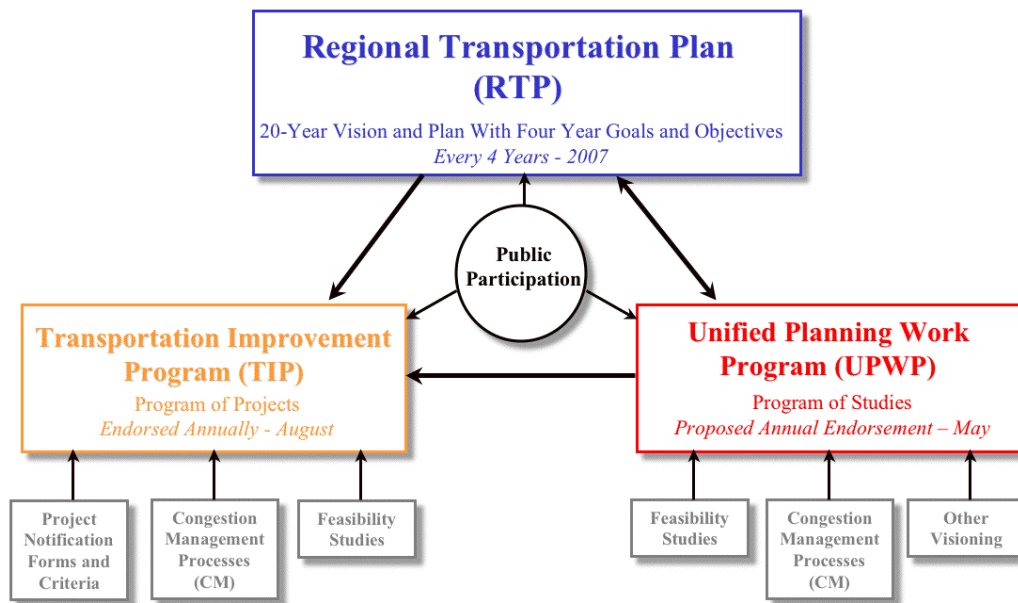
The PVMPO Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is a project-by-project description of all transportation planning and transportation-related air quality planning activities anticipated within the region during the upcoming program year. It indicates who will perform the work, as well as anticipated available funding, the schedule for completion and the products that will be produced.

Under federal regulations pertaining to the transportation planning process, the UPWP must be prepared and endorsed annually by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) prior to the start of the planning program period.

### **4.4 Schedule of Activities**

- 1. ACTIVITIES SUBJECT TO PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.** PVMPO shall provide early and continuing public involvement opportunities throughout the transportation planning and programming process.  
Transportation
  - A. Planning Activities. In accordance with Section 3 of this plan, special emphasis shall be given to engaging the public in planning studies that form the basis for later programming decisions. Planning activities include corridor studies and special regional studies, environmental assessment studies, and development of the Pioneer Valley Regional Transportation Plan. These activities offer the public the earliest opportunity to participate in the development of project proposals that might eventually be programmed for funding. Thus, PVMPO shall involve the affected community through methods such as local advisory committees, public information meetings, consultation with stakeholders, newsletters and use a variety of other outreach method identified in this plan.
  - B. Programming Activities. Opportunities for the public to participate shall also be provided through the project selection, programming, and project development phases. These activities include the selection of projects, and the adoption or amendment of Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). PVMPO shall make an effort to involve the affected community through methods such as consultation with representatives to the Joint Transportation Committee, local advisory committees, public information meetings, consultation with stakeholders, and newsletters.

## Relationship of PVMPO Transportation Plans and Programs



### 4.4.1 2. DEFINITION OF PUBLIC & STAKEHOLDERS.

PVMPO shall make an effort to inform and engage both the general public and stakeholders as appropriate.

- A. General Program. As part of its general planning and programming process, PVMPO will try to involve as broad a cross-section of the population and the region as possible. However, we recognize there are certain segments of the population and certain organizations that either have a special interest in transportation or that we have a special obligation to reach out to. In this regard, we will make a concerted effort to involve the following: the public, member municipalities, affected public agencies, public and private providers of transportation, providers of freight transportation services, public transportation advocates, users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, advocates of the community of individuals with disabilities, seniors, and other parties who have expressed an interest in the process.
- B. Pioneer Valley Regional Transportation Plan or Transportation Improvement Plan. When developing a new or making a major modification to an existing Pioneer Valley Regional Transportation Plan, or Transportation Improvement Plan the PVMPO will consult "as appropriate" with state and local agencies responsible for land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, and historic preservation. This consultation will help PVMPO achieve its related goal of promoting consistency between planned transportation improvements and state and local planned growth and economic development patterns.
- C. Special Studies. For special studies and corridor studies that PVMPO conducts, it shall make an effort to identify and involve persons and groups that might be affected by potential changes to the particular transportation service or facility under review, in addition to those engaged through the general planning process. Examples include neighborhoods associations, residents and businesses in the area.

- D. Consultation and Discussion with Special Groups – Environmental Justice (EJ). PVMPO shall also make a special effort to seek out and consider the needs of groups or communities traditionally not well served by existing transportation systems. These include, but are not limited to low-income households and minority households. To assure adequate participation of these groups, PVMPO will be proactive in seeking representation from low-income or minority individuals, or representative low-income or minority groups and consult and discuss the PVMPO's transportation planning programs and products.

It is sometimes necessary to conduct an outreach effort to EJ communities, beyond that which is normally expended. At a minimum, PVMPO shall identify groups that it needs to involve, add them to the appropriate mailing lists, and define methods for engaging them in relevant programs or projects. This requirement for special outreach efforts shall apply to both sections A and B above.

PVMPO efforts in this regard shall be consistent with the Environmental Justice Executive Order (EO 12898) dated February 11, 1994, and other related guidance from the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration. This effort will also be consistent with the Environmental Justice Action Items identified in the Regional Transportation Plan (endorsed by the PVMPO February, 2007) The Environmental Justice recommendations of the RTP have been incorporated into this public participation plan and are included in Appendix A. Appendix A has been updated with this Public Participation Plan to reflect accomplishments in PVMPO's outreach to environmental justice communities.

- E. Outreach to Special Groups – Persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). PVMPO shall also make a special effort to seek out and consider the needs of individuals or communities with Limited English Proficiency and in accordance with the PVMPO Language Access Plan.<sup>3</sup>

The PVMPO will engage persons with LEP with regard to regionwide planning activities such as the adoption of the Regional Transportation Plan, Unified Planning Work Program, transit studies, or an updated TIP, the PVMPO will make outreach to Spanish-speaking residents a more routine undertaking. Meeting notices will be available upon request in Spanish, with an opportunity to request translator services highlighted in the notice. Important reports will be summarized and translated into Spanish upon request.

With regard to special activities focused on a specific neighborhood or corridor, maps depicting the distribution of non-English speaking persons will be consulted at the beginning of any such project to determine what, if any, special outreach in any language other than English should be undertaken. If it is determined that a special outreach is warranted, PVMPO will consult with neighborhood groups such as ethnic and religious associations to determine the best method for reaching and involving those non-English speaking residents.

PVMPO efforts in this regard shall be consistent with the signed Executive Order 13166, "Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency" dated August 11, 2000, and other

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<sup>3</sup> Federal regulations define Persons with Limited English Proficiency as individuals with a primary or home language other than English who must, due to limited fluency in English, communicate in that primary or home language if the individuals are to have an equal opportunity to participate effectively in or benefit from any aid, service or benefit in federally funded programs and activities

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related guidance from the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration.

#### **4.5 ADEQUATE TIME FOR PUBLIC COMMENT.**

PVMPO shall allow reasonable time for public review and comment at key decision points. These include, but are not limited to, action on the Pioneer Valley Regional Transportation Plan, Unified Planning Work Program and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Minimum notification periods shall be as follows:

- Amendments to PVMPO’s Public Participation Plan – 45 days
- Adoption of the TIP & major TIP amendments – 21 days \*
- Adoption of the UPWP & major UPWP amendments – 21 days
- Adoption of Pioneer Valley Regional Transportation Plan & major amendment – 21 days
- Joint Transportation Committee, JTC Subcommittee, PVMPO meetings – 7 days

\* While a minimum public comment period of 21 days has been established for the TIP, and major TIP amendments, the MPO may, at their discretion, vote to abbreviate the public comment period under what they (the MPO) consider to be extraordinary circumstances. Under no circumstances will this period be less than 15 days. All comments received during the abbreviated comment period will be taken into consideration by the MPO before making a recommendation.

The MPO may extend the public participation period and provide an additional opportunity for comment when the revised document differs substantially from the version that was made available to the public or when public comment raises new material issues which interested parties could not have reasonably foreseen. Under these circumstances the PVMPO has the sole discretion to determine justification for an extension. When the action to extend public comment on the TIP is approved, the MPO will re-advertised a public notice on the proposed TIP amendments and schedule an additional public meeting followed by an additional abbreviated 15 day comment period. Adjustments, defined as minor alterations to major documents, are not considered amendments and will not be re-advertised.

#### **4.6 METHODS OF NOTIFYING THE PUBLIC**

PVMPO shall use appropriate methods to notify the public of its activities and of opportunities for public involvement as outlined in Section 3 of this plan. Determination of which methods to use must be done for each individual planning project or study.

#### **4.7 DOCUMENTATION OF PUBLIC COMMENT & RESPONSE**

PVMPO shall document public comments received during the course of a study or an amendment of the Pioneer Valley Regional Transportation Plan, UPWP, or TIP. PVMPO shall also document how it responded to public comments.

A. Comments Received. Documentation of comments may be accomplished in a manner appropriate to

the project and the nature of the comments. Documentation may consist of meeting minutes, a file of letters, or a special memo that summarizes the comments. A written summary is preferred at key points in the decision-making process: when members of the relevant study committee must decide to narrow the range of alternatives, select a preferred alternative, or make a decision of similar nature. The written summary of comments made at public information meetings shall be given to the committee members prior to any committee action.

- B. Response to Comments. PVMPO shall provide a descriptive summary of how it responded to significant public comments during the development of a plan or document such as the TIP. The summary may be produced as a separate report or included as a short section in the final plan or document. In instances where direct response is warranted the PVMPO will document this correspondence as prescribed under FTA/FHWA Policy guidance 79 FR 31214.

**8. ADOPTION OF A “FINAL” TRANSPORTATION PLAN.** The following describes the minimum public involvement program required during the review of a draft Pioneer Valley Regional Transportation Plan, or a draft of a major amendment to the Plan. These steps must be taken before PVMPO acts to adopt the draft document as the final Plan.

- A. World Wide Web. The draft Transportation Plan itself (or draft major amendment) or a more lengthy notice if appropriate, will be made available on the PVMPO website a minimum of 21 days in advance of the final decision by the PVMPO. The final Plan will also be posted to the PVMPO website as soon as possible after the plan’s endorsement, and made available there at least until an updated or new Plan is adopted.
- B. Comment Period and Public Meeting. PVMPO shall allow a minimum of 21 days for public comments and shall hold a public information meeting prior to completion of the 21-day public comment period. Opportunity for public comment on the plan shall also be provided at every Joint Transportation Committee and PVMPO meeting during the comment period.

The MPO may extend the public participation period and provide an additional opportunity for comment when the revised document differs substantially from the version that was made available to the public or when public comment raises new material issues which interested parties could not have reasonably foreseen. Under these circumstances the PVMPO has the sole discretion to determine justification for an extension. When the action to extend public comment on the RTP is approved, the MPO will re-advertised a public notice on the proposed RTP changes and schedule an additional public meeting followed by an additional abbreviated 15 day comment period. Adjustments, defined as minor alterations to the document, are not considered amendments and will not be re-advertised.

- D. Summary & Disposition of Comments. A summary of significant comments and the disposition of the comments shall be provided in the final document.

**9. ADOPTION OF A TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP)** The following describes the minimum public involvement program required during the review of a draft Pioneer Valley TIP or the draft

of a major amendment to this document. These steps must be taken before PVMPO acts to adopt a draft document as the final or the official endorsed document.

- A. World Wide Web. The draft TIP (or draft major TIP amendment) and the notice, or a more lengthy notice if appropriate, will be made available on the PVMPO website a minimum of 21 days\*. The final TIP and UPWP will also be posted to the PVMPO website as soon as possible after its adoption, and a current version made available there at least until a new TIP is adopted.
- B. Comment Period and Public Meeting. PVMPO shall allow a minimum of 21 days\* for public comments and shall hold a public information meeting during the public comment period. Opportunity for public comment on the TIP shall also be provided at every Joint Transportation Committee and PVMPO meeting during the comment period.
- C. Summary & Disposition of Comments. A summary of significant comments and the disposition of the comments shall be provided in the final document.

\* While a minimum public comment period of 21 days has been established for the TIP, and major TIP amendments, the MPO may, at their discretion, vote to abbreviate the public comment period under what they (the MPO) consider to be extraordinary circumstances. Under no circumstances will this period be less than 15 days. All comments received during the abbreviated comment period will be taken into consideration by the MPO before making a recommendation.

The MPO may extend the public participation period and provide an additional opportunity for comment when the revised document differs substantially from the version that was made available to the public or when public comment raises new material issues which interested parties could not have reasonably foreseen. Under these circumstances the PVMPO has the sole discretion to determine justification for an extension. When the action to extend public comment on the TIP is approved, the MPO will re-advertised a public notice on the proposed TIP amendments and schedule an additional public meeting followed by an additional abbreviated 15 day comment period. Adjustments, defined as minor alterations to major documents, are not considered amendments and will not be re-advertised.

Development of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a requirement of the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process as described in the Metropolitan Planning Final Rule 23 CFR 450 section 324. This regulation developed by the Federal Department of Transportation defines the Transportation Improvement Program as:

“A staged, multiyear, intermodal program of transportation projects which is consistent with the metropolitan transportation plan.”

The Pioneer Valley TIP is a four-year schedule of projects identified by year and location complete with funding source and cost. The TIP is developed annually and is available for amendment and adjustment at any time. Each program year of the TIP coincides with the Federal Fiscal Year calendar, October 1 through September 30. All TIPs and amendments are consistent with the goals and objectives of the Regional Transportation Plan for the Pioneer Valley Region.

The voting members of the Pioneer Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization consist of the following

officials or their designee or alternate:

- the Secretary of the Mass DOT
- the Administrator of the Mass DOT Highway Division
- the Chairman of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
- the Chairman of the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority Advisory Board
- the Mayors of two of the following three (3) urban core cities within the Pioneer Valley region:

Holyoke

Chicopee

Springfield

- the Mayor or a Selectman of one of the following four (4) cities and towns outside of the three core cities within the Pioneer Valley region:

Agawam  
West

Southwick

Westfield

- the Mayor or a Selectman of one of the following five (5) cities and towns within the Pioneer Valley region:

Amherst  
Northampton

Easthampton  
South Hadley

Hadley

- a Selectman of one of the following fourteen (14) suburban and rural towns within the Pioneer Valley region:

Belchertown  
Granby  
Longmeadow  
Palmer  
Ware

Brimfield  
Hampden  
Ludlow  
Pelham  
Wilbraham

East Longmeadow  
Holland  
Monson  
Wales

- a Selectman of one of the following seventeen (17) suburban and rural towns within the Pioneer Valley duly elected as prescribed under the provisions of this MOU document:

Blandford  
Cummington  
Hatfield  
Montgomery  
Southampton  
Williamsburg

Chester  
Goshen  
Huntington  
Plainfield  
Tolland  
Worthington

Chesterfield  
Granville  
Middlefield  
Russell  
Westhampton

In addition, the Joint Transportation Committee (JTC) Chairman, and one representative each from the

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Chair of the Infrastructure Committee of the Western Massachusetts Economic Development Council (EDC), the five (5) alternate community MPO representatives, and one representative each from both the MassDOT Highway Division District One and District Two Offices shall be considered ex-officio, non-voting members of the Pioneer Valley MPO. Alternate members shall be additional chief elected officials from each of the above-cited categories of communities and he/she shall be eligible to attend, participate and vote at MPO meetings in the event that the primary member cannot attend.

As the lead planning agency for the MPO, the PVPC accepts the responsibility for developing the TIP and UPWP in a cooperative process with other members of the MPO and the general public. The final TIP and UPWP is voted on for endorsement at a formal meeting of the MPO. The endorsed TIP project listing is included in the State Transportation Improvement Program verbatim and requires endorsement by the Secretary of Transportation and Public Works.

The MPO relies on a transportation advisory committee (JTC) to carry out the cooperative process during TIP development. The Joint Transportation Committee (JTC) is a group of community appointed officials, MPO member representatives, public and private transportation providers, the interested parties, and special interest groups and agencies. The JTC establishes and recommends to the MPO procedures for submitting, prioritizing and selecting projects for the TIP. PVPC staff provides the technical support to conduct the TIP development activities for the JTC.

Below is a general outline of steps taken during the TIP development process.

1. Project proponents (communities, MPO members, agencies) submit projects through the process outlined in Chapter 2 of the Massachusetts Project Development & Design Guidebook (2006)
2. Projects are prioritized based on an evaluation criteria by MPO staff, JTC representatives, and MassDOT Highway Division District staff, and MassDOT staff at a posted meeting open to all.
3. The State (thru MassDOT) provides funding targets for the Pioneer Valley Region.
4. JTC reviews and recommends project priorities on the TIP to the MPO
5. Draft TIP project listings are prepared by the MPO staff are distributed for review and comment to MPO members
6. MPO meets to make final decisions on the composition of the TIP and to recommend the Draft TIP for general public release for no less than a 21 day review period
7. Final Draft TIP is distributed for review, consultation and comment in accordance with the adopted Public Participation Plan
8. Public meetings and news releases are conducted to promote public involvement and consultation.
9. Comments are compiled and addressed where appropriate
10. Final TIP developed for the JTC's consideration and their recommendation to MPO
11. MPO meets to vote on endorsement of the TIP
12. Endorsed Regional TIPs are compiled by MASSDOT to create the State TIP (STIP)



13. Secretary of MASSDOT endorses the STIP (on behalf of the Governor) and submits the STIP to federal agencies for review and approval
14. Federally approved STIP is ready for state implementation (project advertisement)
15. Amendments and adjustments to the TIP are made on an as needed basis with the additional public review and input for formal amendments only.

Project Priority Criteria and Selection. The MASSDOT developed a process and set of criteria to evaluate and prioritize the region's TIP projects which was modified and endorsed by the MPO. All projects included in the TIP are evaluated and assigned a priority value or rating. This process is used as a management tool to identify projects of regional priority and program them accordingly in the TIP based on their level of design readiness.

Program Amendments to the TIP. For the purposes of project selection and programming, amendment to the TIP can be conducted at any time. Amendments require formal MPO action. An amendment to the TIP is defined any change that differs significantly from the version that 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.

The public involvement requirements for amendments shall be satisfied by following the standard 21 day procedure\* for MPO and JTC Committee meetings. So long as the proposed amendment is listed on the respective Joint Transportation Committee and PVMPO agendas, and those agendas have been sent to the town clerks and respective committee mailing lists and posted on the PVMPO website seven days in advance of the meeting the public involvement requirements for the amendment shall be satisfied.

\* While a minimum public comment period of 21 days has been established for the TIP, and major TIP amendments, the MPO may, at their discretion, vote to abbreviate the public comment period under what they (the MPO) consider to be extraordinary circumstances. Under no circumstances will this period be less than 15 days. All comments received during the abbreviated comment period will be taken into consideration by the MPO before making a recommendation.

Program Adjustments to the TIP. Program adjustments can be conducted without formal MPO action. Minor adjustments may include such actions as moving projects between Year 1 and Year 2, and minor fluctuations in project description, costs and funding source. This action can be accomplished through an agreed upon administrative action.

Annual Listing of Projects. An annual listing of projects, including investments in pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, for which Federal funds have been obligated in the preceding year shall be made available on the PVMPO website. The listing is developed by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation and will be consistent with the categories identified in the TIP.

9. **PUBLIC INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS FOR THE UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM (UPWP)** The following describes the minimum public involvement program required during the review of a draft Pioneer Valley UPWP. These steps must be taken before PVMPO acts to adopt a draft document as the final or official endorsed document.

- A. World Wide Web. The draft UPWP will be made available on the PVMPO website a minimum of 21 days in advance of the final decision by the PVMPO. The final TIP and UPWP will also be posted to the PVMPO website as soon as possible after its adoption, and a current version made available there at least until a new TIP and UPWP are adopted.
- B. Comment Period and Public Meeting. PVMPO shall allow a minimum of 21 days for public comments and shall hold a public information meeting during the public comment period. Opportunity for public comment on the UPWP shall also be provided at every Joint Transportation Committee and PVMPO meeting during the comment period.
- C. Summary & Disposition of Comments. A summary of significant comments and the disposition of the comments shall be provided in the final document.

**10. PUBLIC INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS FOR SECTION 5307 GRANTS.** The public involvement process adopted by PVMPO for its TIP shall also serve to satisfy the public involvement requirements of the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) as applicant for regular Section 5307 (FTA Transit Capital) funds. This applies to the PVTA's annual purchase of replacement vehicles for programs and other major capital purchases. This does not apply to non-routine capital projects that require an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement. For major projects the PVTA shall conduct its own separate public involvement process.

**11. ACCESS TO TECHNICAL INFORMATION.** PVMPO shall provide reasonable public access to technical and policy information used in the development of the Pioneer Valley Regional Transportation Plan, the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and related studies, plans, and programs

#### **4.8 REASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROGRAM**

PVMPO shall conduct a review of the effectiveness of the public participation process once every two years to ensure that the process provides full and open access to all. This task will include a review of public participation efforts undertaken, assessing both what worked and what might be improved, and recommendations for future efforts, if appropriate.

### **5.0 Appendices**

#### **5.1 Title VI Outreach Checklist**

#### **5.2 Comments Received on Draft**

#### **5.3 PVMPO Signed Endorsement**

PVMPO / PVTA TITLE VI AND LEP PUBLIC PARTICIPATION CHECKLIST

Preliminary Planning		
Review public participation plan materials on inclusive interactions	(Language) (Accessibility)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Coordinate internally within PVTA/PVPC	(Small Groups) (Individuals)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Conduct preliminary community research and draft strategic plan of engagement, as needed	(Meetings) (Small Groups)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Identify potential barriers to inclusive participation		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Coordinate accessibility accommodation notice		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Coordinate language accommodations notice		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Develop notice dissemination plan	(Timing)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Notice & Meeting Logistics		
Identify accessible locations		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Establish times and locations for meetings		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Disseminate notice and contact media		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Follow up with contacts to increase knowledge of community interests and engage broader community meetings		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Conduct key stakeholder outreach (small groups)		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Incorporate demographics and community needs into plan		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Coordinate accessible meeting venue		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Coordinate preparation of meeting materials in simple and clear language and to meet civil rights obligations	Meetings Open Houses	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Address accommodations requests		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Address language assistance requests		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Address challenging requests for accommodations		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Meeting Location – Accessibility & Language		
Accessibility – Ensure accessibility of location and sufficiency of accommodations	Meetings Open Houses One to One	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Verify and place way finding signage, as needed	Meetings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Test assistive devices		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Language – Ensure availability of language assistance, as needed	Meetings Open Houses One to One	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Prepare for accommodation of potential late language assistance requests	Meetings One to One	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Conducting the Meeting		
Distribute and collect demographic survey		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Announce available accommodations		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Use assistive technology		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Use language and accessibility accommodations effectively		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Provide additional accommodation and language assistance as requested, when possible	Meetings One to one	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Meeting Follow Up</b>		
Document all efforts to achieve diversity of involvement and results	Meetings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Share meeting insights with project manager and/or across PVPC/PVTA departments		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Respond to questions, especially from Title VI communities		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Summarize demographic information		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Preliminary Planning</b>		
Review public participation plan materials on inclusive interactions	Language Accessibility	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Coordinate internally within PVTA/PVPC	(Small Groups) (Individuals)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Conduct preliminary community research and draft strategic plan of engagement, as needed	(Meetings) (Small Groups)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Identify potential barriers to inclusive participation		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Coordinate accessibility accommodation notice		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Coordinate language accommodations notice		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Develop notice dissemination plan	(Timing)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Notice &amp; Meeting Logistics</b>		
Identify accessible locations		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Establish times and locations for meetings		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Disseminate notice and contact media		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Follow up with contacts to increase knowledge of community interests and engage broader community meetings		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Conduct key stakeholder outreach (small groups)		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Incorporate demographics and community needs into plan		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Coordinate accessible meeting venue		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Coordinate preparation of meeting materials in simple and clear language and to meet civil rights obligations	Meetings Open Houses	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Address accommodations requests		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Address language assistance requests		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Revised 8/30/2015



Endorsement to be inserted here

END