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# Chapter 7:

## Public Participation

This chapter outlines the process used to encourage involvement in the development of the 2040 Plan and summarizes the input and comments received from stakeholders, partner agencies, and the community at large.

### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN**

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The FRMPO Policy Board has an adopted Public Participation Plan which describes the procedures the staff undertakes to collect public and stakeholder input and how that input is used in the development and adoption of its plans and programs, including the Regional Transportation Plan as well as the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

#### **Stakeholders**

In addition to participation from the general public, the Public Participation Plan includes the goal of involving freight shippers and providers of freight transportation services, representatives of public transportation employees, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties in the development of the Plan.

#### **Methods of Outreach**

Information about all MPO meetings is advertised through at least one or more of the following outreach channels and media outlets, depending on the nature and significance of the meeting: publication via the local newspapers editions of the Beckley Register-Herald and/or the Fayette Tribune, local radio and TV stations including but not limited to WJLS Radio, WOAY TV, WQAZ Radio, WVNS/CBS TV, WOAY Radio and Summit Media Broadcasting, LLC. In addition, the agenda for upcoming meetings and other public information is posted on the FRMPO's website at [www.frmppo.org](http://www.frmppo.org). All members of the FRMPO are also encouraged to distribute meeting information to their councils and other interested parties via their own websites or through other distribution channels.

### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE 2040 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

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#### **Steering Committee**

The FRMPO Policy Board appointed a Steering Committee to provide guidance in the development of the region's first long range transportation plan. Members included representatives from the WV Division of Highway and Division of Public Transit, local governments, local and regional economic development agencies, local transit agencies, bicycling organizations and freight carriers. A full list of Steering Committee members is provided in [Appendix B](#).

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The Steering Committee met at several key points during the development of the 2040 Plan to draft and recommend goals and objectives for adoption by the Policy Board; provide review and input to the Existing Conditions Report; discuss regional revenue projections; and comment on the content and priorities of the draft list of proposed projects.

### **Initial Public Meetings**

The FRMPO held an initial round of public meetings in September 2014 at Beckley City Hall and Oak Hill City Hall to invite general input from citizens and stakeholders about regional transportation concerns and issues that should be considered in the 2040 Plan. The meetings included a presentation of draft Plan Goals and Objectives, existing transportation conditions in the two-county region based on an analysis of data for roadways, transit and other modes, as well as projections for future population and employment and their anticipated impact on transportation demand. Citizens were asked to comment on the proposed Goals and Objectives and provide input to confirm the initial findings and/or suggest additional transportation needs not previously identified.

### **Public Survey**

During the early stages of the 2040 Plan's development, a brief survey on transportation needs and concerns was also developed for use in obtaining community input. A copy of the survey form is included in **Appendix C**.

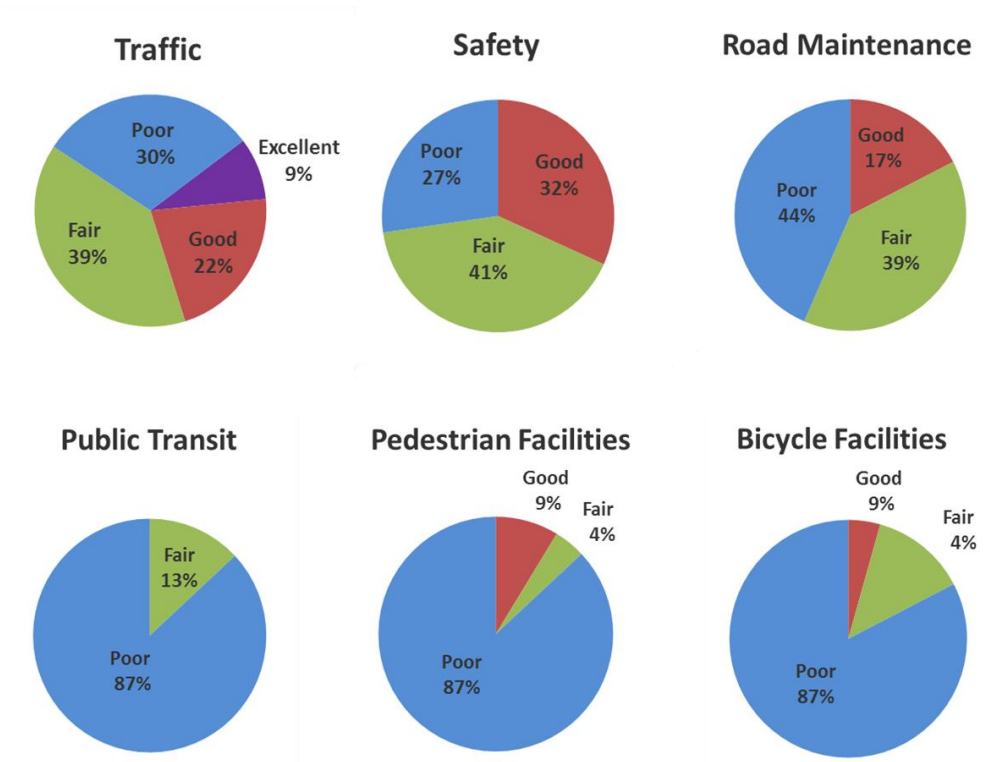
Paper copies of the survey were provided at the September public meetings, and those attending the meetings were encouraged to take extra copies to distribute to others. The survey was also posted on the FRMPO website, and the link to access it was included in the notices published in advance of the public meetings. FRMPO Policy Board members and Steering Committee members were asked to help publicize the survey by placing copies in city and county government facilities as well as other public buildings.

The number of responses was not large (25) but certainly comparable to the number of citizens typically attracted to public meetings. Notable survey findings are described below. The final 2040 Plan includes recommendations to address the issues most frequently raised.

- Most survey respondents are aware that public transit is available, and feel it is a very important service. However, they say buses need to run more frequently to be truly usable as a form of transportation, especially for the Fayette County routes.
- Walking or bicycling is dangerous even in urban areas because of a lack of sidewalks and bicycle facilities. Where sidewalks do exist, they are blocked or in need of repair. The lack of sidewalks along Harper Road in Beckley was mentioned multiple times.
- Traffic congestion is particularly bad on Ritter Drive (US 19) through the Beaver and Shady Spring communities, on Harper Road, and on Robert C. Byrd Drive and Eisenhower Drive.

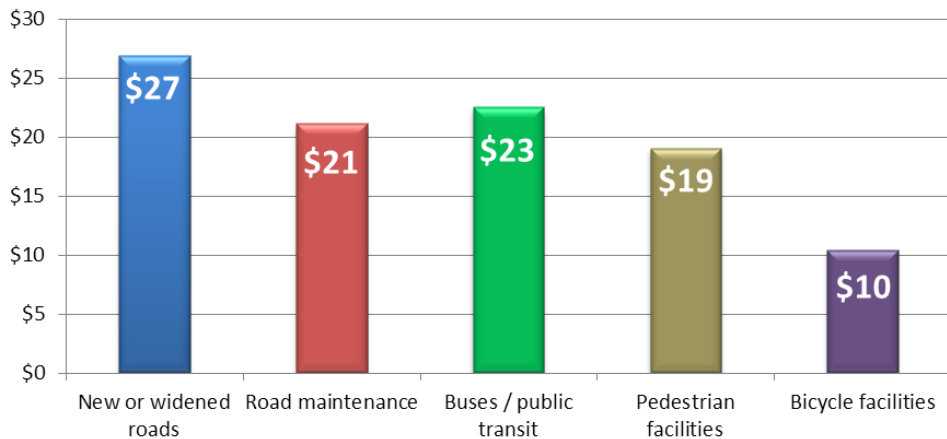
**Figure 7-1: Survey Respondents' Ranking of Transportation System**

How would you rank the region's transportation system in each of these areas?



**Figure 7-2: Average Expenditure Rate Proposed by Survey Respondents**

If you had \$100 dollars, how much would you spend on each part of the transportation system?



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As shown in **Figure 7-2**, persons responding to the survey were asked how they would divide a hypothetical \$100 among various types of transportation system needs. The resulting average, by category, indicates support for increased spending on transit and other alternative modes, particularly sidewalks.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT PLAN**

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The draft 2040 Plan was released for public comment on June 8, 2015 and advertised and distributed in accordance with the FRMPO's public participation procedures as described above. This included making review copies available at Beckley City Hall and Oak Hill City Hall, as well as posting the plan on the MPO website with information on how to contact the staff by telephone, fax, written letter or e-mail.

The FRMPO held public meetings June 22, 2015 at Beckley City Hall and June 23, 2015 at Oak Hill City Hall to present the draft Plan and receive public comment. The meetings included a presentation highlighting the Plan's key findings and recommendations, followed by an open question and answer session. Comments were taken verbally at the meeting; paper comment forms were also provided for those who wished to submit comments in writing and/or provide them at a later time.

At the public meetings, a number of citizens expressed concerns about the safety of walking and bicycling, including those who currently use the area's public transit system. Bus schedules were mentioned as an issue that keeps many people from being able to use transit effectively to get to work or enjoy community facilities and services such as public libraries. More frequent transit service, Saturday service, and earlier/later hours of service were brought up as needs. Improved transit connections between Beckley and Oak Hill were also proposed, along with future connections to Charleston and Bluefield.

Concerns were raised about the impact of the East Beckley Bypass Industrial Drive Connector on traffic patterns once the road is completed and open to drivers.

The topic of rail service also received attention. Meeting participants suggested increased marketing of Amtrak's passenger rail service and increased coordination among local transit providers who can transfer passengers to and from rail stations. It was noted that the Montgomery station is located near a rail yard at Handley which could be used as a staging area for trains for special service such as the transport of Boy Scouts. A suggestion was also made to examine the opportunity for intermodal freight transfer facilities at locations where rail is in proximity to the interstate.

Support was expressed for the Plan's approach of combining short-term, lower cost projects along with more substantial transportation investments that will take more time and funding to implement. Support was also voiced for the recommended use of the "safety edge" in future repaving projects around the region.

Survey responses and copies of written comments are included in **Appendix D**.