

MEMORANDUM

To: Tyler Deke, Bend MPO
From: Thomas Brennan
Date: January 11, 2012
Subject: Public Involvement Strategy for Bend MPO Public Transit Plan and Transit Corridor Land Use Assessment (TGM 4B-10)

This memo summarizes the Public Involvement Strategy for the Bend Metropolitan Planning Organization (BMPO) Public Transit Plan (PTP) and Transit Corridor Land Use Assessment. The purpose of this Public Involvement Strategy is to establish the means by which the BMPO will offer Bend residents the opportunity to provide input and ideas about existing and future land uses and transit services in the Bend area. Efforts will be made to engage community members from various backgrounds, demographics and income levels, including both current transit users and residents who are underserved by public transportation options. Key communities that will be targeted in the outreach effort include:

- Existing transit riders
- Communities such as low-income households, seniors, and youth who rely on transit to a greater extent than the general population
- Minority populations, based on race, color, and national origin (as required under Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act)
- Non-English speakers

The strategy aims to engage the community and provide a clear path for incorporating community input into plan recommendations and implementation strategies. Although specific opportunities for involvement are set forth in this memo, public input is welcomed and will be accepted at all stages of the planning process until the plan is adopted.

The elements of the Public Involvement Strategy are described in the following sections.

PROJECT TEAM AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE ROLES

Project Team

The project team includes representatives from BMPO, the City of Bend, ODOT, DLCD, and Cascades East Transit (CET), including land use planning, long-range planning, transportation planning, and public works. Representatives of other departments in the MPO or City of Bend may participate in the team meetings as needed.

MPO, City, CET, DLCD, and ODOT staff on the Project Team will work with and advise the consulting team on how to effectively engage public transportation stakeholders and the public in transit planning. The team will meet regularly and provide input on public engagement throughout the project.

Project Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

The Technical Advisory Committee, working with agency staff and the consultant team, will play an important role in guiding the public transportation plan and can provide input into how to best engage the public in the planning process. The committee will meet regularly and provide input throughout the duration of the project.

Membership of the project TAC remains to be determined, but intended members include representatives from the following:

- Local agencies, such as human services and non-profit service providers (e.g. Housing Works, Neighbor Impact, Abilitree, Opportunity Foundation)
- Transit providers
- Transit dependent populations
- Local developers
- Bike and Pedestrian Advisory Committee
- Safety, e.g., Transportation Safety Advisory Committee
- Central Oregon Community College
- Cascades East Regional Transit Advisory Committee
- Chamber (City and Downtown)

The Project Charter identifies specific TAC members and affiliations.

FOCUSED OUTREACH

Focused outreach efforts as part of the Public Transit Plan include a web-based community survey, several mobile outreach events, and a public open house.

Community Survey

A web-based community survey will be conducted targeting the general public. The focus of the survey will be on land use and transportation development issues and will be one of the primary means of gathering community input. While not intended as a statistically valid measure of public opinion, such surveys offer much broader participation than phone or mail surveys and offer residents who cannot attend public meetings the opportunity to weigh in on questions regarding transit needs, receptiveness to land uses changes, mobility tradeoffs, etc. The methods described below will be utilized to attain a high participation rate. The survey results will be evaluated and included in the Existing Conditions Report. As an option, initial survey results can be summarized in the Existing Conditions report while the survey remains open throughout the study to allow additional community input. Survey design and delivery will be coordinated with the broader regional community survey being conducted by the Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council (COIC) for the coincident Regional Transit Master Plan project.

Survey Content

The survey will include questions about general travel habits, use and opinion of existing public transit services, preferences regarding improvements to the existing transit services, and demographic information. The survey can also be translated into Spanish if it is determined that sufficient demand/need exists. Two options for assisting non-English speakers in completing the survey include:

- Create a Spanish version of the web-based survey. This would allow Spanish speakers to complete the survey online but will also require translation of responses.
- Translate only the survey questions into Spanish, but provide translation assistance where the translator translates the responses and enters them in English on the survey form as the individual answers them. This would require an MPO or City of Bend employee or non-profit staff (e.g., Latino Community Association) who can provide this service. (This option could also be applied to other languages).

The survey will include a link to a Google-map based site that allows respondents to provide input on specific transit corridors or other locations. This map may also be integrated into the project website, if technically feasible.

Survey Development and Outreach

The consulting team will develop the survey and it will be reviewed in coordination with the surveys for the COIC Regional Transit Master Plan at a joint meeting of the Project Teams for the BMPO Public Transit Plan project and the COIC Regional Transit Master Plan project. The survey will be made available electronically, linked from the project website on the City's website. A short, easily remembered link to the survey will be created (e.g., www.bendtransitsurvey.com).

A printed notice advertising the survey will be developed by the consulting team and, if possible, placed by BMPO staff at appropriate locations in Bend such as City Hall, the library, Central Oregon Community College (COCC), Bend Senior Center, and human service/medical offices. If possible, the notice will also be posted at CET offices and on CET buses. The notice will include a quick response code that can be scanned using smart phones.

A link to the survey will also be disseminated electronically by e-mail. The e-mail will be written by the consulting team and sent or posted by BMPO staff. Organizations will be requested to post and/or distribute a link to the survey to their members, as appropriate.

- Bend's 13 neighborhood associations
- City of Bend Accessibility Advisory Committee
- COCC (students and staff)
- Area High Schools
- Bend Chamber of Commerce (employers and businesses)
- Medical community
- Tourism community
- Bend Community Center (meal site)
- Agencies/organizations that support seniors and/or persons with disabilities, e.g., United Senior Citizens of Bend, Central Oregon Council on Aging, Oregon DHS Bend Seniors and Persons with Disabilities (SPD) Office, Abilitree, Deschutes County Department of Health Services, etc.
- Organizations that support the Latino community, e.g., Latino Community Association
- Human services organizations, e.g., NeighborImpact

Where applicable, notice of the survey will be posted on social media sites, such as the Bend MPO, City of Bend, Deschutes County, and/or Latino Community Association Facebook pages. A press release will also be written and distributed to local newspapers, e.g., Bend Bulletin.

A brief notice with a link to the survey will be developed for inclusion in the City of Bend “Our City” newsletter that is delivered in utility/water bills (also available online). This notice is targeted for the February 2011 newsletter (deadline for submitting the notice is in the first week of January).

An additional advertising option is to complete an online sponsorship request to BendBroadband for a notice in one of several formats.

Survey Incentives

Incentives will be offered to encourage participation in the community survey. This could be implemented by directing survey respondents to a separate form where they can enter their e-mail address to be entered into a random drawing for a cash prize (e.g., bus tickets or gift cards).

Mobile Outreach Events and Public Meeting

Public presentations and workshops are valuable ways in which elected officials, the general public and potential transit users can provide insights into transit needs in the city and provide feedback on components and concepts being considered as part of this plan. Public outreach is planned following two project milestones. The first will follow release of the final Existing Conditions report and will take the form of several mobile outreach events coordinated with existing community events. The second will utilize a more traditional open house format and follow release of the draft Public Transit Plan.

Mobile Outreach Events (February - April 2012)

These events will utilize a mobile public outreach booth developed by the consulting team to present information from the existing conditions memo, including existing land use, transportation, public facilities, services, and demographics, and solicit feedback from community members.

The consulting team will attend two outreach events and BMPO will be responsible for staffing at subsequent events. The general types of events that will be targeted include farmers’ markets (during certain times of the year) and sporting events. In addition, during the likely time frame of the outreach, Bend Winterfest (February 17-19) may be a suitable candidate. One of the outreach events could be set up at the CET Transfer Point in Bend (Hawthorne Station) to reach bus riders. Other events could target specific communities, e.g., be held at the Bend Senior Center or Bend Community Center, coincide with an event sponsored by the Latino Community Association, or be held at the COCC campus.

Public Meeting (Open House) (September 2012)

This public meeting will present the draft Public Transit Plan to the community and solicit feedback on the plan from community members.

The meeting will use an open house format where people can speak with staff and the consulting team to ask questions and provide input on priorities, goals and transit needs. There will be a brief presentation at a designated time during the open house.

It is requested that a staff representative be available to offer Spanish translation if necessary.

ONGOING OUTREACH

Project Website

Project websites are commonly used to present project information and work products, to solicit comments, and to survey transit users and others. The consulting team will prepare text, images and links for a project website that will be hosted on BMPO's website. The website will then be maintained by the BMPO with updated information provided by the consulting team as the project progresses, including six one-page project updates. The website link will appear on virtually all materials that are prepared as part of this project and a short, easy-to-remember web address will be created as a shortcut to the website.

The website will feature the following elements:

- Study overview
- Meeting dates and locations
- Key study personnel and how to contact them
- Project milestones, findings and outcomes
- Study documents
- Opportunities to provide input via an on-line survey
- Information about how to get involved and how to provide comments on the study

If the MPO, City, or a non-profit (e.g., Latino Community Association) can provide translation services, key information can be translated into Spanish and information about the availability of these services will be posted on the website. Alternatively, Google Translate could be used to provide basic translation services.

E-Mail Project Updates

Survey respondents who provide their e-mail address will be given the opportunity to receive periodic project updates by e-mail. Respondents will be able to either opt-in or opt-out (to be determined). Community members will also be able to sign up for project updates on the project website, at mobile outreach events, or at the public meeting.

Project updates will include six 1-page newsletters posted on the project website. These newsletters will be timed with release of major deliverables. The newsletters and/or announcements will include the schedule and locations of mobile outreach events and the public meeting, as well as City Council and MPO Board meetings where the project will be on the agenda.

Media Relations

As with any public involvement strategy, the media will play an important role in developing and maintaining relationships with the public. The media will be encouraged at key times in the study to publicize important events/activities and to provide key information to the public. This will include communication through the Bend Bulletin, The Source Weekly, local TV and radio stations, as well as other local community news outlets for the Latino community (specific outlets to be identified). MPO staff will be the primary contact for media relations with support from the consulting team as needed. In general, media relations/messaging will need to be tightly coordinated with messaging for the coincident Regional Transit Master Plan project being prepared by COIC to avoid community confusion.