

MTPO 2022 Title VI Annual Report

Purpose & Background

The mission of the MTPO's Title VI program is to implement compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This Act ensures that no person is excluded from participation in; denied the benefits of; or is subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Transportation. The MTPO will provide leadership and guidance to promote and engage the participation of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability or socioeconomic status. The reporting period for this report is from September of 2021 through August of 2022. These public participation and outreach techniques are also in accordance with the MTPO's current Public Participation Plan (PPP).

As outlined in the MTPO's PPP, the MTPO encourages the public to participate in the transportation planning process through a variety of public participation techniques. One of the roles of the MTPO is to provide information to the public and to facilitate active participation in the transportation decision-making process. The MTPO utilizes maps that depict areas of the MTPO Planning Area that have higher concentrations of persons that may fall under the protections of Title VI. The map depicts areas of socioeconomic characteristics indicative of those described through Environmental Justice (EJ). Transportation project distributions are then analyzed with respect to their proximity to these EJ Areas.

Environmental Justice

Environmental Justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. On April 15, 1997, USDOT issued its Final Order to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low Income Populations. Among other provisions, the Order requires programming and planning activities to:

- Include explicit consideration of the effects of transportation decisions on minority and low-income populations.
- Provide meaningful opportunities for public involvement by members of minority and low-income populations.
- Gather, where relevant, appropriate and practical, demographic information (race, color, national origin, and income level) on the populations served or affected by transportation decisions.
- Minimize or mitigate any adverse impact on minority or low-income populations.

Public Involvement and advertising for MTPO Outlets and Partners

During this reporting period, the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) update was completed, as well as seven (7) amendments to the 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) and three (3) amendments to the 2023 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). In addition, the MTPO applied for two (2) Transportation Alternative (TA) grants, and one Cost-Share Grant. The MTPO staff incorporated public outreach activities for each of these amendments, updates and grants. Activities included public meetings both virtual and in person, with notices directly emailed, posted online, advertised on the City's Television network, and printed in the Official City newspaper. In addition to all meeting materials, direct mailings also included a ZOOM meeting information, when applicable, and information on accessibility accommodations if desired. In-person public meetings were held at the Topeka Public Library (Downtown in LMI) neighborhood, at the Cyrus K. Holliday Building, and at Neighborhood Improvement Association (NIA) meetings.

Disadvantaged socioeconomic status as described by the department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for the purpose of distribution of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, are those individuals or families making less than 80% of the Area median income, or "Low-Moderate Income (LMI) households. All

Neighborhood Improvement Associations, by definition, meet this income qualification guideline. Therefore, for EJ and Title VI compliance purposes, all NIA's are within our EJ target area. The MTPO has direct correspondence with all NIA presidents, and all of are on our email distribution list.

Other groups contacted include the Topeka Independent Living Resource Center(TILRC), an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) organization; Topeka Metropolitan Transit Authority (TMTA) and Paratransit organizations; Kansas American Disabled for Attendant Programs Today (ADAPT); the Topeka Branch NAACP; and the Topeka Justice Unity and Ministry Project (JUMP). Social media outlets utilized to reach Title VI groups included Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and NextDoor. The MTPO has representatives from all of the afore mentioned targeted populations and they are listed on its direct mailing list for all public notices for document updates and associated activities.

2022 MTPO Projects and Activities Pertaining to Title VI Objectives

This year, in addition to public notices being advertised through the representatives on our correspondence list for the Updated FUTURES 2045 MTP, TIP Amendments, UPWP Amendments, the following Title VI related activities were also carried out:

- 1) Prepared documents and materials for TA grants and presented this information to community groups via Zoom and in-person meetings. Input was solicited on the TA grants from these groups before the final submission of the Grant application. All projects submitted for Transportation grants, regardless of source, are shared on social media sites, Facebook and Twitter, accounts which are maintained by the MTPO. The Transportation grants submitted for this year included:
 - TA Grant: Safe-Routes-to-School (SRTS) phase I study for all of district 501 elementary schools. This entails preparing Phase I studies for 14 elementary schools. Consultants, MTPO staff and partners will collaborate on this study. The 501 school district includes the entire EJ area of the City of Topeka. At present, only one of these schools has completed a SRTS phase I. Not only will this create a safer walking environment for elementary students but it will also promote active and healthy lifestyles in neighborhoods identified as Environmental Justice (EJ) Areas.
 - Cost-Share Grant: The Cost-Share grant that was applied for was a resubmission of the Topeka Boulevard sidewalk project. This project extended sidewalks and pedestrian crossings along Topeka Blvd. between 29th and 37th Streets. This is a commercial corridor through Central Topeka, which will facilitate pedestrian, and bicycle mobility for work as well as for recreation. This project will help support efforts already underway for this corridor, which began using "leftover" annual allocations of Complete Street and sidewalk funds. Many of neighborhoods adjacent to this project are within the EJ area.
- 2) Completed the process of updating the Futures 2040 MTP to Futures 2045. This included analyzing and updating the current socioeconomic data for the MTPO Area. Environmental Justice Areas were updated as necessary based on current Low-Mod-Income (LMI) guidelines based on current estimated Census data. This data was also utilized to create base year model runs for the MTP update.

The MTPO staff and JEO consultants prepared Story Maps, which were part of the public participation and outreach displaying results of participant input from interactive mapping exercises. Notifications for survey and map participation were distributed via social networking sites, NextDoor, Facebook, Twitter and Topeka Speaks, as well as direct emailings.

- 3) MTPO staff worked with City Engineers to update and expand the current GIS map layer depicting the existing conditions of sidewalks as well as the areas near residential areas and commercial districts where sidewalks are lacking. This allows for a more efficient tool for prioritizing where to construct new sidewalks and which damaged sidewalks should be repaired first. More often than not, these priority sidewalk placements are in EJ areas. (on-going project)

- 4) MTPO staff worked with the City of Topeka on Safe-Routes-to-School maps for several schools in the Topeka Area. The City received a grant to support the development of SRTS projects for several schools throughout Topeka. This included assisting with creating “preferred route maps” and potential sidewalk improvements needed. Many of these schools are in EJ Areas.
- 5) The TMTA continued to perform outreach via meetings and surveys available on buses and online pertaining to bus stop placements and possible rerouting of buses.

Heartland Healthy Neighborhoods (HHN)

MTPO staff attended, via ZOOM, monthly meetings of the Heartland Healthy Neighborhood and Heartland Visioning meetings. Persons representing various interests among the City including business, education, recreation, health and transportation attend these meetings. These meetings provide a platform to espouse transportation and healthy lifestyle issues and in turn gives the MTPO an opportunity to gather opinions and concerns from a broad and diverse representation of the community. Many of the persons in these groups also serve on MTPO transportation committees. (on-going)

Respectfully Submitted,

Carlton Scroggins AICP, MTPO Manager