Appendix 4: Public Involvement Plan

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MAY 2019

Public Involvement Plan

EAST-WEST GATEWAY
Council of Governments

Creating Solutions Across Jurisdictional Boundaries

FINAL 05/29/2019

Appendix 4: Public Involvement Plan

A Note from Executive Director Jim Wild:

The East-West Gateway Council of Governments (EWG) is committed to providing meaningful opportunities for public involvement in regional decisions. The agency's transportation and community planning programs have a wide ranging impact on the St. Louis metropolitan area, affecting the economy, the environment, and the daily lives of residents. The broad scope of these projects and activities, undertaken by the agency on behalf of the region's residents and local governments, make public guidance and advice a critical consideration.

However, creating opportunities for members of the public to weigh in on topics of regional importance that feel authentic and consequential is a significant challenge. The rapid pace of the modern world can lead to a focus on only the most immediate concerns, which makes it difficult to engage on issues that have longer time horizons or don't occur in our own backyard. Too often when people do participate, they feel their voices are not heard and that their concerns are not addressed.

The East-West Gateway Public Involvement Plan sets forth strategies and procedures to address these obstacles and ensure all residents of the St. Louis metro area can participate in decision-making on regional issues. The plan establishes the expectations for how public involvement is incorporated into EWG's transportation planning and other processes, in line with guidance from the agency's federal funders. We take seriously our obligation to educate, inform, and involve. The Public Involvement Plan reflects our approach to this huge responsibility and contains specific goals and objectives our staff works to achieve.

The creation of this plan benefitted from the time and expertise of many people. For this update, we convened an advisory committee of community members as well as an internal focus group, both of which contributed valuable input. This plan provides a framework for building a culture of robust civic engagement, and we invite all of our partners and stakeholders to help us realize its mission of involving community members in regional planning decisions. By working together, we can create meaningful engagement opportunities that are accessible to everyone.

Jim Wild

Inside this plan you will find:

Regional Planning Matters 2
About East-West Gateway 3
The Public Involvement Planning Process 4
Mission and Vision of the Public Involvement Plan..... 6
Our Goals and Strategies..... 7
The Agency's Core Products 12
Overview of Current Engagement Practices 14
Conclusion..... 16
Title VI Program Policy ..... Back Cover

Regional Planning Matters

The process of regional planning often involves tackling big, complicated issues—how to make the region safer and more secure, how to increase the sustainability and resiliency of the region, or what infrastructure investments to make. With the many requests for our attention that bombard us on a daily basis, it can be hard to find the time to participate in conversations on these topics, especially when they don't always seem to affect us directly.

The Public Involvement Plan is a critical piece of our efforts to overcoming these obstacles to participation. The many different types of regional planning activities undertaken by the East-West Gateway Council of Governments and its partners have the potential to impact the entire St. Louis area, so it's imperative that the region's residents are engaged in the planning process.

Transportation Impacts Each of Us

EWG is responsible for a wide range of regional planning activities, but none are more highly visible than the process of distributing federal funds for transportation projects across the St. Louis region. Transportation has a tremendous impact on a broad array of regional activities and institutions. Our transportation system makes it possible for us to get where we want to go, as well as to enjoy products and services from all over the world. It is a driving force behind our region's economic health and our ability to grow.

In the St. Louis metropolitan region, our vast transportation system includes the Mississippi and Missouri rivers, St. Louis Lambert International Airport and several regional airports, MetroLink (light rail) and MetroBus, paratransit services, ports, bike paths and greenways, sidewalks, and the many local or state roadways and bridges we use each day.

EWG is designated by the federal government as the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), charged with coordinating transportation planning for the St. Louis metropolitan region. This includes roadway construction and maintenance along with bus, rail, pedestrian, and bicycle projects, and ranges from bridges that span our rivers to streetscape improvements in our neighborhoods.

Allocating transportation dollars for specific projects and programs is a huge responsibility. EWG staff considers a number of federal requirements—such as the need to conform to federal air quality standards and inclusive public involvement—in our decision making. In addition, we must work with the limited transportation funding made available by federal, state, and local resources to pay for projects. Our needs far outweigh our resources, so we must make tough decisions that balance many regional interests.

Your Voice Makes a Difference

The advice and input of stakeholders with diverse perspectives is an integral part of the decision-making process described above. EWG views "stakeholders" as a broad term that encompasses residents, business owners, municipal and county governments, environmental and civic organizations, and advocacy groups that represent the needs of underserved and underrepresented populations—including low-income, minority, elderly, and disabled persons.

The Public Involvement Plan lays out the methods EWG uses to make sure these stakeholders are informed and involved in regional issues and decisions. It is imperative, not only as a matter of federal law but of sound public policy, that EWG hears and considers their different sets of needs and interests. By engaging the region's residents, EWG ensures that the investments made by state and local governments align with the priorities of the public. We are committed to ensuring you have a voice in the planning process and hope you will join us in our efforts to make the St. Louis region a more prosperous, vibrant place.

About East-West Gateway

Who We Are

Formed in 1965, East-West Gateway Council of Governments brings together local elected officials from Missouri and Illinois to work together and make regional decisions on issues that cross jurisdictional boundaries. As the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the St. Louis metro area, we also implement the region's federal transportation planning process.

EWG is governed by a 29-member board of directors compromised of local government representatives and residents from across the St. Louis region. The board works with the agency's executive director to define the initiatives, projects, and programs our staff accomplish.

The East-West Gateway Region

EWG covers the city of St. Louis and seven surrounding counties—Franklin, Jefferson, St. Charles, and St. Louis counties in Missouri; and Madison, Monroe, and St. Clair Counties in Illinois. This broad geographic reach is unique among the area's governmental organizations and helps EWG serve as a collaborative forum for planning and problem solving.

What We Do

Successful regional planning requires understanding and addressing the complex relationships between transportation and the region's economy, community, and environment. Accordingly, the work performed by EWG's staff covers a wide range of topics but can be separated into four broad categories.

Transportation Planning

EWG develops short- and long-range plans that decide how federal transportation funds are distributed among the region's local governments, transit providers, and other agencies. Any transportation projects that request and receive federal funds must be contained within these plans, which are approved by EWG's board of directors. In addition, the agency implements programs and projects related to the functional classification of roadways, bike/pedestrian planning, safety, congestion management, corridor planning, and freight.

Community Planning

The initiatives of the community planning department focus on environmental planning, public engagement, local government services, and hazard mitigation. EWG activities in this area include encouraging sustainable development, monitoring air and water quality, and building the capacity of the region's municipalities.

Regional Security

Through the St. Louis Area Regional Response System (STARRS), EWG brings together emergency management professionals and public safety agencies to develop plans and systems for preventing and responding to natural disasters, terrorist acts, and other incidents. STARRS also increases the effectiveness of these agencies by providing needed equipment and training.

Research and Analysis

EWG's research services department provides insight on issues identified as important to the fiscal, economic, and social well-being of the St. Louis region through data collection and analysis. The department also collaborates with local, state, and federal agencies on acquiring, maintaining, and distributing spatial data and maps.

The Public Involvement Planning Process

As the regional planning agency, our community and transportation planning activities impact every resident in the St. Louis metropolitan area. We are committed to involving everyone—including low-income, minority, elderly, and limited English proficient populations, and individuals living with disabilities—in regional discussions surrounding social, economic, environmental, community development, and transportation planning decisions. The map below illustrates where Environmental Justice census tracts are located in the St. Louis region. These are areas with an above median proportion of persons in poverty, persons with a disability, or elderly persons.

In addition, federal regulations require the incorporation of public involvement into the metropolitan transportation planning process. Specifically, the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) signed into law in 2015 outlines the federal requirements for public participation process and procedures. This plan meets these requirements and guides staff in their public involvement efforts to ensure meaningful engagement opportunities.

Public Involvement Plan Update Activities

EWG developed and approved the initial plan in 2014 as part of a year-long process that including establishing an advisory committee, reviewing meeting evaluations, consulting with agency staff, and conducting a public survey. In 2018, community engagement staff began the process of updating the plan and took the following actions:

- EWG's community engagement staff established a Public Involvement Plan Advisory Committee that represented key perspectives in the community. The Advisory Committee met three times throughout the process and provided feedback on how EWG could achieve the goals outlined in the plan.
- Community engagement staff also convened an internal agency focus group, comprised of EWG staff members who manage projects with major public involvement components. The objective of this staff committee was gather to input on what resources, tools, and processes are needed to accomplish EWG's public involvement goals.
- Community engagement staff reviewed agency's progress in pursuing the goals, objectives, and strategies established in the Public Involvement Plan. This assessment is included as part of the update to the plan.
- Comments from the 45-day public comment period were considered and incorporated.
- Community engagement staff presented the Public Involvement Plan draft to the EWG Board of Directors at its March 2019 meeting.

Thank you to our Public Involvement Plan Advisory Committee

Marie Elliot
Missouri Department of Transportation

Wayne Flesch
St. Louis County Senior Services

Kevin Jemison
Illinois Department of Transportation

Ch. Will Jordan
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Kisha Lee
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St. Louis Economic Development Partnership

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Mission and Vision of the Public Involvement Plan

Mission

Create Meaningful Engagement Opportunities That Are Accessible to Everyone

Vision

EWG staff, in our commitment to include all residents in regional planning discussions and decisions, will create and continuously support a framework that guides our public involvement efforts. Our public involvement program will always include specific strategies that welcome ideas, leverage partnerships, respect differences, embrace community, share knowledge, and foster responsive solutions that reflect the regional aspirations of residents.

Our Commitment to the Community

East West-Gateway Council of Governments understands the value of community. We understand that healthy, vibrant communities create a healthy and vibrant region. Our commitment to all communities in the region is simple: to ensure meaningful public engagement opportunities for all residents including low-income, minority, elderly, limited English proficient populations, and individuals living with disabilities. Public involvement in regional decisions surrounding regional security, transportation and community planning, and research programs ensures that EWG is tuned into the region's needs, wants, and desires. The connection between the region and the region's metropolitan planning organization is critical to its overall success.

For EWG's public involvement efforts to be effective, the agency must earn the trust and respect of the region's residents. EWG establishes such trust and respect by being responsive to community needs, providing accurate and timely information, maintaining transparency in agency processes, and striving to explain the agency's activities using methods that are free from jargon and relatable to all cultures. Additionally, EWG convened an advisory committee comprised of regional practitioners to lend their expertise on how to maximize our interactions with the residents of this region. The Advisory Committee's input was incorporated into this Public Involvement Plan and helped further refine EWG's approach to community engagement in our region's transportation planning and other activities.

Goals and Strategies

To help translate the mission and vision of the Public Involvement Plan into action, EWG has created a set of six core goals, each with a series of objectives and strategies to achieve them. The community engagement team works with all agency staff to accomplish these goals and provide meaningful opportunities for the public to be involved in EWG's transportation and community plans.

The framework provided here is the core of the Public Involvement Plan. As part of the 2019 update, this section now includes a "progress update" that assesses each of the plan's 36 strategies as under review, ongoing or completed. The bulleted sections highlight additional context on the implementation of a particular strategy, and the "What We Heard" quotes reflect input received from our Advisory Committee and internal focus group.

Goal 1

EWG will clearly articulate the process for public information and involvement from the outset of a project.

Objective 1: **Ensure meaningful participation opportunities for ALL communities.**

What We Heard: "EWG should be intentional in their outreach efforts. Neighborhoods, communities, municipalities, and underserved populations should be invited by staff or a board member to attend public meetings or outreach opportunities."

Strategy A: In consultation with community engagement staff, a planning process will be developed and then tracked for all projects.	Complete

➢ *Community engagement staff meet with planning staff ahead of major projects to map out engagement opportunities, discuss how to make it meaningful, and identify strategies for reaching underrepresented communities.*

Strategy B: We will create an advisory committee comprised of people who represent key perspectives of the community to help EWG staff assess their plans.	Under Review
Strategy C: EWG will collect data on how people get their information and provide feedback.	Ongoing

➢ *Comment cards and evaluations are regularly collected during engagement activities to solicit further public feedback.*

Objective 2: **Create a vehicle for evaluation at the end of the public involvement activity.**

What We Heard: "It's not just quantitative. The quality of interactions are important as well and really looking at who you are hearing from."

Strategy A: In collaboration with EWG staff a new project close out process will be created with an eye toward documenting public involvement efforts and outcomes.	Under Review
Strategy B: New evaluation and tracking mechanisms will be developed to collect feedback and assessment on all public involvement processes.	Complete

➢ *The community engagement staff created a tracking tool that is completed by EWG staff following public involvement activities. The tracker was revamped in 2018 and is regularly reviewed for analysis of EWG's engagement efforts.*

Goal 2

EWG will create mechanisms that document public feedback and make it available for public consideration and report how we used/incorporated public input in the decision-making process.

Objective 1: **Report back often to the community as to status of input, decisions, and plans.**

Strategy A: Create an easy to find, dedicated space for public involvement reporting on the EWG website that "tie-in" to Facebook and Twitter.	Complete

➢ *Newly revamped EWG website has dedicated section for community engagement, which includes links to the agency's event calendar, the Public Involvement Plan, and social media accounts.*

Strategy B: Create an agency monthly electronic newsletter that reports the activities of the agency to the community.	Under Review

➢ *The agency publishes a weekly Local Government Briefings email newsletter that, while geared toward a municipal audience, contains announcements and information on EWG's plans and programs. Links to surveys, calls for public comment, and other engagement opportunities are regularly included in the newsletter.*

Strategy C: Create a monthly electronic update for email and print that specifically reports public involvement outcomes, opportunities, activities, and strategies.	Under Review

Goal 3

EWG will create and strengthen the Council's strategies for reaching people and communicating appropriately.

Objective 1: **Find new and creative ways to reach and involve people.**

What We Heard:

"EWG needs to develop a known identity. Develop a 'road show' that is as generic as possible. Identify the staff members who would be willing and are comfortable doing presentations. EWG should develop and increase the level of social media technology. Decide which platform works best for the agency (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, podcasts, Youtube videos)."

Strategy A: Redesign and assess necessary content of EWG website to make it more user friendly, to ensure important information is easier to find, and that content is relevant for users.	Complete

➢ *EWG's website was completely rebuilt and relaunched in 2017 with a mobile-friendly design and a more intuitive layout. The new design includes a more robust events calendar and a searchable archive of agency documents, including meeting minutes and agendas.*

Strategy B: The agency will continue to enhance its social media capabilities.	Ongoing

➢ *EWG has focused on building its presence on Twitter and Facebook with more regular content and updates, including hosting a "virtual open house" using Facebook Live. The videos produced for the annual Outstanding Local Government Achievement awards are now posted on the agency website and shared on social media.*

Strategy C: We will create a communication staff committee to discuss, assess existing, and implement new outreach communication tools and strategies.	Under Review

Objective 2: **Expand the types of opportunities for participation.**

What We Heard: "The annual meeting and the morning sessions are great, I would like to see EWG continue to use the morning sessions or host other forums for regional conversations."

Strategy A: Develop creative programming, including speaker series, discussion forums, and expanded policy briefings.	Under Review
Strategy B: Identify new strategies for reaching people electronically including web meetings, online real-time question and answer sessions, interactive electronic open houses, and webinars.	Ongoing
➢ *EWG uses a variety of online tools for public involvement. This includes online chats through the St. Louis Post-Dispatch as part of the TIP public comment process, livestreaming public meetings and other events, use of web-based surveys, and investment in email marketing software.*	
Strategy C: Conduct effective, productive, and interactive meetings.	Ongoing
➢ *Community engagement staff frequently assist EWG planners with designing creative exercises for soliciting and gathering feedback. Large-format maps, post-it notes, small group discussions, and touchpad polling are among the tools and techniques employed.*	

Objective 3: **Expand and enhance the EWG network through partnerships.**

Strategy A: Assess current agency memberships in order to ensure agency participation with a broad array of partners and track EWG attendance and participation in meetings and events.	Ongoing
➢ *Community engagement staff have recently expanded their involvement with regional partners, such as participating in the HomegrownSTL Initiative, helping start the St. Louis chapter of Engaging Local Government Leaders (ELGL), and serving on Great Rivers Greenway's Equity Advisory Committee.*	
Strategy B: Serve as a matchmaker to help partners find the right resources.	Ongoing
➢ *EWG hosts project application workshops, holds information sessions on federal funding programs, releases technical guides for local planners, and provides other assistance to local government members. The Local Government Briefings newsletter also includes links to resources, tools, datasets, and grant opportunities relevant to municipalities in Missouri and Illinois.*	
Strategy C: Create a process under which EWG staff actively contacts and engages with new groups quarterly.	Under Review
Strategy D: Actively look for new partnership opportunities through sponsorship/ involvement in regional events.	Ongoing
➢ *EWG recently partnered with the St. Louis Association of Community Organizations, St. Louis Earth Day and local universities to have a presence at various events as part of the Long-Range Transportation Plan update.*	

Objective 4: **Create training for staff to introduce members of the communities that we need to reach and discuss appropriate approaches for engagement.**

Strategy A: Invite members of key community groups to be part of an ongoing agenda and introduce their groups to staff.	Under Review
Strategy B: Introduce staff to fundamental and advanced approaches and tools for effective public involvement.	Under Review

Goal 4

EWG will assure that every effort will be made to ensure nondiscrimination in all of its programs and activities, whether they are federally funded or not.

Objective 1: **Provide information to the public regarding Title VI obligations.**

Strategy A: Posts EWG's policy statement regarding Title VI on the website along with the complaint procedure.	Complete
Strategy B: Title VI, ADA, and environmental justice materials will be available at EWG meetings.	Complete
Strategy C: EWG will offer translations of necessary materials and provide appropriate accommodations as requested. We will track all requests for accommodation.	Ongoing

➢ *Several agency documents are available in Spanish, including the Title VI brochure, Limited English Proficiency (LEP) brochure, Title VI Complaint Procedures, and Title VI Nondiscrimination Complaint Form.*

Goal 5

EWG will provide access to and create quality information, education, and data.

Objective 1: **Data, information, and plans need to focus on relevance and impact to the public whenever possible.**

Strategy A: Identify new ways to present data/information to the public, including on our website and through social media, in an understandable and accessible manner.	Ongoing

➢ *Community engagement staff redesigned the weekly Local Government Briefings newsletter and began using an email marketing service to improve delivery and build the audience.*

Strategy B: Work to make our GIS and demographic products easily available to the communities and groups that have an interest.	Ongoing

➢ *The website redesign improved access to datasets and other research produced by EWG. In addition, EWG produces a reoccurring "Map of the Month," which features insightful analysis of regional issues and concerns using geographic data.*

Strategy C: Continue to expand and enhance Where We Stand and its updates and ensure broad distribution of regional policy analysis of the topics we choose to highlight.	Ongoing
Strategy D: Continue to expand and enhance the availability of training and workshops on EWG projects, grants, and key regional and local government policy issues	Ongoing
Strategy E: Create partnerships with public radio, news, and television outlets.	Under Review

Objective 2: **Ensure that staff has access to the appropriate tools and information.**

What We Heard: "Create a written community engagement process that includes templates, strategies, and recommendations of engagement tools that are appropriate for a given plan."

Strategy A: Create an intranet site where staff can post and find the latest information, data, and updates that colleagues are working on that can be used internally by different departments.	Under Review

➢ *Community engagement staff in consultation with program staff is exploring developing a toolkit for staff that includes resources, templates, internal databases, and shared materials to enhance our efforts to effectively communicate with our publics.*

Objective 3: **Information, education, and data development and articulation needs to consider all Title VI, EJ, ADA, and LEP requirements in the planning stages and ensure that citizens, members, and contractors are aware of these requirements.**

Strategy A: Community engagement staff in cooperation with program staff will continue to develop mechanisms to ensure that citizens understand their rights under Title VI, to ensure that recipients of funding are fulfilling their obligations, and that EWG documents its efforts to ensure compliance.	Ongoing

Goal 6

EWG will continuously evaluate the effectiveness of the EWG public involvement program.

Objective 1: **Continuously evaluate participant and public satisfaction.**

Strategy A: Track participation efforts and approaches for every EWG sponsored meeting.	Ongoing

➢ *EWG staff use the activity tracker, a web-based survey created by the community engagement department, to document and evaluate all public involvement activities.*

Strategy B: Create a realistic evaluation policy and ensure that staff is capturing necessary and appropriate evaluation data.	Ongoing
Strategy C: Create an internal database to capture all evaluation data.	Complete

➢ *The information captured by the activity tracker is easily accessible and can be exported as reports for further analysis.*

Strategy D: Analyze the results of evaluative data on a regular basis to illustrate changes in participation, representative participation, and identify areas for improvement.	Ongoing
Strategy E: Institute a EWG regional public awareness and satisfaction survey every two to three years to assess public perceptions about EWG and assess how we can improve our outreach efforts.	Under Review
Strategy F: Implement an agency self-evaluation process of public involvement efforts annually.	Under Review

The Agency's Core Products

Public participation is a valuable tool used to shape plans that accurately reflect the goals and visions for the region. EWG develops several core plans on a regularized schedule that have stipulated, minimum public input requirements. In each case we strive to find new avenues to engage the public and expand public input beyond what is required. EWG recognizes that specific plans and studies with regional goals and objectives are more valuable when active community input is included. The following sections describe EWG's core plans with public comment periods identified. All of EWG's core plans are available on the EWG website.

A. Unified Planning Work Program

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is the one document that is used to organize and unify all of the agency's work for the coming year. The development of the UPWP creates an opportunity for the policymakers on the Board of Directors, the agency's advisory committees, and our funding agencies to review and consider East-West Gateway's many activities. It also provides staff with a valuable management tool and is part of grant applications for several state and federal programs.

Unexpected circumstances sometimes necessitate additions to the document outside the regular annual cycle. When this happens, and funding has been clearly identified for any new activities, the Board can amend new work into the UPWP as part of its monthly meetings.

The implementation of the UPWP is a team effort. The complexity of our work frequently demands interdepartmental coordination, interdisciplinary research, and considerable involvement of members of the affected public and constituent interest groups.

The UPWP is supported by financial grants and in-kind resources from federal, state, and local government sources as well as nonprofit organizations and private foundations. EWG submits the UPWP to our funding agencies as a commitment to fulfill our legal obligations as the region's designated MPO. The document is also made available to our local governments and the public.

Comment period: 45 days>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>Update schedule: Annually

B. Long-Range Transportation Plan

The Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) serves as a blueprint for the management of the region's transportation system. Developed every four years, the LRTP identifies transportation improvements over a 25- to 30-year period and articulates a range of regionwide transportation goals, policies, and strategies.

The principles and strategies included in the LRTP are carried out through a variety of short-range transportation plans and programs. Chief among these is the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which reflects more immediate decisions on how federal funds are spent in the region. In effect, the TIP is used to implement the LRTP. Other plans connected to the implementation of the LRTP include the Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan, the Regional Freight Study, the Congestion Mitigation Process, and OneSTL: The Plan for Regional Sustainable Development.

EWG's Board of Directors oversees the development of short- and long-range transportation plans for the region and selects the federally and locally funded capital projects and operational initiatives that will best carry out the principles and strategies of the long-range plan. EWG develops the LRTP under certification from the U.S. Department of Transportation and under joint agreements among the states of Missouri and Illinois, the city of St. Louis, and the counties in the region: St. Charles, St. Louis, Franklin, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, and St. Clair counties. All federally funded transportation projects must be consistent with the principles of the LRTP to be included in the TIP.

Comment period: 30 days >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>Update schedule: Every 4 years

C. Transportation Improvement Program

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a financial and implementation schedule for projects receiving federal transportation funding in the St. Louis metropolitan area. The TIP documents how St. Louis will prioritize limited transportation resources to meet the needs of the region. It contains major surface transportation projects planned to receive federal, state, and local funding within the metro area that will be carried out in a four-year period. Project examples include new roadways, additional lanes to existing streets, interchange construction or modification, improvements to intersections, transit amenities, and bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure. EWG updates the TIP every year.

Projects identified in the TIP are prioritized from, and must be consistent with, the region's 20-year Long-Range Transportation Plan. The TIP consists of a four-year program: the current year plus the next three consecutive years. Each year the TIP is modified by adding a new fourth year and advancing the first of its future years to current status. While the projects in the TIP are shown for a four-year time period, the emphasis is on the first three years. Presenting a four-year span allows for a more systematic forecast of funding needs during the planning cycle and provides a more comprehensive view of the program for public information purposes.

Notice of public involvement activities and the time established for public review and comment on the TIP satisfies the program of projects requirements of the Section 5307 Program for public transportation operators.

Comment period: 30 days >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>Update schedule: Annually

D. Public Involvement Plan

The Public Involvement Plan (PIP) provides a framework to guide the public participation process for all activities at EWG, including transportation planning projects and a range of programs and special studies, such as major investment studies. This plan specifies the strategies and techniques EWG staff will consider and employ in achieving the goals of the public participation process.

As part of the plan, EWG documents and assesses current public involvement approaches and activities. We identify new ways that our agency should and can reach out to the public, inform the public, and ensure meaningful involvement from all of the region's residents. This review of current practices and development of new strategies is informed by the board of directors, agency staff, an advisory committee, and citizen feedback.

EWG is dedicated to a planning process that allows all citizens affected by the agency's activities to have a voice. As the region's designated metropolitan planning organization, EWG receives federal funding from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and other state and federal agencies responsible for metropolitan planning.

Effective public involvement requires that the agency be as inclusive as possible to serve the widest range of citizens, especially the hard-to-reach populations who reside in the bi-state area. The plan will be continuously reassessed and updated as needed.

Comment period: 45 days >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>Update schedule: As needed

Overview of Current Engagement Practices

EWG has many approaches that are currently used to reach the public and garner input. The list below provides a broad overview of these public involvement practices.

East-West Gateway Committees—EWG supports numerous committees that include citizens and professionals from other organizations for the purpose of advising the agency's work. These committees include the Air Quality Advisory Committee, the Water Resources Council, the Transportation Planning Committee, and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee. Citizens and officials on these committees provide regular and ongoing input.

The agency also convenes ad hoc advisory policy and technical committees to support agency initiatives as needed. A few of the newer policy groups created to improve services in the region are the Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan stakeholder committee, the Northside-Southside MetroLink Corridor Study advisory committee, and the Freight Working Group, which assisted with the creation of the St. Louis Regional Freightway.

Publications—Numerous regular publications are created to inform and educate the region's residents on various issues. Other materials are continuously developed to support citizen engagement as the need arises. Examples include:

- **Local Government Briefings:** This weekly email newsletter provides information on programs, grants, news, and other items relevant to the region's municipalities.
- **Where We Stand:** This strategic assessment of the St. Louis region ranks the St. Louis Metropolitan Area as compared to the country's 50 most populous metropolitan areas across a host of metrics in the areas of economic development, workforce and education, and crime and public safety.
- **Annual Public Officials Directory:** A reference guide for the city of St. Louis and seven surrounding counties containing contact information for key local government elected officials and personnel.
- **Know Your Rights:** This Title VI brochure series is available in English, Spanish, and Bosnian.
- **East-West Gateway Informational Brochure:** Explains the mission, history, and functions of the agency and how the public and others can be involved in agency activities. Updated with more accessible language in 2018.
- **Frequently Asked Questions about the TIP:** This brochure was updated in 2018 and breaks down the Transportation Improvement Program process.

Website and Social Media—In 2017, EWG launched a new, mobile-friendly website that provides a more user-friendly experience and improved access to data, meeting agendas, agency events, and project announcements. Any document that EWG puts out for public comment is posted to the website. All of EWG's plans, reports, final publications, RFPs, and minutes are also available. In addition, the agency regularly publishes content on its official Twitter and Facebook channels for continuous outreach and engagement.

The Outstanding Local Government Achievement Awards—Each year, EWG presents the Outstanding Local Government Achievement Awards to recognize the extraordinary work of municipal, county, public safety, and school district officials. Nominations are widely solicited from community organizations and individuals as well as local government officials. The goals of the program are to acknowledge the good work occurring in the local government community, to raise public awareness of the positive impacts of local government, and to involve community members in highlighting the progress in their communities.

Local Government Collaboration—EWG regularly collaborates with universities, professional groups, and other regional organizations to increase the capacity of the region's municipalities. The goal of these efforts is to provide training, technical assistance, and other resources to local government officials throughout the region.

Technical Assistance and Workshops—Council staff works with local governments, community organizations, and residents to recognize and pursue regional solutions and increase their effectiveness. EWG also hosts workshops that are open to the public in accessible settings on an array of regional issues or agency programs. This includes training and application review for municipalities and other organizations seeking federal funds from EWG.

Presentations and Community Outreach—EWG staff, by invitation, attends meetings of numerous civic, volunteer, business, neighborhood, and professional organizations to share information about the agency's work. Staff also regularly attends community events as part of engagement efforts for various agency plans and projects.

Mapping—EWG staff use geographic information systems (GIS) to develop maps that inform the public and our research partners. They produce a new map each month on different demographic trends that is made available on our website.

Research—EWG produces in-depth analysis of regional trends related to transportation planning, demographic changes, and sustainability planning. Staff use GIS applications and data from the U.S. Census and other sources to ensure the availability of accurate information.

Conclusion

East-West Gateway has maintained and enhanced its strong commitment to public involvement since its inception 54 years ago. This document is another phase in an on-going planning process designed to ensure continuous improvement in our efforts. We are committed to overcoming today's challenges to public participation and identifying new avenues to involve all the residents of the region. We would therefore ask you to contact us with any suggestions you may have.

Please send comments, feedback, or inquiries on this plan to:

Roz Rodgers
Manager, Community Engagement and
Local Government Services

East-West Gateway Council of Governments,
One S. Memorial Drive. Suite 1600,
St. Louis, MO 63102

Phone: 314-421-4220 or 618-274-2750

Appendix 4: Public Involvement Plan

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EAST-WEST GATEWAY
Council of Governments
Creating Solutions Across Jurisdictional Boundaries

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