

# **Stakeholder Community Engagement Plan**

## **Long-Range Transportation Plan Update East-West Gateway Council of Governments**

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## **Purpose of the Plan**

This **Stakeholder Community Engagement Plan (SCEP)** will serve as the guide for implementing the community engagement and outreach process for the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Update currently being conducted by East-West Gateway Council of Governments (EWG), the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the St. Louis region. The LRTP is a federally mandated document that is used to guide regional transportation decision making over the next 20 to 30 years. It is a document that must be updated every four years and requires input from community stakeholders from the communities it serves, as well as guidance from locally elected officials in those respective communities.

The SCEP will follow EWG's guidelines as outlined in its Public Involvement Plan. It is a living document, to be reviewed and revised as needed throughout the period of performance. The goal of the SCEP is to outline a program of activities to engage a wide range of diverse stakeholders throughout the metropolitan region in the decision-making process. The objectives of the SCEP are to:

- Identify and continue to engage a diverse group of regional stakeholders and the public in the decision-making process associated with the reviewing and updating of existing guiding principles that serve as the foundation for the LRTP;
- Establish and maintain an excellent working relationship with regional stakeholders and the public, community organizations, higher education institutions, and businesses throughout the region who participate in the engagement process;
- Meet with and maintain open lines of communication with all interested stakeholders, groups, local and regional community leaders, business owners and others;
- Use multiple communication channels to deliver timely and accurate information about the plan development process and how input into the process guides future transportation investments;
- Conduct informational meetings and focus groups with a diverse group of stakeholders to better understand what is most important to the future of the region and to generate excitement and conversation around transportation choices and future investments;
- Incorporate stakeholder and public input into the development of the LRTP's guiding principles and corresponding performance measures.

### **The Desired Level of Involvement/Influence**

The goal of this plan is to be intentional in the engagement and outreach approach. It is designed to reach as many diverse stakeholders as possible. Participants will be asked to:

- Provide input into the guiding principles review process;

- generate discussion around the most important transportation challenges facing the region today, as well as in the future;
- identify current priorities, values and aspirations, transportation needs (broadly, not from a specific project perspective), and issues of equity; and
- provide input to support selection of performance measures.

It is critical to the successful implementation of this plan that the engagement process be open, transparent, and community driven, whereby everyone involved can walk away satisfied that their voices have been heard, that their thoughts, ideas, and opinions have the potential to impact and shape future decisions, and with a better understanding of the region's transportation and decision-making process.

All engagement activities and programs will comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statues and regulations. The project team will work with the Council's Title VI Coordinator to ensure that all meetings are both ADA and LEP accessible and that reasonable accommodation is provided.

## **Overall Approach to Stakeholder Engagement**

### **Identification of Stakeholders**

Initial research and outreach efforts will be conducted to identify key stakeholders that are critical to the success of this engagement effort. A stakeholder list will be maintained by the project team, to include persons identified by the team as key stakeholders, and all persons who request to be included in the stakeholder contact list to receive information and updates. The project team will work with Council staff to compile the initial list of stakeholders.

In addition, residents and businesses throughout the region will be invited to participate in the process. They will be asked to share information with their communities by distributing information electronically, such as email updates, or posting information on their websites and social media platforms.

Some of the stakeholders for this effort include, but are not limited to:

- Local Elected Officials/Municipal Leaders
- Chambers of Commerce
- Local School Districts
- Colleges and Universities
- Local Media/Newspapers
- Local Businesses
- Local Faith-Based Groups and Community Organizations
- Hospital and Emergency Responders
- Neighborhood Groups and Local Residents
- Civic/Community Leaders
- Transportation Organizations
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Interest Groups

- Environmental Coalitions and Advocacy Groups
- Non-Profit Organizations
- Local Railroads and Freight Operators

## **Outreach to Key Stakeholders**

### **EWG Board of Directors**

The project team will provide EWG’s Board with at least three (3) updates at its regularly scheduled meetings. The first presentation will be in March where the project team will give an overview of the LRTP update process and schedule and share initial findings from the review of existing guiding principles.

The second Board of Directors meeting will occur in May/June 2022, and will consist of a working session with EWG’s Board. During this session, results of the initial outreach, including surveys, will be shared. Reaction to proposed revised principles will be gathered as well as any additional input. The third and final meeting will be held in September/October 2022. Results of the equity analysis, final guiding principles, and project prioritization process will be shared.

### **Equity Advisory Group (EAG)**

Working with Council staff, an Equity Advisory Group (EAG) will be formed to serve as “ambassadors” who will help in building community awareness, trust, aid in ongoing engagement for the planning process and advise on issues associated with equitable transportation. This group will be comprised of 15-25 diverse individuals who represent the diverse interests and communities across the St. Louis region. It includes two representatives from EWG’s Board of Directors, a designee of each member of the Board’s Executive Committee, civic and community organizations, business representatives, and regional stakeholders. Civic and community-based organizations being considered to serve on this group include, but not limited to the following:

- NAACP – Illinois & Missouri
- Urban League
- International Institute of St. Louis
- Metropolitan Congregations United
- United Congregations of Metro East
- St. Louis Clergy Coalition
- League of Women Voters
- The Municipal League of Metro St. Louis
- Southwest IL Council of Mayors
- United Way of Greater St. Louis
- Beyond Housing
- St. Patrick’s Center
- St. Louis Public Schools
- Paraquad
- OATS
- Mideast Area Agency on Aging
- Illinois Area Agency on Aging - AgeSmart Community Resources
- AARP
- Greater St. Louis, Inc.
- Asian American Chamber of Commerce
- Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

- Bosnian Chamber of Commerce
- Metro, St. Clair County Transit, and Madison County Transit

Members of this group will have an early opportunity to review and provide feedback on regional priorities and values that will inform the region's transportation guiding principles. In addition, this group will provide input on the region's transportation equity investment analysis and will be tasked with promoting participation in public meetings and open houses and helping identify opportunities for pop-up events and speaking engagements at local meetings of other civic and community groups and neighborhood associations.

This group will meet at least three (3) times over the course of the planning process with the first meeting taking place in March 2022.

## **Specific Engagement Activities**

### **Stakeholder Interviews and Focus Groups**

The project team will conduct 15 to 20 interviews from March to June 2022 with members of EWG's Board, civic, and community leaders. Interviews will be conducted in-person or virtually via one-on-one sessions or in small group discussions. These interviews are designed to help identify key regional and community priorities and challenges to be addressed in the planning and analysis process and to establish communication channels with local leaders and their respective communities. The project team will work with EWG staff to identify individuals and groups to be interviewed.

An interview guide will be developed in collaboration with Council staff to ensure that these interviews have similar structure. Follow-up meetings will be made with these stakeholders as needed throughout the process to keep them informed about the principles review process, comments, and final recommendations. These interviews would be approximately an hour in duration. EWG staff and the project team will conduct the interview based on the interviewee's preference. These meetings may be conducted in-person, over the phone or virtual. A summary will be prepared following each interview and shared with EWG.

### **Resident Focus Groups**

At least two (2) virtual focus group meetings will be conducted with area residents in April and May 2022. These focus groups will be designed to engage those individuals who may not participate in traditional engagement settings like public meetings or open houses. These focus groups will target hard-to-reach populations and people that traditionally do not participate in public engagement. The project team will work closely with Council staff and other community partners to identify those groups and populations. Once identified, the project team will work with community partners to

develop a strategy for engaging them. This could be as simple as using the community partner's communication network, outreach platform, or forum.

Like the stakeholder interviews, an interview guide will be developed and used to guide the conversation. It is anticipated that approximately 10 to 15 individuals will be invited to participate in each meeting, lasting approximately two hours. A summary will be prepared following each focus group and shared with EWG.

### **Public Open Houses (In-Person and Virtual)**

In July 2022, the project team will conduct three (3) in-person public open houses (COVID restrictions permitting) and two (2) virtual public open houses. These meetings will take place consecutively, in three (3) different locations, within the eight (8) jurisdictions that comprise the St. Louis Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) served by EWG. One meeting will be held in Illinois and the two remaining meetings will be held in Missouri. The project team will work with Council staff and the locally elected representative to determine the best location for each meeting. A virtual version of the meeting will be developed by the project team and posted on the dedicated project webpage currently being developed.

Each in-person public open house meeting will use an open-house style format where participants will have the opportunity to meet and interact with project team members on an individual basis. They will be able to submit comments and provide feedback on the guiding principles. These meetings will be at least three (3) hours in duration and adhere to Title VI guidelines.

A 30-day comment period will follow the series of public open houses. Comment forms will be made available at each meeting to encourage participants to submit written comments. Comments may also be provided through the project webpage and submitted electronically. All comments will be reviewed and incorporated appropriately. The project team will share with EWG a summary of submitted comments and the approved response.

### **Community Gatherings, Pop-Up Events and "Meeting in a Box" Sessions**

To capture the voices of a broader audience and provide opportunities for community stakeholders who may not participate in traditional engagement efforts, the project team will "meet people where they are" by taking part in at least three (3) local community gatherings in the region. These local community gatherings can be events such as community fairs and festivals or events hosted by members of the EAG. One gathering will be in Illinois and the other two gatherings will be in Missouri. The project team will work closely with Council staff to identify those non-traditional engagement opportunities.

At these events, the project team will share information about the planning process and collect information about transportation priorities and aspirations that will support development of the guiding principles.

At least six (6) “pop-up events” will be conducted throughout the planning process, with two (2) events proposed in Illinois and four (4) events in Missouri. These events can take place at transit centers, MetroLink Stations or local farmers markets. Similar to the community gatherings, the project team will provide information about the LRTP Update process and collect information about transportation priorities and aspirations that will support the development of the guiding principles.

“Meeting in the Box” kits will also be developed by the project team. These kits will contain “everything necessary” for a citizen volunteer to conduct a discussion with their peers and constituents in a setting and timeframe of their own choosing and provide discussion results to the project team in a standardized format. Materials included in the kit include sign-in sheet; name tags; discussion guide; and a meeting summary template. The project team will ask members of the EAG to volunteer to serve as “Meeting in the Box” hosts. These events will occur between April-August 2022. A summary of the results will be provided for each of these engagement interactions and shared with EWG.

## **Specific Communications Strategies**

### **Press Kit and Brochure**

The project team will develop a press kit that can be used to inform and educate stakeholders about the LRTP Update process. This kit will contain a press release announcing the official kickoff of this planning effort, a project fact sheet/brochure about the process, including basic information about the project’s goal, purpose, and schedule. Information about how to get involved in the process will also be provided. These kits will be made available in March at the first meeting with the Council’s Board of Directors.

### **Webpage**

Working with Council staff, the project team will develop content for the webpage that is being developed for this planning initiative and provide guidance on the overall design. This webpage will ultimately feed into the Council’s *Connected2050* website. Visitors to the site will be able to access the overall project schedule, including meeting dates and summaries, review draft and final reports, frequently asked questions, surveys, and other collateral materials.

### **Notification Flyers and Postcards**

Informing the public and community stakeholders about this process and opportunities to become engaged is critical to the overall success of this initiative. The project team

will develop postcards to announce opportunities to join the conversation. These items will be printed as well as made available electronically so that they can be easily shared by community partners. The project team will print a minimum of 200 flyers and/or postcards for each open-house or pop-up event. These items may be mailed to community partners if requested for their respective organization or community. The project team will also work with Council staff to develop the appropriate material. It is anticipated that these items will be used primarily to announce the public open houses and “pop-up” events.

### **Display Boards**

Display boards that highlight the existing principles and the planning process may be developed to be used at community gatherings, pop-up events and public open houses in an effort to generate discussion and interest in the planning process. These boards will be at least 24x36.

### **Online Surveys**

Two online surveys will be developed for this initiative. Each of these surveys will be administered between April-May 2022.

**Regional Panel Survey:** The regional panel survey will use a Census-balanced sample of adult residents in the St. Louis region based on county of residence, to provide a mechanism to explore a representative sample of perspectives from across the region. All respondents will answer the questionnaire online. It is anticipated that the survey will take no longer than 15 minutes to administer.

To ensure accurate demographic information, the project team will weight data with post-stratification adjustments, commonly used in surveys, so that the resulting estimates can be interpreted as population characteristics.

**MetroQuest Survey:** In addition to the regional panel survey, the project team will develop an online survey using MetroQuest, an online engagement tool. This survey will be posted on the Council’s website and used to educate visitors about the LRTP Update process and to gather information from people about their transportation priorities and aspirations. A link to this survey will be shared with all stakeholders through social media and other collateral materials developed for this initiative. It is an easy first step for residents of the St. Louis region to join the conversation and share their thoughts about the future of transportation and what is most important to them.

### **Social Media**

Like the webpage that is being developed for this initiative, the project team will develop and provide Council staff content to be shared through its social media platforms. The project team will develop content, monitor conversations, provide a schedule and

develop a unique hashtag so that the process is promoted and tracked consistently across all platforms.

It is anticipated that the project team will provide Council staff with at least one (1) post per week following the official project kick-off. Short online clips and videos will be produced and shared as needed throughout the project performance period.

### **Stakeholder Database**

The project team will develop and maintain a project database of all identified stakeholders and others expressing interest in being informed and involved in the planning process. Individuals can request to be added to the project database via the project webpage or by completing a sign-in sheet or registration form at every event.

### **Modification of the SCEP**

This SCEP is a living document and will be reviewed on a regular basis for continued effectiveness and updated as appropriate. It is important that this engagement process be flexible and that outreach activities and engagement strategies be evaluated in terms of effectiveness. The project team, in consultation with EWG staff, will evaluate all outreach activities, make the necessary pivots and try other tactics if those outlined in this plan are deemed to be ineffective. Plan administration includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Maintaining a current list of project stakeholders
- Maintaining a detailed public engagement record (log) that includes records of all stakeholder contacts, meetings, and comments
- Ensuring two-way communication and timely responses to stakeholders through formal and informal channels

Revisions to this SCEP may be necessary throughout the project. The project team will provide an updated version of the SCEP to the Council as needed. SCEP updates will be tracked and identified on each version of the document.