

Missoula Connect: Public Involvement Goals & Early Activities

February 2020

DRAFT PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT GOALS

The draft goals below are intended to guide the project’s public involvement plan and early engagement activities. These goals will be revisited throughout the course of the project.

Goal	What is the purpose of this goal?
Communicate effectively about Missoula Connect to ensure that 80% of people the project team engage with say the 2020 update fills a need in the community’s planning efforts.	To demonstrate to stakeholders and the public that the MPO is strongly positioned to identify the best long-range solutions for Missoula and surrounding community.
Conduct conversations with no less than 15 key Missoula-area organizations, helping local influencers to understand the timing of this project and how it fits within long-term goals for the area.	To form a more collaborative, positive relationship with leaders in the Missoula Valley who can focus conversations specifically to the LRTP rather than various infrastructure needs.
Build awareness of the MPO's responsiveness, as evidenced by additional outreach opportunities designed to gather at least 250 new comments over the course of the project.	To build public trust in the MPO and to demonstrate the investment and specific role of the MPO in the larger planning area.
Develop and execute a communication strategy that disseminates accurate, easily understood facts across multiple channels used by Missoula area residents. Provide opportunities for residents to learn about the MPO’s planning and future project nomination processes and timing and funding considerations, reaching 20,000 Missoula area residents.	To create an informed public pertaining to Missoula Connect and the MPO’s role in general.
Meet with all local elected officials and key government staff, as well as state legislators, at least once in 2020 to ensure they understand the Long-Range Transportation Plan and the ways project prioritization can better align with budget goals, such as the City and County’s Capital Improvement Plans (CIP).	To engage and educate officials about the MPO’s mission, processes, and efforts to engage residents and taxpayers. This will also serve as an opportunity to educate officials regarding the MPO’s project nomination progress and timing/funding considerations, demonstrating that the MPO is well organized and is listening to community feedback.

APPROACH TO EARLY PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

This section outlines potential public involvement activities for Missoula Connect between January and August 2020. Building relationships early will help set the tone for the project. Stakeholder outreach and education will be conducted in tandem with gathering feedback. Methods will include, but are not limited to, a public open house/interactive engagement meeting, stakeholder meetings, pop-up meetings with property owners and businesses, coffee shop discussions, and potentially an educational video promoted on social media platforms. Working with the public early in the project will lay the groundwork for positive relationships moving forward.

To help demonstrate the MPO's commitment to the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and to the community, we will be encouraging public dialogue. We want to be highly visible in the community, providing members of the public with multiple opportunities for engagement. By meeting them where they are, we'll reach a diverse audience, and especially those who might not otherwise get involved through traditional outreach methods such as public meetings or who have not felt empowered to share their thoughts on planning efforts to date.

In addition to the in-person approaches outlined below, the project team will establish a website and develop materials to explain the relationship between this plan update, transportation funding, and agency roles in transportation project design and implementation. Our objective in this early stage is to illustrate "the why" behind the plan update.

Phase 1: Education

Through the Needs Assessment and initial outreach and research, we have learned that public involvement will need to begin with education. The first phase of project outreach will be focused on providing the general public, key stakeholders/partners, and government agencies with background on who the Missoula Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is and why the MPO is the agency charged with updating the LRTP.

Starting with a strong, inclusive, and inviting public involvement approach is critical. Because the larger Missoula-area community is undergoing a great deal of development and planning, this project must stand alone while supporting the work of partner agencies. We want to begin laying the foundation for collecting public feedback through the following activities.

January: Kickoff Activities

- Finalize Needs Assessment themes
- Develop comprehensive public involvement plan
- Establish a project logo and brand

February: Early Research

- Build stakeholder database and begin light-touch partner meetings
- Develop one or two question survey
- Draft MPO introduction and project key points
- Establish feedback criteria with the MPO
- Update webpage content and launch new forum
- Start coffee shop-style meetings with the general public and agency partners

March: MPO Awareness

- Continue with tactics outlined previously
- Begin working on MPO educational materials
- Host a public event to share Missoula's transportation past and introduce the project (as the transportation future)
- Launch initial public survey
- Develop an LRTP video

April: Preparing for High-Touch Outreach

- Begin preparing media and advertising materials for May and June outreach
- Offer community briefings
- Develop engagement-in-a-box toolkit
- Plan pop-up events

Phase 2: Engagement

Phase 1 is designed to establish a strong foundation from which the MPO can build into Missoula Connect-specific messaging. Phase 2 leverages that base to begin strategically connecting with stakeholders, community partners, agencies, and non-profit organizations. This phase builds toward the first week in June, when the project team will host a series of public events. The focus from May through August will be to gather extensive feedback, building on the relationships created in Phase 1.

May: Resident and Stakeholder Outreach

- Engage with neighborhood groups and neighborhood councils
- Leverage new engagement toolkit
- Market June events
- Staff tables (and pop-up) at local grocery stores, Food Bank, and other community locations

June: Public Outreach Bonanza

- June 3: Start outreach with interactive booth at Out to Lunch
- June 4: Hold similar outreach at Downtown ToNight
- June 5: Participate in First Friday
- Push media relations and web updates
- Present project at existing meetings
- Begin social media campaigns

July-August: Keep Riding the Public Involvement Train

- Report back to the community what we've heard to date
- Begin using initial feedback
- Continue media relations, web updates, social media, and online engagement
- Prepare engagement plan for final project phase

Phase 3: Adoption and Implementation

Phase 3 tactics and deliverables will be dictated by the success and proven strategies of Phases 1 and 2. Continual review and evaluation of the engagement plan will help to ensure that any new or supplemental strategies can be successfully executed in Phase 3.

Ongoing updates will be provided online and in-person, as needed. There will also be a media relations strategy and goals to keep the feedback loop open for those who may have missed summer outreach pushes. As the project team begins drafting plans, scenarios, and presentations, more detailed strategies for community and partner engagement will be developed.

Phase 3 will focus on reporting to the community what we have heard and how we are using their feedback. The goal is to demonstrate that the development of Missoula Connect has been as transparent and inclusive as it is important. We want those involved to know they are part of shaping the community's future.