

# **Public Involvement in Transportation Decision Making**

Maine Department of Transportation

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## **Contents**

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>MaineDOT's Vision, Mission, Core Values and Goals.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Purpose of Public Involvement.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Public Involvement Requirements.....</b>	<b>4</b>
Federal Requirements for Public Involvement.....	5
Maine's Sensible Transportation Policy Act.....	7
<b>Tools for Public Involvement.....</b>	<b>7</b>
Public Hearings, Public Informational Meetings, Charrettes and Workshops.....	8
Public Advisory Committees.....	8
Stakeholder Groups.....	9
Public Notices.....	9
Outreach Office.....	9
Business and Community Liaisons.....	10
MaineDOT Website.....	10
Social Media.....	10
Customer Satisfaction Assessment Survey.....	11
Geographic Information Systems (GIS).....	11
Visualization.....	11
Enhanced Project Scoping.....	12
Consultative Planning for Non-Metropolitan Local Officials.....	12
<b>Public Involvement for Planning Documents.....</b>	<b>12</b>
Long-Range Statewide Transportation Plan .....	12
Major Studies.....	14
NEPA Documents.....	14
MaineDOT Work Plan.....	16
Statewide Transportation Improvement Program.....	16
Locally Coordinated Plans and State Management Plan (Transit).....	17
Statewide Strategic Transit Plan .....	17
State Rail Plan.....	18
Integrated Freight Strategy.....	18
Aviation Facility Plans.....	18
<b>Traditionally Underserved Populations and Environmental Justice.....</b>	<b>19</b>
Public Involvement and Traditionally Underserved Populations.....	19
Environmental Justice.....	20
<b>Public Involvement for Transportation Improvement Projects.....</b>	<b>20</b>
Project Design.....	21
<b>Public Involvement for Maintenance and Operations.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Public Involvement and Partner Agencies.....</b>	<b>22</b>
Tribal Governments.....	22
Metropolitan Planning Organizations.....	23
Regional Planning Organizations.....	24
Standing Advisory Committees and Transportation Authorities.....	24

## **Introduction**

Planning for the future needs of Maine's transportation system takes place on multiple levels. Many people and organizations provide input for the decisions that help shape the future of the system by which Maine's residents, workers and visitors will travel, and by which goods will be transported, around the state. The Maine Department of Transportation, (MaineDOT) along with partner agencies—municipalities, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, Regional Planning Organizations, counties, native American tribes, public transportation authorities, private-sector entities, other state and federal agencies, and most importantly, the general public—all have a role in the transportation decision-making process.

An important element of transparency and accountability in the provision of transportation services is development of an inclusive public involvement process that helps educate the public and, at the same time, provides early, continuous and meaningful opportunities for participation in decision-making during all phases of transportation planning and implementation. The purpose of this document is to outline the public involvement processes that MaineDOT uses to engage a broad array of stakeholders in statewide transportation planning, project development and maintenance activities. From statewide and metropolitan long-range planning and programming processes through individual project design, construction and maintenance, MaineDOT is obligated to reach out, not only to the general public, but also to populations that have sometimes been underserved by the transportation system, or that have lacked access to the decision-making process.

*Public Involvement in Transportation Decision Making* is intended to document and strengthen how MaineDOT engages people and communities throughout the state. The department will continuously refine and improve its public participation methods and activities over time, based on feedback and direction provided by the department's customers—the users of the transportation system—and by other stakeholders in Maine's transportation system.

## **MaineDOT Vision, Mission, Core Values and Goals**

In 2012, MaineDOT developed *The MaineDOT Strategic Plan (SP-12)* to establish a department-wide framework for the strategic direction and operation of the department. *SP-12*, updated in 2014 (*2014 Update*), is a practical roadmap intended to guide the department's operational policies, decisions and expectations for the foreseeable future. In *SP-12*, the department's vision, mission, core values and goals are identified:

### ***Vision***

*To be the most trusted organization in Maine by being open, accountable and responsive*

### ***Mission***

*To responsibly provide our customers the safest and most reliable transportation system possible, given available resources*

### ***Core Values***

*Integrity, Competence, Service*

### ***Goals***

*Manage the existing system, support economic opportunity and build trust*

Meaningful public involvement can contribute positively to the department's overall strategy—to become a highly trusted organization; to carry out the mission to provide customers with a safe and reliable transportation system; to exemplify core values of integrity, competence and service; and to achieve the goals of managing the system, supporting economic opportunity and building trust.

## **Purpose of Public Involvement**

According to the Federal Highway Administration website, "*Public participation is an integral part of the transportation process that helps to ensure that decisions are made in consideration of and to benefit public needs and preferences.*" Transportation agencies provide opportunities for public involvement in the planning and decision-making processes in order to accomplish multiple purposes, including to:

- **Obtain Quality Input and Involvement** - Comments that are relevant, constructive and will contribute to better decisions, plans, policies, programs and projects.
- **Provide Opportunity to Build Consensus** - An effective public involvement process can facilitate and increase public support for specific, recommended actions.
- **Ensure Accessibility** - Public participation opportunities that are geographically, physically, temporally, linguistically, and culturally accessible, help ensure that all stakeholders have a voice.
- **Ensure Diversity** - Good transportation planning elicits a range of socioeconomic, ethnic and cultural perspectives, including from people who reside in low-income and minority neighborhoods, and from other traditionally underserved communities.
- **Establish and Maintain Partnerships** - Partnerships with communities and community-based organizations can help create long-term support for the projects, programs, and activities of the transportation agency.
- **Foster Participant Satisfaction** - People who take the time to participate deserve assurance that it is worth the effort to join the discussion and provide feedback.
- **Clearly Define the Potential for Influence** - A well-crafted public involvement process effectively communicates where and how participants can influence decisions.
- **Establish the Department's Commitment** - Regular communication by the transportation agency can help establish trust with affected communities, and help build community capacity to provide quality public input.
- **Establish Relevance** - Effective public involvement processes help frame issues so that the significance and potential impacts are well understood by participants.

## **Public Involvement Requirements**

*Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-Making* is intended to address applicable state and federal laws and regulations with a documented public involvement process for statewide transportation planning, programming and project development. The federal agencies to which MaineDOT is primarily accountable—the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal

Transit Administration (FTA), Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)—each have their own requirements relating to public involvement in transportation planning and project delivery. In this plan, the department intends to address all of those requirements, as well as those of the state of Maine, in a single document.

## Federal Requirements for Public Involvement

The principles of public involvement are comparable across those federal agencies that regulate state DOTs and disburse federal funds for transportation. Federal requirements concerning public participation in statewide transportation decision-making are specified in Title 23 and Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR); in the Passenger Rail Improvement and Investment Act of 2008; in the Civil Rights Act of 1964; in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); and in other federal laws and regulations. Federal requirements generally leave the choice of methods for facilitating participation to the discretion of each state, but require that public participation processes provide:

- Early and continuing opportunities for public involvement
- Open public meetings at convenient and accessible locations, and at convenient times
- Timely and complete information on transportation issues and decision-making processes
- Reasonable access to technical and policy information
- Information electronically accessible on the Internet
- Adequate notice of public involvement opportunities, and time for review and comment at key decision points
- Procedures for demonstrating explicit consideration of and responses to public input
- A process for soliciting and considering the needs of traditionally underserved populations
- Visualization techniques to describe proposed plans and studies
- Opportunities for collaborative input on alternatives
- An allotment of time for review of and written comment in the development of long-range plans and transportation improvement programs before new procedures, major revisions to existing procedures or investment programs are adopted
- Periodic review and evaluation of the public participation process

Title 23, Ch. 450 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) establishes the fundamental public involvement requirements for the Federal-Aid Highway Program, which is administered by the FHWA, and also for the programs of the Federal Transit Administration. This section of Title 23 requires states to “develop and use a documented public involvement process that provides opportunities for public review and comment at key decision points.” The main provisions of these requirements in federal code are consistent with the elements enumerated above—early and continuous opportunities, access to information, adequate public notice, convenient meeting locations, electronic availability of information, consideration of traditionally underserved communities, and periodic review of the public involvement process. This section of federal code is the original impetus for all states to develop public involvement plans. It is MaineDOT’s policy and practice to satisfy these requirements using the techniques and strategies identified in this plan.

Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) regulations also require states to involve public and private stakeholders—including private railroads that own rail-related infrastructure—in development and review of state rail plans. They must be notified and given the opportunity to provide input on the State Rail Plan as it is being prepared, with reasonable time allowed for public and stakeholder review. The occasions and times for public involvement during State Rail Plan development are determined by states in collaboration with the public and stakeholders. States are encouraged to incorporate the public involvement associated with State Rail Plan development within the public involvement processes established for overall statewide/nonmetropolitan planning process, with the inclusion of a range of interested stakeholder groups, including, for example, the state freight advisory committees encouraged by MAP-21 (the current federal surface transportation authorization act.)

The Federal Aviation Administration requires that grant applicants “provide active, early, and continuous public involvement and reasonable public access to information that accurately describes a proposed project and its environmental effects. Applicants must ask for and consider public input on plans, proposals, alternatives, impacts, and mitigation. They must use public involvement techniques designed to meet the needs of different interest groups and individuals, and promote an active public role to lessen potentially adverse community reaction to the agency actions needed to ensure safe, efficient aviation.

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1970 (NEPA) is a national policy that endeavors to prevent or minimize the adverse impacts to the environment that may be caused by activities with a federal nexus, and to promote the health and welfare of citizens when those federal actions occur. NEPA is a decision-making process that engages with the public on potential environmental impacts, collects and integrates public feedback in decision-making and informs the public of how decisions are made with regards to proposed impacts to the environment. The NEPA process involves an evaluation of a set of alternatives and their associated environmental impacts. MaineDOT is obligated to satisfy a federal requirement for public involvement and opportunities for public hearings in the NEPA process, including FHWA requirements to maintain a public involvement process, and it is the department’s practice to satisfy the law and its underlying intent. Pursuant to 23 USC 128 and 23 CFR 771.111, public involvement procedures must provide for:

- Coordination of public-involvement activities and public hearings
- Early and continuing opportunities for the public to be involved in the identification of social, economic, and environmental impacts, as well as impacts associated with relocation of individuals, groups, or institutions
- One or more public hearings, or the opportunity for hearing(s) for any federal-aid project that:
  - Requires significant amounts of property acquisition
  - Substantially changes the layout or functions of connecting roadways or of the facility being improved
  - Has a substantial adverse impact on abutting property
  - Has a significant social, economic, environmental or other effect
  - The federal agency has determined should have a public hearing, because it is in the public interest

MaineDOT conscientiously observes the NEPA-related FHWA requirements for planning processes and studies, and development of road and bridge improvement projects.

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) requires federal agencies to take into account the effects of their projects on historic properties, and afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation a reasonable opportunity to comment. The responsible federal agency first determines whether it has an undertaking that is a type of activity that could affect historic properties. Historic properties are properties that are included in the National Register of Historic Places or that meet the criteria for the National Register. During project development, the department will send notifications to the tribes and the towns, requesting information about historic properties as part of Section 106 consultation. These consultations are coordinated with the appropriate State Historic Preservation Officer/Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO/THPO) to determine eligibility. If eligible, the department will coordinate with the department's project manager to avoid, minimize or mitigate for impacts to National Register-eligible or -listed properties. Depending on the community interest, the department and the SHPO may hold public meetings to share project information and receive public comment.

### **Maine's Sensible Transportation Policy Act**

Maine's Sensible Transportation Policy Act (STPA) was enacted by voter referendum in 1991; the STPA's Administrative Rule was updated most recently in 2008. The law and rule require a planning process that provides for meaningful public involvement opportunities and gives proper consideration to the diverse transportation needs of the people of the state and to transportation efficiency, energy conservation, and the effects of transportation on the environment.

The STPA stipulates that transportation planning decisions and project decisions must minimize the harmful effects of transportation on public health, and that a full range of reasonable transportation alternatives must be evaluated for significant highway construction and reconstruction projects. With regard to public involvement, the STPA requires MaineDOT to incorporate a public participation process in which local governmental bodies and the general public have timely notice, and opportunities for the public to identify and comment on concerns related to transportation project and planning decisions. MaineDOT and the Maine Turnpike Authority are required to take the comments and concerns into account and must respond to them in a timely fashion.  
<http://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/23/title23sec73.html>

### **Tools for Public Involvement**

The MaineDOT approach to public involvement is based on the concept that everyone who uses Maine's transportation system is a *customer*. The department's decision-making processes are based in the collection and analysis of reliable transportation data, the value of which can be enhanced by the insights, knowledge and preferences of transportation customers. Quality public participation can best be carried out when customers are identified and brought into the planning process early, and continue to be involved throughout the various phases of transportation decision-making. MaineDOT planning-level and project-level public participation incorporates public input in the development of both long-term goals and project implementation. MaineDOT's public involvement processes include public meetings and hearings, as well as advisory and stakeholder committees and participation of other transportation planning partners, such as the state's Regional Planning Organizations, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, tribal governments, and the Maine Turnpike Authority. The make-up and jurisdiction of these groups helps ensure that MaineDOT receives

substantive input from people in urban and rural areas, statewide and with respect to all transportation modes, on an ongoing basis.

### **Public Hearings, Public Informational Meetings, Charrettes and Workshops**

MaineDOT conducts *formal* public hearings most frequently when they are related to transportation improvement projects in the design phase, and also during transportation planning studies, at specified milestones. At a formal public hearing, testimony from any and all sides of an issue is heard or collected, and then recorded for the public record, usually by a professional stenographer. In some cases, formal public hearings are not explicitly required by law, but in other instances, such as NEPA studies, the requirement for a formal public hearing is mandated at certain steps in the process.

Planning and project development activities often include public informational meetings. Such meetings may be hosted by the department, or by a municipality or another public entity. Public informational meetings are generally not required, but they provide opportunities for members of the public to learn about and comment on proposed transportation projects or activities. The department endeavors to schedule public meetings on dates and at times that can maximize participation of those who may be affected by the proposed action, and at locations that are convenient and accessible to all who may have interest in the proposed actions.

Public hearings and public meetings are conventional tools in the public involvement portfolio, providing direct and efficient means of engaging the public, and they are often expected by participants. In other cases, more informal approaches, such as design charrettes and workshops, can be effective in eliciting information from participants in the public process, including those who might not speak at a public meeting. A design charrette is a planning meeting in which customers, planners, designers, technical experts and decision-makers work together to develop ideas to address the transportation issues at hand. Charrettes enable on-the-spot feedback and enfranchise participants as creative collaborators. The workshop approach often involves two-way exchange of information at several stations in a large meeting room. Subject experts at each station use one-on-one conversation both to educate participants and to collect information and preferences from customers. These informal tools are sometimes useful to MaineDOT in planning studies and development of projects, the main advantages being efficient engagement and enabling a voice for more people.

### **Public Advisory Committees**

MaineDOT also convenes public advisory committees (PACs) for some studies and projects, to facilitate informed public input while transportation planning or project-development efforts are in progress. A public advisory committee may be formed to assist with a specific transportation study, project design or initiative, or may have an ongoing role related to a specific area of the transportation field or mode, (e.g., the Maine Aeronautical Advisory Board.) It is important that members of an advisory committee clearly understand the advisory role and that they do not have expectations that their input will determine the decisions that are ultimately made. The input provided by a public advisory committee is understood to be non-binding, and ultimate decisions will still rest with MaineDOT or the responsible authority. Advisory committees are most often comprised of people with knowledge of the transportation issue or project under consideration, and

interested members of the general public who are willing to give their time and effort to assist with assessment of the transportation questions under consideration.

## **Stakeholder Groups**

A stakeholder group, or committee, is a type of advisory committee the department sometimes creates to gather input from parties with strong interest in a specific transportation issue, study effort or transportation improvement project. Stakeholder groups may be comprised of people with similar interests (e.g., business advisory group, comprised solely of business representatives.) Or, a stakeholder group may represent a broader cross section of interests related to the transportation topic or a geographic area, (e.g., environmental, business, local government, disabled, bicycle-pedestrian, school, transit and public utility interests related to a highway or bridge improvement project.) Members of stakeholder groups can share information with and gather feedback from their peer communities, serve as liaisons between those communities and the project team, and work collaboratively with sometimes conflicting interests to develop recommendations that are acceptable. MaineDOT has used stakeholder groups successfully to help assess alternatives and develop consensus on large or otherwise challenging transportation projects.

## **Public Notices**

State and federal regulations often include the requirement for public notice upon filing a permit application. Specifically, Section 404 of the Federal Clean Water Act and Maine's Natural Resources Protection Act require an applicant to provide public notice, less than 30 days prior to submittal, for any project requiring a permit for more than a de minimis activity. MaineDOT routinely publishes notice of its intention to file an application in newspapers local to the project, and in those larger circulation newspapers within the activity's region. Public notices require a brief description of the project, and a contact person for more information.

## **Outreach Office**

MaineDOT plays an important role in connecting Maine communities to other parts of the state, to other states and even to other countries. The department's diversity of processes, policies and projects is complex and can be formidable. To address this challenge, MaineDOT created an Outreach Office in 2014 to provide a one-stop resource to answer customers' transportation questions, to link customers with the appropriate offices and individuals at the department, to listen to customer input and to facilitate customer participation in the department's decision-making processes. A regional planner from the Outreach Office is assigned to one or more of the department's five maintenance regions in order to provide quality customer service, regardless of the transportation mode or process. Depending on the complexity of a customer inquiry, the regional planner will respond by phone or email, or may visit the customer to discuss concerns and issues. The Outreach Office strives to engage the public continuously regarding future and current transportation projects, studies, transportation issues and initiatives across all communities and regions of the state.

## **Business and Community Liaisons**

In 2015, MaineDOT created new Business and Community Relations Liaison (BCRL) positions to supplement and augment the activities of the Outreach Office. BCRLs serve as liaisons to community leaders, businesses, law enforcement officers, chambers of commerce, and stakeholder organizations such as the Maine Municipal Association. As such, BCRLs provide yet another conduit for public and stakeholder input for department decisions. The BCRL positions report directly to MaineDOT's Executive Office, so the input gathered by these staff members is taken in at the highest staff levels of the department. The BCRLs maintain defined coverage areas, but work together on major projects and issues.

## **MaineDOT Website**

MaineDOT's Internet website is intended to further MaineDOT's mission through relevant, timely and easily accessible information and resources, and thereby to support effective public involvement. The website is designed to be user-focused, easy-to-navigate and up-to-date. The website offers the public continuous, "24/7" access to information and the ability to offer input or ask questions at any time. The website provides a variety of information from the bureaus and offices of the department, and also provides a means for the public to contribute input on transportation plans, programs, policies and projects. Comments and inquiries will be directed to the relevant bureau or office in the department for timely responses. Of particular relevance to public involvement are draft publications and reports such as the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program and major project planning documents, long-range plans, preliminary construction plans, planning studies, and Locally Coordinated Plans and State Management Plans for transit, to name a few. The department policy is to respond to inquiries submitted to the website within two business days. [www.mainedot.gov](http://www.mainedot.gov)

## **Social Media**

Social media is an increasingly essential means for reaching younger demographics, and is also popular among baby boomers and seniors. MaineDOT maintains Facebook and Twitter pages. The department uses Facebook primarily to distribute public information, and features events like Walk-and-Bike-to-School Week, Work-Zone-Safety-Awareness Week, and announcements about publications such as the draft Long-Range Plan, the annual Work Plan and other reports where public comment is encouraged. Facebook is also used for significant construction-project announcements or unexpected traffic delays due to highway incidents. When a new project or initiative, (e.g., a customer-satisfaction survey) is launched, MaineDOT provides a link to the appropriate web page, where there is typically a project-specific "comments" option. The public input received will either go directly to the project manager or to an appropriate employee for response. The MaineDOT Twitter account is used strictly for news releases but, as such, does provide project information as part of the public involvement process.

*mySidewalk* is an online, interactive, social media tool that MaineDOT has recently adopted to make it easy for the public to explore and learn about planning studies, projects in development, and construction activities. *mySidewalk* enables participants to share their interest, knowledge and expertise through conversations with other members of the public, municipal officials and transportation agencies, the underlying principle being that public input and ideas can contribute to

solving local and regional transportation issues, and can sometimes inspire new initiatives. The department regularly posts planning and project questions on *mySidewalk*, facilitating real-time collection of feedback from local residents and other transportation customers. It makes it possible for the department to connect with more community members with targeted notifications and announcements, and to make more informed decisions using live data. The department encourages all users of the transportation system to use this online, interactive, web-based resource. <https://mainedot.mysidewalk.com/>

### **Customer Satisfaction Assessment Survey**

One action item of the MaineDOT Strategic Plan, SP-12 was development and deployment of a customer satisfaction assessment survey. In 2014, using a widely used web-based survey tool, the department asked customers about their travel habits and patterns, their relative preferences of transportation modes, their views of the state transportation system, and their views of MaineDOT's performance as stewards of the state transportation system. The information developed in this effort was collated and summarized for use in developing the Long-Range Transportation Needs Assessment, and as an ongoing reference for department management and staff. This broad-based survey will be revised and periodically repeated. Other, more statistically valid survey tools may be considered in the future to more precisely ascertain customer evaluation of the transportation system, the public view of the department's performance, and customer preferences.

### **Geographic Information Systems (GIS)**

MaineDOT uses Geographic Information Systems (GIS) primarily for internal data integration and analysis, inventory and communications. GIS also provides an effective means for external communication and public involvement. Since the department's beginnings, static maps have provided the public with information about specific locations, such as individual project sites. In recent years, MaineDOT has increasingly used online GIS mapping tools such as the *MaineDOT Map Viewer* to provide infrastructure and investment information to the public, as well as to planning and operational partners. The *Map Viewer* provides Internet users with access to map-based information about Maine's transportation infrastructure and associated MaineDOT work. Well-designed, static map images and paper maps shown at public meetings and in publications can also help agencies and the public better understand a project and potential issues.

Using GIS web pages (such as the *Map Viewer*) for project-level public involvement allows the audience to navigate an interactive map of the project area, view data layers of interest, and perform simple searches using a common web browser. This web page enables customers to review proposed project plans and provide comments directly to the project manager. The *Map Viewer* is accessible using MaineDOT's website: [www.mainedot.gov](http://www.mainedot.gov) through the *Work Plan* web page or through the context of specific topics such as the *Posted Roads*, *Construction Advertise Plan* and *Construction Advertise Schedule* web pages. <http://www.maine.gov/mdot/mapviewer/>

### **Visualization**

Visualization refers to various computerized methods for graphically rendering a proposed project or an element of a proposed project (e.g., a bridge or overpass) to provide the project team, agencies, and the public with a better understanding of how the facility will look in its environment.

Visualizations may include terrain, vegetation, hydrography, land use and land cover, existing transportation facilities, above-ground utilities, and proposed facilities. Visualization techniques include simulations (static images resembling a photograph of the built facility) and animations (computer-generated video, as in a drive- or fly-through rendition, that places either the viewer or landscape features in motion). Project simulations and animations are currently being developed for MaineDOT planning studies and for project development. These are used at public meetings, and the department is exploring ways to expand their use to web-based applications. Visualization provides the public with the opportunity to see what a project is going to look like on the ground, and enables public involvement and design modifications during project decision-making.

### **Enhanced Project Scoping**

Enhanced Project Scoping (EPS) is a coordinated process for engaging stakeholders regarding a specific transportation matter. The EPS process is used on a limited number of projects each year to help decide the best course of action when the project is complex or controversial. Through the EPS process, the department strives to clearly define a project's purpose and need, assess alternatives to achieve the stated purpose and need, and ultimately to develop a clear scope of work for candidate projects for the Work Plan. EPS is often initiated as a result of customer concerns about potential project impacts to residents, businesses and travelers. The public process for EPS is unique to the characteristics of each project. Scoping efforts can range from a 15-minute presentation at a selectboard meeting to utilization of websites, advisory committees, design charrettes and multiple project-specific meetings. Since EPS efforts are primarily stakeholder partnerships, MaineDOT often defers to the host municipality regarding the specific public involvement processes that will work best for them. These communities typically sponsor the public processes, meetings, and other activities, and EPS staff are invited as participants.

### **Consultative Planning Process for Non-Metropolitan Local Officials**

Pursuant to federal requirements, MaineDOT developed *Consultative Planning Process for Non-Metropolitan Local Officials*, to document and obtain input on the processes by which MaineDOT consults with municipal officials. This document, finalized in 2011, describes the statewide planning process, plans, and planning tools. Specifically, the plan also outlines the activities of the Maine Local Roads Center, the Maine Roads Scholar Program, Locally Administered Projects, and how and with whom local officials can communicate the transportation needs and concerns of their communities. This plan will be updated in 2016 per federal requirement.

## **Public Involvement for Planning Documents**

MaineDOT develops a variety of planning documents. The associated public involvement activities for each may differ in various respects, according to federal requirements, what communities are affected, the transportation mode(s), and the nature of the specific planning document.

### **Long-Range Statewide Transportation Plan**

Federal and state laws require that every state develop a long-range statewide transportation plan to set out a vision for the future of the state transportation system, to identify the needs of the system,

and to propose how best to meet those needs. Maine's next long-range statewide transportation plan—the *Long-Range Transportation Needs Assessment* (or LRTNA)—will be a statewide, comprehensive, multimodal transportation plan that sets forth goals, objectives and strategies for MaineDOT to pursue in response to Maine's transportation needs. The LRTNA will tie together the department's "family of plans"—the various modal plans developed by the department—to plan for future investment, and to satisfy federal and state requirements. The LRTNA will be primarily a policy document and, in general, does not identify specific transportation improvement projects. MaineDOT will update the LRTNA periodically to meet the state requirement of a long-range multimodal plan with a planning horizon of at least 10 years, and the federal (FHWA and FTA) requirements of a long-range plan with a planning horizon of at least 20 years. MaineDOT's LRTNA will evaluate and make recommendations for investments in Maine's transportation systems:

- Highways and bridges
- Public transportation, including local and intercity buses, passenger rail, ferries, and airports
- Sidewalks and other pedestrian facilities
- Bicycle lanes and other bicycle facilities
- Marine facilities, including access to them
- Freight rail and motor carriers
- Transportation system management, such as ridesharing
- Scenic, historic and natural resource connections with transportation systems
- Current and emerging technological innovations relative to transportation

MaineDOT will provide notice to the public of its intent to publish or update the LRTNA. The notice will be posted online at [www.mainedot.gov](http://www.mainedot.gov), and by mailings or e-mail notices to municipal officials and known parties of interest. Notices will also be sent to the applicable Regional Planning Organizations (RPOs), Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and tribal governments.

In early 2015, the department's Outreach Office conducted statewide listening sessions—"Talking Transportation"—to gather public input for the LRTNA, as well as to pioneer a format for periodic, non-project-specific interaction with the general public. Meetings were held at convenient times, and at a variety of locations that were accessible, and selected to attract a cross section of citizens, business representatives and municipal stakeholders. Public announcements of these meetings were published in newspapers of regional interest and at the MaineDOT website. Notices were also sent to RPOs, MPOs and tribal governments, and these groups were also engaged to inform other interested parties about the meetings.

These sessions served as forums to discuss the condition of the state's transportation system (all modes), to define system deficiencies and to identify alternative solutions and overall transportation system priorities, all in the context of anticipated funding availability. The information obtained through this public engagement technique will be incorporated into the LRTNA draft document. In the future, similar meetings may also occur in association with the development of other transportation planning documents or programs.

Once in draft form, the LRTNA will be made available to the public through notices in statewide newspapers of record, and by publication of the plan on the MaineDOT website. MaineDOT will also make the draft available to RPOs, MPOs, tribal governments, MaineDOT Region Offices and

state depository libraries. After giving due consideration to all of the public comments received, MaineDOT will publish the final LRTNA, and will post it on the department's website.

## **Major Studies**

MaineDOT conducts major studies to evaluate potential new or expanded transportation facilities when potential investments could result in significant environmental impacts, or as directed by the Maine Legislature. Major studies must be conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Maine Sensible Transportation Policy Act (STPA), and if any project phase relies on federal funds or requires a federal action, with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Major studies include transportation feasibility studies, Environmental Assessments (EAs), and Environmental Impact Statements (EISs). Each major study will have a project-specific public involvement process. Examples of public involvement techniques used for major studies include steering and stakeholder advisory committees, Internet sites, business surveys, formal public meetings and newsletters.

MaineDOT will contact municipal representatives, RPOs, MPOs, tribal governments, environmental and historic groups, and others within the projected study area to identify customers and stakeholders who might be interested in becoming involved in the study. A steering committee may be convened to provide meaningful input to MaineDOT throughout the study effort. The steering committee identifies potential stakeholders who may then be invited to serve on the study-specific stakeholder committee. A formal study-specific Public Involvement Plan is developed and frequently, a neutral public involvement facilitator is retained to ensure complete and continuous public involvement throughout the study.

## **NEPA Documents**

As previously explained, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires public involvement activities appropriate to the level of environmental documentation of a proposed federal action. The key public involvement elements associated with NEPA substantially align with the public involvement components described previously in this plan:

- Coordination of public involvement activities and public hearings with the entire NEPA process
- Early and continuing opportunities for the public to be involved in the identification of social, economic, and environmental impacts, as well as impacts associated with relocation of individuals, groups, or institutions
- One or more public hearings or the opportunity for hearing(s) to be held by the state highway agency at a convenient time and place for any Federal-Aid project that requires significant acquisition of right-of-way, substantial changes in the layout or functions of connecting roadways or of the facility being improved, substantial adverse impact on abutting properties, other significant social, economic, environmental or other effect, or for which the federal agency determines that a public hearing is in the public interest
- Reasonable notice to the public of either a public hearing or the opportunity for a public hearing

The three levels of environmental documentation are:

**Categorical Exclusion (CE)** - Environmental documentation for a project deemed to be on a list of project types that do not adversely impact the environment. Public involvement related to CE-level environmental documents is subject, at a minimum to federal requirements for early and ongoing coordination with local officials and the general public. Through its annual Work Plan, its continuous contact with municipal officials and its availability to other customers, MaineDOT provides ongoing channels to comment on and influence decision-making for these relatively generic projects and activities.

**Environmental Assessment (EA)** - An Environmental Assessment is a considerably more involved process in which experts and interested parties are consulted to determine potential environmental impacts of a proposed federal action. The EA process develops and examines a list of possible alternatives to address a transportation need. The law requires the department to conduct public hearings if they are requested by local officials or other interested parties, and MaineDOT also provides a public comment period for draft EA documents. If the outcome of the EA process is a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), the final document is then published and made available to affected federal, state, local or tribal government entities, or to any customer or interested party, as requested.

**Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)** - For proposed federal actions where significant environmental impacts are apparent, or when an EA determines that significant impacts will occur, the state, under the authority of the federal agency, may be required to conduct an EIS process. The EIS is a more exhaustive examination of multiple alternative solutions to a transportation need, and the impacts associated with them. The EIS process requires more comprehensive public involvement, beginning with public announcement of the intent to prepare an EIS document, one or more public hearings and extensive opportunity for public comment on drafts of a final document. Every EIS effort will include development of a public involvement plan specific to that planning project. Working with the federal agency, the department will also generally convene and oversee a public advisory committee to provide informed input over the course of the study. MaineDOT is involved in only one EIS-level planning effort at this time, but MaineDOT's approach to public process for EIS-level environmental documents has been and will be rigorous in its effort to meet and exceed NEPA requirements. Painstaking attention to an effective public involvement process is more likely to result in successful planning efforts and ultimately, to projects that are constructed, as opposed to being stalled or halted as a result of non-compliance with federal process.

**Documentation** - Careful and thorough documentation of NEPA process and public involvement surrounding NEPA studies is essential to demonstrate compliance with the intent and letter of the federal process. MaineDOT will maintain a complete record of public participation components and events for any NEPA study, including public notices, brochures or other handouts, exhibits, meeting notes and transcripts, comments and responses to comments, and all correspondence (including e-mails) of the study team and involved parties. A Final EIS (FEIS) will include discussion of any 'substantive' comments received during the course of the study and the comment period, as well as of the department's responses to those comments.

**Public Notice for NEPA** - At a minimum, MaineDOT incorporates the following public notice time frames per NEPA public notice requirements:

- Public Meetings: 7 or more calendar days
- Public Hearings (when applicable): 15 or more calendar days

- Public Comment Periods for draft reports: 45 calendar days
- Posting by federal agencies of Final EA and FEIS in the Federal Register: 30 days

**Website** - For EIS-level studies, study data, analyses and technical memoranda are posted to the MaineDOT website or to a study-specific website to ensure all pertinent study materials are available to the general public. The website typically includes meeting notices, agendas and summaries, presentation materials, technical memoranda, the study's stated "purpose and need", measures of effectiveness, and descriptions of the alternatives to be considered. Draft reports and final report recommendations are also posted to the website.

### **MaineDOT Work Plan**

MaineDOT's annual Work Plan is developed each year to describe all projects and work activities planned by the department for a three-year period. On an ongoing basis, input from public officials, from members of transportation stakeholder organizations and from members of the general public is incorporated in development of the Work Plan. MaineDOT continuously receives requests and comments from municipal officials, lawmakers, transportation stakeholders and the general public in the form of letters, e-mails, phone calls and petitions. These requests and comments are evaluated by appropriate MaineDOT staff and considered in the development of the Work Plan. MaineDOT publishes the Work Plan on the MaineDOT website and continues to accept comments and questions about the plan on an ongoing basis.

The public can also influence what work is in the Work Plan through participation in development of the department's long-range plan—the LRTNA. During development of the LRTNA, regional meetings are held across the state to obtain public and municipal input on potential candidate projects. Members of the public can also provide input into the Work Plan process through other periodic regional meetings conducted by the Outreach Office. These regional meetings are held with service center communities and stakeholders by MaineDOT regional planning staff to discuss proposed transportation projects, major development proposals, studies, and department initiatives.

### **Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)**

The Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is a federally required document that lists federally funded transportation projects for a four-year time period. All projects funded by either the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) or Federal Transit Administration (FTA) must be listed in an approved STIP before they can be eligible for federal funding. The STIP demonstrates fiscal constraint and compliance with the Clean Air Act. The STIP provides an additional opportunity for public input for all projects included in the department's Work Plan. MaineDOT solicits public input specific to the STIP by making a draft document available for public comment for a period of 30 days. Notice of the draft STIP is posted on the MaineDOT website.

Changes in project schedules, funding needs, priorities, and project scopes invariably occur as projects proceed. These changes require revising the approved STIP. Administrative modifications are not significant changes to the existing STIP, and therefore, no public involvement is required for those modifications. Amendments to the STIP *are* required for major changes, and for those amendments, a public involvement process is required. The STIP amendment process must provide a "reasonable opportunity" for public comment. This may include public meetings, public hearings,

Public Advisory Committee (PAC) meetings, and City or Town Council, or Selectperson's meetings. STIP amendments are posted on MaineDOT's website and emailed to relevant municipalities and RPOs. Once the public involvement period ends, MaineDOT will respond to or address all substantive comments received. When the STIP change affects a project in an MPO area, the respective MPO Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) must be amended in conjunction with the STIP. MaineDOT may revise the STIP concurrently with the MPO revision and public involvement processes.

Beginning in 2016, MaineDOT will transition to an annually developed and published STIP.

### **Locally Coordinated Plans and State Management Plan (Transit)**

Locally Coordinated Plans are developed by MaineDOT to meet requirements of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The Locally Coordinated Plans are prepared in cooperation with the state's transit providers, which receive FTA and/or state financial assistance. These plans are updated annually and address federal and state requirements for managing transit systems and for obtaining a range of public input on plans for meeting transit needs. Locally Coordinated Plans involve contacting a broad range of potential stakeholders and interested parties, and holding forums in accessible locations to obtain public input on how best to provide transit services that meet the needs of transit-dependent populations. Notifications for these forums include information that translation services are available upon request.

The State Management Plan describes MaineDOT's policies and procedures for the administration of the public transportation programs funded by the FTA. This plan is updated periodically and is a requirement of FTA, which provides financial assistance to states, through a number of programs, to develop new transit systems and improve, maintain, and operate existing systems. FTA requires that each state describe the state's policies and procedures for the state-managed portion of these programs. Public involvement for the State Management Plan includes consultation with a broad range of potential stakeholders and interested parties, and holding transit forums in accessible locations to obtain public input on how best to provide transit services to meet the needs of transit-dependent populations. Advance notice and information about these forums will be made available on the MaineDOT website.

### **Statewide Strategic Transit Plan**

In 2015, MaineDOT completed a Statewide Strategic Transit Plan—a 10-year comprehensive transit plan intended to assist MaineDOT in prioritizing service improvements, identifying performance measures, and establishing standards for transit services. The plan provides a holistic approach to evaluating surface passenger transportation initiatives, programs and funding sources, including interagency coordination of public and social service transportation, operations plans for the eight transit districts, park and ride lots, and connectivity with passenger rail, ferry service, and capital improvements for transit providers. The plan has a focus on Maine's aging population with an assessment of and recommendations for meeting elderly transportation needs statewide. In addition, the plan makes recommendations on best practices for transit planning and funding strategies. During 2013 and 2014, public involvement in development of this plan included involvement used for Statewide Strategic Transit Plan updates, and future planning efforts will also include stakeholder

advisory committees, the MaineDOT website, business surveys, formal public meetings and newsletters.

## **State Rail Plan**

Statewide rail planning is required by federal law under guidelines established originally by the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) and more recently by the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 and the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008. These laws require that rail capital projects be identified in a State Rail Plan, in order to be eligible for federal financial assistance. Federal guidance for the State Rail Plan includes:

- Increase the safety and security of the transportation system.
- Increase mobility of people and freight.
- Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and state and local planned growth and economic development patterns.
- Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system for people and freight, across and between modes throughout the state.
- Promote efficient system management and operation.
- Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

Maine's state rail goals and objectives are included in the LRTNA. Public involvement during development of the State Rail Plan includes public meetings to help shape the direction of the plan and incorporate public comments and suggestions, as well as posting of the plan on the MaineDOT website. The Federal Railroad Administration reviews and approves the plan.

## **Integrated Freight Strategy**

MaineDOT developed the Integrated Freight Plan (IFP) in 1998, updated it in both 2001 and 2008, and developed a successor document—the Integrated Freight Strategy (IFS) in 2011. Together, these plans help shape statewide freight policy and investment activities, strengthen the relationship with the private sector freight community, and allow MaineDOT to be more responsive to both public- and private-sector freight needs and issues. These efforts are reviewed and updated in order to accurately encompass recent trends and activities, both within and outside the state, into the IFS. Public involvement during IFS development included extensive consultation with various stakeholders in Maine's freight transportation system—transportation companies, manufacturers and other shippers, and owners of transportation facilities. The general public is afforded opportunity to comment on the department's freight plans through plan postings on the MaineDOT website.

## **Aviation Facility Plans**

MaineDOT administers Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) laws concerning aeronautical activities to promote public safety and the interests of aviation in the state. MaineDOT has oversight and input on all federally funded airport projects, including programming, scoping, environmental issues, property acquisition, planning, design and construction. The department partners with municipalities and airport authorities to support their needs and ensure compliance with federal requirements. Airport Master Plans are developed for short-, mid-, and long-term development goals

(5-, 10- and 20-years respectively) and include a detailed description of scheduled planning and construction projects. These plans are updated every five to ten years. Planning of airports and all facilities using FAA funding includes an opportunity for public meetings to consider economic, social, and environmental effects, and consistency with goals and objectives of the surrounding communities. The public is notified of such meetings through a published public notice.

In addition, MaineDOT holds regional meetings with municipalities and airports on an annual basis to plan and prioritize individual needs and projects. Aviation projects are subsequently prioritized on a statewide level and become the basis for Airport Capital Improvement Plans, which are updated every year.

## **Traditionally Underserved Populations and Environmental Justice**

### **Public Involvement and Traditionally Underserved Populations**

Many people in minority and low-income communities, as well as those with low literacy and/or limited English proficiency, have traditionally been underserved by conventional outreach methods. Reaching out to traditionally underserved groups helps ensure that all customers and stakeholders have opportunities to influence the decision-making process. It sets the tone for subsequent project activities and promotes a spirit of inclusion. MaineDOT meeting planners strive to encourage attendance among groups protected by anti-discrimination laws with which MaineDOT is required to comply. This tailoring of outreach efforts is particularly useful because they:

- Provide fresh perspectives to project planners and developers
- Give MaineDOT information about community-specific issues and concerns
- Allow MaineDOT to identify potential controversies
- Provide feedback on how to get these communities involved
- Ensure that the solutions ultimately selected are those that best meet the communities' needs

To maximize the effectiveness of the department's public participation efforts in engaging underserved people, MaineDOT staff is committed to:

- Plan public meetings and hearings well in advance, and publicize them in diverse media, flyers, and on the MaineDOT website
- Ensure that meeting notices state that the meeting uses accessible-format materials
- Determine what non-English languages and other cultural characteristics apply and could inhibit public participation for the particular program or activity if not accommodated, and to offer appropriate accommodations to reduce any barrier effect
- Accept both verbal and written comments in languages other than English
- Hold meetings and conduct outreach in the affected neighborhoods themselves, using community activity centers as meeting locations and venues for informal outreach
- Use varied meeting times, sizes, and locations to accommodate the schedule, transportation, and child care limitations for the community members
- hold meetings at convenient times and at locations that are accessible and welcoming to all, including those with disabilities. (This includes providing appropriate room set-up and, when requested, alternate formats of handouts [e.g., large-print materials] and audio equipment)

- Make available alternative methods for two-way flow of information and input between MaineDOT and people who are not likely to attend meetings
- Use various illustration and visualization techniques to convey the project information including, but not limited to, charts, graphs, photos, maps, and the Internet
- Reach out to others, both internally and externally, with expertise in contacting and connecting with underserved people, to obtain advice and information about best practices and effective techniques

## **Environmental Justice**

In 1994, the administration of President Bill Clinton issued Executive Order #12898—*Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations*. Under this order, transportation agencies are required to make achieving environmental justice (EJ) part of their mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of their programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations. EJ initiatives accomplish this goal by involving the potentially affected public in developing transportation projects that fit harmoniously within their communities, without sacrificing safety or mobility. MaineDOT complies with EJ requirements by:

- Updating the state's demographic profile every three years to determine where low-income, non-native and minority populations reside (the most recent profile was complete in 2014 and can be accessed on our website at: <http://www.maine.gov/mdot/civilrights/title6/>)
- Updating U.S. Census Data every three years and conducting a “Four-Factor Analysis” to determine Limited English Proficiency (LEP) population concentrations around the state
- Ensuring the participation of identified minority and low-income populations located within the limits of a proposed project by holding meetings that are close to or adjacent to the project areas
- Providing good access for public participation—holding public forums and meetings at facilities that are ADA-accessible, and providing translation services requested for non-English speaking populations when they are requested
- Designating and training EJ liaisons—ensuring that they are knowledgeable about the EJ requirements of federal agencies

## **Public Involvement for Transportation Improvement Projects**

MaineDOT's Bureau of Project Development is charged with the timely and efficient delivery of MaineDOT's capital program, including projects selected by MPOs. The bureau is committed to achieving trust through on-time project delivery and to promoting economic prosperity by infusing transportation resources into the economy as quickly as possible. Major activities include:

- Managing the development of the department's capital program from the approval of funding to public meetings and outreach to construction completion for all highway, bridge and multimodal capital projects
- Oversight of the contracting of construction projects, federal documentation, prequalification of contractors and payment of contractors

- Federally mandated materials testing, sampling and analysis, independent quality-assurance testing, reporting of incentive and disincentive payments
- Engineering, boundary survey and property acquisition in support of MaineDOT's capital program
- Project-related wetland mitigation and surface water quality and management projects.

## **Project Design**

As a transportation improvement project moves from the planning and environmental phases into design (engineering), ongoing public involvement is essential to maintain customer support for the project and to obtain meaningful input on the design elements. This public outreach is often in the form of public meetings, but it may also include less formal dialogues with municipal officials, interested parties and other stakeholders. The public involvement process may be different for each effort as projects vary in size, scope, and the length of time required for design and construction. Design projects generally follow this public involvement process:

- **Letter to the municipality only** - For any project that has minimal impact on abutters and the traveling public, letters will be sent to municipalities only. The letter content will include the project description, schedule, an explanation of expected impacts, and an offer of public process, if it is requested by the municipality. If there will be minor impacts to abutters, property owners along the project will also receive a letter.
- **Public Meetings** - Any project where impacts to abutters or the traveling public are expected to be significant.

When public meetings are appropriate they will generally include these public involvement forums:

- **Initial Stakeholder Outreach** - During preliminary design, the project manager or appropriate team members may reach out to municipalities, utilities, MPOs or other stakeholders to obtain initial feedback on the proposed project.
- **Public Informational Meeting** - If the project is identified as having a "substantial public interest," an informational meeting may be necessary to update the public on the project's progress.
- **Preliminary Public Meeting** - These meetings are intended to provide balanced, objective information on the project and obtain feedback on challenges, needs, opportunities and solutions. The project manager acts as the moderator, and other team members may attend if appropriate. In some cases, this meeting may determine whether additional public meetings are necessary.
- **Formal Public Meeting or Hearing** - At this meeting, the project details are presented to the public by the project manager and other team members as appropriate. This is the final opportunity for public input into the scope of the project, the chosen alternative and major design features.

MaineDOT incorporates input from these meetings in its design decisions. By involving the public early in the planning process and throughout the development and implementation of projects, MaineDOT provides its customers with opportunity for coordination and participation prior to the approval of final designs. When appropriate, traffic control, construction staging and timing, and proposed detours may be discussed at public meetings during the design phase.

## **Public Involvement for Maintenance and Operations**

The MaineDOT Bureau of Maintenance and Operations is responsible for the maintenance of transportation infrastructure and system operations activities throughout the state. MaineDOT's five maintenance Regions and five functional units are responsible for the day-to-day maintenance and operation of state highways, bridges, ferries, maintenance lots and other facilities across the state. Crew supervisors, traffic engineers and region engineers interact with customers on a daily basis. Often this involves gathering information and input about infrastructure deficiencies and needed improvements. The majority of these concerns can be addressed by the specific Region or functional office, while other issues may need coordination with the Bureau of Planning or the Bureau of Project Development for implementation by the department. In addition, region staff frequently interacts with municipal officials and RPOs, who are often the conduit for issues raised by the general public. This ongoing public interface with the Bureau of Maintenance and Operations includes:

- **Direct Customer Support** - Customers may report safety problems or other transportation infrastructure problems to the appropriate MaineDOT Region Office by phone, via e-mail or through the MaineDOT website, or directly at the Region Offices. The Bureau of Maintenance and Operations maintains a database of all customer inquiries to ensure that each inquiry is addressed and properly resolved. These customer contacts are taken very seriously, and all receive a response.
- **Posted Roads and Posted Bridges Notifications** - MaineDOT maintains an online, interactive map of roads and bridges throughout the state that are posted with weight restrictions, whether temporary or for the longer term. Bureau of Maintenance and Operations staff regularly meets with stakeholders and other affected parties when roads and bridges are to be posted. Business and Community Relations Liaisons partner with the MaineDOT Bridge Committee to communicate with municipalities and the public regarding bridge postings and closures.
- **Region Offices and the Outreach Office** - Regional planners from the MaineDOT Outreach Office meet regularly with Bureau of Maintenance and Operations Region Offices to share two-way information from municipalities, RPOs and the general public. Customer inquiries and concerns are reviewed, discussed, and prioritized along with a timely response to the appropriate parties. This interface is valuable to the Bureau of Planning in helping to identify transportation needs that may be addressed in a future annual Work Plan.

## **Public Involvement and Partner Agencies**

Numerous entities in Maine partner with MaineDOT in transportation decision-making. These include tribal governments, planning organizations, advisory committees and transportation authorities. These partners play an important role in gathering input from various communities.

### **Tribal Governments**

There are four federally recognized tribal governments in Maine, with five reservations:

- Passamaquoddy Tribe - Indian Township and Pleasant Point
- Penobscot Indian Nation - Indian Island

- Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians - Littleton
- Aroostook Band of Micmacs - Presque Isle

MaineDOT coordinates the development of its LRTNA and annual Work Plan with the federally recognized Native American tribal governments, which also develop their own long-range transportation plans. MaineDOT also coordinates with the tribal governments on all projects, studies and other activities that may impact the tribal governments, tribal lands or properties of traditional religious or cultural significance. The MaineDOT Tribal Liaison in the Bureau of Planning is the primary point of contact for tribe-related transportation matters. Project managers also take an active role in contacting the tribal governments to ensure they are kept informed and involved regarding projects affecting tribal lands. This may require routine calls to the tribal government in order to ensure their active participation.

## **Metropolitan Planning Organizations**

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are federally designated planning organizations responsible for carrying out a continuous, comprehensive and cooperative transportation planning process in urbanized areas with populations of 50,000 or more. MPOs are responsible for conducting transportation planning within their federally defined Metropolitan Planning Areas (MPA). MaineDOT must coordinate its statewide planning and specific project development, funding and implementation activities with the MPOs as well. Maine has four MPOs.

- Androscoggin Transportation Resource Center (ATRC)  
Member communities: Lewiston, Auburn, Lisbon, Sabattus.
- Bangor Area Comprehensive Transportation System (BACTS)  
Member communities: Bangor, Brewer, Veazie, Hampden, Orono, Old Town, Milford, Bradley, Hermon, Orrington and the Penobscot Indian Nation.
- Kittery Area Comprehensive Transportation System (KACTS)  
Member communities: Kittery, Eliot, South Berwick, Berwick, Lebanon and York.
- Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System (PACTS)  
Member communities: Arundel, Biddeford, Cape Elizabeth, Cumberland, Falmouth, Freeport, Gorham, North Yarmouth, Old Orchard Beach, Portland, Raymond, Saco, Scarborough, South Portland, Standish, Westbrook, Windham and Yarmouth.

As a partner in the metropolitan transportation planning process, MaineDOT is involved in the development of each MPO's Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), long-range plan, and public involvement plan. Additionally, MaineDOT and each MPO work together to ensure that their plans and programs contribute to shared goals and objectives for regional and statewide transportation systems.

Each of Maine's MPOs must by federal regulation (23 CFR §450.316) develop and maintain its own public participation plan. Those plans must be developed in consultation with transportation stakeholders, and it must provide reasonable opportunities for public involvement in the metropolitan transportation planning process. When the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) includes federally recognized tribal governments, the MPO involves them in the development of its long-range plan and transportation improvement program. In Maine, this additional requirement applies

only to BACTS, the MPO for the greater Bangor area, which covers part of the Penobscot Indian Nation. MaineDOT has a voting seat on each MPO Policy Committee.

## **Regional Planning Organizations**

Maine has eleven Regional Planning Organizations (RPOs). RPO regions and their responsibilities are defined by Maine statute. RPOs are in some regions closely linked to Maine's Economic Development Districts (EDDs). The EDDs develop broad-based regional goals and integrate transportation and land use planning with economic development.

For many years, MaineDOT has contracted with the RPOs for the development and implementation of plans, studies and projects within the respective RPO regions. The RPOs have worked on behalf of MaineDOT in defining their regions' long-range transportation needs. RPOs have been engaged to collect and summarize information from citizens, municipalities and regional stakeholders in order to make recommendations on regional and statewide transportation needs and priorities. On behalf of MaineDOT, RPOs have used a variety of tools for public outreach including, but not limited to, public forums, surveys, open house meetings and the use of various committees. The contracting model by which MaineDOT procures auxiliary planning services from the RPOs is in transition and will primarily be by task, rather than by regional distribution of work, as of 2016.

## **Standing Advisory Committees and Transportation Authorities**

MaineDOT participates in, and sometimes leads, public involvement activities of modal transportation organizations in Maine. These include:

- **Maine State Ferry Service** - The legislatively created Maine State Ferry Advisory Board advises MaineDOT on matters relating to the Maine State Ferry Service. Membership of the board is comprised of residents of the island communities served, and others appoint by the Commissioner of Transportation. The board submits to the Commissioner an annual report which includes recommendations for change to the Maine State Ferry Service, and comments on the present and future needs of that service. Written reports and comments are made available to the public.
- **Casco Bay Island Transit District** - The Casco Bay Island Transit District (CBITD) provides year-round ferry service, carrying passengers, vehicles and freight between Portland and Peaks Island, Little Diamond Island, Great Diamond Island, Long Island, Chebeague Island, and Cliff Island. CBITD is governed by a board of twelve directors—ten elected from the islands, one appointed by the City of Portland, and one appointed by the Commissioner of the Maine Department of Transportation. Monthly board meetings are open to the public, and members of the public are encouraged to attend. The minutes for each board meeting are posted in the Portland terminal and on line at <http://www.cascobaylines.com/board.htm>.
- **Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA)** - The Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority operates the Amtrak Downeaster passenger rail service, which runs daily from Boston, Massachusetts to Portland and ultimately to Brunswick, Maine, with several stops along the way. NNPRA's governing body is a seven-member board of directors, which includes five members of the public who are appointed by the Governor and confirmed

by the Maine Legislature. NNEPRA board meetings are open to the public, and NNEPRA capital projects include public involvement opportunities.

- **Maine Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Council** - The Maine Bicycle and Pedestrian Council is an advisory committee convened by the Maine Department of Transportation, which includes representatives from the Bicycle Coalition of Maine, the Eastern Trail Management District, Kennebec Messalonskee Trails, the Androscoggin Land Trust, the DownEast Sunrise Trail Coalition, the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, the National Park Service, the East Coast Greenway Alliance, RPOs, police departments, bicycle and pedestrian advocates, and others. The council provides feedback to MaineDOT on improving safety and connectivity for bicyclists and pedestrians in Maine.
- **Maine Aeronautical Advisory Board** - The legislatively created Maine Aeronautical Advisory Board, comprised of representatives of local airports, pilots, aviation organizations, and the public, advises MaineDOT on matters relating to aeronautics, provides recommendations for change to aeronautical laws, and comments on present and future needs.

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As MaineDOT conducts public involvement efforts in statewide transportation planning and programming, department staff will continue efforts to improve the process outlined in this document. The public involvement process will be modified from time to time in response to changing needs and conditions, and to improve its usefulness. In periodic reviews of the process, MaineDOT may seek input from stakeholder groups, as well as the general public, through letters, surveys and other appropriate means.

At MaineDOT, it is fundamental principle that everyone who relies on our state's transportation network is a customer. The department, in coordination with its customers, partners and stakeholders, continually seeks to develop Maine's transportation system through investment decisions that are informed, in part, by quality public participation. The department is committed to a robust and flexible public involvement process that meets the needs and expectations of the citizens of Maine, ensures that its customers have sufficient involvement in transportation decision-making, and that satisfies the requirements of federal and state law.