

T R A V I S C O U N T Y



Transportation & Natural Resources
Public Engagement Plan
July 2014

Purpose

Travis County, Transportation and Natural Resources has developed a draft Land, Water, and Transportation Plan (LWTP) which will guide how the county protects its land and water resources, builds transportation and park systems, and delivers services to residents over the next twenty years. This plan incorporates information from existing planning documents, ordinances, and rules, which were all developed with public engagement. The county will continue to engage the public through this process to gain insight from residents and to ensure development of a plan that reflects local values and priorities.

The Public Engagement Plan (PEP) identifies the goals for this process and outlines the strategies the county will employ to effectively incorporate public input into the development of the LWTP. The PEP will be implemented by the Transportation and Natural Resources Department with support from the public engagement consultant Concept Development & Planning (CD&P), the public engagement team (team).

Goals

Travis County is committed to active communication with stakeholders, individuals, community leaders, and organizations throughout the county to ensure that their preferences and opinions are heard and considered. The goals of this PEP are:

- Create public awareness of the LWTP and generate public participation through a deliberative outreach effort
- Maintain an open and transparent process throughout the entire engagement effort
- Provide objective information to the public to assist them in understanding the growth related issues and challenges facing Travis County
- Engage a broad range of stakeholders in the process including:
 - Those who have and have not previously participated in similar efforts
 - A diverse geographic representation of the county
 - Representatives of the various municipalities and other jurisdictions within the county
- Provide multiple and easily accessible opportunities for the public to get involved
- Collect meaningful input from the public and provide feedback on how input is being used
- Build understanding and support for the final LWTP

Participants

The LWTP draft review process will include a significant amount of input from the residents of Travis County. Engagement of residents throughout the county will be encouraged, and additional resources and efforts will be focused on reaching those residents in the unincorporated areas of the county as these policies predominantly affect this population. The team will reach out to those who are directly and indirectly affected by land, water, and transportation policies in the County, and will conduct extensive research to identify and encourage participation by all interested stakeholders.

General Public – The general public includes residents of Travis County.

Underrepresented Groups – The team will make additional efforts to reach and solicit participation and input from groups and citizens who traditionally do not participate in civic planning efforts. Outreach techniques will be incorporated to involve stakeholders such as people with disabilities, residents with limited English proficiency, minorities, the elderly, and low-income residents.

Local Jurisdictions – These stakeholders will have useful input related to existing planning, needs, policies, and funding. Entities such as individual cities, school districts, municipal utility districts, etc. will be able to provide insight specific to their entity.

Governmental Agencies – These agencies, such as regional planning groups, will be able to provide information related to existing plans and planning efforts.

Interest Groups – A collection of community groups, individuals, businesses, civic organizations, and special interest groups, each having different interests and enthusiasm for participation. The team will work to reach these stakeholders and incorporate their input in the planning process.

Public Engagement Process & Schedule

The graphic below illustrates the process and timeframe for public engagement for the LWTP. The tools and timelines given may be adjusted as PEP evaluations are made or should the LWTP process and schedule be altered.

	Public Engagement Launch	Public Engagement	Comment Review, Analysis, and Recommendations	Report on Public Input and Recommendations, and LWTP Adoption
	AUGUST	AUGUST - SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER - NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
Community Meetings	●	●		
Public Meetings		●		
Jurisdictional Outreach	●	●		
Webpage Updates	●	●	●	●
Media Release	●	●		●
Advertisements		●		
Social Media	●	●	●	●
Email Updates	●	●	●	●
Questionnaire	●	●		
Polling		●		
Public Comments	●	●	●	●

Participation Opportunities and Outreach Tools

Various tools will be employed to educate and engage the public. These tools are all effective methods to disseminate project information and provide a convenient and easy way for the public to provide feedback and input. Timelines indicated are to illustrate the areas the team will be focusing on throughout the engagement process.

Community Meetings and Events

August – September

The team will reach out to groups that have regularly scheduled meetings to distribute project information. Community meetings will serve as a forum to distribute information on the LWTP, the ways to provide feedback, and information about the upcoming public meetings. Presentations at these meetings will be coordinated with the host organization.

The team will also identify local events such as festivals or farmers markets, as well as public locations such as grocery stores, libraries and malls to set up information tables or exhibits to share information about the LWTP and how to participate. Efforts will be made to identify places where underserved residents of Travis County may have access to information on the LWTP. Certain events and locations may be manned by team members, while others may simply provide information about the LWTP and opportunities to participate in the public engagement effort.

Public Meetings

September

Public meetings will be held to share information about the LWTP and facilitate the process of gathering public feedback. It is anticipated that six meetings will be held in locations throughout the County. The same information will be shared at each meeting.

The meetings will be conducted in a hybrid format, consisting of an open house session, followed by a presentation and discussion session, followed by an additional open house period. The open house format allows attendees to come and go as they are available, and facilitates one-on-one dialog, while the presentation format allows a greater level of detail to be shared and an opportunity for a question and answer discussion. Meeting materials and activities will be designed to gather input from participants and include tools such as instant audience feedback polls, questionnaires, and collection of general comments. A Spanish translator will be present at all public meetings, and every effort will be made to select locations which are ADA compliant. The project team will attempt to accommodate other special needs with advance notice.

Locations across the County will be selected in an effort to provide good coverage and diverse participation and limit travel for attendees. Meetings will be promoted using email updates, flyers, media releases and advertisements, social media, public notices and phone outreach.

Jurisdictional Outreach

August – September

One of the goals of this PEP is to collect input from the local municipal jurisdictions and other agencies within Travis County. These entities have unique input to share on behalf of their stakeholders, such as city developed transportation plans, land use plans, and resource management plans, and how those plans interrelate to the LWTP. The team may develop additional questionnaires, materials, and engage in outreach by phone or via in-person meetings to gain insight into the valuable input these jurisdictions can contribute.

Webpage

August – December

An LWTP webpage will be created on the Travis County website to share project information and materials. The project team will work closely with the Travis County Information Technology System (ITS) staff to continuously update the webpage with materials as they become available. Community and public meeting notices, as well as, links to social media outlets, questionnaires, and comment submission instructions, will all be included on the LWTP webpage.

Media Tools

August – December

Media Releases – The team will develop a media list for Travis County and create media releases to share project information and promote awareness and participation in the LWTP development process. Media release will be distributed to announce the launch of the project, meeting dates, and final results. CD&P will serve as a media contact during the public engagement process, will distribute media releases, and will coordinate responses to media inquiries with the project manager.

Advertisements and PSAs – The team will identify media outlets in which to place advertisements promoting the engagement process, meeting times and locations, questionnaires, and other opportunities to participate. Advertisements may be placed in print publications, and submitted to local TV and radio outlets for public service announcements.

Social Media – Social networking is a useful and efficient tool in reaching out to the public. Social media will enhance public engagement as a means to communicate quickly with a large audience and receive feedback. The LWTP will use existing Travis County social media networks including Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. It will serve as a tool to educate the public on the process, announce public meetings and other public engagement opportunities, distribute project materials, and generally get people involved in the process.

Email Updates

August – December

Periodic emails will be distributed to provide project highlights and updates and detailed information on opportunities for public feedback. Emails may be forwarded to stakeholder groups to be sent out to their contact list or can be used to update their own newsletters, blogs, and other materials. The project team will collect email address from all public meetings and will be added to the distribution list.

Stakeholder Database

May – December

An essential component of the public engagement process will be the development of a comprehensive stakeholder database of city, county, and other jurisdiction contacts, neighborhood associations, planning groups, businesses, economic development groups, environmental and social advocacy groups, transit services, hospitals, schools, residents, community and civic organizations, special interest groups, media, and other interested parties. Email addresses will be collected at all public engagement activities and added to the database. The database will be used to distribute information about the project, such as meeting notification and will be updated throughout the project as new stakeholders are identified.

Project Materials

July – December

The project team will design and develop project materials in an effort to further disseminate LWTP information and to collect input from the public. These materials may include flyers, meeting handouts, exhibits, informational graphics, maps, and fact sheets. These collateral materials and maps are essential in providing information to the public and will be developed in an easy to understand format. Materials will be translated into Spanish, as needed.

Collecting Public Input

The team will offer many different formats for those interested in the LWTP to share their ideas, comments, and concerns. Some maybe be interested in sharing longer written comments while some may only want to take a brief survey. Similarly, some may want to participate in all aspects of the LWTP while others just want to share comments on a single aspect. The tools outlined below will facilitate many opportunities for sharing feedback on the LWTP. All data collected will be categorized, analyzed, and included in the final report.

Travis County will accept comments on the LWTP and this process at any time. To be included as official comments for the record, they must be submitted in writing, via email, or as responses to a questionnaire or poll. All official comments must be received by the comment period close date. Discussions that occur during the public engagement process, such as social media, one-on-one conversations with staff, and question and answer discussions will further education and outreach efforts; however, they will not be documented as official comments.

Questionnaire – A brief questionnaire(s), will be developed to collect input on priorities and preferences of the public. The questionnaire will be available online and in paper format. All paper responses will be entered in the online tool so that reports can easily be run of data collected. The team will work to identify organizations, other community events, and activities where the questionnaire can be distributed.

Real Time Polling – During public meetings and possibly during some community meeting presentations, the team will poll the crowd to gather input on different topics. This tool is beneficial as participants can instantly see how other members of their community feel.

General Comments – Many participants will want to share general comments on the LWTP and planning process. These comments will be collected via paper comment cards, email, and mail. Once received the comments will be categorized and shared with the team. Questions and comments that do not pertain to the LWTP (such as questions other projects) will be forwarded to the appropriate contact, but not included in the public comment record.

Final Report

All comments will be categorized and summarized in an official public record report. This report will be presented to the County and used in the revision of the LWTP before it is finalized and submitted to the Travis County Commissioners Court to be considered for adoption. Further, it will include a detailed summary of the public engagement outcomes and the outreach activities conducted during this process. Results reflect those that participated in the process and are not a statistical representation of Travis County residents.

Evaluations

To ensure that a high degree of public involvement is achieved in the most effective and efficient manner possible throughout this process, public outreach tools will be monitored on a regular basis and adjustments will be made as needed to enhance levels of engagement. As input is collected, the team will encourage participants to provide feedback on the quality of public involvement activities and the community outreach strategies employed. The evaluation methods listed below are qualitative and will help team members gauge understanding and effectiveness of the public engagement process.

Goals & Evaluations

<p>Create public awareness of the LWTP and generate public participation through a deliberative outreach effort</p>	<p>Evaluate media coverage; Measure the number of participants, questionnaires completed, and comments collected</p>
<p>Maintain an open and transparent process throughout the entire engagement effort</p>	<p>Measure how often team reports back to public</p>
<p>Provide objective information to the public to assist them in understanding the issues and challenges facing Travis County as growth continues</p>	<p>Evaluate questions received on policies</p>
<p>Engage a broad range of stakeholders in the process</p>	<p>Measure number of participants, groups and jurisdictions; Create zip code maps of participants to measure geographic representation; Ask demographic questions and about previous involvement</p>
<p>Provide multiple and easily accessible opportunities for the public to get involved</p>	<p>Measure the number of participants</p>
<p>Collect meaningful input from the public and provide feedback on how input is being used</p>	<p>Review input and comments received; Measure how often we are reporting back on how input is used</p>
<p>Build understanding and support for the final LWTP</p>	<p>Evaluate input and comments received</p>