

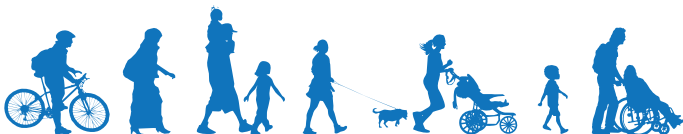
RAMSEY COUNTY-WIDE

Pedestrian & Bicycle Plan

PRIMER: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



PRIMER: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
Reaching Everyone



Active Living
Ramsey Communities

A Program of
RAMSEY COUNTY

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Community Engagement



THE RAMSEY COUNTY VISION

This primer is intended for two audiences: community members who wish to better understand the planning process and engagement opportunities and local governments who would like to improve their engagement processes.

Everyone relies on the transportation system. Some of use it to get to work or school, some use it to visit friends or family, some use it for recreation and some use it to move cargo.

Transportation systems address the needs of the public better when the public is meaningfully involved in the planning process.

This primer discusses the potential opportunities for meaningful community engagement and offers recommendations for when to use specific methods of engagement to support active transportation.

Meaningful strategies for engaging with a diverse set of stakeholders in the transportation planning process.

Outreach vs Engagement

Outreach focuses on informing and educating. Engagement focuses on meaningful involvement leading to real, substantial changes in the outcome of a project or process.

Community Engagement



A PRIMER ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Opportunities for Engagement

The Transportation Planning and Decision-Making Process

The earlier someone can get involved in the planning process, the more impact that person can have on a project. Different government bodies have different planning processes, but many follow sequences similar to this one provided by the Federal Highway Administration:

- » Plan
- » Design
- » Construct
- » Operate
- » Maintain

Each part of the decision-making process is made up of smaller steps. For example: in the planning phase, participants survey existing conditions, define community goals and think of a strategy to achieve those goals. It is important to engage with community members as early in the planning process as possible, in order to fully reflect the community's needs.

How To Get Involved: There are usually two categories of stakeholders in a transportation project: internal and external.

Internal partners serve on committees that steer, manage and develop projects. Internal stakeholders often are members of advocacy groups or local government or in some way have relevant expert or local knowledge. The involvement opportunities for internal partners are the meetings that they attend over the course of the project.

External stakeholders are all others who rely on the transportation system. This includes local residents, workers and business-owners. People who use a street, sidewalk or bike path on a regular basis have local knowledge that technical experts do not have. Residents who rely on transit for their transportation, who depend on a wheelchair or another mobility device or who have limited economic resources or options for getting around bring perspectives and personal knowledge and insights that the project team is not likely to have.

Engagement – the process that recognizes the value of creating ongoing, long-term relationships for the benefit of the greater community – brings the interactive, collective problem-solving element into the process that capitalizes on the collective strengths of various stakeholders.”¹

¹ The Metropolitan Council's Draft Public Engagement Plan (June 2014): <http://www.metrocouncil.org/METC/files/da/da700204-27d7-4dc9-b8a4-30e80c07039b.pdf>

A project that considers the needs of all potential users will be one that will be more useful and transformative. Community members can also initiate conversation with designers and decision-makers, who can improve projects by gathering this special knowledge and asking the community to share their goals, experiences and concerns. A wide variety of tools can be used to gather input and local knowledge from the general public.

Examples of Public Involvement Opportunities:

- » Listening sessions hosted with community organizations to listen to their members’ ideas and concerns
- » Hosting a table or booth to engage people at places where they go - like supermarkets, parks and community festivals
- » Partnering with diverse media to invite a broader audience to participate, with inclusive opportunities for that audience to respond
- » Workshops, including Design Workshops (also known as charrettes), where potential design solutions are brainstormed and discussed
- » Neighborhood organization meetings
- » Walk/Bike/ADA audits with community members, where community members walk or bike in the community to identify opportunities and challenges
- » Community meals in partnership with an organization (for example, like Marnita’s Table in the Twin Cities)
- » Visioning exercises, where a group brainstorms and discusses how things would look if the issue were perfectly addressed
- » Open house meetings
- » Public hearings
- » Surveys, either printed or online
- » Community advisory committees
- » Health Impact Assessments

Contact information for government agencies and advocacy groups can be found in the appendix, for those wishing to be more involved.

Engaging with people at places where they go – like parks, libraries and community events – is an effective strategy for gathering input and local knowledge from the general public.

ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

How can residents and other stakeholders participate in each project phase, and how much time do they have to commit to participate? The chart below shows the short term, medium term and long term engagement opportunities available to community members.

Project Phase	Goals	Short Term Engagement	Medium Term Engagement	Long Term Engagement
Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research Existing Conditions Identify and prioritize needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tabling events Online tools, surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listening sessions / Community meals Design workshop / Visioning session Open House meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serve on a steering or advisory committee Partner with community organizations
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop potential solutions Examine alternatives and choose preferred solution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tabling events Online tools, surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open House meetings Public hearings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serve on a steering or advisory committee Partner with community organizations
Construct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the preferred solution, Ensure timeline and mitigation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online tools, surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction meetings 	
Operate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serve users' needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online tools Safety Hotline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walk/Bike/ADA audits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with community organizations
Maintain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximize the implemented solution's useful life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online tools Maintenance Hotline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walk/Bike/ADA audits Listening sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with community organizations

How to Engage the Community

Some organizations believe they are doing community engagement when they are really only doing outreach. Experts from *Building the Field of Community Engagement* distinguish community engagement from outreach by asking several questions:

What kind of relationship do you have with your partners? If it's transactional, exclusive, limited and short-term, it is outreach. If it's foundational, diverse, extensive and long-term, it's engagement.

Why are you engaging people? If it's to gain buy-in for a specific project designed by the organization, it's outreach. If it's to create a space for people to act in their own interest, it's engagement.

How are you getting people involved, and when? If it's distributing information about a project that has already been planned, it's outreach. If it's using listening sessions and leadership-building workshops to empower the community to plan for themselves, it's engagement.

Types of Engagement

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	To place final decision making in the hands of the public
Promise to the Public	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Tools	Fact sheets, websites, open houses	Public comment, focus groups, surveys, public meetings	Workshops, deliberative polling	Citizen advisory committees, consensus-building, participatory decision-making	Citizen juries, ballots, delegated decision

How Much Community Voice and Power Do You Want? The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) classifies participation as occurring along a spectrum of community voice and empowerment. Traditional outreach is farther on the “inform” side of the spectrum. Contemporary, forward-looking engagement provides a greater level of participation and shifts to consult, involve, collaborate and empower.

For each project, organizations must decide the most appropriate level of participation based on:

- » the project’s scope and timeline
- » the role of technical considerations in preparing and selecting alternatives
- » how the project’s recommendations fit within the larger planning context

By promising more than they can deliver, agencies sometimes undermine public trust and cause other problems. Agencies should communicate a project’s constraints, trade-offs and options to community members.

Whatever the level of participation selected, jurisdictions ought to document the process and outcome of public engagement efforts to create a record of public support. This can be referred to in future project stages.

Thinking Beyond Hosting Open House Public Meetings

Open houses are a staple of local planning processes, but they sometimes fail to engage a broad segment of the population. The engagement strategies listed here can supplement a traditional open house with input from more of the community. Open house meetings that incorporate small group activities or delegate decision-making power to participants are more likely to be successful in engaging the community.



A walking audit is an informal way to engage with the public and identify opportunities and concerns.



Setting up a table or booth at local destinations, such as libraries and grocery stores, can be an effective way to gain information.



Design workshops and charrettes are interactive ways to gather public input.



FEATURED EXAMPLE

MET COUNCIL

The Metropolitan Council, the planning organization for the Twin Cities, outlined best practices for inclusive and meaningful public engagement in their new draft public engagement plan of June 2014. Here is a sample of the principles, values, and strategies the Met Council seeks to emphasize in their engagement efforts:

- Engagement efforts involve residents and communities as **full and equitable partners in public decision-making**. Some residents and communities may require different approaches to ensure participation. When possible and appropriate, agencies can provide funds directly to community organizations to engage their constituencies.
- Engagement efforts should work to **mitigate existing racial, ethnic, cultural or linguistic barriers** and include diverse races, cultures, genders, sexual orientations and socio-economic and disability statuses. Local governments can schedule periodic listening sessions to work toward this goal.
- Plan **informal activities** to provide members of the community with information and an opportunity to inform and influence planning processes.
- **Collaborate directly with the public** and traditionally underrepresented populations (people of color, immigrants, low-income populations, people with disabilities, the elderly, youth) as well as community advocates and partners in regional public engagement. Collaboratively set goals and outcomes for engagement efforts.
- Use **online interactive spaces**, including social media platforms, to gather feedback and foster discussion about planning activities and policy plans' content.

At the end of a project, Met Council staff collect a variety of data to evaluate the engagement. This data includes qualitative elements, such as whether the participants felt that their time and opinions were valued, and quantitative measures, which include the number and diversity of organizations and people who participated. This monitoring and evaluation can help governing bodies improve their strategies and techniques.

APPENDIX

Local Government Contact Information

Ramsey County

- » Parks & Recreation: <https://parks.co.ramsey.mn.us/Pages/default.aspx>, 651-748-2500
- » Public Works: <http://www.co.ramsey.mn.us/pw>, 651-266-7100

St. Paul

- » Parks & Recreation - <http://www.stpaul.gov/index.aspx?nid=243>, 651-266-6400
- » Public Works - <http://www.stpaul.gov/index.aspx?nid=73>, 651-266-9700
- » Planning and Economic Development - <http://www.stpaul.gov/index.aspx?NID=354>, 651-266-6565

Other Ramsey County Municipalities

- » Arden Hills: <http://www.cityofardenhills.org/>, 651-792-7800
- » Blaine: <http://www.ci.blaine.mn.us/home.cfm>, 763-784-6700
- » Falcon Heights: <http://www.falconheights.org/>, 651-792-7600
- » Gem Lake: <http://www.gemlakemn.com/>, 651-767-2790
- » Lauderdale: <http://www.ci.lauderdale.mn.us/>, 651-792-7650
- » Little Canada: <http://www.ci.little-canada.mn.us/>, 651-766-4029
- » Maplewood: <http://www.ci.maplewood.mn.us/>, 651-249-2000
- » Mounds View: <http://www.ci.mounds-view.mn.us/>, 763-717-4000
- » New Brighton: <http://www.ci.new-brighton.mn.us/>, 651-638-2100
- » North Oaks: <http://www.cityofnorthoaks.com/>, 651-792-7750
- » North St. Paul: <http://www.ci.north-saint-paul.mn.us/>, 651-747-2400
- » Roseville: <http://www.ci.roseville.mn.us/>, 651-792-7000
- » Shoreview: <http://www.shoreviewmn.gov/>, 651-490-4600

Other Ramsey County Cities

- » St. Anthony: <http://www.ci.saint-anthony.mn.us/>, 612-782-3301
- » Spring Lake Park: <http://www.slpmn.org/>, 763-784-6491
- » Vadnais Heights: <http://www.cityvadnaisheights.com/>, 651-204-6000
- » White Bear Lake: <http://www.whitebearlake.org/>, 651-429-8526
- » White Bear Township: <http://www.ci.white-bear-township.mn.us/>, 651-747-2750

Metropolitan Council

- » <http://www.metrocouncil.org/Planning.aspx>, 651-602-1000

State

- » Department of Natural Resources (DNR): <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/index.html>, 651-296-6157
- » MnDOT: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/>, public meeting opportunities: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/publicinvolvement/hearings.html>, 651-296-3000
- » MnDOT Metro District: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/metro/>, 651-234-7502
- » MnDOT Bike & Pedestrian Program: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/>, <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/peds/>, 651-366-4162
- » MN Department of Health: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/>, 651-201-5000
- » MN Department of Human Rights: <http://mn.gov/mdhr/>, 651-296-5663
- » Pollution Control Agency (PCA) <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/>, 651-296-6300
- » Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP): <http://www.health.state.mn.us/ship/>

Federal

- » Department of Justice: <http://www.justice.gov/>, 202-514-2000
- » Federal Highway Administration: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/>, 202-366-4000

- » National Park Service: <http://www.nps.gov/index.htm>, 402-661-1736

Community Group Contact Information

Local

- » Active Living Ramsey Communities: <https://parks.co.ramsey.mn.us/alrc/Pages/whatwedo.aspx> 651-748-2500
- » Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota: <http://www.bikemn.org/> 651-387-2445
- » Cycles for Change: <http://www.cyclesforchange.org/>
- » Friends of Ramsey County Parks and Trails: <https://friendsoftheparks.org/> 612-703-9044
- » Major Taylor Bicycle Club – St. Paul: <http://www.majortaylorminnesota.org/> contact@majortaylorminnesota.org
- » MnDOT Non-Motorized Transportation Advisory Committee: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/sntc/index.html> 218-382-4530
- » NE Communities Bike Walk: <https://nebikewalk.wordpress.com/>
League of American Bicyclists: <http://bikeleague.org/> 202-822-1333
- » Ramsey County TOWARD Zero Death (TZD): <http://www.minnesotatzd.org/> 651-234-7706
- » Sierra Club North Star Chapter: <http://minnesota.sierraclub.org/> 612-659-9124
- » St. Paul Bicycle Coalition: <http://www.saintpaulbicyclecoalition.org/>
- » St. Paul Healthy Transportation For All: <https://stphealthytransportation.wordpress.com/>
healthytransit@unionparkdc.org
- » St. Paul Smart Trips: <http://www.smart-trips.org/>
- » St. Paul Walks: <http://www.smart-trips.org/for-advocates/about-st-paul-walks/> 651-224-8555

- » St. Paul Women on Bikes: <http://www.smart-trips.org/for-advocates/about-women-on-bikes/>
- » Transit for Livable Communities: <http://www.tlcminnesota.org/651-767-0298>

Information on Engagement

- » “Community Engagement in the Twin Cities”: http://www.corridorsofopportunity.org/sites/default/files/CET_Report_9-13.pdf
- » “Distinguish Your Work: Outreach or Community Engagement? An Assessment Tool” by Building the Field of Community Engagement (2014) <http://nexuscp.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/BTF-DistinguishYourWork.pdf>
- » “Effective Practices in Community Engagement for Equitable Transit-Oriented Development”. http://www.metrostability.org/efiles/TOD_Community_Engagement_Report_CURA.pdf
- » “IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation” by International Association of Public Participation (2007) http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/imported/IAP2%20Spectrum_vertical.pdf
- » The Metropolitan Council’s Draft Public Engagement Plan (June 2014): <http://www.metrocouncil.org/METC/files/da/da700204-27d7-4dc9-b8a4-30e80c07039b.pdf>
- » Marnita’s Table: <http://marnitastable.org/>
- » “The Sustainable Communities Initiative: The Community Engagement Guide for Sustainable Communities”: [http://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/COMMUNITYENGAGEMENTGUIDE_LY_FINAL%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/COMMUNITYENGAGEMENTGUIDE_LY_FINAL%20(1).pdf)

