
APPENDIX G - ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Public engagement is key to ensuring the Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan (SMTP) reflects Minnesotans' transportation priorities. People have a right and deserve to be involved in decisions that impact their lives. Transportation has a vast impact on people, the environment and our economy. The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) provided a variety of inclusive and meaningful ways for people to help deliver the best transportation system possible through engagement for the SMTP.

The engagement process for the plan update was unlike any that MnDOT had done before. MnDOT recognized the extraordinary circumstances surrounding the plan process. However, the goal to engage Minnesotans meaningfully in this project remained. MnDOT committed to a flexible, phased approach to respond to the changing context. MnDOT created opportunities to hear directly from people regarding what transportation issues they face..

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the plan update relied primarily on virtual engagement methods rather than in-person. All in-person engagement was deferred to the end of the plan update when immunization rates began to increase, but ultimately had to be cut short due to the Delta and Omicron variants. Even when in-person engagement was underway, online engagement was also available.

MnDOT based the engagement approach for the plan update on the following principles:

- Identify clearly when stakeholders and the public can influence transportation decisions.
- Implement an appropriate timeline and process for the public and stakeholders to engage based on capacity and time available.
- Use a variety of methods and platforms.
- Inform policies, strategies and investment direction (as applicable).
- Use easy to understand language and graphics and culturally responsive practices.
- Comply with federal and state requirements.

This document outlines how and who MnDOT connected with. More information about public engagement can be found in collection of summaries and reports at [MinnesotaGO.org](https://www.mn.gov).

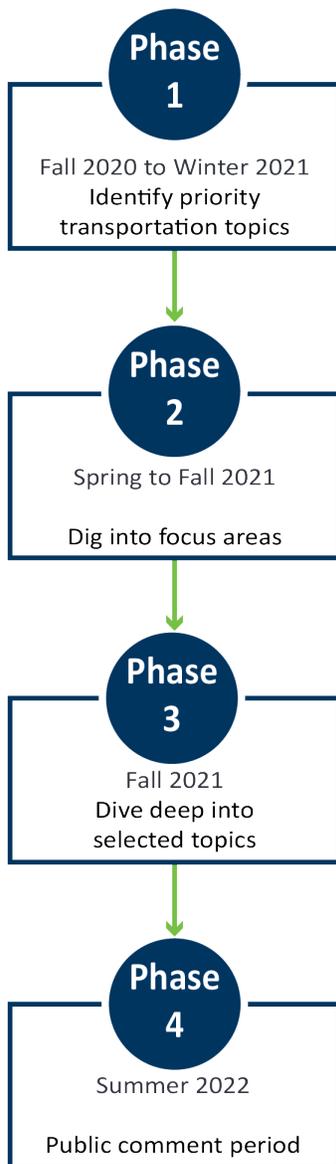
- [Overall Engagement Summary](#)
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HOW DID WE CONNECT WITH PEOPLE

ENGAGEMENT PHASES

The SMTP had a four-phased engagement approach. See the Overall Engagement Summary for a brief overview of Phase 1-3 engagement activities. Figure G-1 highlights the four phases of engagement and the focus of each phase.

Figure G-1: Four Phases of SMTP Engagement



PHASE 1

Phase 1 began in October 2020 and ended February 2021. The first phase of engagement focused on connecting with the general public and transportation partners. This phase prioritized partnerships with community-based organizations and promoted input opportunities with communities and people who have been underserved by transportation decision making. Activities built a broad understanding of Minnesotans’ transportation challenges and priorities over the next 20 years. MnDOT asked participants to identify up to six focus areas for this plan update. See the [Phase 1 Engagement Summary](#) for more information on activities, demographics and what MnDOT learned.

PHASE 2

Phase 2 began in March 2021 and ended in October 2021. The second phase of engagement dove deep into each of six focus areas to understand impacts to the transportation system. People were asked to share ideas that evolved into draft strategies and actions for the six focus areas—aging infrastructure, climate change, economy and employment, equity, safety and transportation options. See the [Phase 2 Engagement Summary](#) and [Transportation Equity Definition Report](#) for more information on activities, demographics and what MnDOT learned.

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PHASE 3

Phase 3 began in September 2021 and ended in December 2021. The aim was to get feedback on select topics where MnDOT and transportation partners needed more information on how to proceed. Phase 3 included both virtual and in-person engagement activities. The circumstances around COVID-19 briefly provided an opportunity for staff to connect with people at in-person community events. Phase 3 included a collaboration with MnDOT's Artist-in-Residence, Marcus Young 楊墨, to facilitate the Council of Old and New Wisdom. See the [Phase 3 Engagement Summary](#), [Council of Old and New Wisdom Report](#), [Policy Panel Survey and Discussion Forum Report](#) and [Stakeholder Forum Summary](#) for more information on activities, demographics and what MnDOT learned.

PHASE 4

Phase 4 was the public comment period and hearing for the draft SMTP. MnDOT held an eight-week public comment period from July 25 to September 18, 2022. An open house and public hearing occurred in St. Paul on September 7, 2022, from 4:00 to 6:00 pm, and was connected to seven video conference locations throughout Minnesota. The public comment period, open house and public hearing were announced in the State Register, in a press release, on social media and through earned media.

DELIVERY METHODS

ONLINE

Due to the limitations caused by the COVID-19 restrictions, online tools were extensively used to give Minnesotans an opportunity to shape the future of their transportation system. Overall, online tools and information varied by phase. Most online activities took place during Phases 1 and 2. Even when in-person engagement opportunities were available during Phase 3, online was also used to expand the efforts.

IN-PERSON

Phase 3 provided the first opportunity to connect with people in-person. The purpose of in-person engagement was to supplement online input activities and techniques. Not everyone could or preferred to engage virtually. In-person events offered the opportunity to be present in communities. Techniques and methods were sometimes altered due to MnDOT's engagement policy, existing restrictions, Minnesota Department of Health and CDC guidance and staff comfort.

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

The following sections include details about the engagement activities used between fall 2020 and summer 2022 to support the SMTP. Because of COVID-19 policies, MnDOT had to rely on non-traditional means of public engagements to give Minnesotans the opportunity to shape the future of their transportation system. As a result, the MinnesotaGO.org website became a key public engagement tool. The website was supplemented by virtual events, in-person engagement and a Minnesota GO newsletter that updated the public on key progress of the plan. The project team also partnered with several community organizations to advance the public engagement goals of the SMTP.

Table G-1 shows engagement activities by engagement phase. Some activities occurred during all phases. Other activities were used in specific phases to help tailor the engagement approach through the plan update. The selection of each activity was informed by the decision at hand and the best way to connect given current engagement considerations in the pandemic.

Table G-1: Engagement activity by engagement phase

ACTIVITY	PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	PHASE 4
Project website	X	X	X	X
Social media	X	X	X	X
Newsletter	X	X	X	X
Partner and stakeholder meetings	X	X	X	X
Surveys	X	X	X	
Let's Talk Transportation Trivia discussion events		X		
In-person community events			X	
Policy panel online discussion board			X	
Stakeholder forums			X	
Council of Old and New Wisdom			X	
Public comment period				X
Public hearing				X

PROJECT WEBSITE

The MinnesotaGO.org website served as the online home for the SMTP. The website included general project information and highlighted opportunities to provide input. Features of the site included links to surveys and input activities, a calendar of events, links to key documents or background information, reports on overall project progress and summaries of input.

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SOCIAL MEDIA

The social media strategy focused on MnDOT’s Facebook page. The frequency of social media activity varied based on the project phase. The most active social media presence occurred during Phases 1 and 2 of engagement. Overall, the strategy used organic and targeted advertisements via zip codes with focused work to connect with underserved communities.

NEWSLETTER

The project team developed a Minnesota GO newsletter to help communicate progress updates to the public on statewide transportation planning topics and projects. People who signed up for the monthly email newsletter received SMTP engagement and project updates as details available to share. Periodic SMTP updates were also shared in the Air Mail newsletter from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

PARTNER AND STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

MnDOT staff met with partners and stakeholders throughout the duration of the project. Generally, MnDOT attended regularly scheduled virtual meetings to provide project updates and gather input. The focus of each presentation depended on the project stage. Partner and stakeholder meetings began in October 2019 and continued through November 2022. However, most meetings and presentations were concentrated in Phases 2-4.

Table G-2 summarizes internal and external engagement numbers through November 3, 2022.

Table G-2: Summary of internal & external meetings held for the SMTP

GROUP TYPE	TOTAL EVENTS	TOTAL ATTENDEES
Area Transportation Partnership	18	382
Business or special interest	11	234
City	3	26
Community-based organization	2	25
County	6	199
MnDOT (internal)	127	2,078
MnDOT organized	80	1,502
Metropolitan Planning Organization	47	797
Other	13	261
Public	8	123
Regional Development Organization	13	207
Tribal	9	145

*Note that “Total Attendees” reflects the total number of people who attended events by each group type not unique individuals.

SURVEYS

The project team relied on virtual surveys to facilitate public input on the SMTP. The project team gathered input in four ways:

- Mode Lib
- Partner Survey
- VideoAsk
- Policy Panel Survey

MODE LIB SURVEY

A fill-in-the-blank-story activity was used to explore the impact of transportation through personal experiences and stories. The activity encouraged Minnesotans to tell MnDOT in their own words about their transportation experiences and wishes for their communities. This activity was directed towards public audiences during Phase 1 online.

PARTNER SURVEY

The survey focused on which trends or policy areas have changed, which areas transportation partners need more guidance and how important the policy topics are as the various agencies continue to plan for the future. The survey was sent to agencies and organizations, community organizations, non-profits, other public agencies, local organizations and transportation advocacy organizations during Phase 1 to be completed online.

VIDEOASK

This input opportunity targeted multicultural communities throughout Minnesota, specifically those with oral story telling traditions. The recordings were offered in Somali, Hmong, Spanish and English throughout Phases 1 and 2 online. The VideoAsk questions provided opportunity to have more direct conversations with individual respondents. The questions were intentionally left open-ended.

POLICY PANEL SURVEY

MnDOT commissioned a statewide virtual market research panel with a representative sample of Minnesotans to aid decision making about policies, strategies, targets and related messaging. Specifically, the goals of this research were to understand top of mind perspectives and preferences related to MnDOT goals and targets for:

- Commuter delays
- Greenhouse gas emissions
- Vehicle miles traveled reduction

The research also aimed to understand attitudes about:

- Technology and transportation
- Transportation modes and options
- Community engagement, safety and equity
- Trade-offs and priorities

The policy panel had two parts within Phase 3. The quantitative online survey was conducted in October 2021 and followed by a qualitative online discussion board, which wrapped up in November 2021.

LET’S TALK TRANSPORTATION TRIVIA DISCUSSION EVENTS

Let’s Talk Transportation trivia and storytelling aimed at getting input on six focus areas. Information was shared about each topic then people were asked open-ended questions. The trivia and visuals served as conversations prompts. The input received helped MnDOT understand Minnesotans’ experiences and priorities for the future. Because of the limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual trivia was one of the most effective tools available to engage communities. MnDOT relied on three ways to deliver the trivia and discussion questions:

- Community-hosted events
- MnDOT-hosted events
- Online at MinnesotaGO.org

MNDOT-HOSTED EVENTS

MnDOT hosted 31 virtual events similar to the community-hosted events. Five of these events were for MnDOT staff. The rest were open to the public. The goal of the MnDOT-hosted events was to allow people to help shape the decisions around the transportation system.

ONLINE AT MINNESOTAGO.ORG

An online self-paced trivia format was available at MinnesotaGO.org. People were able to select from one of the six focus areas to read content and comics and answer trivia and open-ended discussion questions. This version was available on the website for those who were not able to share comments at a live, virtual gathering.

COMMUNITY-HOSTED EVENTS

MnDOT partnered with community-based organizations representing people underserved in transportation decision making. Staff provided these organizations with tools, content and support needed to host an online trivia-themed virtual gathering for their members. Community-based organizations received a stipend for their participation depending on the scope and scale of what they were able to do. The following are the organizations that hosted events:

- Central Minnesota Council on Aging
- Health Empowerment Resource (HER) Center – Urban hope Ministries
- Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research (HACER)
- Lakes and Prairies Communities Action Partnership (CAPLP)
- Mahube-Owa Community Action Partnership
- North Shore Area Partners
- PartnerSHIP 4 Health
- Project FINE
- Sister of Synergy
- United Church of God in Christ
- Vietnamese Social Services

Nine events were hosted in partnership with community-based organizations.

IN-PERSON COMMUNITY EVENTS

The purpose of in-person engagement was to supplement online input activities and techniques. Not everyone can or prefers to engage virtually and the project team wanted to offer an option for in-person engagement and to be present in communities. People were asked to provide their feedback on the SMTP's six objectives. MnDOT used the following criteria to guide engagement decisions:

- Provide opportunity for conversations (space for comment, feedback, and guidance).
- Meet people where they are.
- Engage with targeted communities and groups (Black, Indigenous and People of Color, children/youth, people with low-income in urban communities, low-income communities, older adults, people with disabilities, new immigrants).
- Prioritize outdoor events.

POLICY PANEL ONLINE DISCUSSION BOARD

The policy panel had two parts within Phase 3. The quantitative online survey was conducted in October 2021 and followed by a qualitative online discussion board, which wrapped up in November 2021. Following the completion of the online survey, participants were told about an opportunity to participate in a follow-up discussion that would dig deeper into some of the content areas. The follow-up online discussion was the qualitative segment of the study and included approximately 50 individuals using a bulletin board research platform. The discussion was moderated over a few days. Note that not every topic from the quantitative survey was discussed in-depth during the qualitative discussion.

STAKEHOLDER FORUMS

Stakeholders and partners were invited to participate in one of two interactive stakeholder forums held in December 2021. Participants had the opportunity to review, discuss and make recommendations to changes to objectives, performance measures, strategies and actions in the SMTP. Participants provided feedback on six topics where MnDOT could use additional guidance on how to proceed:

- Planning for CAV readiness
- Mitigating and adapting to climate change
- Developing policy strategies to reduce vehicle miles traveled
- Supporting freight and economic competitiveness
- Applying a Safe System approach to transportation safety
- Implementing transportation equity

The forums included presentations, live polling and small group discussions. Both forums were hosted virtually and 125 stakeholders attended.

COUNCIL OF OLD AND NEW WISDOM

MnDOT staff in collaboration with a team of artists and community members answered questions in a series of conversations rooted in what the artist team called “auntie and grandma wisdom.” The discussions, known as the Council of Old and New Wisdom, allowed participants to speak plainly about transportation challenges and opportunities ahead.

This group included representation across race, class, gender and geography. The project centered voices from Black and Indigenous communities to address those who have endured the most harm throughout American history, having stolen land and labor, and with awareness that the path to liberation for those communities is the path to liberation for all. The goal was to facilitate intimate conversations to provide guidance and material for the creative and artistic expression as part of the SMTP. See the [Council of Old and New Wisdom Report](#) to hear clips from the discussions and prompts to connect with the illustrations and wisdom in the words.

This work was led by Marcus Young 楊墨, a behavioral artist. He makes participatory work at the intersection of art, spirit and social movement.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

MnDOT held an eight-week public comment period from July 25 to September 18, 2022. The public hearing occurred in St. Paul on September 7, 2022. The public comment period and public hearing were announced in the State Register, in a press release, on social media and through earned media.

A total of 327 comments were received at MinnesotaGO.org, by email and by letter. Sixteen agencies submitted comment letters:

- Association of Minnesota Counties
- Carver County
- City Engineers Association of Minnesota
- City of Minneapolis
- Metropolitan Council
- Minneapolis Regional Chamber/Move Minneapolis
- Minnesota Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus
- Minnesota Chamber of Commerce
- Minnesota County Engineers Association
- Minnesota Department of Agriculture
- Minnesota Freight Advisory Committee
- Minnesota Ports Association
- Move Minnesota
- Natural Resources Defense Council
- Saint Paul Port Authority
- Transportation Alliance

A response to comments was posted at MinnesotaGO.org when the SMTP was adopted.

OPEN HOUSE AND PUBLIC HEARING

MnDOT hosted an open house and public hearing for the SMTP on September 7, 2022. The open house was in person at eight locations around Minnesota:

- Duluth – 1123 Mesaba Avenue
- Bemidji – 3920 Highway 2 West
- Baxter – 7694 Industrial Park Road
- Detroit Lakes – 1000 Highway 10 West
- Rochester – 2900 48th Street NW
- Mankato – 2151 Bassett Drive
- St. Paul – 395 John Ireland Boulevard
- Willmar – 2505 Transportation Road

The public hearing was a hybrid event with people able to attend at the same eight locations and via web conference. This document provides a summary of the information available during the open house and public hearing, how many people attended and the comments received.

The open house occurred in person from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m. at eight locations around Minnesota. The intent of the open house was for people to learn more about the plan, talk with staff and submit written comments.

One member of the public attended in person in District 3 in Baxter, Minnesota.

The public hearing occurred in person at the same eight locations and virtually as a web conference from 5:00 to 6:00 p.m. Commissioner Daubenberger welcomed participants. Hally Turner, Policy Planning Director, shared a short presentation. Assistant Commissioner Tim Sexton presided over the public testimony.

Three members of the public attending in person; one person in District 1 in Duluth, one person in District 3 in Baxter and one person in District 8 in Willmar. Five members of the public attended via web conference. One person provide testimony via the web conference chat.

TRANSPORTATION EQUITY DEFINITION ACTIVITIES

MnDOT staff worked with the members of the State Transportation Plans Equity Work Group to draft a working definition of transportation equity. MnDOT staff connected with Minnesotans to discuss the transportation equity working definition using two primary methods. Staff attended presentations to share information about the SMTP and to discuss their reactions to the working definition. Also, Minnesotans were invited to share their feedback at MinnesotaGO.org.

Staff engaged with internal and external stakeholders during summer 2021 to gather feedback on a working definition to ensure the final version is grounded on the lived experiences of Minnesotans. Most of the conversations focused on the transportation equity working definition to ensure ample time and opportunity for people to weigh in on the proposed language. Information shared typically included background on the SMTP and is included in overall SMTP engagement results. This summary includes sections that will provide information specific to engagement for the transportation equity definition.

MnDOT connected with people from:

- Community-based organizations
- Disadvantaged Business Enterprise & Workforce Collaborative
- Metropolitan planning organizations
- MnDOT employee resource groups and Diversity & Inclusion committees
- Regional development organizations
- Transportation professional organizations
- Tribal staff
- And more

Based on that feedback, the Equity Work Group recommended a revised definition for MnDOT leadership to consider. MnDOT leadership built on that recommendation to clarify what transportation equity means to the agency resulting in a statement of commitment to transportation equity.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF PAST HARMS

MnDOT acknowledges the transportation system and agency decisions have underserved, excluded, harmed and overburdened some communities. We understand some of our past decisions denied Black and Indigenous communities as well as people with disabilities the full participation of transportation benefits. These and other underserved communities have historically carried disproportionate burdens of transportation decisions.

WHAT TRANSPORTATION EQUITY MEANS TO MNDOT

MnDOT is committed to creating an equitable transportation system.

Transportation equity means the benefits and burdens of transportation systems, services and spending are fair and just, which historically has not been the case. Transportation equity requires ensuring underserved communities, especially Black, Indigenous and People of Color, share in the power of decision making.

The journey of transforming our transportation systems, services and decision-making processes will require ongoing listening, learning, changing, implementing and adapting.

Everyone in our agency regardless of position or work assignment has a role to advance transportation equity. We will partner with community members, community based organizations, transportation service providers, Tribal Nations and government institutions to evolve our work and to change outcomes for our communities.

WHO DID WE CONNECT WITH

AUDIENCES

MnDOT understands that not every person shares the same ability, capacity and level of interest in the planning process. It was important to offer a variety of opportunities for different levels of involvement. The project team worked to connect with interested people in ways that are meaningful and accessible to them. It was important to distinguish public, stakeholder, partner and internal input. All are important, but the expectations and tactics for participation differed.

PUBLIC

The public was a key audience for this plan and is the ultimate beneficiary of the outcomes. MnDOT scaled opportunities for Minnesotans to connect with this planning process to their interest and capacity to participate. All levels of interest had the opportunity to learn about the plans and provide input. MnDOT used a variety of outreach techniques, as listed in the How did we connect with people? section, with the goal of reaching a broad and inclusive audience.

The project team paid special attention to hearing from voices underserved in transportation decision making, including Black people, Indigenous people, people of color, people with low-income, people with limited-English proficiency and youth. The project team designed engagement strategies with these people in mind and identified specific strategies to hear and include these voices.

STAKEHOLDERS

A stakeholder was a person, group or organization with a specific interest in the project, but not necessarily in a decision-making role. The project team developed a list of stakeholders for the SMTP update based on previous planning processes. Key stakeholder groups included bicycle associations, environmental groups, neighborhood associations, etc.

PARTNERS

Minnesota has a range of partners working on transportation. There are agencies and organizations that play a key role in collaborating with MnDOT to advance transportation in Minnesota. These include metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), regional development organizations (RDOs), local governments (i.e., townships, cities and counties), transit agencies and agencies responsible for tourism, land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation and historic preservation. These groups are partners since they are decision makers, along with MnDOT, in planning and developing a strong transportation system for Minnesota. Partners were generally those identified in the consult and cooperate categories by federal regulations.

External partners include but are not limited to:

- Boards and councils, such as:
 - Area Transportation Partnerships
 - Minnesota Council on Transportation Access
 - Minnesota Freight Advisory Committee
 - Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils
- Federal and state agencies
- Legislators
- MPOs
- Public Transportation Operators
- RDOs
- Townships, cities, and counties
- Tribal staff and governments

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TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS

There are twelve federally recognized tribes with eleven reservations in Minnesota (See Figure G-2). Chippewa tribes, also called Ojibwe or Anishinabe tribes, are located in the northern part of the State. Minnesota's Dakota Sioux tribes are located in the southern portion of the State. Minnesota is also home to the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe (MCT). The Minnesota Chippewa tribe is a federally recognized tribal government for its member tribes (Bois Forte, Fond du Lac, Grand Portage, Leech Lake, Mille Lacs and White Earth). In addition, Minnesota contains lands owned by the Ho-Chunk Nation which does not have a reservation. The Ho-Chunk Nation's lands are primarily located in Wisconsin. See Appendix J – Tribal Coordination and Consultation for more details.

MNDOT

The SMTP is a plan for all modes of transportation for the state of Minnesota. In addition, the SMTP helps fulfill state and federal transportation planning requirements for MnDOT when combined with other MnDOT plans. As the state's transportation agency, MnDOT plays a critical role in implementing the planning direction. It is important that MnDOT employees engage in the planning process, so they have buy-in and support for the transportation policy and investment direction. Staff will be responsible for the ongoing implementation of the plan. Accordingly, MnDOT staff were also included through the engagement process.

COMMITTEES & WORK GROUPS

The project team created several advisory committees and work groups that helped to guide the planning process. These groups included individuals from a variety of audiences.

POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The project team established a Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) to guide the overall SMTP update process, including advising on engagement activities. PAC members included advocacy organizations, boards, councils, stakeholders and partners who represent different perspectives and modes. A list of PAC members is included in Appendix A – Acknowledgments.

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The project team established a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to provide guidance on the plan update process, including input on engagement activities. The TAC helped ensure the final policy strategies reflect the priorities and needs of MnDOT and partners. TAC members included staff from MnDOT and partner organizations. A list of TAC members is included in Appendix A – Acknowledgments.

WORK GROUPS

The project team created work groups related to the six focus areas identified in Phase 1 engagement – one work group for each focus area. These groups addressed technical issues and drafted strategies for MnDOT and partners to address transportation priorities. Members included staff from MnDOT and partner agencies with subject matter expertise in each topic. A list of work group members is included in Appendix A – Acknowledgments.

WHAT DID WE HEAR

Information for each phase of engagement, transportation equity definition engagement and policy panel included a written summary of activities, demographics (if available) and feedback received. These summaries are available at MinnesotaGO.org.

- [Overall Engagement Summary](#)
- [Phase 1 Engagement Summary](#)
- [Phase 2 Engagement Summary](#)
- [Phase 3 Engagement Summary](#)
- [Phase 4 Engagement Summary](#)
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