

**Minnesota Department of Transportation**  
**20-Year Minnesota State Highway Investment Plan**

Public Participation Plan

Last Update: April 5, 2022

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# CONTACT LIST

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## 1.0 PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) is currently updating the 20-year Minnesota State Highway Investment Plan (MnSHIP). MnSHIP is part of MnDOT's Family of Plans, which stems from the Minnesota GO 50-year Vision. The Vision outlines what Minnesotans desire from the state's transportation system and identifies key guiding principles MnDOT strives to achieve. The MnSHIP is the system investment plan for the State's highway system. It translates the State Multimodal Transportation Plan's objectives into fiscally constrained, performance-based highway investment direction. MnDOT is working to update MnSHIP while concluding the Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan (SMTP) and Statewide Pedestrian System Plan updates. Public engagement for MnSHIP will build off processes from these previous planning efforts.

MnSHIP meets federal and state transportation planning requirements. In 2015, President Obama signed a new federal transportation program into law. It is called the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act). The FAST Act includes requirements for plans like the MnSHIP, including rules on how they are developed and what they should include. The MnSHIP needs to be developed in cooperation with Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and in consultation with non-metropolitan local officials, Tribal governments, and partner agencies. Partner agencies are those responsible for land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, and historic preservation. These rules, along with state requirements, have been carefully considered when developing a strategy for public participation on this joint update process.

The purpose of the Public Participation Plan (PPP) is to provide a framework for how public involvement activities will be conducted during the plan update process. This PPP is intended to be a dynamic document which will be updated periodically throughout the plan update process, based on input from partners, stakeholders and the public and results from previous engagement activities.

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## 2.0 GOALS AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The overall goals for public involvement are to:

- Create meaningful, equitable and safe opportunities for public involvement early and often, including a range of engagement opportunities, both in-person and online, that reduce barriers to participation.
- Use innovative engagement methods to reach more individuals statewide and pilot new tools to reach underrepresented communities underrepresented in statewide planning engagement efforts.
- Offer a variety of platforms to provide input, including online and in-person engagement opportunities.
- Understand prioritizes from transportation partners, stakeholders, underrepresented communities, and the public for investing on the state highway system.

MnDOT will use the engagement results to guide the development of specific investment direction and strategies for the state highway network. MnSHIP engagement strategies will:

- Convey complex, technical information using plain language and graphics.

- Comply with federal and state requirements.

The intended outcome from using this engagement plan is that the public, including stakeholders, has actively participated in the plan development process, and assisted MnDOT in updating the MnSHIP plan. A secondary outcome from using this engagement plan is generation of broad public and stakeholder buy-in and ownership of the policy and investment direction set for transportation in Minnesota.

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## 3.0 AUDIENCES

MnDOT is aware that transportation planning is not a priority for all people, and that other essential life functions are higher priorities. MnDOT is committed to creating multiple opportunities for people to engage in the planning process in ways that are welcoming to all people and fit among daily priorities. MnDOT uses the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation as a tool to identify these varied levels of public engagement for a plan development effort. The spectrum consists of five levels of public participation:

- **Inform:** To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions.
- **Consult:** To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.
- **Involve:** To work, directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.
- **Collaborate:** To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.
- **Empower:** To place final decision making in the hands of the public.

The text that follows lists audiences and anticipated participation levels customized to their unique needs. The engagement will comply with all federal and state law, requirements including Environmental Justice (EJ), Civil Rights, and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.

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## MNDOT

Since the MnSHIP is a plan for the state of Minnesota, MnDOT, as the state's transportation agency, plays a critical role and is empowered in implementing the plan direction. MnDOT employees will be engaged in the plan development process so they feel ownership for the transportation policy and investment direction, and work to implement it. MnDOT staff are the largest number of people responsible for plan implementation.

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## TRANSPORTATION PARTNERS

A broad range of partners work on transportation in Minnesota. Like MnDOT, there are partner agencies and organizations that will play a key role to collaborate with MnDOT in advancing Minnesota toward the planned transportation future. These include MPOs, local governments (e.g., cities, counties, and transit agencies), Tribal governments, and agencies responsible for land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, and historic preservation. These groups are considered Transportation Partners since they play an important role in planning and delivering a strong and resilient transportation system for Minnesota.

Partners include and are not limited to:

- Advocacy Council for Tribal Transportation (ACTT)
- Area Transportation Partnerships
- Counties, cities, and townships
- Federal and state agencies
- Legislators
- Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)
- Metropolitan Council including Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) and Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Minnesota Council on Transportation Access (MCOTA)
- Minnesota Freight Advisory Committee
- Public transit providers
- Regional Development Organizations (RDOs)
- Tribal governments

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## STAKEHOLDERS

A stakeholder is generally defined as a person, group, or organization with a specific interest in a project. MnDOT will generate a list of stakeholders for this plan update process based on information generated in previous planning processes. The initial list of stakeholders may expand as the plan development process proceeds and as specific needs are identified. The primary stakeholders are people who fall in the categories of “Consult” and “Cooperate” levels of public participation, as well as stakeholders MnDOT identifies as meeting other specific needs in the state highway planning process.

The MnDOT list of stakeholders will include Minnesota’s vulnerable and underrepresented populations, which have been disproportionately and adversely impacted by social unrest and COVID-19. These specific populations include ethnic or racial minority groups, low wage earners, non-English speakers, elderly, youth, persons with disabilities, and zero motor vehicle households. Stakeholder groups associated with these specific populations will be identified in the project stakeholder list and actively engaged.

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## PUBLIC

The general public is the primary beneficiary of the policy and investment direction established in MnSHIP and is a key audience that this planning process intends to reach. MnDOT values that general public interest may be less specific than Transportation Partners or stakeholders and values the interest at the same level of importance. People with any level of interest will have the opportunity to learn about the plans and provide input (“Inform” and “Consult” levels of public participation). MnDOT will employ a variety of engagement techniques with the goal of reaching a broad audience. These techniques are documented in **Section 5.0** of the PPP.

MnDOT will provide specific engagement opportunities, including piloting new engagement tools and techniques, for engaging Minnesota’s vulnerable and underrepresented populations.

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## 4.0 PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

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### PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM

The MnSHIP update will be a coordinated effort led by MnDOT’s Investment Planning Director and MnSHIP Project Manager, under the supervision of the Statewide Planning Director. This group, along with the Investment Planning Unit staff, will make up the project management team (PMT). The PMT will be responsible for overseeing all tasks associated with the MnSHIP update and for coordinating tasks with other planning efforts and investment decisions within MnDOT. A consultant will assist the project team in the development and implementation of the public and stakeholder engagement activities. The project team refers to members of the PMT and the consultant.

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### PLAN ADVISORY STRUCTURE

The MnSHIP advisory and decision-making structure has more opportunities for people both internal and external to MnDOT to participate in developing and approving policy guidance. Three existing MnDOT decision making structures will be leveraged for the 2022 SMTP: Executive Leadership Team, Senior Leadership Team, and Management Groups.

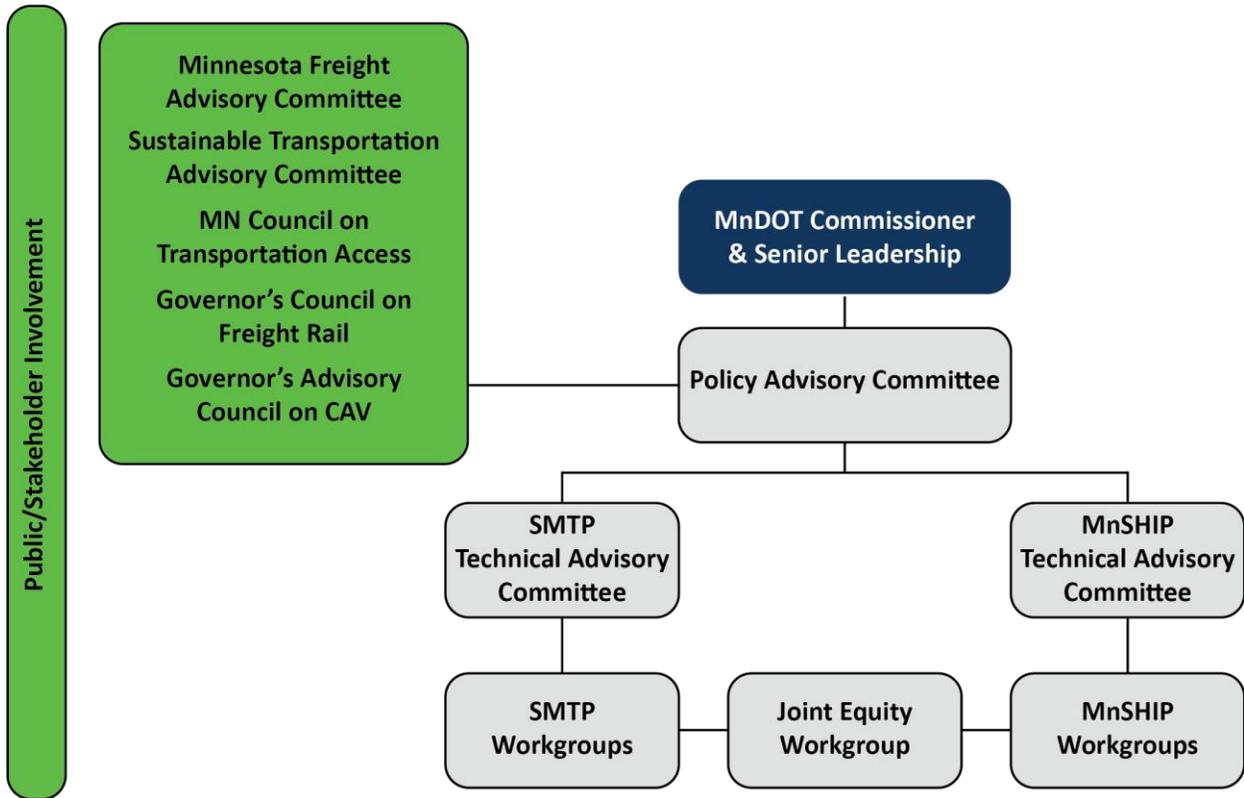
Two committees—Policy Advisory Committee and Technical Advisory Committee—are included for more opportunity for external partners to participate in the update process. The Policy Advisory Committee will serve in this role for both the Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan and the Minnesota State Highway Investment Plan. This will give our external partners who are providing policy and investment guidance a more complete picture of decision-making considerations and processes while also limiting demands for participants’ time. Transportation partners including MPOs, RDOs, tribal governments, counties and cities are represented on both advisory committees.

The Executive Leadership Team with input from the Senior Leadership Team will have make any necessary final decisions if there is not agreement among the advisory committees.

Figure 1 highlights the advisory committee structure for MnSHIP and SMTP. Opportunities for the different stakeholder groups to come together for joint discussion will be provided through the engagement techniques described in **Section 5.0**.

The role of the MnSHIP workgroups will be to identify different investment strategies around different types of roadway infrastructure or improvements that could be made on the state highway system. The workgroups also estimate funding required to implement the investment strategies and outcomes. The different investment strategies from the workgroups will inform the various investment approaches for public engagement and help to set the direction.

**FIGURE 1: ADVISORY COMMITTEE STRUCTURE**



## STAGES OF PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

There are a number of stages during the life of a plan development process. At each stage, the type of engagement, as well as the stakeholders targeted, varies. Opportunities for all audiences and levels of stakeholders will be available throughout the plan update. The following list identifies the project stages and summarizes the type of engagement that occurs at each phase.

- **Scoping:** This stage includes the scoping process as well as communications after the scope of work is drafted. The project team will meet with stakeholders to discuss upcoming tasks and timeline. Feedback from stakeholders during this time will inform the overall project scope.
- **Public Participation Plan:** This stage begins with the completion of the draft PPP. General stakeholder engagement at this time is focused on the informing stakeholder groups of the plan for project engagement. Additionally, there is a required 45-day public comment period on the draft PPP. Edits to the PPP are anticipated to be made based on feedback received.
- **Review of Local Priorities on the State Highway System:** The objective of this stage is to engage with transportation partners including cities, counties, MPOs, and tribal transportation staff to identify local investment priorities on the state highway system. Local priorities will be compiled

and reviewed to understand if these needs have already been identified in the MnSHIP 20-year performance-based need calculation. Local priorities, which go above and beyond the MnSHIP need calculation, will be highlighted separately as additional priorities on the state highway system.

- **Engagement Phase 1:** This is the stage when the project team is actively conducting engagement meetings, online activities and events. During this stage, stakeholders, partners, and the public will participate in organized engagement activities and provide input focused on informing the development of the draft MnSHIP investment direction.
- **Engagement Phase 1 Summary:** This stage occurs at the end of the first phase of organized engagement activities. A summary of the feedback heard during the engagement meetings, online activities and events in the previous stage will be summarized and shared with stakeholders, partners, and the public. While this is a specific phase of engagement, it is important to note that feedback will be summarized throughout the engagement process to confirm what is being heard.
- **Engagement Phase 2:** This is the stage when the project team is actively conducting engagement meetings and events. During this stage, stakeholders, partners and the public will participate in organized engagement activities and provide input focused on review and feedback to the draft investment direction and priorities investment if revenue projections significantly change.
- **Engagement Summary (Phase 1 and 2):** This stage occurs at the end of the organized engagement activities. A summary of the feedback heard during the engagement meetings, online activities and events in the previous stage will be summarized and shared with stakeholders, partners and the public. While this is a specific phase of engagement, it is important to note that feedback will be summarized throughout the engagement process to confirm what is being heard.
- **Draft Documents:** This stage begins with the completion of a draft plan document and includes the open houses and public comment period, as well as the public hearing. The type of engagement that occurs at this stage varies by stakeholder type. For primary stakeholders, the project team will present on key document information during this stage. All stakeholders, partners, and the public could review and provide comments on the draft plan via the open houses, public hearing, and public comment period.
- **Final Documents:** This stage begins after the plan is adopted. In this stage, engagement is communication focused with the project team informing stakeholders of plan adoption document and the key information included, as well as providing responses to all comments received in the previous stage. This stage also includes communication of the results and implementation of the plan to stakeholders, partners and the public.

Table 1 summarizes the engagement opportunities anticipated by stage of plan development.

**TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITY TYPES BY PROJECT STAGE**

Project Stage	Opportunity Types	Tasks
Scoping	Opportunities to learn about the timeline for the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scope of work</li> </ul>
Public Participation Plan	Opportunities to influence the proposed public engagement strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PPP public comment period</li> </ul>
Review of Local Priorities on the State Highway System	Opportunity to identify additional local priorities on the state highway system beyond the performance-based needs calculation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update transportation partners on the status of MnSHIP</li> <li>• Gain input on additional local priorities on the state highway system</li> <li>• Educate and communicate where a priority may already be calculated in an investment category's need</li> <li>• Highlight the investment needed over the next 20 years to manage performance on the state highway system and address locally-desired improvements</li> </ul>
Engagement Phase 1 (Summer/Fall 2022)	Opportunities to influence the direction of the MnSHIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educate the public on the state highway system and types of investment decisions MnDOT must make</li> <li>• Gain input on priorities for different strategies to focus on</li> <li>• Identify a preferred investment direction scenario or construct one of their own</li> <li>• Provide any additional input or additional considerations about how MnDOT manages the state highway system</li> </ul>
Engagement Phase 1 Summary	Opportunities to reflect what was heard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary of feedback</li> </ul>

Project Stage	Opportunity Types	Tasks
Engagement Phase 2 (Fall 2022/Winter 2023)	Opportunities to shape the content of the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present and receive feedback on draft investment direction, outcomes, and impacts</li> <li>• Understand considerations for implementation and project selection</li> <li>• Seek feedback on priorities for adjusting the investment direction based off changes in expected revenue</li> </ul>
Engagement Summary (Phases 1 and 2)	Opportunities to reflect what was heard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary of feedback</li> </ul>
Draft Documents	Opportunities to review and refine the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan public comment period</li> </ul>
Final Documents	Opportunities to read and learn about the final plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responses to comments</li> <li>• Plan finalization and adoption</li> </ul>

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## 5.0 ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

The information that follows describes the public engagement techniques that MnDOT will use in its plan update process, with a specific focus on equity in engagement. The engagement techniques include a balance of in-person and online tools to maximize the volume and effectiveness of engagement statewide. MnDOT will host meetings in locations that are ADA and transit accessible where transit is available. MnDOT will provide information in alternative formats and/or languages by request. A comprehensive calendar of all engagement events will be available on the project website and updated throughout the project process. At any point in the plan update process, a group may request a presentation on the plan. Engagement techniques will be implemented using materials written in plain language. All engagement materials will be tested and revised as necessary to ensure they are effective and clear in conveying and collecting information from the public.

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### EQUITABLE ENGAGEMENT

MnDOT has adopted a [public engagement policy](#) that recognizes the importance of effective public engagement to advance equity in transportation. The policy establishes expectations, responsibilities, and requirements to ensure equitable engagement outcomes. The engagement process for this plan will comply with that policy.

### COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Whether in-person or virtual, MnDOT will continue to partner with community organizations based in underrepresented populations and with leaders who provided guidance on ways to pilot new engagement tools and techniques to better reach historically underrepresented populations across the

state. MnDOT's engagement approach places emphasis on engaging with Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), immigrant populations, elderly populations, youth populations, persons with disabilities and other underrepresented populations. MnDOT will also be mindful of the input received from Areas of Concentrated Affluence. MnDOT will continue to leverage the following engagement methods to gain input on the MnSHIP developed in partnership with a diverse range of traditionally underrepresented community members.

## **MULTILINGUAL PARTICIPATION TOOLS AND MATERIALS**

Project participation tools and materials will be translated to increase input opportunities for non-English speaking Minnesota residents. Spanish, Hmong, and Somali were identified as the three languages other than English that would increase participation. Participation tools and materials such as VideoAsk and the online survey will be translated or have the option for translation. Participation tools will be the same in all languages in order to collect consistent results. For the online survey, a downloadable hard-copy version will also be available in English, Spanish, Hmong or Somali.

The project team will hold focus groups while testing participation tools and materials and refine them before launching more broadly. These focus groups could include the general public and traditionally underrepresented populations identified through community partnerships.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

Social media strategies planned include partnerships with underrepresented community organizations and targeted social media ads. Both will be used to connect non-English community members to engagement opportunities such as the translated online survey. The social media sources will include Facebook and Twitter.

## **EVENTS**

MnDOT will participate in events attended by non-English and English speakers combined. Event attendees will have the opportunity to take the iPad or paper equivalent survey in English, Spanish, Hmong or Somali. MnDOT will use either the roving or information kiosk set-up during each of the attended events. If an event is well-attended, hard-copy surveys will be distributed to increase participation. MnDOT will continue use and target online engagement towards boosting opportunities for historically underrepresented populations to participate in public engagement across the state. MnDOT's engagement approach places emphasis on engaging with Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), immigrant populations, elderly populations, youth populations, persons with disabilities and other underrepresented populations. MnDOT will also be mindful of the input received from Areas of Concentrated Affluence. MnDOT will continue to leverage the following engagement recommendations to gain input on the MnSHIP developed in partnership with a diverse range of traditionally underrepresented community members.

## **EQUITY ANALYSIS**

The project team will conduct two engagement equity analyses and address engagement equity issues as they are identified. MnDOT will request demographic information from participants such as race, languages spoken, national origin, age, income, ability status, gender, and sexual orientation. We acknowledge that not everyone may be comfortable providing this information; our data request will clearly communicate that the provision of demographic information is voluntary and not a requirement to

participate. Once collected, the project team will protect individual rights and privacy by securely storing and analyzing demographic data separate from engagement responses.

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## **IN-PERSON ENGAGEMENT**

### **MEETINGS THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS**

The project team will partner with local and regional community leaders, organizations, and mobility managers to connect with established stakeholder networks, including community elders and people with varying abilities, to spread information about engagement opportunities with their networks and facilitate forums for gathering feedback. Mobility managers focus on removing transportation barriers for people experiencing transportation challenges. The purpose of the community leader and mobility manager-supported forums is to provide an opportunity to solicit more in-depth input on specific questions and issues beyond what can be accomplished through more limited time-exposure events. The project team will develop and share an all-in-one meeting tool kit with facilitator instructions, a video presentation, project handouts, and tablet and paper surveys.

### **COMMUNITY EVENTS**

The project team will identify community events throughout the state with opportunities for socially distant in-person engagement. At these events, we will feature kiosks for taking the online survey via tablet, posters with project information, and handouts with a QR code to the online survey. Events will be selected based on geographic diversity and other factors to reach a diverse population of Minnesotans.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD AND HEARING**

A public comment period is expected of all statewide planning documents at MnDOT. The project team will schedule a 30-day public comment period upon completion of the draft plan document. This will be held in the spring of 2023. A notice of the public comment period will be posted in the State Register prior to its start and include the date and time of the scheduled public hearing. Notices will also be posted on the project website and communicated through project social media channels. An accessible version of the draft plan and comment options will be available on the project website. Hard copies of the draft plan document will be available for review in the MnDOT library and MnDOT district offices. The public hearing will be held in St. Paul with video conference and virtual participation options available for participation throughout the state. Comments will be accepted online, at the hearing, in writing or via phone.

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## **ONLINE ENGAGEMENT**

The engagement strategy for this plan update includes a robust series of online tools. The communications and participation tools online will mirror those implemented in-person, allowing for consistent messaging and sound data integration. An Online Accessibility Plan for online tools is included as **Appendix A**. The Plan will be updated throughout project development to reflect the challenges and opportunities associated with providing accessible web-based engagement.

## **PROJECT WEBSITE**

The plan update has an interactive website branded under the Minnesota GO theme, MnDOT's brand for statewide planning. This website serves as a hub for information and resources about the plan. The website will be updated to host historical context about the State Highway system, investment category information, interactive input tools and upcoming engagement opportunities. There will be a place to request a presentation from the project team. The project team will track hits on a regular basis to evaluate the success of the website. The website is mobile-friendly and ADA accessible. It includes a translation link for limited English proficiency viewers.

## **VIDEOASK**

VideoAsk is an interactive tool that poses short questions via video, audio or text by members of the community and will be offered in Somali, Hmong, Spanish, and English languages. To put a conversational spin on engagement, the project team will use this platform to gather feedback on investment priorities, asking the public questions like "What do you want MnSHIP to know about your experience with the state highway system?"

## **BUDGETING TOOL**

The project website will feature an interactive budgeting tool, allowing users to see the trade-offs and share their investment priorities for MnSHIP. The budgeting tool will be designed to translate into multiple languages.

## **ONLINE SURVEYS**

The project team will utilize online surveys to gain input on investment preferences. Where necessary, surveys will be offered in other languages and formats.

## **VIRTUAL INDIVIDUAL STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS**

The project team will offer to schedule informational meetings with stakeholder groups. Any interested group will also be able to request a presentation via the project website, and the project team will make a good faith attempt to present whenever possible. These meetings can be offered in person as well, if desired.

The goal of these meetings is to increase overall project awareness and provide key information to interested and affected stakeholders. The project team will look to partner with other MnDOT stakeholder engagement efforts, whenever possible, in order to reach more groups and limit overlap. Throughout the meetings, the project team will use interactive surveys tools like Mentimeter to gather stakeholders' feedback on investment priorities.

## **VIRTUAL TRANSPORTATION PARTNER MEETINGS**

MnDOT embraces its responsibility to meaningfully engage with and involve all transportation partners. These groups of people serve in oversight and implementation roles that are critical to successful plan implementation. For these groups, in addition to providing informational project briefings, the project team will also be asking for guidance on the overall project direction and key decisions. Throughout the meetings, the project team will use interactive survey tools like Mentimeter to gather feedback. MnDOT

will communicate with transportation partners how often they can expect that MnDOT will meet with them. For most, this will be multiple times throughout the plan update process at key decision points.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

Social media will be used to promote engagement activities as a part of the joint plan update (SMTP and MnSHIP). A strategy will be crafted primarily around the Minnesota GO Facebook and Twitter profiles, with interaction and occasional posts from the MnDOT general Twitter and Facebook accounts. Posts will be made when approaching or during major project milestones. This will include driving traffic to the project website for more information and educational materials, promoting surveys and other feedback opportunities and interacting with followers to gain input directly through Twitter. Posts will be a mixture of graphics and text-based updates.

In partnership with the social media strategy, the project will implement targeted Facebook and Instagram ads when approaching or during major project milestones. The main goal of the ads will be to drive participation to online input tools.

## **STAKEHOLDER E-MAIL UPDATES**

The project team will utilize the existing GovDelivery statewide transportation planning email list to provide project updates to interested stakeholders and the general public. A link to sign up for the email list will be on the project website throughout the plan update process. Additionally, a one-time email will be sent to all stakeholders in the master stakeholder list at the beginning of public and stakeholder engagement inviting individuals to sign-up to receive continued project information and updates. Other strategies will be implemented to direct stakeholders and the general public to the email list throughout the process as well. Emails will be sent at key project stages and will highlight recent discussions, upcoming milestones and opportunities for input. Specific emails highlighting engagement and engagement opportunities will be sent to the targeted stakeholders identified in the master stakeholder list to increase project awareness and participation among these communities.

## **PRESS RELEASES**

The project team will provide press releases for statewide distribution and for use by the MnDOT Public Affairs Coordinators to publish in local newspapers and media outlets, including local access television, radio and community newsletters, including minority and ethnic publications and outlets. Press materials will be prepared prior to each general public engagement opportunity and will also communicate key decision points (i.e. plan available for public review, public hearing date and final plan adoption).

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# **6.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT SCHEDULE**

A summary of the engagement tools listed in Section 5.0 is presented in Table 2 and a general schedule for implementing the techniques is listed in Table 3.

**TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUES**

Tools What tools are planned?	Timing When and for what duration?	Audience Level MnDOT, Partner, Stakeholder, Public	Input Solicited What is needed from participants?	Communication Method How will we drive people to participate via this tool?
Virtual Individual Stakeholder Meetings	Phase 1 and 2 engagement periods	Stakeholder	Present plan information and ask key questions depending on the stage of plan development	Established networks
Virtual Transportation Partner Meetings	Throughout plan development	MnDOT, Partner, Stakeholder	Present plan information and ask key questions depending on the stage of plan development	Established networks
MPO, Tribal, Environmental Resource Agency and Non-Metropolitan Local Official Engagement	Throughout plan development	Partner, Stakeholder	Present plan information and ask key questions depending on the stage of plan development	Established networks
Meetings through community partnerships to share information and gather input	At key decision points including the engagement periods, public comment period and final adoption.	Partner, Stakeholder	Round 1. Gain input on investment priorities, identify a preferred scenario; Round 2. Gain input on draft investment direction, seek feedback on adjustment investment direction based on changes in revenue; provide options for engagement, all-in-one meeting toolkit	E-mail, established networks
Community Events - Events in different locations throughout the state, promoting and using input tools	During Phase 1 engagement, Phase 2, and public comment period.	Public	Provide educational materials on plans; gain input on changes and investment direction	List of events that meet targeted audience objectives
Equitable Engagement- Community events, targeted social media, translation/alternative formats for participation tools	During Phase 1 engagement, Phase 2, and public comment period.	Stakeholder, Public	Provide educational materials on plans; gain input on changes and investment direction	Initial meetings, website, social media
Press Releases	Throughout the project, as needed	Partner, Stakeholder, Public	Press releases to announce project milestones and opportunities to provide input	In coordination with other activities
Public Comment Period and Hearing	Public hearing and comment period to be held upon official release of plans in spring 2022	MnDOT, Partner, Stakeholder, Public	Comments on draft document	E-mail, press release, website, social media
Project Website	Regular web updates throughout plan development	MnDOT, Partner, Stakeholder, Public	Provide information on plan; use as a platform to host other participation tools (e.g., budget tool, surveys)	In-person activities, e-mail, social media
Social Media	Twitter and Facebook posts, as needed	MnDOT, Partner, Stakeholder, Public	Focus is on messaging, education and promotion of other tools	In-person activities, e-mail, website, community partners
Targeted Facebook Ads - To promote project events, meetings, and online engagement opportunities to provide input	During Phase 1 engagement, Phase 2, and public comment period.	MnDOT, Partner, Stakeholder, Public	Targeted ads promote opportunities to provide input via surveys; participate in events	List of geographies/demographics that meet targeted audience objectives
Stakeholder E-Mail updates	Throughout the project, as needed	MnDOT, Partner, Stakeholder, Public	Provide updates on the process; share opportunities to get involved	E-mail list
Web Participation Tools (e.g. Online Community Board, VideoAsk, Budgeting Tool, Online Surveys)	During Phase 1 engagement, Phase 2, and public comment period.	MnDOT, Partner, Stakeholder, Public	Round 1. Gain input on investment priorities, identify a preferred scenario; Round 2. Gain input on draft investment direction, seek feedback on adjustment investment direction based on changes in revenue	In-person activities, e-mail, press release, radio, posters, flyers, website, social media

**TABLE 3: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT SCHEDULE**

	2021												2022												2023						
	Phase A: Organize and Establish Contacts			Phase B. Connect, Generate Input, and Establish Direction																		Phase C. Connect and Reflect Input				Phase D. Summarize and Communicate and Implement					
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul			
Public Participation Plan	Draft PPP		State Register Notice; 45-day comment period	Publish PPP		Review and Update						Review and Update	State Register Notice; 45-day comment period	Publish Updated PPP					Review and Update							Finalize Public Participation Report					
Communications Plan		Produce Communications Plan				Review and Update						Review and Update							Review and Update							Finalize Communications Report					
Partner Engagement	Partner engagement to occur throughout plan development – includes Advisory Committee Meetings; MPO, Tribal, Environmental Resource Agency and Non-Metropolitan Local Official Engagement; and Community Partnerships																														
Local Priorities Review with Partners											Review Local Priorities on the State Highway System with Partners																				
Public and Stakeholder Engagement													Develop public and stakeholder engagement tools	Engagement Phase 1			Develop public and stakeholder engagement tools	Engagement Phase 2													
Engagement Analysis and Summary															Engagement Analysis and Summary – Phase 1						Engagement Analysis and Summary – Phases 1 and 2										
Public Review and Comment																								State Register Notice	30-day comment period	Compile responses	Publish comment report	MnDOT adopts final plan			
Set Investment Direction																			Draft Investment Direction				Finalize Investment Direction			Revisions Based on Comment Period					
Plan Preparation																							Produce plan documents				Publish final plan documents				

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## 7.0 EVALUATION OF EFFORTS

Specific techniques will be evaluated by the project team on a monthly basis. Evaluation of techniques will be based on the following (example) criteria.

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### QUANTITATIVE

- How many place-based engagement events occurred? What was the attendance?
- How many virtual stakeholder and transportation partner meetings have taken place? What was the attendance?
- How many people were engaged through community partnerships?
- How many people have signed up for project updates via email?
- How many hits on the project website?
- How many hits on the online engagement tools? What were the online survey demographics and were they representative of Minnesota?
  - Age
  - Race/Ethnicity
  - Gender Identity
  - Location

---

### QUALITATIVE

- What kind of feedback was received from the in-person engagement, stakeholder and transportation partner meetings and other opportunities?
- Were the locations of the meetings appropriate?
- Have stakeholders expressed any particular challenges regarding their participation in the process?
- Have different modal interests been represented?
- Have key demographic groups (e.g. historically unrepresented populations) been represented?

The qualitative and quantitative measures will be summarized in an engagement summary document, which will be drafted following major engagement phases and efforts. Cumulative results and trends will be used to adjust engagement related to this project and considered in the planning and execution of future engagement at MnDOT. In addition, MnDOT will receive monthly reports that document the number of people that interact with the project via:

- In-person activities
- Website
- Social media
- Surveys and other online tools

When possible, this will include a breakdown of participation to ensure age, racial/ethnic, gender, and geographic diversity in engagement. If certain areas of Minnesota are missing, the public participation strategy will be adjusted to target those populations.

# Appendix A

## Minnesota Department of Transportation 20-Year Minnesota State Highway Investment Plan

### Online Accessibility Plan

Last Update: April 5, 2022

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# CONTACT LIST

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## 1.0 PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) is currently updating the 20-year Minnesota State Highway Investment Plan (MnSHIP). The MnSHIP is part of MnDOT's Family of Plans, which stems from the Minnesota GO 50-year Vision. The Vision outlines what Minnesotans desire from the state's transportation system and identifies key guiding principles MnDOT strives to achieve. Strategies for public involvement are outlined in the Public Participation Plan (PPP). This document is a companion to the PPP.

A critical part of any engagement effort is ensuring information is accessible to people of all abilities. Non-digital activities are an important cornerstone of a public involvement plan, but online tools are also needed to amplify the reach of a project. To this end, a variety of online tools are proposed for the MnSHIP update.

This purpose of this document is to provide a framework for how online tools will be made accessible to people of all abilities. Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires that electronic information be accessible to people with disabilities. This protects people with visual, hearing, cognitive, and other disabilities. In addition to this requirement, it is simply a good public involvement practice to make information accessible to all audiences. This document provides goals, standards, and measures to evaluate the accessibility of online tools used in the MnSHIP plan update.

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## 2.0 GOALS

The overarching goal for this online accessibility plan is to make information accessible to all audiences. As with in-person activities, not every audience will respond to every tool. As such, diverse tools are leveraged to reach to a variety of audiences. The same is true for online tools. It is important that information is conveyed in more than just one way so that people can engage in a way that suits their needs. This includes taking necessary steps for people who use assistive technology. In some cases, an equitable alternate format for a participation tool is required. Wherever possible, preference will be given to a single format with the background coding to allow for the same experience. Regardless of approach, the goals below aim to ensure that information and engagement opportunities are accessible to all audiences.

The overall goals for accessible engagement are to:

- Allow people using assistive technologies to autonomously access the same information as those without disabilities.
- Convey online information using plain language to increase the ease of understanding for all people, including those with cognitive disabilities.
- When an alternate format is necessary, provide an equal opportunity for people with disabilities to access information and provide input.
- Comply with federal and state requirements.
- Evaluate the accessibility of online tools.

The intended outcome is that people of all abilities have been given equal opportunities to participate in the project process and assist MnDOT in updating the plan document.

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## 3.0 STANDARDS

This section documents the standards that will be adhered to in order to fully maximize the accessibility of online engagement. This includes a team commitment to accessibility. Accessibility will be adopted into the quality assurance and quality control (QA/QC) process for the project. In addition to this commitment, specific strategies have been drafted to fully maximize the accessibility of online engagement tools. This section documents standards for the website, online participation tools, and online project documents to be developed as a part of the engagement for the joint plan update.

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### WEBSITE

The following production and evaluation standards will be adhered to when developing and updating the project website.

#### PRODUCTION

Website production standards were developed using Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). The following standards will be applied to website production to fully maximize accessibility.

#### APPROACH

Accessibility will be considered at the beginning stages of developing a website concept. By adopting an accessible approach from the onset, the functionality of the site will be considered every step of the way. This includes making intentional design decisions that will allow for information to be easily conveyed without creating barriers for people using assistive technology.

#### CONTENT

Content will be developed to the following standards in order to create a website that is perceptible, operable, and understandable.

#### PERCEPTIBLE

Content will be made available to the senses of sight, hearing, and/or touch. This includes the following.

- Images will be tagged with alternate text.
- Equivalent alternatives to complex images will be provided.
- Decorative content will be tagged as background.
- Videos will have captions.
- Transcripts will be provided for audio content.
- Form inputs will have text labels.
- Frames will be appropriately titled.
- A logical header structure will be applied to fonts.
- Headers will be provided for any tables.
- Tab order will be logical.
- Instructions that rely upon visual cues will not be used (e.g., click in the upper left corner)

- Color will not be the sole means to convey information.
- Audio that automatically plays for more than three seconds will have a way to stop, pause, or mute.

## **OPERABLE**

Logic will be applied to website structure to maximize operability. This includes the following.

- Wherever possible, functionality will be available using the keyboard.
- Keyboard focus will not be locked or trapped in one part of the page.
- Page time limits will not be used.
- Automatically scrolling or updating content will have the option to be stopped.
- No page content will flash more than three times per second.
- Pages will have descriptive and informative titles.
- The navigation order of links and elements will be logical and intuitive.

## **UNDERSTANDABLE**

Website content will be developed in a way that is easy to understand. This includes the following.

- Content will be written in plain language.
- The language of the page will be identified.
- Sufficient labels, cues, and instructions for interactive components will be used.

## **EVALUATION**

The website will be tested prior to launching. Following the initial design and any consequent major updates, the website will undergo an accessibility evaluation using the following tools.

### **Achecker.ca**

This tool checks websites against accessibility standards and provides a work-up of issues. Any known problems will be addressed.

### **508Checker.com**

Like AChecker, 508 Checker will be used to check website compliance. Any known problems will be addressed.

### **Window-Eyes**

Window-Eyes is a screen reading software application for the blind and visually impaired. The free download version of Window-Eyes will be used to check website accessibility.

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## **ONLINE PARTICIPATION TOOLS**

There are a variety of survey tools proposed on this project. The following standards will be adhered to for any online tools created.

## **PRODUCTION**

### **WEBSITE STANDARDS**

All of the above website standards will apply to online participation tools.

### **ALTERNATE FORMAT**

Where a single format is not possible, an equal participation alternative will be provided.

## **EVALUATION**

The same steps outlined for the website will be used to evaluate the accessibility of online participation tools.

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## **ONLINE PROJECT DOCUMENTS**

Documents posted to the project website will be developed and checked for accessibility.

### **PRODUCTION**

Accessibility will be considered from the onset of developing any project materials. This will allow for thoughtful design of project information. As with the website, documents will be produced to a standard that is perceptible, operable, and understandable. This includes the following.

Documents will be written in plain language.

- File names will be concise and will not contain spaces or special characters.
- Document properties (title, author, subject, keywords, and language) will be set.
- Documents will not contain watermarks.
- Images will be tagged with alternate text.
- Complex images will have descriptive text that describes the concepts demonstrated graphically.
- Multilayered objects will be flattened into one object that has alternate text.
- Color will not be used as the sole way to convey a concept.
- Tables will be assigned headers.
- Heading styles will be used.
- Paragraph styles will be used instead of blank spaces or pressing enter.
- Page numbering codes will be used.
- Footnotes will be made using the Word footnote function.
- Email links and URLs will have descriptive hyperlinks and be linked to the correct destinations.
- Documents with a Table of Contents will be made using the Table of Contents field in Word.
- When there is no way to make content accessible, an equal alternative will be made available.

### **EVALUATION**

The following steps will be used to evaluate the accessibility of documents to be posted online.

## **MICROSOFT WORD**

Documents originated in Microsoft Word will be run through the accessibility check. Any problems will be resolved prior to exporting to PDF.

## **ACROBAT**

Wherever possible, documents posted to the website will be done so as PDF files. Prior to finalizing a PDF, it will be run through the accessibility checker. Any problems will be resolved.

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# **4.0 MEASURING OUTCOMES**

The outcomes of this focused effort will be evaluated to improve the process for future efforts. Outcomes will be measured using both qualitative and quantitative means. Questions include the following.

- How many people encountered barriers when accessing information online?
- How does this compare to traditional public involvement efforts?
- How did the evaluation tools work?
- Are there other ways to evaluate accessibility in the future?
- What concerns were expressed?
- How could the process be improved in the future?
- What standards should be applied in future efforts?

These questions will be asked throughout the engagement process, and this document will be revised to reflect what is learned.