

Public Participation Plan 2020 Annual Evaluation



OZARKS TRANSPORTATION ORGANIZATION

A METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

April 1, 2021

This report was prepared in cooperation with the USDOT, including FHWA and FTA, as well as the Missouri Department of Transportation

Introduction

The effectiveness of the Ozarks Transportation Organization's Public Participation Plan and public involvement activities are documented and evaluated annually. This annual evaluation is conducted in accordance with the Public Participation Plan 2020 approved by the Board of Directors on August 20, 2020 and as required by Federal Law 20 CFR 450.316. Through these annual evaluations the OTO adjusts and modifies public involvement activities in a list of action items to be undertaken preceding the next annual evaluation.

Goal

Through continued evaluation, the OTO seeks to improve how information is provided to the public and to enhance public involvement and input. The goal of the evaluation is to utilize quantified performance measures in conjunction with a set of action items to evaluate and improve the provision of information, facilitate public involvement, and increase input.

Previously Designated Action Items

As part of the 2020 Public Participation Plan Evaluation, four action items were identified to improve outreach and increase public involvement. The four items included:

- Ensure that email addresses are included and up to date for all contacts in the OTO Master Contacts database. Public Participation surveys conducted in 2017 and 2020 indicated that emails are a very effective way to provide information and solicit feedback.
- Follow procedures for posting press releases and announcements on the News & Updates Entry page on the OTO Website. This is a critical step in a workflow where URL links to this material can be pasted to social media posts branded with prepared SEO content built into the OTO Website such as logos, images, and a description of the OTO.

- Research and enhance virtual conferencing applications and online broadcasting platforms such as YouTube and Facebook live that allow for moderated comments from the public in real time.
- Recruit and hire an executive assistant whose job description will include responsibilities for following and executing public participation procedures outlined in the Public Participation Plan

Performance Measures

The OTO has been tracking Public Participation performance measures for several years. This section provides a list of activities and outlets that the OTO monitors and uses as performance measures in the evaluation of the public participation plan.

Facebook Participation

Date	Likes	Men/Women
August 2013	51	Not Available
August 2014	108	56/43
April 2015	137	52/45
July 2016	175	54/43
March 2017	177	55/43
March 2018	220	56/43
March 2019	234	53/45
March 2020	437	44/55
March 2021	541	43/56

Facebook Participation by Location

Date	Battlefield	Springfield	Nixa	KC	Ozark	Republic
August 2014	-	60	4	3	2	2
April 2015	-	82	4	3	4	3
July 2016	15	72	5	2	11	7
March 2017	13	66	5	3	11	5
March 2018	3	117	8	3	13	4
March 2019	2	129	7	4	15	5
March 2020	3	207	21	5	41	13
March 2021*	4	212	23	4	46	9

**Includes 9 in Strafford & 4 in Willard*

Twitter Participation

Date	Followers	Following	Tweets
August 2014	57	241	284
April 2015	91	218	628
July 2016	149	216	1,503
March 2017	169	214	1,648
March 2018	185	219	1,712
March 2019	217	289	1,743
March 2020	264	308	1,881
March 2021	264	309	1,964

Number of Meetings Open to the Public

OTO attempts to hold six meetings annually for the following boards and committees:

Board of Directors

Technical Planning Committee

Local Coordinating Board for Transit

Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee

Each meeting is open to the public and provides an opportunity for the public to share opinions and concerns with OTO leadership and staff. Occasionally, electronic or email meetings are held. The following table shows how many meetings were held for each committee or board per year.

Meetings Held Annually

Year	BOD	TPC	LCBT	BPAC
2012	7*	7*	4	5
2013	6	6	6	6
2014	7*	7*	9	5
2015	8*	8*	5	6
2016	7*	8	4	6
2017	9*	8*	6	11
2018	8*	7*	3	6
2019	6	7*	3	2
2020	6	7*	4	6

* Indicates an E-meeting was held during the year. †Includes Board of Directors Training Workshop.

Press Releases Sent

Press releases sent out for **2012 - 41**

Press releases sent out for **2013 - 39**

Press releases sent out for **2014 - 41**

Press releases sent out for **2015 - 57**

Press releases sent out for **2016 - 53**

Press releases sent out for **2017 - 56**

Press releases sent out for **2018 - 54**

Press releases sent out for **2019 - 34**

Press releases sent out for **2020 - 45**

Media Coverage of OTO

The OTO maintains a log of all media articles and stories where OTO was featured or mentioned. The log provides a record of the types of items that are of interest to the media. Furthermore, as we continue to refine press releases, this log could serve as a guidebook to the effectiveness of our press releases.

- Media coverage from October 2014 to December 31, **2014– 8**
- Media coverage from January 1, 2015 to December 31, **2015 – 20**
- Media coverage from January 1, 2016 to December 31, **2016 – 10**
- Media Coverage from January 1, 2017 to December 31, **2017 – 12**
- Media Coverage from January 1, 2018 to December 31, **2018 – 12**
- Media Coverage from January 1, 2019 to December 31, **2019 – 13**
- Media Coverage from January 1, 2020 to December 31, **2020 - 15**

Events Attended by OTO Staff in 2020

In past evaluations, public events attended by OTO staff are listed here. The OTO defines public events as any function where the public has access to OTO staff outside of the OTO office. Events are often expos or trade shows. This last year staff did not attend any public events due to COVID-19.

Website Statistics

The OTO has been tracking activity on our website utilizing Google Analytics to document usage since 2015. Below are the google analytics for ozarkstransportation.org from 2015 to 2020.

Analytics for the OTO website

Year	Sessions	Users	Page Views	Avg. Session Duration	male/female	Percent New Visitors
2015	7,454	4,918	14,926	2:19	54/45	63.3
2016	7,816	4,873	17,339	2:15	N/A	61.3
2017	6,189	3,677	14,041	2:06	57/43	83.9
2018	6,559	3,869	13,911	2:13	58/42	98.1
2019	7,300	4,413	17,338	2:13	55/44	88.8
2020	7,558	5,000	19,160	2:25	N/A	98

Legal Ads

Legal ads are utilized as documentation of efforts to include the public in the planning process as per the Public Participation Plan. Affidavits of publication are evidence of compliance with public comment periods by way of advertising in print publications widely circulated in the planning area as required by federal regulations.

Year	No. of Ads Printed
2012	4
2013	7
2014	3
2015	3
2016	6
2017	3
2018	3
2019	4
2020	1

Public Comment Log

OTO maintains a Public Incoming Comment Log. This log documents all email, phone, and personal interactions with the public to the extent possible. Ideally, the log will include the individuals:

- Name
- Date and time of comment
- Phone number and/or email address
- Subject or topic of their comment
- Their comment
- Any reply that was given or how the comment was processed

OTO Logged Comments

Year	Comments Received
2013	70
2014	195
2015	63
2016	22
2017	40
2018	16
2019	20
2020	37

Action Items for 2021

The following action items were identified to enhance Public Participation in 2020. The updated list is based on progress towards previously designated action items and performance measures. The items are recommendations for moving forward and represent refocused objectives for 2020. The OTO staff will work towards accomplishing the updated action items in advance of the next Public Participation Plan Evaluation. These items include:

- Ensure that all comments and concerns related to State maintained roadways are relayed to MoDOT SW District in a timely manner. Identify points of contact at the district for relaying public comments.
- Develop and follow standard procedures for posting meeting notifications for various planning activities requiring different levels of public involvement, such as, strategizing, seeking input, taking action, and Board approval or adoption.
- Continue to expand the use of Zoom and Facebook live allowing for moderated comments from the public in real time and boosting ads/posts to communities in the OTO area.
- Develop a standard format for documenting public comments to be included in Technical Planning Committee and Board of Directors agenda packets including as much information from the comment log as possible.

Summary

Several years of performance measures used to evaluate the PPP have been compiled and now include data for the 2020 calendar year. The performance measures produce data for understanding how the public are utilizing tools that the OTO provides for keeping them informed and the methods that the OTO employs to solicit public engagement. A summary of conclusions from the performance measures include:

- In 2020, 37 comments were logged compared to 20 in 2019. Most of the comments were submitted through the “Map It” feature on the OTO Website.
- The OTO Website had the highest number of users and page views in the period from 2015 to 2020 using Google analytics.
- The OTO sent out 45 press releases in 2020 compared to 34 in 2019, 54 in 2018, and 56 in 2017. The increase in the number of press releases coincided with an increase in news coverage. Media coverage in 2020 included 15 news articles compared to 2019, 2018, 2017, and 2016 with 13, 12, 12, and 10, respectively.

- The number of followers on OTO social media accounts has steadily increased, however in 2020, the number of users following the Ozarks Transportation Page on twitter has plateaued. Facebook has proven to be more an effective platform to communicate with the public. The OTO Technical Planning Committee and Board of Director Zoom meetings are broadcast on Facebook live to conform with sunshine laws. Several comments have been received during these meetings via social media.

The OTO staff will continue to work towards increasing public awareness of its role in the region and planning activities. The action items, especially maintaining email contacts for interested parties, should be effective in directly providing information and gathering public feedback from them. In addition, the public involvement processes outlined in the update of the PPP and implementation of the updated action items will provide continuity and consistency in public involvement efforts at the OTO.