

Public Participation Plan 2019 Annual Evaluation



OZARKS TRANSPORTATION ORGANIZATION

A METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

April 1, 2020

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 continuously evaluated. This annual evaluation is conducted in accordance with the Public Participation Plan 2017 approved by the Board of Directors on June 15, 2017 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 and increase public involvement and input.

Previously Designated Action Items

As part of the 2018 Public Participation Plan Evaluation, five action items were identified to improve outreach and increase public involvement. The five items include:

- Website Redesign – the OTO website redesign is expected to be operational by summer 2019. The new site will have more accessible public comment functions and streamline navigation to planning documents and announcements. The redesign will be an overhaul and major update from the old website and enhance engagement with the public
- Increase Social Media presence, frequency of messaging, and quality of information – users following the OTO on Twitter and Facebook have increased steadily over the last few years, however, utilization of this medium can be improved through more strategic messaging campaigns
- Logo Branding – the OTO staff will ensure that updated logos are prominently displayed on applicable documents and publications

- Maintain comment log - The OTO shall strive ensure and demonstrate that public concerns are addressed, questions are answered, and comments are taken into consideration through the inclusion of all comments in Board of Director meeting agendas
- Prepare a public involvement outline – a checklist for involvement tools for plans and activities will help ensure that staff are following protocols to notify the public of opportunities to comment for plans activities at the OTO

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

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

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

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

* 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**

Media Coverage of OTO

A log of all media articles and stories where OTO was featured or mentioned has been updated since October 2014. 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**

Events Attended by OTO Staff in 2019

The OTO defines 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 in conjunction with seeking public input through Nixa Trail Investment Study Workshops a variety of events were attended:

- Community Study Tour to Northwest Arkansas – May 1
- Lawnmower Equipment demonstration at Farmer’s Market of the Ozarks – May 15
- Regional Trails Luncheon – May 23
- Springfield City Council Walkability Action Team – June 3
- Republic Chamber of Commerce – July 1
- Chadwick Flyer Regional Trail Meeting – July 30
- City of Springfield Transportation Advisory Board Project Tour - July 30
- Republic Comprehensive Plan Update Meeting – October 2
- Community Focus Report Release Event – October 10

- Forward SGF Workshop - October 12
- Ozark State of the Community 2019 – October 15
- OTO Legislative Breakfast – October 16
- Nixa State of the Community – October 29

Website Statistics

In 2014, the OTO was not able to provide analytics for Ozarkstransportation.org, however, for the past five years the OTO has utilizing Google Analytics to document website statistics. Below are the google analytics for ozarkstransportation.org for 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019.

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

Giveyourinput.org

Giveyourinput.org was developed in 2013. In 2014 the site was used for the Transportation Input Initiative. In March of 2015, the site was redesigned and transformed into a blog style layout. The redesign of the OTO website in 2019 integrated the giveyourinput site as a webpage. The giveyourinput site was taken offline in June of 2019.

Giveyourinput.org Site Data

Year	Sessions	New Users	New Visitors (%)	Post Count	Comments
2015	11	11	100	30	15
2016	613	527	86	18	7
2017	842	688	93.6	39	10
2018	1,354	1,233	91.1	22	6
2019*	510	432	95.6	18	3

*Through June 2019

Legal Ads

Legal ads are utilized to document efforts to include the public in the planning process. Affidavits of publication are evidence of the effort to involve the public 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

Public Comment Log

OTO maintains a Public Incoming Comment Log. This log documents all email, phone, and personal interactions with the public.

The log maintains 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
- In the event of an email a link to the email is also included

OTO logged 70 comments in 2013, 195 in 2014, 63 for 2015, 22 in 2016, 40 in 2017, 16 in 2018, and 20 in 2019.

Action Items for 2020

Below is a list of revised action items to enhance Public Participation in 2020. The updated list is based on progress towards completion of the previously designated action items and performance measures. The updated 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 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

Summary

Several years of performance measures used to evaluate the PPP have been compiled and now include data for the 2019 calendar year. The performance measures produce data for understanding how the public are utilizing tools that the OTO provides for keeping them informed and collecting feedback compared to the number of ways and methods that the OTO has solicited public engagement. In 2019 there were no major plan updates that required a

coordinated public involvement effort. A summary of conclusions from the performance measures include:

- In 2019, 20 comments were logged compared to 16 in 2018. Over half of the comments were submitted through the “Map a Concern” feature on the Give Us Your Input page on the OTO Website
- The OTO sent out 34 press releases in 2019 compared to 54 in 2018, 56 in 2017, and 53 in 2016. Although the number of press releases has been significantly less than the past three years, a similar number of news articles resulted with 13, 12, 12, and 10, respectively. as has the number of news articles focused on the OTO’s role.
- The number of followers on OTO social media accounts has steadily increased, however in 2019, the number of users following the Ozarks Transportation Page nearly doubled. This was due in large part to sharing a schedule of closures of sections of Highway 65 for a rebuild. The OTO post was reshared numerous times and reached over 60,000 accounts and elicited over 50 comments however these were mostly unrelated to OTO activities. This following has been maintained and although subsequent posts elicited a high degree of interaction and reach, they have not garnered much input as far as public comment is concerned.

In anticipation of the completion of the public involvement process for the Destination 2045 long-Range Transportation Plan will be completed in 2020, the OTO staff will continue to increase 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 creation of an executive assistant position will provide continuity in public involvement efforts and implementation the PPP.