

**SOUTHWEST OKLAHOMA REGIONAL
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING
ORGANIZATION**

**PUBLIC
PARTICIPATION
PROCESS**

**Southwest Oklahoma Regional
Transportation Planning Organization**

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Adopted Amendment #2

Public Review and Comment Period



DRAFT

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The Southwest Oklahoma Regional Transportation Planning Organization (SORTPO) complies with all civil rights provisions of federal statutes and related authorities that prohibit discrimination in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance. Therefore, SORTPO does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, national origin, religion, or disability, in the admission, access to and treatment in SORTPO programs and activities.

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Mission Statement

The mission of the Public Participation Plan is to actively engage and empower the community in the planning and decision-making processes for transportation development. We aim to ensure that all voices are heard and considered, fostering a collaborative environment where diverse perspectives contribute to creating a safe, balanced, and efficient regional transportation system that meets the needs and interests of the SORTPO region.

Purpose of the Public Participation Process Summary

The Public Participation Process (PPP) is intended to provide direction for transportation public participation activities to be conducted by the Southwest Oklahoma Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (SORTPO) and contains the techniques and processes used by SORTPO for public participation. The purpose is to encourage and support proactive public participation throughout the planning and decision-making process related to the development of proposed transportation plans, programs, and projects so that a safe, efficient transportation system reflecting the needs and interests of all stakeholders can be provided. Public participation provides citizens, affected public agencies, private providers of transportation and other interested party's reasonable opportunity to comment, participate in goal setting, problem solving, and expand the focus of transportation decision making.

- All SORTPO Transportation Policy Board and Technical Committee meetings are open to the public and will be conducted in a location that complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). A reasonable period for comments from members of the public will be provided prior to the adjournment of said meetings.
- All meetings are subject to the provisions of the Oklahoma Statutes, Title 25 § 301-314 Open Meetings Act.
- Official notification of Public Meetings, Public Hearings, and Public Review and Comment periods will also be posted on the SORTPO website (www.sortpo.org).
- When, and if, non-English newspapers of general circulation are initiated in the Southwest Oklahoma region, SORTPO staff will work with these newspapers to have meeting notices printed in the appropriate language in their publications.
- The SORTPO staff is available during normal business hours to discuss technical and policy information with citizens and other interested parties. The SORTPO offices are located at 420 Sooner Drive, Burns Flat, Oklahoma. SORTPO staff are available to meet with outside groups after normal business hours, arrangements must be made at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting.
- Copies of all available documents and other materials are available for the cost of postage.

Introduction

“Transportation affects nearly every aspect of a person’s life. Whether you are driving to work, riding a bike, or walking to the store, taking the bus to a doctor’s appointment, your transportation system is there to move you. Transportation brings food from the farm to your local store, services to your community, and provides connections to jobs.”¹

Public participation is a fundamental component of the transportation planning process. It ensures that the community has a voice in the decisions that affect their daily lives and the future of their region. SORTPO is committed to fostering an inclusive and transparent planning process by engaging the public at every stage of transportation project development. This principle guides SORTPO’s approach to public participation, emphasizing the importance of accessibility, transparency, and responsiveness.

Transportation helps shape the region’s economic health and quality of life. Not only does the transportation system provide for the mobility of people and goods, but it also influences patterns of growth and economic activity by providing access to land. The performance of the system affects public policy concerns like air quality, environmental resource consumption, social equity, land use, urban growth, economic development, safety, and security. Transportation planning recognizes the critical links between transportation and other societal goals. The planning process is more than merely listing highway and transit capital projects. It requires developing strategies for operating, managing, maintaining, and financing the region’s transportation system in such a way as to advance the region’s long-term goals.

¹ U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, 2015, “A Guide to Transportation Decision-making,” Washington, DC.

SORTPO is a regional transportation planning leader for facilitating collaboration and input opportunities into decision making for future transportation infrastructure, safety, and economic growth in southwest Oklahoma. SORTPO region spans 16 counties across southwest Oklahoma (Beckham, Caddo, Comanche, Cotton, Custer, Grady, Greer, Harmon, Jackson, Jefferson, Kiowa, McClain, Roger Mills, Stephens, Tillman, and Washita Counties (see map on page 5).

The Public Participation Process (PPP) is a framework for accomplishing the cooperative process goals among the SORTPO members, technical and policy committees, public agencies (including emergency response agencies), elected officials, and citizens.

The public participation factors outlined in this document will guide the development of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), Regional Transportation Improvement Plan (RTIP), Planning Work Program (PWP) and other relevant transportation policies, plans, programs, and projects. These guidelines may also be used in other planning activities by SORTPO, considering specific program requirements and needs. The objective of updating the PPP is not only to continue guiding SORTPO staff in crafting public outreach strategies for the transportation improvement process but also to intensify efforts to engage the region's Title VI community.

Being consistent with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which ensures that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, sex, national origin, or physical handicap, be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program receiving Federal assistance from the United States Department of Transportation; and moreover, seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, including, but not limited to, low income and minority households.

This community includes older adults, individuals with limited English proficiency, people with disabilities, ethnic groups, and low-income households. The process seeks to maximize educational opportunities on transportation issues and to encourage citizens to offer their

ideas and express their opinions early and often.

Meaningful Public Involvement

USDOT defines meaningful public involvement as a process that proactively seeks full representation from the community, considers public comments and feedback, and incorporates that feedback into a project, program, or plan when possible. The impact of community contributions encourages early and continuous public involvement and brings diverse viewpoints and values into the transportation decision-making process.

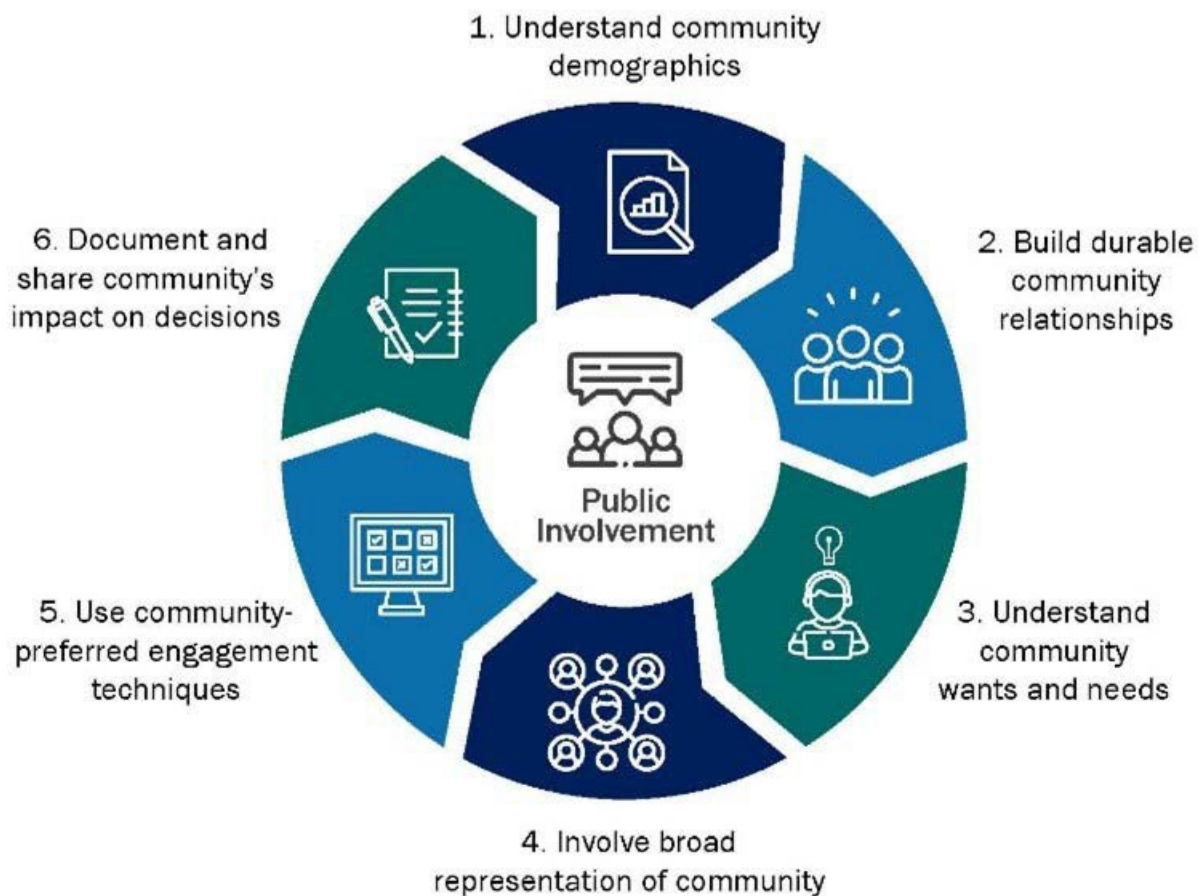


Figure 1 *Public Participation Process “ US Department of Transportation”*

SORTPO actively seeks the views of historically disadvantaged people including racial and ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, seniors, and people with low and moderate incomes.

1 – Inform, Reach Out, and Educate the Public

Inform and educate stakeholders and interested citizens, share information, and increase the overall awareness of regional planning and transportation activities in the SORTPO region. Involve underserved communities in the regional transportation planning process.

2 – Engage the Public and Encourage Ongoing Participation

Ensure the public have been provided with adequate and meaningful opportunities to participate in the decision-making process. Establish a significant and ongoing public participation in transportation planning processes.

3 – Promote Open and Accessible Involvement

Document and review all input received from diverse audiences and use the input to shape plans and programs. The process will be transparent and open to the public.

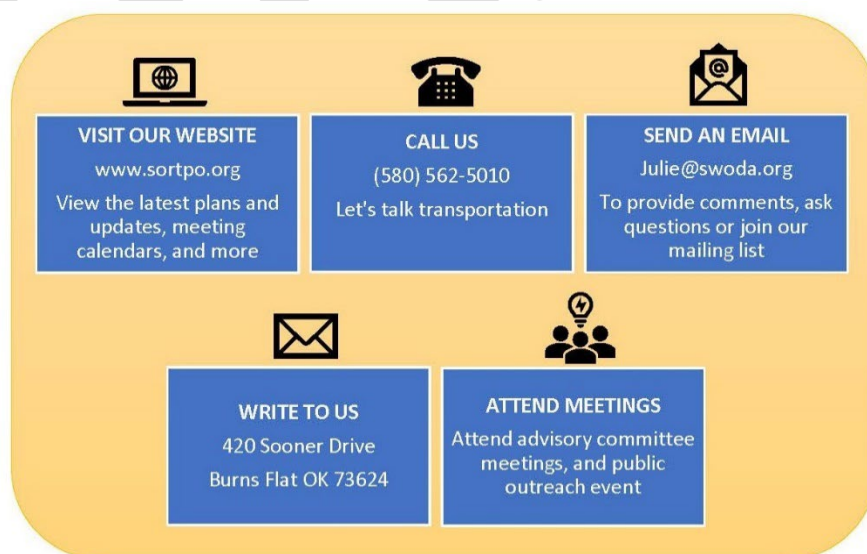


Figure 2 Ways to Get Involved in the Transportation Planning Process

Southwestern Oklahoma Regional Transportation Planning Organization

Counties: Beckham, Caddo, Comanche, Cotton, Custer, Grady, Greer, Harmon, Jackson, Jefferson, Kiowa, McClain, Roger Mills, Stephens, Tillman, and Washita.

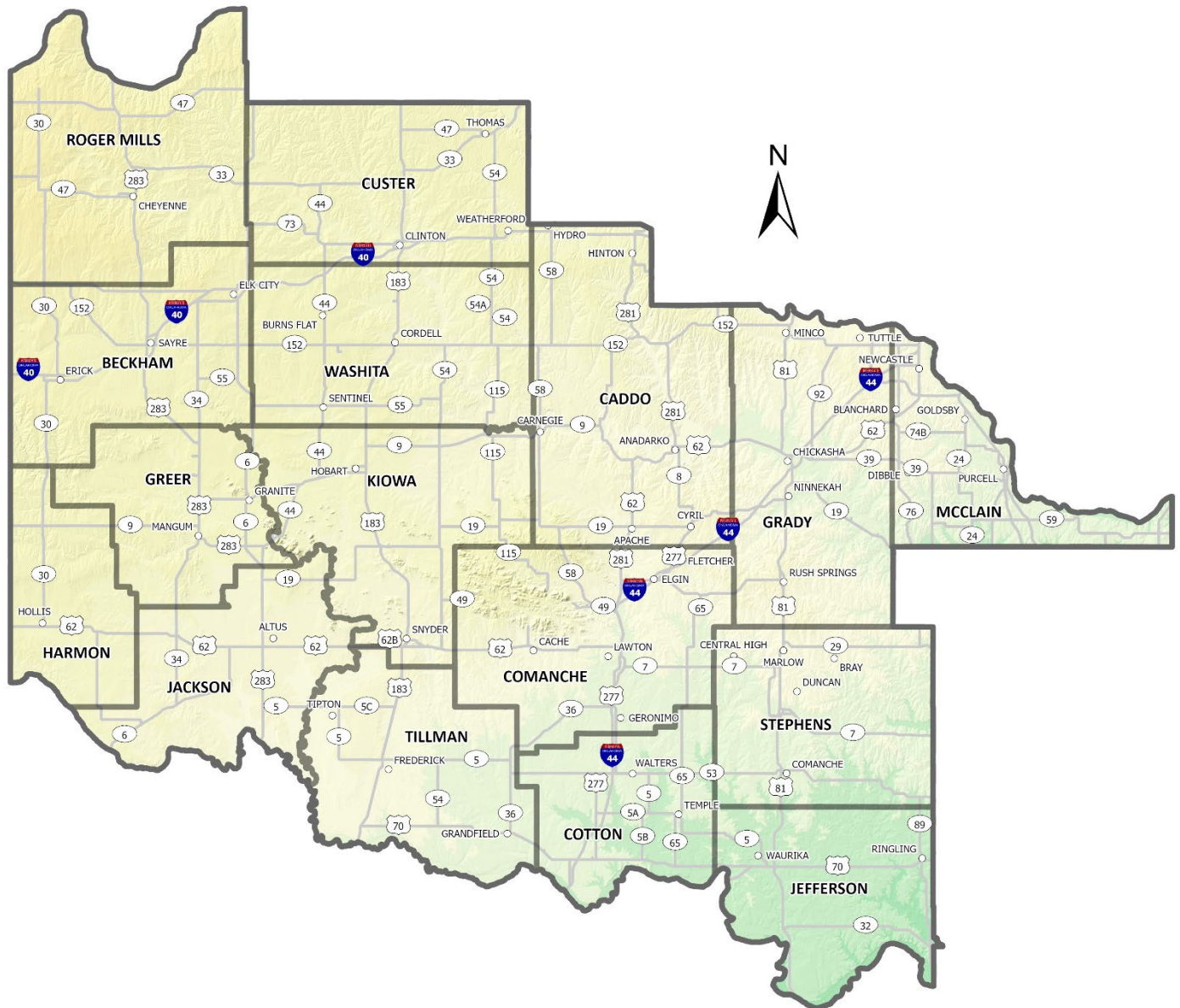


Figure 3 Map of the Oklahoma Southwest Region

The image below illustrates the regional transportation planning process.

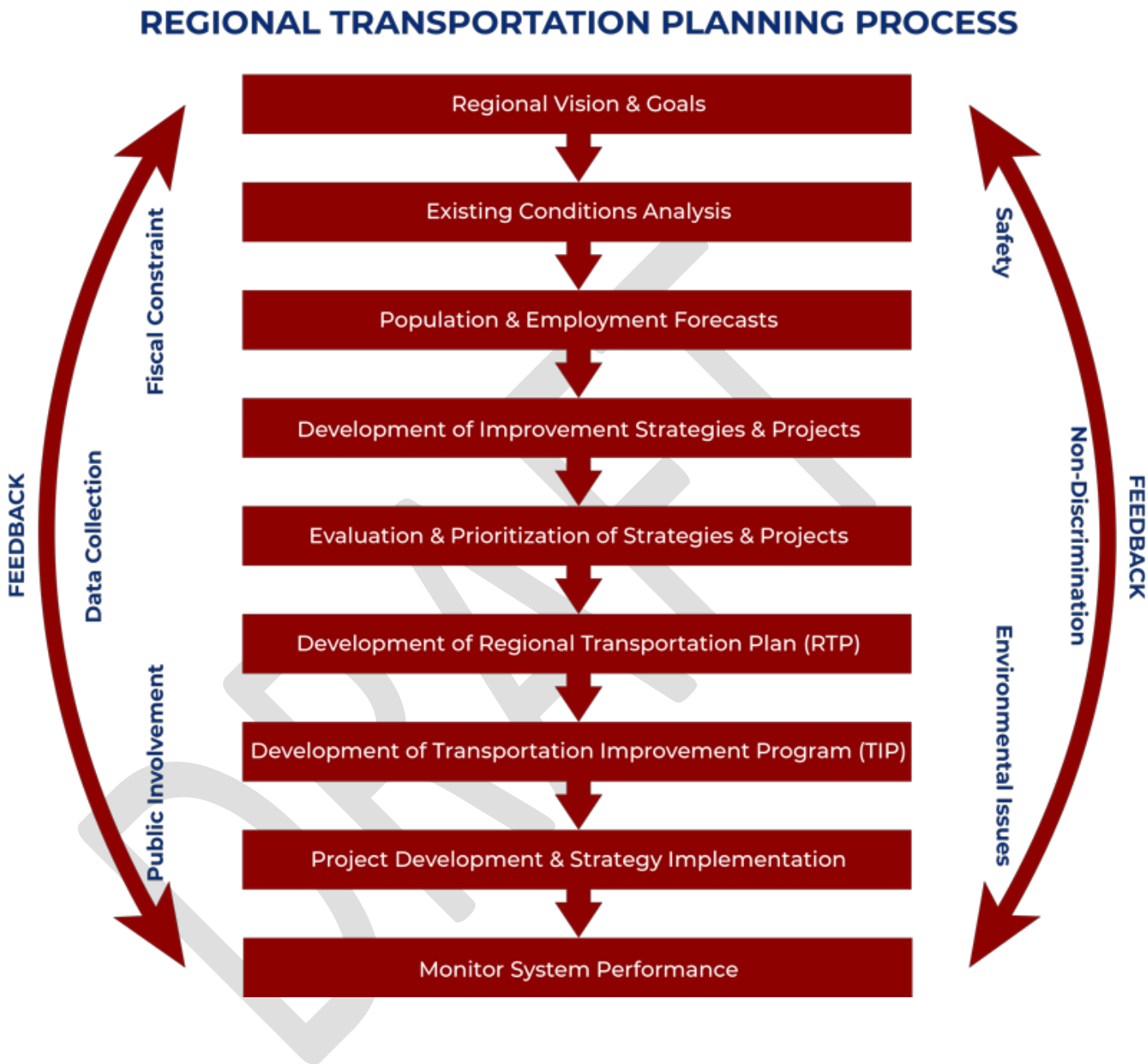


Image Source:
Virginia RVA

SORTPO's Structure and Public Committees

The following highlights SORTPO's structure and the roles of the SORTPO Transportation Policy Board and SORTPO Transportation Technical Committee engaged in the transportation planning process. All committee meetings follow the Oklahoma Open Meeting Act and are open to the public, and citizens are encouraged to attend and to participate.

SORTPO's staff provides information and support to the Policy Board and Technical Committee, prepares the documents and plans produced as part of the transportation planning process, facilitates public outreach activities to gain input and feedback, and manages the planning process.

SORTPO's Committee Structure

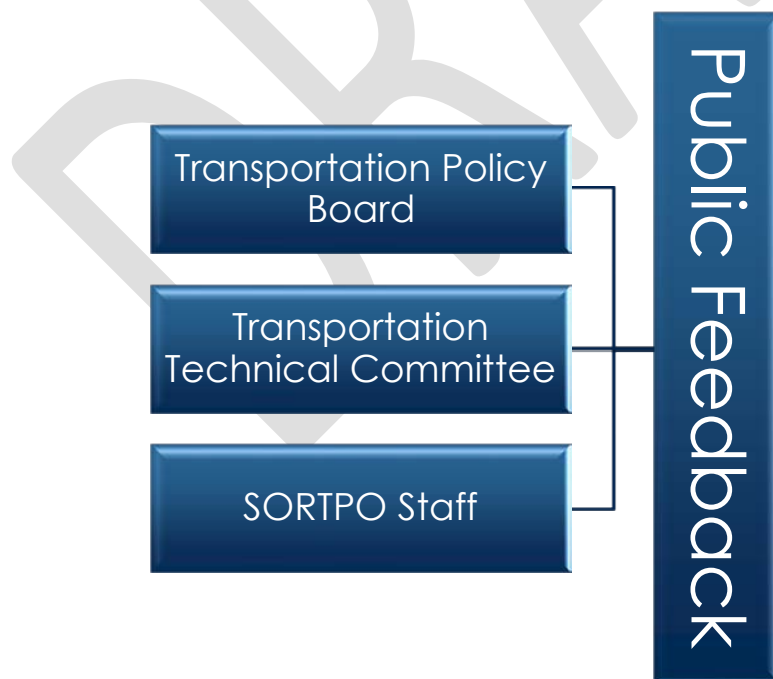



Figure 4 SORTPO's Structure

SORTPO Transportation Policy Board

The SORTPO Transportation Policy Board (TPB) provides policy guidance and approval of transportation planning documents. . Membership of the TPB can include major employers, ODOT, transit operators, port districts, and where applicable, Native American tribal interests, and member cities, towns, and counties to participate in policy making. Additional representatives from the State, private businesses, transportation service providers, economic development practitioners, and the public in the region also participate. The TPB hold regularly scheduled meetings in accordance with 25 O.S. §301-§314 (Open Meetings Act).

SORTPO Transportation Technical Committee

SORTPO utilizes the technical expertise of member jurisdictions and TPB members by the establishment of a Transportation Technical Committee (TTC). This committee reviews all regional transportation planning products and processes, making recommendations to the TPB as necessary throughout the regional transportation planning process. The TTC holds regularly scheduled meetings in accordance with 25 O.S. §301- §314 (Open Meetings Act).



If individual with disabilities who require accessible alternative formats of the agenda and related meeting materials and/or auxiliary aids/services to participate in the meeting, notification to SORTPO Director of Transportation at (580)-562-5010 at least 48 hours prior to the scheduled meeting is encouraged to make necessary accommodations. Southwest Oklahoma Regional Transportation Planning Organization (SORTPO) may waive the 48-hour rule if interpreters for the deaf (signing) or translation services for LEP individual are not necessary accommodation.

Transportation Technical Committee Meetings Schedule

Meetings are held at 10:00 am CT the second Wednesday of the month (excluding the months of July & December) simultaneously at:

- SWODA, 420 Sooner Dr., Burns Flat, Oklahoma
- Red River Technology Center, JD Morris Bldg., 3300 Bois D'Arc, Duncan, Oklahoma.

Transportation Policy Board Meetings Schedule

Meetings are held at 10:00 am CT typically the last Thursday of the month at:

- SWODA, 420 Sooner Dr., Burns Flat, Oklahoma
- Red River Technology Center, JD Morris Bldg., 3300 Bois D'Arc, Duncan, Oklahoma.

Table 1 SORTPO's Technical and Policy Board Meeting Schedule

	Schedule	Meeting Schedule Posting	Meeting Notice	Public Review Period
TPB	2 nd Wednesday 10:00am Monthly	https://sortpo.org/get-involved/meetings-events/	1-5 days	Every Meeting
TTC	3 rd Thursday 10:00am Monthly	https://sortpo.org/get-involved/meetings-events/	1-5 days	Every Meeting
Other meetings & workshops	As needed	N/A	1-5 days	Every Meeting

Public Participation Importance

Involving the public in the planning process is essential for collecting valuable feedback from those who use the transportation system. The range of stakeholders includes everyone from elected officials and planning boards to property owners and special interest groups, each with their unique expectations and concerns. By fostering public involvement, projects can gain broader support.

Public participation helps inform citizens, groups, and organizations about decisions that may impact their lives, ensures that planning and decision-making reflect stakeholder perspectives, and addresses various issues by

considering diverse interests and concerns. Most importantly, these processes encourage active engagement from individuals and organizations in addressing transportation issues within their community, enhancing communication and cooperation.

Guided by Federal agencies and ODOT, SORTPO recognizes that ongoing engagement with the community not only builds support but crucially ensures that the public has a chance to influence the development of plans and projects. The SORTPO staff assesses the effectiveness of current outreach methods and explores new strategies to sustain and improve a participatory and transparent regional transportation planning process.

Public Participation General Guidelines

The following guidelines were developed with the purpose of facilitating this process and reflecting federal requirements (Federal Regulation Code 450.316 and 450.212 – Appendix xxx)

- Utilize innovative tools, media campaigns, and a variety of public participation techniques to increase awareness, interest, and support among the general public and decision-makers, tailoring these methods to meet public needs.
- Foster opportunities for direct citizen involvement from the initial phases of the planning process, encouraging active participation.
- Implement alternative methods for gathering input from those unable to attend meetings, such as direct mail and online feedback platforms, ensuring everyone has a reasonable chance to comment on proposed plans or programs.
- Regularly assess and update the Public Participation Plan to ensure its effectiveness and to maintain full and open access for all participants.
- Provide the public with timely notifications and easy access to technical and policy information that informs the development of plans or programs.
- Provide a public comment period of 45 days before the Public Participation Plan is adopted or amended.
- Customize public participation strategies to suit the specific complexities of various plans, programs, or projects.
- Adhere to Title II, Americans with Disabilities Act
- Hold meetings in locations that are accessible by all, Americans with

Disabilities Act ensuring.

- Adhere to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and subsequent federal legislation, ensuring that no person in the United States is excluded from participation, denied benefits, or discriminated against based on race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.
- Engage the public in a proactive effort by going to civic and cultural groups, churches, neighborhood organizations, and other public committees.
- Show consideration to comments from public participants and respond to public input received during the planning and program development processes.

Considerations for Public Participation

An effective public participation process ensures that the public is well-informed and has numerous opportunities to contribute to the decision-making process. A successful process fosters public trust and support for transportation plans and investments. It is proactive, offering timely information, public notices, full access to decisions, and chances for early and ongoing engagement, the RTPPO follows the same guidance as the MPO as specified in Federal Regulation 23 CFR 450.212(a) and 450.316(b)(1). Additionally, a meaningful public participation process can uncover impacts that transportation planners and decision-makers might not have anticipated.

Several elements are important for achieving an effective public participation process. First, the purposes and objectives should be clearly defined before initiating a public meeting on transportation programs. It is also vital to specifically identify the affected public and stakeholders for each plan and project under development. Effective techniques and procedures to engage the public need to be determined, along with methods for notifying these groups about participation opportunities.

Educating and assisting the public is essential to ensure they fully understand the transportation issues and the various solutions related to each plan or project. Transportation planners and decision-makers must

demonstrate that they have seriously considered public opinions. When significant oral or written comments are received as a result of public participation efforts, a summary analysis and report on the comments received should be included in the final document.

Finally, the entire process should be evaluated based on the achievement of objectives and feedback from the public. The most effective outreach and participation activities are to be identified and maximized in future efforts to gather as much input as possible. Interested parties are encouraged to review the Public Participation Plan and suggest revisions, either during the formal review period or at any time during the planning process.

Public Participation Procedures

Several techniques for expanding public awareness of transportation planning issues have been identified. This section gives an overview of these techniques aiming to help transportation planners and decision-makers choose the best activities according to their goals, target audience, and cost considerations. The following lists (Table 2 Public Participation Objectives & Techniques) the overall public participation objectives followed by general methods of participation and then specific techniques.

SORTPO maintains a website (www.sortpo.org) where the public can review information posted and send comments via online forms and email. The website hosts information of interest to the public: meeting schedules and agendas, the RTP, the updated PWP, Regional Transportation Improvement Plan (RTIP), and other planning products available from SORTPO, active living data, demographic, and traffic data.

In addition, the SORTPO maintains an electronic contact database which will be used to provide citizens, affected public agencies, emergency response agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives and users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of persons with disabilities, and other interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the RTP, the RTIP and PWP and become involved with the transportation planning process, as per state and federal regulations.

State and Federal policies and regulations, including Environmental Justice (EJ) initiatives, reinforce the need of agencies to focus attention on reaching low-income and minority households. To include traditionally underserved communities, disadvantaged populations, and persons with limited English-speaking skills in the decision-making process, it is necessary to identify key stakeholders that have low or no participation, what is preventing them from participating, and what can be done to overcome barriers and increase the levels of participation. Some explanations for the lack of participation include cultural and language barriers, disabilities, economic constraints, and lack of participation opportunities.

Table 2 – Public Participation Objectives & Techniques

Objectives	Techniques
Transparency	Provide clear and accessible information about transportation planning activities.
Inclusivity	Engage a broad range of stakeholders, including underserved and minority communities.
Informed Decision-Making	Integrate public feedback into the planning process.
Public Notification	
Public Notices	Publish announcements via press releases and on the RTPO website.

Community Outreach	Utilize community bulletins, mailers, and social media to inform the public.
Mailing Lists	Maintain and use email and postal mailing lists for direct notifications.
Public Meetings and Workshops	
Accessibility	Schedule meetings at convenient times and locations that are accessible to all community members.
Documentation	Provide agendas, project descriptions, and relevant materials ahead of meetings.
Interactive Sessions	Facilitate interactive sessions to encourage active participation and gather diverse perspectives.
Comment Periods	
Minimum Duration	Allow at least 30 days for public comments on major plans and projects.
Submission Methods	Accept comments via multiple channels including mail, email, online platforms, comment forms, and in-person at meetings.
Response and Incorporation	Review all comments, acknowledge receipt, and address significant issues in planning documents.
Stakeholder Engagement	
Advisory Committees	Form advisory committees representing various stakeholder groups, local governments, community organizations, and business groups.
Focus Groups and Surveys	Conduct targeted focus groups and surveys to gather detailed input on specific transportation issues and needs.
Compliance with Federal and State Regulations	
Environmental Reviews	Ensure public participation meets the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and state environmental policies.
Non-Discrimination	Comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and other relevant non-discrimination policies to ensure equitable participation.
Monitoring and Evaluation	
Feedback Mechanisms	Implement ongoing mechanisms for public feedback, including comment forms, online forms, and regular surveys.

Periodic Review	Regularly review and update public participation procedures to enhance effectiveness and inclusivity based on feedback and performance assessments.
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Federal and State legislation and regulations' provisions require expanded consultation and cooperation with Federal, State, Local and Tribal agencies responsible for land use, natural resources, and other environmental issues. Throughout the planning process SORTPO will seek to engage and will incorporate comments from such agencies, including:

- National Parks Service
- Department of Interior
- Chickasaw Nation
- Kiowa Tribe
- Comanche Nation
- Apache Tribe
- Fort Sill Apache Tribe
- Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribe
- Caddo Nation
- Wichita & Affiliated Tribe
- Delaware Nation
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- US Environmental Protection Agency
- US Geological Survey
- Forest Service (US Department of Agriculture)
- Oklahoma Parks and Wildlife
- Oklahoma Historical Society
- Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ)
- Local Land Use Plans
- Local Historical Agencies
- Local Parks and Recreation Departments
- Homeland Security

SORTPO developed the listing of “interested parties” to be engaged during the planning process and public comment periods to include:

- Citizens
- Affected Public Agencies
- Local governments
- Health Agencies
- Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)
- Tribes
- Public Transportation
- Freight Shippers
- Providers of Freight Transportation Services
- Private providers of transportation
- Representatives of users of public transportation
- Representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities
- Disability Advocacy Groups
- Other interested parties

SORTPO will seek to engage these segments of the community and incorporate their comments throughout the planning process. SORTPO will also undertake consultation and coordination activities with agencies related to safety planning and security planning.

As part of the planning development process, SORTPO will create a comprehensive continually review and evaluate previous, current, and emerging techniques to facilitate public participation related to the planning process.

Public Participation

From the outset, SORTPO will engage the public about the process of developing the long-range regional transportation plan. The engagement will begin with a stakeholder meeting to bring together various stakeholders. Additionally, SORTPO will regularly update a contact list drawn from past public engagements, including tribes, civic groups, community leaders, local governments, and other interested stakeholders. When appropriate, SORTPO will use PowerPoint presentations, information materials, and various visualization techniques to explain the plans.

1. **Up-to-Date Information** – SORTPO will disseminate information on transportation issues and processes to stakeholders and citizens as part of the planning process and plan development. Methods will include issuing press releases to local media, distributing printed materials available at public buildings such as local libraries and public places, publishing information online, participating in community meetings to share information, and engaging with local public officials to promote outreach within their jurisdictions.
2. **Public Access** – SORTPO will actively participate in existing meetings or events to inform and engage the public. Additionally, SORTPO will offer citizens and stakeholders the chance to access technical and policy information significant to the RTP and other planning document development.
3. **Public Notice** – SORTPO will announce public participation activities and allow for public review and comment during the development or amendment to the RTP, RTIP, PWP, PPP and other transportation planning documents as part of the decision-making process. Notices for public meetings will be published to media outlets (see Appendix 2 page 37), displayed in public facilities, shared on social media, and posted on the SORTPO website. Invitations will also be sent to individuals on the established contact list.

4. **Consideration and Response** – SORTPO will adhere to the outlined processes in the plans and programs to demonstrate that public input received during the planning and development stages has been acknowledged. All comments will be documented, and responses will be addressed. Information on these comments and responses will be available on the website, through information publications, and in the final document.
5. **Engaging Traditionally Underserved Communities** – SORTPO will identify and focus on areas where traditionally underserved populations, such as low-income and minority groups with limited access to employment and other amenities, are concentrated. Efforts will include facilitating public participation from these communities by providing interpreters to bridge language barriers, publishing bilingual educational materials, and issuing news releases to local media outlets that cater to these groups. Specific activities will be tailored for each plan.
6. **Review Period** – The effectiveness of the Public Participation Process will be periodically assessed to ensure it provides unrestricted access to all stakeholders. Following each public participation event, SORTPO will evaluate its effectiveness and implement any necessary adjustments based on this evaluation.

Public Participation Evaluation

Federal and State regulations require that RTPO's review the Public Participation Process periodically to determine if the objectives of the process are achieved and if adjustments are necessary to make it more effective. Several methods can be used to determine what enhancements are necessary to make meetings more accessible and information more understandable, increasing public participation in transportation decision-making. These methods can include meeting evaluation forms, public comments, surveys, or any other form of public

feedback.

The following criteria will be used to determine the effectiveness of the PPP:

1. The number of citizens responses:
 - Types of media used to contact participants (including publications that focus on minority, disadvantaged population, disabled, youth/elderly, low-income, or LEP residents)
 - Meeting convenience (time, place, accessibility)
 - Documentation of demographics of participants making sure that a representative group of the community in the planning area is involved.
2. The input received demonstrates citizen understanding:
 - Effectiveness of communication tools
 - Types of techniques used.
 - Input received from the citizens, decision-makers, and funding agencies provided reliable and useful information.
3. The public process was responsive:
 - Documentation of how public input affected decisions.
 - Evaluation of the effectiveness of the program from participants' perspective (feedback)
 - Participation process tailored to specific community needs and accessible to all segments of the public.
 - Efforts to improve performance.
4. Environmental Justice was achieved:
 - Strategies for engaging minority, disabled, youth/seniors, low-income, and LEP populations in the decision-making process.
 - Utilization of media targeted to minority, disabled, youth/elderly, low-income, and LEP populations.
 - Reduction of participation barriers for non-traditional

transportation stakeholders

- Feedback from minority, disabled, youth/ seniors, low-income, and LEP participants.
- Consideration and documentation of their concerns and input in the decision-making process.

The PPP is designed to be adaptive, ensuring it meets the community's evolving needs. As new methods are validated and adopted, the plan will be updated to incorporate these improvements. SORTPO staff and stakeholders will evaluate the effectiveness of public participation activities as they occur, making timely revisions to the process. The TTC and TPB will examine changes that necessitate formal modifications to the document, following extensive stakeholder consultation and a comprehensive public review period. To maintain the plan's relevance and effectiveness, SORTPO will conduct a biennial review, assessing both the process and outcomes, and will propose any necessary updates.

Planning Documents

SORTPO's regional transportation planning process (23 CFR 450) results in the development of mandated planning products, including the Planning Work Program (PWP), data reports, Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), Regional Transportation Improvement Plan (RTIP), short range studies, Limited English Proficiency and Public Participation Plan (PPP). Table 3 summarizes SORTPO's development and amendment process to the planning documents.

Planning Work Program (PWP). The PWP is one element of the transportation planning process that outlines the budget and tasks needed to maintain and complete the transportation planning process for SORTPO with State Planning & Research funds (SPR) funds and the local match during the federal fiscal year (FFY). The PWP is developed annually.

Regional Long-Range Transportation Plan (RTP). The RTP is one of the main products of the transportation planning process. Between 2015 and 2019 the SORTPO Transportation Policy Board adopted sixteen Long Range Transportation Plans. The development of the Regional Plan: Southwest Oklahoma Moving People and Goods began in 2020 and was adopted in FFY 2023. SWODA is the recipient of a 2022 RAISE grant in the amount of \$1.5 million that will be utilized to further develop and enhance the regional plan under development. The RTP must be reviewed and updated every 5 years.

RTP Amendment. An amendment is a major revision to a LRTP, including adding or deleting a project, major changes in project/project phase costs, initiation dates, and/or design concept and scope (e.g., changing project locations or the number of through traffic lanes). Changes to projects that are included in the LRTP only for illustrative purposes (such as in the financially unconstrained "vision" element) do not require an amendment. An amendment

requires public review and comment, demonstration that the project can be completed based on expected funding, and/or a finding that the change is consistent with federal transportation conformity mandates.

Public Participation Process (PPP). The intent of the Public Participation Process is to encourage and support proactive public participation throughout the planning and decision-making process related to the development of proposed transportation plans, programs, and projects so that a safe, efficient transportation system reflecting the needs and interests of all stakeholders can be provided. Public participation provides citizens, affected public agencies, private providers of transportation and other interested party's reasonable opportunity to comment, participate in goal setting, problem solving, and expand the focus of transportation decision making. In addition, the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) requires transportation agencies to develop and implement a proactive approach to ensure that transportation services are extended to those traditionally underserved. The SORTPO Policy Board amended the PPP by Resolution #2018-2 on June 28, 2018.

Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP). The RTIP is a prioritized list of transportation projects proposed for implementation during the next four years. Projects included in the TIP must be consistent with the RTP. The RTIP is required to be financially constrained in each year of the program. This means that the funding identified for transportation projects in a given year must be equal to the amount reasonably expected to be available under existing federal, state, and local programs. Prior to adoption of the RTIP (or amendment) SORTPO provides an opportunity for public review and comment and holds a public hearing. A project utilizing federal transportation funds may not proceed unless it is included in the TIP. Amendments and revisions of the TIP may occur at any time during the FY. The RTIP is also responsible for implementing and monitoring Performance-Based Planning and Programming initiatives. A new TIP is adopted once every two years and SORTPO will continue to provide opportunities for public participation by interested

parties in the development of the program. The proposed RTIP will be published and be made readily available for public review and comment. A notice of public hearing will be published at least 21 days prior to the date of the TPB at which a new RTIP will be considered for adoption. Notice of public hearing for a TIP amendment will be published at least 15 days prior to the TPB action. Proposed amendments to the TIP will be presented to the TTC for its review and recommendation to the TPB.

Limited English Proficiency Plan (LEP). The intent of LEP is to find a balance that ensures meaningful access by LEP persons to critical services while not imposing undue burdens on small business, or small nonprofits. The LEP plan must be developed in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 12898 and Executive Order 13166. The RTPO's transportation planning processes must assure that the transportation planning process and projects do not result in a disproportionately high and adverse effect on minority or low-income populations and must take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to their programs and activities by LEP persons. The planning process must include a demographic profile identifying the locations of low-income and minority populations, an assessment of the distributions (financial), and conditions across these groups and public involvement activities aimed at engaging minority and low-income population in transportation decision-making.

Table 3: SORTPO's Primary Document Participation Process Summary

	Public Comment Period	Public Hearing Meeting Notice	TECHNICAL COMMITTEE	POLICY BOARD
L RTP	Public notice of 30-day comment period prior to the Policy Board considering the Plan placed on the SORTPO's website and distributed to agencies in Appendix C	Legal notice to be published in the local newspaper 15 days prior to the Policy Board Meeting.	Technical Committee at a public meeting makes recommendation on the L RTP to the Policy Board	Policy Board holds a public hearing to solicit comments at a public meeting prior to adopting the L RTP by resolution
L RTP AMENDMENT	Public notice of 10-day comment period on SORTPO's website and distributed to the sites listed in Appendix C.	Legal notice to be published in the local newspaper 15 days prior to the Policy Board Meeting.	Technical Committee meeting makes recommendation on the amendment to the Policy Board.	Policy Board holds a public hearing to solicit comments prior to adopting the amendment by resolution.
PPP and amendment	Public notice of 45-day comment period prior to the Policy Board meeting placed SORTPO's website and distributed to agencies in Appendix C.	Legal notice to be published in the local newspaper 15 days prior to the Policy Board Meeting.	Technical Committee at a public meeting makes recommendation on the PPP to the Policy Board.	Policy Board holds a public hearing to solicit comments at a public meeting prior to adopting the PPP by resolution.
PWP	Public notice of 10-day comment period prior to the Policy Board considering the PWP placed on SORTPO's website and distributed to agencies in Appendix C.		Technical Committee at a public meeting makes recommendation on the PWP to the Policy Board	Policy Board at a public meeting adopts the PWP by resolution.

	Public Comment Period	Public Hearing Meeting Notice	TECHNICAL COMMITTEE	POLICY BOARD
RTIP and amendment	Public notice of 21-day comment period prior to the Policy Board considering the Plan placed on the SORPTO's website and distributed to agencies in Appendix C	Legal notice to be published in the local newspaper 15 days prior to the Policy Board Meeting.	Technical Committee at a public meeting makes recommendation on the LRTP to the Policy Board	Policy Board holds a public hearing to solicit comments at a public meeting prior to adopting the LRTP by resolution

Acronyms

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
EJ	Environmental Justice
FAST Act	Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FFY	Federal Fiscal Year
LEP	Limited English Proficiency
LRTP	Long Range Transportation Plan
ODOT	Oklahoma Department of Transportation
PPP	Public Participation Process
PWP	Planning Work Program
RAISE Grant	Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity
RTP	Regional Transportation Plan
RTPO	Regional Transportation Planning Organization
RTIP	Regional Transportation Improvement Program
SPR	State Planning & Research
SORTPO	Southwest Oklahoma Regional Transportation Planning Organization
TPB	Transportation Policy Board
TTC	Transportation Technical Committee
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program

Appendix 1: Environmental Justice and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Considerations

State and Federal policies and regulations, including Environmental Justice initiatives, reinforce the need of agencies to focus attention on reaching low-income and minority households. There are many individuals whose primary language is not English. Individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English can be “Limited English Proficient,” or “LEP.” This language barrier may prevent individuals from accessing services and benefits. To include traditionally underserved communities in the decision-making process, it is necessary to identify key stakeholders that have low or no participation, what is preventing them from participating, and what can be done to overcome barriers and increase the levels of participation. Some explanations for the lack of participation include cultural and language barriers, disabilities, economic constraints, and lack of participation opportunities. The map on the next page shows the distribution of non-English speaking persons residing in the SORTPO region.

Participation with LEP Communities

SORTPO's public participation process is intentionally designed to be accessible, inclusive, and thorough. The primary transportation planning documents, including the Long-Range Regional Transportation Plan, the PWP, the RTIP and other transportation planning documents, are widely available at various locations and times to ensure broad access and participation from diverse populations.

SORTPO organizes multiple stakeholder meetings to discuss different elements of the plan, such as Bike/Pedestrian paths, Freight, Transit, and Roadways. These meetings are conducted in various locations throughout the region to collect community input effectively. The goal is to understand the community's transportation needs and preferences within the SORTPO Region. Information materials are provided in both English and Spanish and can be accessed on the SORTPO website. Additionally, information about these meetings is shared through local media outlets to ensure widespread dissemination (Appendix 2).

County	LEP Percentage	County LEP Description
Beckham County	4.1%	With 4.1% of its population demonstrating limited English proficiency, Beckham County hosts a variety of language groups, which adds to its cultural diversity and points to a need for multilingual services.
Caddo County	3.1%	Caddo County's 3.1% LEP figure reflects a community with notable linguistic diversity, where a segment of the population requires access to English language support.
Comanche County	3.0%	The 3.0% of residents in Comanche County with limited English skills suggest a significant multicultural element within the community, influencing the provision of local services and educational programs.
Cotton County	0.1%	This county has a lower LEP percentage, suggesting that the majority of the population likely communicates effectively in English, with a small minority experiencing language barriers.
Custer County	6.0%	With a higher percentage LEP Custer County might experience some impact on community interactions and local services, indicating a need for targeted language support services.

Grady County	1.2%	Grady County's LEP percentage suggests a moderate presence of individuals who are not proficient in English, which could influence community engagement and access to information.
Greer County	0.1%	The low LEP rate in Greer County implies that language barriers are less of a challenge here, with the majority being proficient in English.
Harmon County	5.2%	Harmon County has a higher percentage among the listed counties, which might impact various aspects of life, including education, employment, and healthcare access.
Jackson County	6.8%	At 6.8%, Jackson County has a significant percentage of residents with limited English proficiency, reflecting a diverse demographic that could benefit from strategic multilingual outreach and support.
Jefferson County	1.4%	This percentage points to a smaller portion of the population that may require language assistance in daily interactions and accessing public services.
Kiowa County	1.2%	Kiowa County's LEP population suggests a moderate need for language support in educational and public service sectors.
McClain County	2.3%	McClain has a noticeable number of residents with limited English, indicating potential areas for community support and engagement initiatives.
Roger Mills County	0.3%	The very low LEP percentage here suggests that most residents are proficient in English, with minimal language barriers within the community.
Stephens County	1.7%	The LEP percentage of 1.7% in Stephens County points to a community where language diversity is present but manageable, with some implications for service provision and community integration.
Tillman County	4.9%	The relatively high LEP figure of 4.9% in Tillman County suggests considerable language diversity, impacting education, healthcare, and employment within the community.
Washita County	2.3%	Washita's LEP rate suggests that there is a manageable, but still important, number of individuals needing language support in the community.

Data Source: US Census 2020 American Community Survey

Appendix 2: Media Contact Information

ORGANIZATION	CITY	COUNTY	FREQUENCY	PUBLIC NOTICE	LEGAL HEARING
Elk City Daily News	Elk City	Beckham	Daily	X	X
Sayre Record & Beckham County Democrat	Sayer (County Seat)	Beckham	Non-Daily	X	X
Anadarko Daily News	Anadarko (County Seat)	Caddo	Daily	X	X
The Carnegie Herald	Carnegie	Caddo	Non-Daily	X	
Hinton Record	Hinton	Caddo	Non-Daily	X	
Cyril News	Cyril	Caddo	Non-Daily	X	
Apache News	Apache	Comanche	Non-Daily	X	
Fletcher Herald	Fletcher	Comanche	Non-Daily	X	
The Lawton Constitution	Lawton (County Seat)	Comanche	Daily	X	X
KSWO Channel 7	Lawton	Comanche			
Walters Herald	Walters	Comanche	Non-Daily	X	
The Current	Walters	Cotton, Comanche, Stephens, Tillman, Jefferson, Caddo, Carter, and Grady	Non-Daily	X	
Weatherford Daily News	Weatherford	Custer	Daily	X	X
Chickasha Express Star	Chickasha (County Seat)	Grady	Daily	X	X
Minco- Union City Times		Grady	Non-Daily	X	

ORGANIZATION	CITY	COUNTY	FREQUENCY	PUBLIC NOTICE	LEGAL HEARING
Rush Springs Gazette	Rush Springs	Grady	Non-Daily	X	
Tuttle Times	Tuttle	Grady	Non-Daily	X	
Mangum Star News	Mangum (County Seat)	Greer	Non-Daily	X	
Hollis	Hollis (County Seat)	Harmon	Non-Daily	X	X
Altus Times	Altus (County Seat)	Jackson	Daily	X	X
The Ringling Eagle	Ringling	Jefferson	Non-Daily	X	
Waurika News Journal	Waurika (County Seat)	Jefferson	Non-Daily	X	
Kiowa County Democrat	Snyder (County Seat)	Kiowa	Non-Daily	X	
Hobart Democrat Chief	Snyder	Kiowa	Non-Daily	X	X
Mountain View Times	Mountain View	Kiowa	Non-Daily	X	
Blanchard News	Blanchard	McClain	Non-Daily	X	
Newcastle Pacer	Newcastle	McClain	Non-Daily	X	
Purcell Register	Purcell (County Seat)	McClain	Non-Daily	X	X
Comanche Times	Comanche	Stephens	Non-Daily	X	
The Duncan Banner	Duncan (County Seat)	Stephens	Daily	X	X
The Marlow Review	Marlow	Stephens	Non-Daily	X	

ORGANIZATION	CITY	COUNTY	FREQUENCY	PUBLIC NOTICE	LEGAL HEARING
Frederick Press Leader	Frederick (County Seat)	Tillman	Non-Daily	X	
Clinton Daily News	Clinton (County Seat)	Custer & Washita	Daily	X	X
Cordell Beacon	Cordell	Washita	Non-Daily	X	

Appendix 3 - PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

Excerpted from 23 CFR 450.316

- Include a proactive public involvement process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continuing involvement of the public in developing plans and TIPs and meets the requirements and criteria specified as follows:
- Require a minimum public comment period of 45 days before the public involvement process is initially adopted or revised;
- Provide timely information about transportation issues and processes to citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, private providers of transportation, other interested parties and segments of the community affected by transportation plans, programs, and projects (including but not limited to central city and other local jurisdiction concerns);
- Provide reasonable public access to technical and policy information used in the development of plans and TIPs and open public meetings where matters related to the Federal-aid highway and transit programs are being considered;
- Require adequate public notice of public involvement activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including, but not limited to, approval of plans and TIPs (in nonattainment areas, classified as serious and above, the comment period shall be at least 30 days for the plan, TIP, and major amendment(s));
- Demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input received during the planning and program development processes;
- Seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, including but not limited to low-income and minority households;
- When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft transportation plan or TIP (including the financial plan) as a result of the public involvement process or the interagency consultation process required under the U.S. EPA's conformity regulations, a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made part of the final plan and TIP;
- If the final transportation plan or TIP differs significantly from the one which was made available for public comment by the MPO and raises new material issues which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement

efforts, an additional opportunity for public comment on the revised plan or TIP shall be made available;

- Public involvement processes shall be periodically reviewed by the MPO in terms of their effectiveness in assuring that the process provides full and open access to all;
- These procedures will be reviewed by the FHWA and the FTA during certification reviews for TMAs, and as otherwise necessary for all MPOs, to assure that full and open access is provided to MPO decision making processes; and,
- Metropolitan public involvement processes shall be coordinated with statewide public involvement processes wherever possible to enhance public consideration of the issues, plans, and programs and reduce redundancies and costs. 15ction, airport operations, or freight movements) or coordinate its planning process (to the maximum extent practicable) with such planning activities. In addition, the MPO shall develop the [metropolitan transportation plans](#) and TIPs with due [consideration](#) of other related planning activities within the metropolitan area, and the process shall provide for the design and delivery of transportation services within the area that are provided by:

(1) Recipients of assistance under title [49 U.S.C. Chapter 53](#);

(2) Governmental agencies and non-profit organizations (including representatives of the agencies and organizations) that receive Federal assistance from a source other than the U.S. Department of Transportation to provide non-emergency transportation services; and

(3) Recipients of assistance under [23 U.S.C. 201-204](#).

(c) When the MPA includes Indian Tribal lands, the MPO shall appropriately involve the Indian Tribal government(s) in the development of the [metropolitan transportation plan](#) and the TIP.

(d) When the MPA includes Federal public lands, the MPO shall appropriately involve the Federal land management agencies in the development of the [metropolitan transportation plan](#) and the TIP.

(e) MPOs shall, to the extent practicable, develop a documented process(es) that outlines roles, responsibilities, and key decision points for consulting with other governments and agencies, as defined in paragraphs (b), (c), and (d) of this section, which may be included in the agreement(s) developed under [§ 450.314](#).

Appendix 4 - Environmental Justice

Pursuant to Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-income Populations, dated Feb. 11, 1994, and the subsequent U.S. Department of Transportation Order 5680.3, issued April 15, 1997, the NORTPO promotes Environmental Justice in all aspects of the SORTPO transportation planning process. These procedures augment and reaffirm the SORTPO policy to adhere to and advance the principles of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (URA) as amended, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) as amended, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), and other statutes, regulations and guidance that address or affect infrastructure planning and decision making; social, economic, or environmental matters; public health; and public involvement. To these ends, notices of meetings and public hearings will be specifically provided in minority and ethnic gathering places to promote participation in the transportation planning process. Minority and ethnic communities will be monitored through census data to guarantee their inclusion in the process as populations fluctuate over time. Special accommodation (e.g., interpreter, sign language interpreter, large print copy, etc.) may be requested of the SORTPO staff during normal business hours at least five (5) business days prior to the meeting. SORTPO staff will attempt to accommodate all such requests.

SORTPO Civil Rights Policy Statement

It is the policy of the South Western Oklahoma Development Authority (SWODA) and Southwest Oklahoma Regional Transportation Planning Organization (SORTPO), under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; Age Discrimination Act of 1975; Section 324 of the Federal-aid Highway Act of 1973; Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987; and other related authorities and regulations, that no person in the United States shall, on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, handicap/disability, religion, or familial status be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination or retaliation under any federally or non-federally funded program or activity administered by SWODA or its sub-recipients.