



Public Involvement Plan

February 2021

Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-Making

Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT)

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1.0 Introduction

Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-Making is intended to strengthen and document how MaineDOT engages people and communities throughout the state. It outlines the public involvement process MaineDOT uses to engage a broad array of stakeholders in statewide transportation planning, project design and development, and construction or maintenance activities. Additionally, MaineDOT is committed to reaching

out to communities and people who have historically lacked access to the decision-making process or been underserved by our transportation system.

Maine residents, municipalities, counties, Municipal Planning Organizations, Regional Planning Organizations, Native American Nations, public transportation authorities, businesses, and non-profits, along with state and federal agencies, participate with MaineDOT in shaping transportation decisions. The involvement of these stakeholders takes different forms: planning and consulting work, public meetings, or written comments and agency review. Our goal is to create meaningful opportunities for participation with transparency and accountability in decision-making.

MaineDOT will refine and improve its public involvement program over time, with feedback from our customers – the users of Maine’s transportation system.

1.1 MaineDOT’s Vision, Mission, Core Values, and Goals (Strategic Plan)

In 2012, MaineDOT developed [The MaineDOT Strategic Plan](#) to establish a department-wide framework for the strategic direction and operation of the department. Updated every two years, the plan is a practical roadmap intended to guide the department’s operational policies, decisions, and expectations for the foreseeable future. The [2016 revision](#) integrated the individual strategies with a more comprehensive asset management approach. It also reaffirmed that, after four years, these goals continue to be the three guideposts that steer MaineDOT’s decisions and activities.

Meaningful public involvement can contribute positively to the department’s overall vision, mission, core values, and goals.

VISION: To be the most trusted organization in Maine.

MISSION: To support economic opportunity and quality of life by responsibly providing our customers the safest and most reliable transportation system possible, given available resources.

CORE VALUES: Integrity – Competence – Service

GOALS:

- **Manage the Existing System:** Effectively manage Maine’s existing transportation system for safety and effectiveness within reliable funding levels.
- **Support Economic Opportunity:** Wisely invest available resources to support economic opportunity for our customers.

- Build Trust: Demonstrate our core values of integrity, competence, and service, both individually and organizationally.

1.2 Why Public Involvement is Important

According to the Federal Highway Administration website, “Public participation is an integral part of the transportation planning process that helps to ensure that decisions are made in consideration of and to benefit public needs and preferences.”

Transportation agencies provide opportunities for public involvement in the planning and decision-making processes in order to accomplish multiple purposes, including to:

- Obtain Quality Input and Involvement – Comments that are relevant, constructive, and will contribute to better decisions, plans, policies, programs, and projects.
- Provide Opportunity to Build Consensus – An effective public involvement process can facilitate and increase public support for specific, recommended actions.
- Ensure Accessibility – Public participation opportunities that are geographically, physically, temporally, linguistically, and culturally accessible help ensure that every stakeholder has a voice.
- Ensure Diversity – Good transportation planning elicits a range of socioeconomic, ethnic, and cultural perspectives, including from people who reside in low-income and minority neighborhoods and from other traditionally underserved communities.
- Establish and Maintain Partnerships – Partnerships with communities and community-based organizations can help create long-term support for the projects, programs, and activities of the transportation agency.
- Foster Participant Satisfaction – People who take the time to participate deserve assurances that joining the discussion and providing feedback are worthwhile endeavors.
- Clearly Define the Potential for Influence – A well-crafted public involvement process effectively communicates where and how participants can influence decisions.
- Establish the Department’s Commitment – Regular communication by the transportation agency can help establish trust with affected communities and help build community capacity to provide quality public input.
- Establish Relevance – Effective public involvement processes help frame issues so that the significance and potential impacts are well understood by participants.

2.0 Requirements for Public Involvement

2.1 Federal Public Involvement Requirements

The principles of public involvement are comparable across those federal agencies that

regulate state DOTs and disburse federal funds for transportation. Federal requirements concerning public participation in statewide transportation decision-making are specified in Title 23 and Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), in the Passenger Rail Improvement and Investment Act of 2008, in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and in other federal laws and regulations. Federal requirements generally leave the choice of methods for facilitating participation to the discretion of each state but require that public participation processes provide:

- Early and continuing opportunities for public involvement.
- Open public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and at convenient times.
- Timely and complete information on transportation issues and decision-making processes.
- Reasonable access to technical and policy information.
- Information electronically accessible on the Internet.
- Adequate notice of public involvement opportunities and time for review and comment at key decision points.
- Procedures for demonstrating explicit consideration of and responses to public input.
- A process for soliciting and considering the needs of traditionally underserved populations.
- Visualization techniques to describe proposed plans and studies.
- Opportunities for collaborative input on alternatives.
- An allotment of time for review of and written comment in the development of long-range plans and transportation improvement programs before new procedures, major revisions to existing procedures, or investment programs are adopted.
- Periodic review and evaluation of the public participation process.

Title 23, Ch. 450 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) establishes the fundamental public involvement requirements for the Federal-Aid Highway Program, which is administered by the FHWA, and also for the programs of the Federal Transit Administration. This section of Title 23 requires states to “develop and use a documented public involvement process that provides opportunities for public review and comment at key decision points.” The main provisions of these requirements in federal code are consistent with the elements enumerated above – early and continuous opportunities, access to information, adequate public notice, convenient meeting locations, electronic availability of information, consideration of traditionally underserved communities, and periodic review of the public involvement process. This section of federal code is the original impetus for all states to develop public involvement plans. It is MaineDOT’s policy and practice to satisfy these requirements using the techniques and strategies identified in this plan.

Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) regulations also require states to involve public

and private stakeholders – including private railroads that own rail-related infrastructure – in development and review of state rail plans. These stakeholders must be notified and given the opportunity to provide input on the State Rail Plan as it is being prepared, with reasonable time allowed for public and stakeholder review. The occasions and times for public involvement during State Rail Plan development are determined by states in collaboration with the public and stakeholders. States are encouraged to incorporate the public involvement associated with State Rail Plan development within the public involvement processes established for the overall statewide/non-metropolitan planning process, with the inclusion of a range of interested stakeholder groups, including, for example, the state freight advisory committees encouraged by MAP-21 (the current federal surface transportation authorization act).

The Federal Aviation Administration provides the following goals and tasks for grant applications:

- Provide active, early, and continuous public involvement and reasonable public access to information that accurately describes a proposed project and its environmental effects.
- Ask for and consider public input on plans, proposals, alternatives, impacts, and mitigation.
- Use public involvement techniques designed to meet the needs of different interest groups and individuals.
- Promote an active public role to lessen potentially adverse community reaction to the agency actions needed to ensure safe, efficient aviation.

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1970 (NEPA) is a national policy that endeavors to prevent or minimize the adverse impacts to the environment that may be caused by activities with a federal nexus and to promote the health and welfare of citizens when those federal actions occur. NEPA is a decision-making process that engages with the public on potential environmental impacts, collects and integrates public feedback in decision-making, and informs the public of how decisions are made with regards to proposed impacts to the environment. The NEPA process involves an evaluation of a set of alternatives and their associated environmental impacts. MaineDOT is obligated to satisfy a federal requirement for public involvement and opportunities for public hearings in the NEPA process, including FHWA requirements to maintain a public involvement process, and it is the department's practice to satisfy the law and its underlying intent. Pursuant to 23 USC 128 and 23 CFR 771.111, public involvement procedures must provide for:

- Coordination of public-involvement activities and public hearings.
- Early and continuing opportunities for the public to be involved in the identification of social, economic, and environmental impacts as well as impacts associated with relocation of individuals, groups, or institutions.
- One or more public hearings or the opportunity for a hearing or hearings for any federal-aid project that:

- Requires significant amounts of property acquisition.
- Substantially changes the layout or functions of connecting roadways or of the facility being improved.
- Has a substantial adverse impact on abutting property.
- Has a significant social, economic, environmental, or other effect.
- The federal agency has determined should have a public hearing because it is in the public interest.

MaineDOT conscientiously observes the NEPA-related FHWA requirements for planning processes and studies and the development of road and bridge improvement projects.

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) requires federal agencies to weigh the effects of their projects on historic properties and afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation a reasonable opportunity to comment. The responsible federal agency first determines whether it has an undertaking that is a type of activity that could affect historic properties. Historic properties are those that are included in the National Register of Historic Places or that meet the criteria for the National Register. During project development, the department will send notifications to the tribes and the municipalities, requesting information about historic properties as part of Section 106 consultation. These consultations are coordinated with the appropriate State Historic Preservation Officer/Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO/THPO) to determine eligibility. If properties are determined eligible, the department will coordinate with the department's project manager to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts to National Register-eligible or listed properties. Depending on the community interest, the department and the SHPO may hold public meetings to share project information and receive public comment.

2.2 State Public Involvement Requirements

Maine's Sensible Transportation Policy Act (STPA) was enacted by voter referendum in 1991; the STPA's Administrative Rule was updated most recently in 2008. The law and rule require a planning process that: provides meaningful public involvement opportunities; acknowledges the diverse transportation needs of Maine people; and considers transportation efficiency, energy conservation, and the effects of transportation on the environment. The STPA stipulates that transportation planning decisions and project decisions must minimize the harmful effects of transportation on public health and that a full range of reasonable transportation alternatives be evaluated for all significant highway construction or reconstruction projects. The STPA further requires that preference be given to transportation system management options, demand management strategies, improvements to the existing system, and other transportation modes before increasing highway capacity.

Regarding public involvement, the STPA requires that MaineDOT incorporate a public participation process in which local governmental bodies and the general public have

timely notice and opportunities to identify and comment on concerns related to transportation project and planning decisions. MaineDOT and the Maine Turnpike Authority are required to take the comments and concerns into account and must respond to them in a timely fashion. Additional details about the Maine Sensible Transportation Policy Act can be found [here](#).

3.0 Identifying the Public

3.1 Tailoring Outreach to Underserved People

Many people in minority and low-income communities, as well as those with low literacy and/or limited English proficiency, have traditionally been underserved by conventional outreach methods. Reaching out to traditionally underserved groups helps ensure that all customers and stakeholders have opportunities to influence the decision-making process. It sets the tone for subsequent project activities and promotes a spirit of inclusion. MaineDOT meeting planners strive to encourage attendance among groups protected by anti-discrimination laws with which MaineDOT is required to comply. This tailoring of outreach efforts is particularly useful because it:

- Provides fresh perspectives to project planners and developers.
- Gives MaineDOT information about community-specific issues and concerns.
- Allows MaineDOT to identify potential conflicts.
- Offers feedback on how to get underserved communities involved.
- Increases the likelihood that solutions ultimately selected are those which best meet the needs of these communities.

To maximize the effectiveness of the department's public participation efforts in engaging underserved populations, MaineDOT staff is committed to:

- Planning public meetings and hearings well in advance and publicizing them in diverse media, flyers, and on the MaineDOT website.
- Ensuring that meeting notices state that the meeting uses accessible-format materials.
- Determining the existence of non-English languages and other cultural characteristics that could inhibit public participation and offering appropriate accommodations to reduce any barriers.
- Accepting both verbal and written comments in languages other than English.
- Holding meetings and conducting outreach in the affected neighborhoods, using community centers as meeting locations and venues for informal outreach.
- Using varied meeting times and locations to accommodate the schedule, transportation, and childcare limitations of community members.
- Holding meetings at convenient locations that are accessible and welcoming to all, including those with disabilities. This includes providing appropriate room

setup and, when requested, alternate formats of handouts (e.g., large-print materials) and audio equipment.

- Making available alternative methods for the two-way flow of information and input between MaineDOT and people who are not likely to attend meetings.
- Using various illustration and visualization techniques to convey the project information including, but not limited to, charts, graphs, photos, maps, and the Internet.
- Reaching out to others – both internally and externally – with expertise in contacting and connecting with underserved populations to obtain advice and information about best practices and effective techniques

3.2 Environmental Justice

In 1994, the administration of President Bill Clinton issued Executive Order 12899 – [Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations](#). Under this order, transportation agencies are required to make achieving Environmental Justice part of their mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of their programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations. Environmental Justice initiatives accomplish this goal by involving the potentially affected public in developing transportation projects that fit harmoniously within their communities without sacrificing safety or mobility.

MaineDOT complies with EJ requirements by:

- Updating the [State's Demographic Profile](#) every three years to determine where low-income, non-native, and minority populations reside. The most recent profile was completed in 2014.
- Updating U.S. Census Data every three years and conducting a “Four-Factor Analysis” to determine Limited English Proficiency (LEP) population concentrations around the state.

During planning and project development, MaineDOT will use the following tools to the maximum extent possible to engage minority and low-income populations:

- Utilizing EPA's EJ Mapper to identify populations in the project area.
- Ensuring the participation of identified minority and low-income populations located within the limits of a proposed project by holding meetings that are close to or adjacent to the project areas.
- Providing good access for public participation – holding public forums and meetings at facilities that are ADA-accessible and providing translation services requested for non-English speaking populations when they are requested.
- Providing adequate notice of virtual or in-person meetings that are accessible to low-income populations/limited Internet population (e.g., providing meeting materials in a mobile phone accessible format and/or placing meeting notices at town halls, libraries, and schools).
- Designating and training Environmental Justice liaisons – ensuring that they are

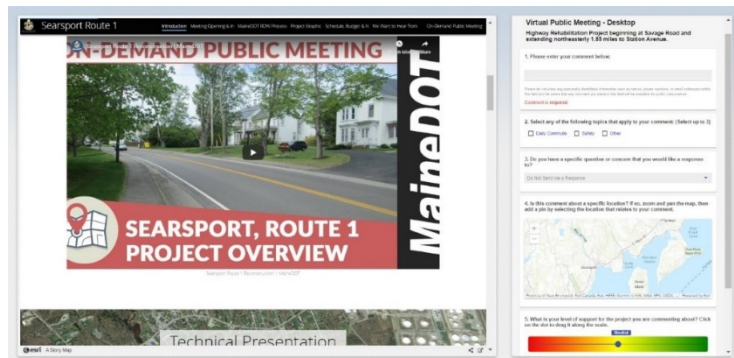
knowledgeable about the EJ requirements of federal agencies.

4.0 Public Involvement Tools and Techniques

4.1 Virtual Public Involvement/On-Demand Public Meetings

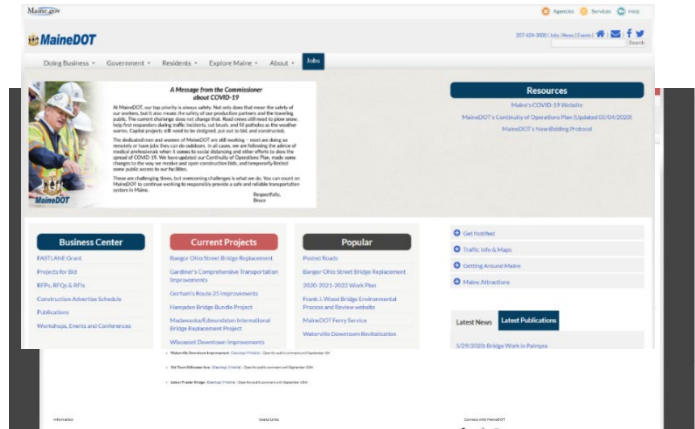
In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, MaineDOT stopped holding in-person public meetings in March 2020. The department had already been evaluating tools and techniques related to supplementing existing public involvement processes with virtual public involvement tools; the pandemic accelerated that need and resulted in the quick development of virtual meetings. Many of the tools below were utilized to create this method.

During initial discussions, MaineDOT determine its best choice would be to create on-demand public meetings as opposed to trying to hold live virtual meetings over Zoom or some other live-streaming program. The on-demand process consists of recording videos of the types of presentations that would



typically be given at an in-person meeting. The videos, along with other documentation helpful for the public to understand the project, are loaded into a StoryMap accessed by the MaineDOT website. A StoryMap is an ArcGIS product that helps to tell stories using text, videos, maps, and other content. The StoryMap allows members of the public to view all the presentations or only those parts that are relevant to them. As an example, a property owner on the project may wish to view the complete presentation, especially the section on the right-of-way. In contrast, someone who travels through the project area may only want to consider the areas related to traffic impacts. The StoryMap was developed to allow for use by desktop, tablets, and mobile phones. Below is an example of a StoryMap describing a project. A recent integration between ArcGIS StoryMaps and the Public Involvement Management Application (PIMA), to be discussed in more detail below, allows for the ability to comment from within the StoryMap.

On-demand public meetings have numerous benefits over live-streamed and in-person meetings. The on-demand meeting allows the members of the public to view the meeting at any time that is convenient for them. It does not require them to log in or attend at a specific time. Neither department staff members nor members of the public need to travel to a physical location. On-demand public meetings also provide for a consistent message regarding the project by posting the information and leaving it posted even after the comment period ends. One potential downside of not having a dialogue during a live or streamed meeting is resolved by the ability for the public to comment and for MaineDOT staff to respond through the Public Involvement Management Application (PIMA). This tool will be discussed further below.



The public notices for each project direct people to the MaineDOT Virtual Public Involvement website: www.maine.gov/mdot/vpi/. The Virtual Public Involvement site has a video explaining the process and lists all projects with an active Virtual Public Meeting. For each project, the site lists the timeframe (typically two weeks) that the project is accepting comments. After that comment period, the project information can still be viewed at the Public Meeting Library page: www.maine.gov/mdot/vpi/library/.

As this new process was being developed, it was determined that we should be able to accommodate comments from people who may not have Internet or mobile access. While all public notices now include a link directing people to view the virtual meeting, the notices still include contact information (mailing address, email address, and phone number) for the project manager. Additionally, MaineDOT posts physical meeting notices in town halls, libraries, and schools. This allows those without Internet and mobile access to contact the project manager via multiple methods to learn about the project.

While this process still accommodates people who may have limited technological access, this new method helps to engage and include many more people, allowing MaineDOT to learn more information from the public and to make better decisions. Having all active public meetings on one page allows members of the public to see projects they may not have known about in any other way and enables them to see the brief presentation and make applicable comments. Also, in addition to the typical notices and the website, each virtual meeting now will be listed on MaineDOT's social media platforms and will include targeted ads to reach users who may have comments. These methods have already resulted in significant increases in both the number of people reached and the number of comments received compared to previous

in-person meetings. Because of the benefits of the on-demand meetings, this method will still be the primary way of holding public meetings after the pandemic.

4.2 MaineDOT Website

[MaineDOT's Internet website](#) is intended to further MaineDOT's mission by providing relevant, timely, and easily accessible information and resources, thereby supporting effective public involvement. The website is designed to be user-focused, easy to navigate, and up to date. The website offers the public continuous access to information and the ability to offer input or ask questions at any time. The website provides a variety of information from the bureaus and offices of the department and provides a means for the public to contribute input on transportation plans, programs, policies, and projects. Comments and inquiries will be directed to the relevant bureau or office in the department for timely responses. The department policy is to respond to inquiries submitted to the website within two business days.

4.3 Use of Social Media

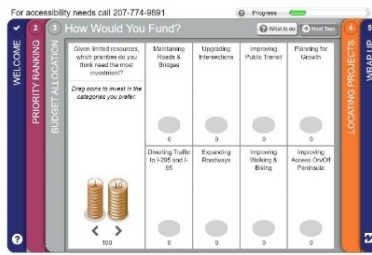
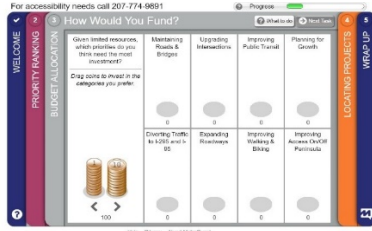
Social media is an essential means of reaching people. MaineDOT maintains a robust presence on its Facebook ([@MaineDOT](#)), Instagram ([@mainedot1](#)), and Twitter ([@MaineDOT1](#)) pages. The department uses social media to post virtual public meeting announcements, disseminate public information, and feature events. Posts about key publications (such as the annual Work Plan) encourage public comment. Facebook and Twitter are used for significant construction-project announcements or unexpected traffic delays due to highway incidents. When a new project or initiative, (e.g., a customer satisfaction survey) is launched, MaineDOT provides a link to the appropriate webpage, where there is typically a project-specific “comments” option that is cross-posted via all platforms. The public input received will either go directly to the project manager or to an appropriate employee for response.



4.4 MetroQuest

MetroQuest is an upgraded survey tool that allows for multiple types of issues and questions. It is much more graphics-focused than a typical survey. It has several preset tabs that allow for various types of questions and graphics. Some of these include budget allocation, tradeoffs, priority ranking, map marker, and scenario rating. It is best

suited for longer-term surveys that are more likely to be used by the Bureau of Planning. MaineDOT has partnered with the Metropolitan Planning Organizations to allow them also to use the tool. Below are some examples and views of actual surveys from MaineDOT, PACTs, and KACTS.



4.5 Turning Point

Turning Point is a tool that is primarily used as a supplement at an in-person meeting. It consists of a physical “clicker” device; those at an in-person meeting can click their answer to a question that has been posed. The Turning Point software consists of an add-on to PowerPoint. Questions can be added to the presentation by MaineDOT staff before the meeting. Turning Point’s advantages are that it is anonymous and that it gives each attendee an equal vote that is not swayed by others. It also offers instant feedback by showing the results after the question period has ended. The downside to this tool is the reliance on an in-person meeting. This tool is not being used during the COVID-19 pandemic. It will also receive limited use post-pandemic since most public meetings will still be held using the on-demand process.

4.6 Public Involvement Management Application (PIMA)

The PIMA application is a tool that was initially developed by IowaDOT to help improve public engagement. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, MaineDOT immediately contracted with the consultant that worked with IowaDOT to build our

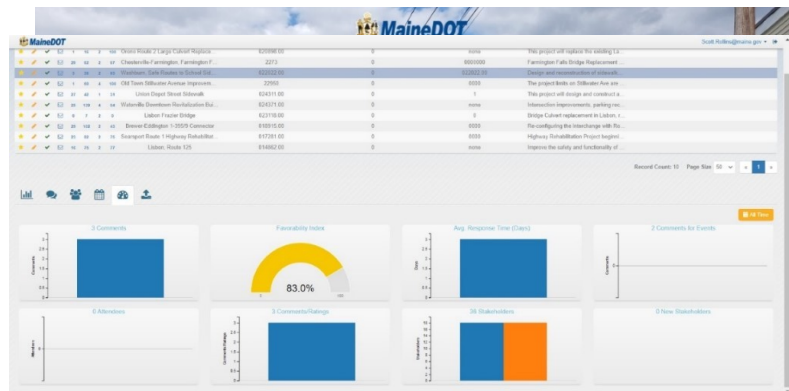


own program. While PIMA was not developed initially as a virtual public involvement tool, we developed PIMA to be a critical part of our virtual public involvement toolbox. The integration of PIMA into the virtual public involvement process is discussed above in section 4.1. What follows will describe the other aspects of PIMA that could be utilized for any type of meeting.

PIMA is a platform that allows for better management and coordination of public involvement and engagement. There are a few components of the application that help to increase public participation and engagement, including an easy process for capturing public input, the ability for continued dialog between the public and staff, transparency and accountability for what we say, analysis and adjustment based on data, and the ability to reach more people and stakeholders throughout the life of a project.

As described above, the integration of the ArcGIS StoryMaps and PIMA allows for easy commenting while viewing the content within the StoryMap for our on-demand meetings. The comment form allows a user to type his or her comment; specify a topic or topics related to that comment; ask for a response to

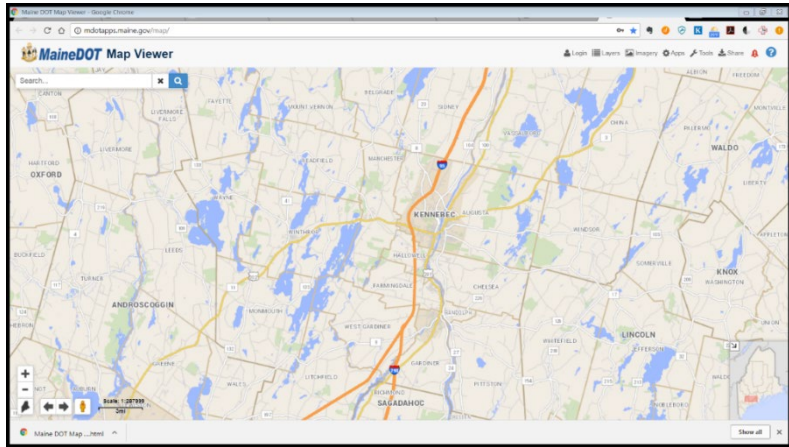
the comment through email, phone, or mail; show a specific mapped location related to the comment; and show his or her level of support for the project. If a commenter requests a response to a comment or question, that request will show up in the PIMA application. Staff can also be notified by email when a comment occurs with the actual comment included, as shown below. The project manager can go into PIMA to answer the comment or can request another team member help with the response prior to submittal. Once a response is generated, it can be submitted back to the commenter. All comments and responses are saved within the program and can be seen by all MaineDOT staff with access to the program. This will typically consist of project team members and managers. An example of a comment thread is shown to the right. This allows staff to be transparent and accountable to their comments. Once a project is completed, all comments can be exported and saved in accordance with MaineDOT's retention policy.



The program consists of a dashboard that allows tracking of metrics for individual projects and groups of projects. Those metrics include project favorability, average response time, and stakeholder types. The use of the website, use of social media, and adding stakeholders directly to the application allows for keeping and retaining involvement throughout the life of a project.

4.7 Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

MaineDOT uses Geographic Information Systems (GIS) primarily for internal data integration and analysis, inventory, and communications. GIS also provides an effective means for external communication and public involvement. Since the department's beginnings, static maps have provided the public with information about specific locations, such as



individual project sites. In recent years, MaineDOT has increasingly used online GIS mapping tools such as the [MaineDOT Map Viewer](#) to provide infrastructure and investment information to the public as well as to planning and operational partners. The Map Viewer provides Internet users with access to map-based information about Maine's transportation infrastructure and associated MaineDOT work. Well-designed static map images and paper maps shown at public meetings and in publications can also help agencies and the public better understand a project and potential issues. Using GIS web pages (such as Map Viewer) for project-level public involvement allows the audience to navigate an interactive map of the project area, view data layers of interest, and perform simple searches using a common web browser. This webpage enables customers to review proposed project plans and provide comments directly to the project manager. The [Map Viewer](#) is accessible using MaineDOT's website and through several context-specific topics such as the [Work Plan](#), [Posted Roads](#), [Construction Advertise Plan](#), and [Construction Advertise Schedule](#) webpages.

5.0 Public Involvement from Planning to Programming a Project

5.1 Maine's Long-Range Transportation Plan

Federal and state laws require that every state develop a long-range statewide transportation plan to set out a vision for the future of the state transportation system, to identify the needs of the system, and to propose how best to meet those needs. Maine's next long-range statewide transportation plan – Maine's Long-Range Transportation Plan 2050 (LRTP) – will be a statewide, comprehensive, multimodal transportation plan that sets forth goals, objectives and strategies for MaineDOT to pursue in response to Maine's transportation needs. The LRTP will tie together the department's "family of plans" – the various modal plans developed by the department – to plan for future investment and to satisfy federal and state requirements. The LRTP

will be primarily a policy document and, in general, does not identify specific transportation improvement projects.

MaineDOT will update the LRTP periodically to meet the state requirement of a long-range multimodal plan with a planning horizon of at least 10 years and the federal (FHWA and FTA) requirements of a long-range plan with a planning horizon of at least 20 years. MaineDOT's LRTP will evaluate and make recommendations for investments in Maine's transportation systems:

- Highways and bridges.
- Public transportation, including local and intercity buses, passenger rail, ferries, and airports.
- Sidewalks and other pedestrian facilities.
- Bicycle lanes and other bicycle facilities.
- Marine facilities, including access to them.
- Freight rail and motor carriers.
- Transportation system management, such as ridesharing.
- Scenic, historic, and natural resource connections with transportation systems.
- Current and emerging technological innovations relative to transportation.

MaineDOT will provide notice to the public of its intent to publish or update the LRTP. The notice will be posted online at www.mainedot.gov and by mailings or e-mail notices to municipal officials and known parties of interest. Notices will also be sent to the applicable Regional Planning Organizations (RPOs), Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), and tribal governments.

In early 2015, the department's Outreach Office conducted statewide listening sessions – "Talking Transportation" – to gather public input for the LRTP as well as to pioneer a format for periodic, non-project-specific interactions with the general public. Meetings were held at convenient times and at a variety of locations that were accessible and selected to attract a cross section of citizens, business representatives, and municipal stakeholders. Public announcements of these meetings were published in newspapers of regional interest and on the MaineDOT website. Notices were also sent to RPOs, MPOs, and tribal governments, and these groups were also engaged to inform other interested parties about the meetings.

Throughout 2018, MaineDOT met with numerous state agencies and stakeholder groups to obtain input on Maine's Long-Range Transportation Plan 2050. A MetroQuest Survey was launched to the general public to gauge the public's perception of trends affecting transportation. The survey was posted on MaineDOT's website, with links to it on social media, as well as in flyers mailed to 20 communities around the state. Valuable data and public input were collected as part of this effort and will help shape this plan.

These sessions served as forums to discuss the condition of the state's transportation system (all modes), to define system deficiencies, and to identify alternative solutions and overall transportation system priorities, all in the context of anticipated funding availability. The information obtained through this public engagement technique will be incorporated into the LRTP draft document. In the future, similar meetings may also occur in association with the development of other transportation planning documents or programs.

Once in draft form, the LRTP will be made available to the public through notices in statewide newspapers of record, social media marketing, and by publication of the plan on the MaineDOT website with interactive features. MaineDOT will also make the draft available to RPOs, MPOs, tribal governments, MaineDOT Region Offices, and state depository libraries. After giving due consideration to all the public comments received, MaineDOT will publish the final LRTP and will post it on the department's website.

5.2 Consultative Planning Process for Non-Metropolitan Local Officials

In line with federal requirements, MaineDOT has developed Consultative Planning Process for Non-Metropolitan Local Officials to document and obtain input on the processes by which MaineDOT consults with municipal officials. This document, finalized in 2011, describes the statewide planning process, plans, and planning tools. Specifically, the plan also outlines the activities of the Maine Local Roads Center, Maine Roads Scholar Program, and Locally Administered Projects. The plan also describes how and with whom local officials can communicate the transportation needs and concerns of their communities.

5.3 Major Studies

MaineDOT conducts major studies to evaluate potential new or expanded transportation facilities when potential investments could result in significant environmental impacts or when directed by the Maine Legislature. Major studies must be conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Maine Sensible Transportation Policy Act (STPA), and if any project phase relies on federal funds or requires a federal action, with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Major studies include transportation feasibility studies, Environmental Assessments (EAs), and Environmental Impact Statements (EISs). Each major study will have a project-specific public involvement process. Examples of public involvement techniques used for major studies include steering and stakeholder advisory committees, Internet sites, business surveys, formal public meetings, and newsletters.

MaineDOT will contact municipal representatives, RPOs, MPOs, tribal governments, environmental and historic groups, and others within the project study area to identify customers and stakeholders wanting to be involved in the study. A steering committee may be convened to provide meaningful input to MaineDOT throughout the study effort. The steering committee identifies potential stakeholders who may then be invited

to serve on the study-specific stakeholder committee. A formal study-specific Public Involvement Plan is developed, and frequently, a neutral public involvement facilitator is retained to ensure complete and continuous public involvement throughout the study.

5.4 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is a procedural statute that requires an assessment of the social, economic, and environmental impacts of proposed Federal actions. NEPA is a decision-making process that engages with the public on potential social, economic, and environmental impacts; collects and integrates public feedback in decision-making; and informs the public of how decisions are made with regards to proposed impacts. The NEPA process involves an evaluation of a set of alternatives and their associated impacts. MaineDOT is obligated to satisfy a federal requirement for public involvement and opportunities for public hearings in the NEPA process, including FHWA requirements to maintain a public involvement process, and it is the department's practice to satisfy the law and its underlying intent. Pursuant to 23 USC 128 and 23 CFR 771.111, public involvement procedures must provide for:

- Coordination of public involvement activities and public hearings.
- Early and continuing opportunities for the public to be involved in the identification of social, economic, and environmental impacts as well as impacts associated with relocation of individuals, groups, or institutions.
- One or more public hearings or the opportunity for hearing(s) for any federal-aid project that:
 - Requires significant amounts of property acquisition.
 - Substantially changes the layout or functions of connecting roadways or of the facility being improved.
 - Has a substantial adverse impact on abutting property.
 - Has a significant social, economic, environmental or other effect.
 - The federal agency has determined should have a public hearing because it is in the public interest.

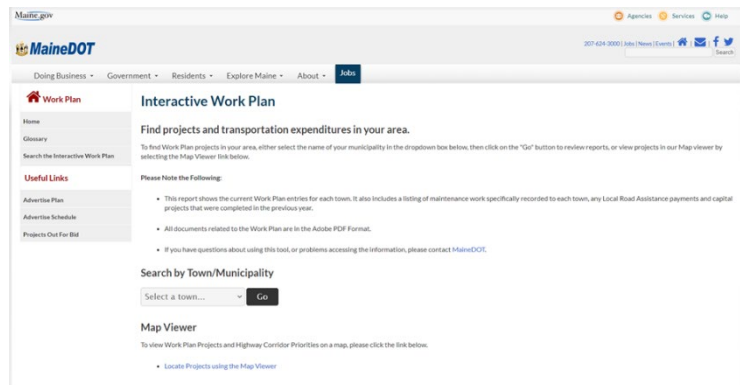
MaineDOT conscientiously observes the NEPA-related FHWA requirements for planning processes, studies, development of road and bridge improvement projects.

5.5 Enhanced Project Scoping

Enhanced Project Scoping (EPS) is a coordinated process for engaging stakeholders regarding a specific transportation matter. The EPS process is used on a limited number of projects each year to help decide the best course of action when the project is complex or controversial. Through the EPS process, the department strives to clearly define a project's purpose and need, assess alternatives to achieve the stated purpose

and need, and ultimately to develop a clear scope of work for candidate projects for the Work Plan. EPS is often initiated as a result of customer concerns about potential project impacts to residents, businesses, and travelers. The public process for EPS is unique to the characteristics of each project. Scoping efforts

can range from a 15-minute presentation at a select board meeting to utilization of websites, advisory committees, design charrettes, and multiple project-specific meetings. Since EPS efforts are primarily stakeholder partnerships, MaineDOT often defers to the host municipalities regarding the specific public involvement processes that will work best for them. These communities typically sponsor the public processes, meetings, and other activities, and EPS staff are invited as participants.



5.6 MaineDOT Work Plan

MaineDOT's annual Work Plan is developed each year to describe all projects and work activities planned by the department for a three-year period. On an ongoing basis, input from public officials, members of transportation stakeholder organizations, and the general public are incorporated in development of the Work Plan. MaineDOT continuously receives requests and comments from municipal officials, lawmakers, transportation stakeholders, and the public in the form of letters, emails, phone calls, and petitions. These requests and comments are evaluated by appropriate MaineDOT staff and considered in the development of the Work Plan. MaineDOT publishes the Work Plan on the MaineDOT website and accepts comments and questions about the plan on a continuing basis.

The public can also influence the Work Plan through participation in development of the department's long-range plan — the LRTP. During development of the LRTP, regional

meetings are held across the state to obtain public and municipal input on potential candidate projects. Members of the public can provide input on the Work Plan process through other periodic regional meetings conducted by the Outreach Office. These regional meetings are held with service center communities and stakeholders by MaineDOT regional planning staff to discuss proposed transportation projects, major development proposals, studies, and department initiatives.

5.7 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)

The [Statewide Transportation Improvement Program \(STIP\)](#) is a federally required document that lists federally funded transportation projects for a four-year time period. All projects funded by either the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) or Federal Transit Administration (FTA) must be listed in an approved STIP before they can be eligible for federal funding. The STIP demonstrates fiscal constraint and compliance with the Clean Air Act. The STIP provides an additional opportunity for public input for all projects included in the department's Work Plan. MaineDOT solicits public input specific to the STIP by making a draft document available for public comment for a period of 10 days. Notice of the draft STIP is posted on the MaineDOT website.

Changes in project schedules, funding needs, priorities, and project scopes invariably occur as projects proceed. These changes require revising the approved STIP. Administrative modifications are not significant changes to the existing STIP, and therefore, no public involvement is required for those modifications. Amendments to the STIP are required for major changes, and for those amendments, a public involvement process is required. The STIP amendment process must provide a "reasonable opportunity" for public comment. This may include public meetings, public hearings, Public Advisory Committee (PAC) meetings, and municipal meetings. STIP amendments are posted on MaineDOT's website. Once the public involvement period ends, MaineDOT will respond to or address all substantive comments received. When the STIP change affects a project in an MPO area, the respective MPO Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) must be amended in conjunction with the STIP. MaineDOT may revise the STIP concurrently with the MPO revision and public involvement processes.

Beginning in 2016, MaineDOT transitioned to an annually developed and published STIP.

6.0 Public Involvement during Project Development

6.1 Elements of Public Involvement in Project Development

MaineDOT's Bureau of Project Development is charged with the timely and efficient delivery of MaineDOT's capital program, including projects selected by MPOs. The

bureau is committed to achieving trust through on-time project delivery and promoting economic prosperity by infusing transportation resources into the economy as quickly as possible. Major activities include:

- Managing the development of the department's capital program from the approval of funding to public meetings and outreach to construction completion for all highway, bridge, and multimodal capital projects.
- Oversight of the contracting of construction projects, federal documentation, prequalification of contractors, and payment of contractors.
- Federally mandated materials testing, sampling, and analysis; independent quality-assurance testing; and reporting of incentive and disincentive payments.
- Engineering, boundary survey, and property acquisition in support of MaineDOT's capital program.
- Project-related wetland mitigation and surface water quality and management projects.

6.2 Public Involvement During Design Phase

As a transportation improvement project moves from the planning phase into the design phase, ongoing public involvement is essential to maintain customer support for the project and to obtain meaningful input on the design elements. This public outreach is often a public meeting or series of public meetings, but it may also include less-formal dialogues with municipal officials, interested parties, and other stakeholders. The public involvement process may differ for each effort as projects vary in size, scope, and length of time required for design and construction. Design projects generally follow one of the public processes shown below. The project team determines the appropriate level based on the anticipated public interest from the scope and complexity of the project.

- Letter to the Municipality Only – For any project that has minimal impact on abutters and the traveling public, letters may be sent to the affected municipalities only. The letter content will include the project description, schedule, an explanation of expected impacts, and an offer of public process if the municipality requests it. If there will be minor impacts to abutters, property owners along the project may also receive letters. This type of public involvement is infrequent and typically only occurs for minor projects such as a paving project with no impacts beyond the existing pavement.
- Public Meetings – Any project where impacts to abutters or the traveling public are expected to be more than minor will involve one or more public meeting(s). The majority of MaineDOT projects involve at least one form of a public meeting. Many projects involve two public meetings and the opportunity for public engagement. With the onset of COVID-19 in 2020, MaineDOT instituted On-Demand Virtual Public Meetings as described in Section 4.1 of this document. Those On-Demand Virtual Meetings have proven to be more effective and allow

greater public engagement than the previous in-person live meetings did. Also, these new meetings provide time and cost savings for both staff and the public by not requiring attendees to travel to a site and by giving members of the public the ability to learn and comment about the project at their convenience. MaineDOT will continue with the On-Demand Virtual Public Meetings even after the pandemic while including the option for having a Live Virtual Meeting or even including an In-Person Meeting in certain circumstances. The criteria for those inclusions will be developed in the near future.

6.3 Public Meeting Process

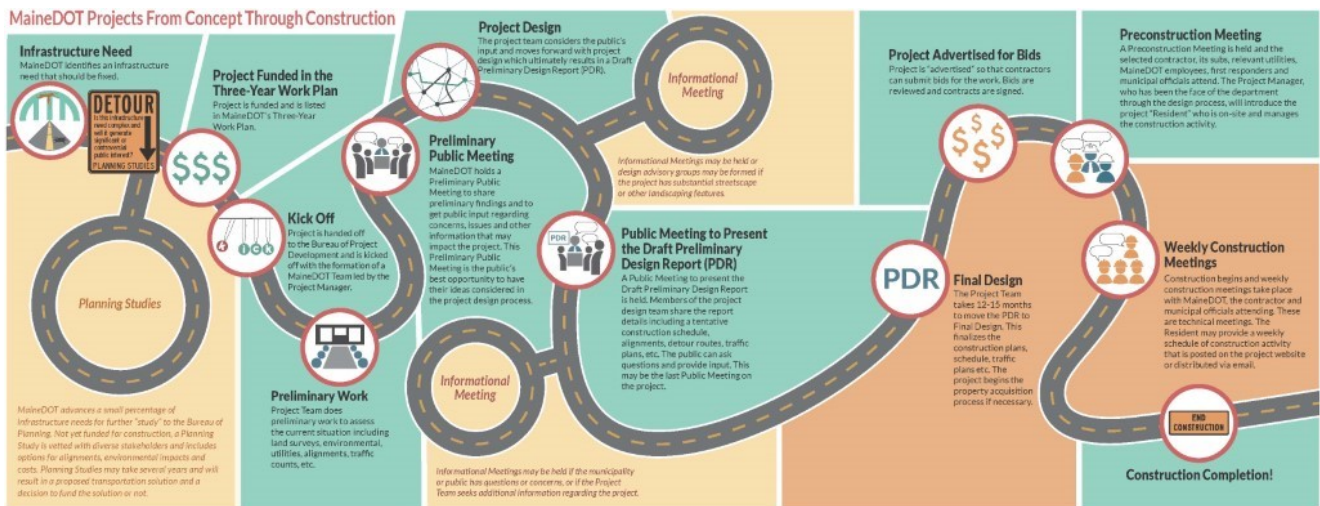
The graphic above depicts a typical process and timeline for a project from the Infrastructure Problem (Identified Need through Construction Completion). The first three phases (Infrastructure Problem, Planning Studies, and Projects Funded in Three-Year Work Plan) of this graphic take place outside of and before the project being delivered to the Bureau of Project Development.

- Kick-Off – This stage is when a project that is funded in the Work Plan is handed off to the Bureau of Project Development to begin preparing the project team.
- Preliminary Work - During this initiation of preliminary design, where the team begins gathering information regarding the project and location, the project manager or appropriate team members reaches out to municipalities, utilities, MPOs, or other stakeholders to obtain initial feedback on the proposed project. For more complex projects, this may include a Preliminary Public Meeting. At this meeting, information such as project purpose and need, existing conditions, traffic data, accident data, funding and budget, and a tentative schedule are shared with the public. Potential design solutions may also be discussed. These meetings are intended to provide balanced, objective information on the project and obtain feedback on challenges, needs, opportunities, and solutions. The project manager, designer, and other team members as deemed appropriate contribute and provide information for the meeting. See section 4.1 for additional information on the typical meeting format for this and other public meetings. In some cases, this meeting may determine whether additional public/informational meetings are necessary.
- Project Design – Using the obtained public input along with engineering judgement, the team begins the process of designing the project to meet the purpose and need of the project to address the infrastructure need adequately.
- Informational Meeting – If the project is identified as having a “substantial public interest,” an informational meeting may be necessary to update the public on the project’s progress. This could also include forming a Design Advisory Group and

holding meetings with that group. Based on the type, complexity, or public interest, an Informational Meeting may be held at any point throughout the design process.

- **Public Meeting to Present the Preliminary Design Report** – This is also known as the Formal Public Meeting. At this meeting, the project details, as shown in the Preliminary Design Report (PDR), are presented to the public by the project manager and other team members as appropriate. The purpose of this meeting is to share the design and receive buy-in from the public regarding the preferred alternative/design. This should include the reason and factors influencing the chosen design. This meeting is typically the final opportunity for public input into the scope of the project, the chosen alternative, and significant design features.

MaineDOT incorporates input from public meetings in its design decisions. By involving the public early in the planning process and throughout the development and implementation of projects, MaineDOT provides its customers with the opportunity for coordination and participation before the approval of final designs. When appropriate, traffic control, construction staging and timing, and proposed detours may be discussed at public meetings during the design phase.



7.0 Public Involvement for Other Transportation Modes

7.1 Aviation

MaineDOT is assigned the responsibility and authority under M.R.S. Title 6 to promote public safety and the interests of aviation in the state. The department partners with municipalities, counties, and airport authorities to support their airport needs and ensure compliance with federal requirements. MaineDOT provides input on and usually matches funding for federally funded airport projects, including programming, scoping, environmental issues, property acquisition, design, and construction and is involved with

planning for the General Aviation (GA) airports. Specifically, MaineDOT works closely with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to program capital projects under the Airport Improvement Program and Military Airport Program for airports in the National Plan of Integrated Airports Systems. This process includes an annual consultation with airport sponsors, their consultant, and FAA staff to discuss, prioritize, and schedule projects for funding, resulting in a multi-year statewide aviation capital improvement plan.

At the state level, the department receives regular input from the Maine Aeronautical Advisory Board (MAAB), which typically meets three times per year to advise the department on any and all aviation matters. The Board is composed of a broad cross section of aviation stakeholders who contribute informed recommendations to the department. These meetings offer an opportunity to discuss pertinent issues and are well-attended by aviation stakeholders, who are kept informed of aviation news by MaineDOT staff through an extensive aviation stakeholder email distribution list. Virtual participation is always made available, and a public comment period is scheduled at each regular meeting.

Every 10 to 15 years, the state updates its Statewide Aviation System Plan, which affords an opportunity to conduct robust stakeholder input on the needs of the aviation system. Surveys, interviews, and stakeholder meetings are utilized to garner public input from various user groups and host communities. A Project Advisory Committee composed of diverse aviation stakeholders is recruited to guide the effort and facilitate public and private sector outreach. The aviation stakeholder distribution list, as well as the MaineDOT website and social media channels, are used to keep the public informed as the plan is developed.

Locally, Airport Master Plans are developed for short-, mid-, and long-term development goals (5, 10, and 20 years respectively) and include a detailed description of scheduled planning and construction projects. These plans are updated every five to ten years. Planning for airports and all facilities using FAA funding includes an opportunity for public meetings to consider economic, social, and environmental effects and consistency with goals and objectives of the surrounding communities. The public is notified of such meetings through a published public notice.

7.2 Bicycle and Pedestrian

MaineDOT's Bicycle and Pedestrian Funding Program supports the development and improvement of bicycle and pedestrian facilities throughout Maine by managing a competitive grant program that utilizes federal funding made available through Surface Transportation Set-Aside Funding. This program also collaborates with MaineDOT's Safety Office to program bicycle and pedestrian projects that improve safety. MaineDOT

partners with municipalities throughout Maine to identify, fund, and construct bicycle and pedestrian projects designed to improve safety at the local level; improve multimodal access to employment, education, and recreational opportunities; and improve an area's sense of community. MaineDOT also works closely with numerous state agencies, advocacy organizations, federal transportation programs, and regional planning organizations to raise awareness of bicycle and pedestrian safety issues; the importance of well-maintained and accessible infrastructure; and advocate for active, sustainable transportation. Beginning in 2017, MaineDOT partnered with several public and private groups to create a nationally renowned pedestrian safety project centered on public engagement and grassroots efforts in communities with high pedestrian crash rates. Throughout its programming, MaineDOT's Bicycle and Pedestrian Program facilitates outreach and education sessions with the primary purpose of raising public awareness, engaging communities in discussions around infrastructure and safety, and providing educational sessions to empower local citizens to become more active in their communities and engage in active transportation pursuits.

7.3 Ferry Service

Under M.R.S. Title 23, Chapter 412. WATERBORNE TRANSPORTATION, The Maine State Ferry Service (MSFS), an entity within the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT), is statutorily charged with providing vehicle, freight, and passenger ferry service to the islands of North Haven, Vinalhaven, Islesboro, Matinicus, Swan's Island, and Frenchboro.

MaineDOT is required to collect at least 50 percent of the cost to operate the MSFS through fares and user fees. The remaining costs are paid out of the Highway Fund budget. In addition to contributing half of the operating costs of the ferry service, MaineDOT also funds all capital investments for the Maine State Ferry Service, such as new ferry vessels and improvements to shoreside infrastructure. MaineDOT holds Maine State Ferry Service Advisory Board (FSAB) meetings with representatives of the island municipalities on a bi-monthly basis to plan and prioritize island needs and projects as well as periodic public meetings in the establishment of rates and capital projects. The public is notified of these meetings through a public notice. As provided in 23 M.R.S.A. § 4301, the Maine State Ferry Advisory Board is established within the Maine Department of Transportation.

7.4 Freight and Freight Rail

MaineDOT developed the Integrated Freight Plan (IFP) in 1998, updated it in both 2001 and 2008, and developed a successor document – the Integrated Freight Strategy (IFS) - in 2011. Together, these plans help shape statewide freight policy and investment

activities, strengthen the relationship with the private sector freight community, and allow MaineDOT to be more responsive to both public and private sector freight needs and issues. When State Freight Plans became a requirement of FHWA, MaineDOT developed its most recent IFS, which was submitted and approved by FHWA in December 2017. These efforts are reviewed and updated in order to accurately encompass recent trends and activities. Public involvement during IFS development includes extensive consultation with various stakeholders in Maine's freight transportation system—transportation companies, manufacturers and other shippers, and owners of transportation facilities. The general public is afforded the opportunity to comment on the department's freight plans through plan postings on the MaineDOT website.

Statewide rail planning is required by federal law under guidelines established originally by the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) and more recently by the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 and the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008. These laws require that rail capital projects be identified in a State Rail Plan in order to be eligible for federal financial assistance. Federal guidance for the State Rail Plan includes:

- Increasing the safety and security of the transportation system.
- Increasing mobility of people and freight.
- Protecting and enhancing the environment, promoting energy conservation, improving quality of life, and promoting consistency between transportation improvements and state and local planned growth and economic development patterns.
- Enhancing the integration and connectivity of the transportation system for people and freight across and between modes throughout the state.
- Promoting efficient system management and operation.
- Emphasizing the preservation of the existing transportation system.

Maine's state rail goals and objectives are included in Maine's Long-Range Transportation Plan 2050 (LRTP). Public involvement during development of the State Rail Plan includes public meetings to help shape the direction of the plan and incorporate public comments and suggestions as well as posting of the plan on the MaineDOT website. The Federal Railroad Administration reviews and approves the plan.

7.5 Passenger Rail

Passenger rail planning and outreach are part of the statewide rail plan (see section 7.4). Additional passenger rail planning project outreach is done through public meetings, MaineDOT website project pages, and through presentations to regional planning organizations.

7.6 Ports and Marine

MaineDOT has followed its “Three Port Strategy” since the late 1970s. This has allowed planning and investment to remain focused on the three, deep-water, industrial seaports of Portland, Searsport, and Eastport. The emphasis on investment at Maine’s three ports has been important in developing maritime-related business opportunities in the state. While waterborne freight transportation makes up a relatively low percentage of the overall freight movement throughout the state, Maine’s focus on its three ports has resulted in three modern and adequately equipped ports with the capability to handle a diverse array of cargo. Ports and Marine is included in the Maine Integrated Freight Strategy (MIFS) and gives members of the public and maritime stakeholders the opportunity for comment throughout its development. The Maine Port Authority also holds regular public meetings and provides members of the public the ability to discuss marine-related activity with state officials.

Smaller ports are numerous along the Maine coastline. Fishing and lobstering are significant economic drivers for many of these coastal communities. MaineDOT has provided the Small Harbor Improvement Program (SHIP) for these communities to access state transportation funds for marine infrastructure improvement. The program is very popular and has a high demand, and through planning and prioritization by need, most projects can be funded within three years of application.

Also prevalent in Maine are members of the transient boating population who enjoy thousands of miles of coastline. Many marina owners are capitalizing on the increased demand for transient boating slips by taking advantage of the Boating Infrastructure Grant (BIG) from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). In partnership with MaineDOT, the BIG program accepts applications for funding up to \$1.5 million to provide facilities for transient boaters with vessels 26 feet or greater in length.

7.7 Transit

MaineDOT is constantly informed by its close connections with public transit providers and Metropolitan Planning Organizations across the state in understanding and prioritizing needs. The department is further guided by the Public Transit Advisory Council (PTAC), an appointed board of diverse stakeholders with knowledge of transit needs from a variety of user groups, partnering organizations, and providers. The Council meets two or three times each year and is required to submit a biennial report to the Governor and Legislature in each odd-numbered year, outlining needs and making recommendations regarding public transportation.

Every five years, both state law and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) regulation require the creation of Locally Coordinated Plans to document regional needs (particularly relating to older Mainers, people with disabilities, and low-income individuals), evaluate capacity, and facilitate collaboration. MaineDOT, with the support of all transit providers using state or federal funds, takes responsibility for developing a statewide Locally Coordinated Plan covering all regions and providers. Locally Coordinated Plans involve contacting a broad range of potential stakeholders and interested parties and holding forums in accessible locations to obtain public input on how best to provide transit services that meet the needs of transit-dependent populations. Notifications for these forums include information that translation services are available upon request. The current Locally Coordinated Plan (2019-2023) includes an ambitious list of recommendations guiding department efforts that were prioritized by the Public Transit Advisory Council and are consistent with the recommendations made in the Council's 2019 biennial report. Public forums were cosponsored by age-friendly communities, social service agencies, and transit providers.

MaineDOT provides financial support as part of its Rural Transit (FTA Section 5311) Program to intercity providers, which are typically private, for-profit businesses. To inform this program, a consultation with private sector providers is held to understand the private sector perspective and ensure an equal opportunity to apply for program support. The State Management Plan describes MaineDOT's policies and procedures for the administration of the public transportation programs funded by the FTA. This plan is updated periodically and is a requirement of FTA, which provides financial assistance to states – through a number of programs – to develop new transit systems and improve, maintain, and operate existing systems. FTA requires that each state describe the state's policies and procedures for the state-managed portion of these programs. Public involvement for the State Management Plan includes consultation with a broad range of potential stakeholders and interested parties and holding transit forums in accessible locations to obtain public input on how best to provide transit services to meet the needs of transit-dependent populations. Advanced notice and information about these forums are made available on the MaineDOT website.

In 2015, MaineDOT completed a Statewide Strategic Transit Plan – a 10-year comprehensive transit plan intended to assist MaineDOT in prioritizing service improvements, identifying performance measures, and establishing standards for transit services. The plan provides a holistic approach to evaluating surface passenger transportation initiatives, programs, and funding sources. This includes interagency coordination of public and social service transportation, operations plans for transit districts and park and ride lots, plans for connectivity with passenger rail and ferry service, and capital improvements for transit providers. The plan has a focus on Maine's aging population with an assessment of and recommendations for meeting elderly transportation needs statewide. In addition, the plan makes recommendations on best

practices for transit planning and funding strategies. During 2013 and 2014, public involvement in development of this plan included involvement used for Statewide Strategic Transit Plan updates. The 2019-2023 Locally Coordinated Plan refreshed and sharpened the focus on recommendations within the Strategic Statewide Transit Plan. The recommendations of both plans guide department efforts and are kept in front of the Public Transit Advisory Council, whose meetings are open to the public with a time for public comment structured into the agenda.

8.0 Public Involvement for Maintenance Activities

8.1 Maintenance and Operations Public Involvement

The Bureau of Maintenance and Operations (M&O) uses different public involvement methods than other MaineDOT bureaus use. The need to address a pothole, wash bridges, stripe centerlines, plow the roads, replace a rotted culvert, cut trees that have fallen into the road after a storm, clean out ditches, fix clogged drainage, etc. requires more immediate response. Most of these items and situations are noted in M&O's 511-page plan.

Depending on the activity, M&O use door knockers (informational cards placed on front door handles) to advise when MaineDOT will be in the area to perform certain work. If M&O is performing vegetation management along a corridor, we will place these door knockers to advise that any trees we cut within the Right-of-Way (ROW) are the property of the landowner who can call to request that the wood be left for him or her.

If MaineDOT is ditching along a roadway, door knockers are distributed to advise of the coming effort. Many property owners want the fill from ditching, and this gives them an opportunity to fill out forms to request this material. In general, a door knocker is used when we will be working for an extended period along a corridor. Larger vegetation management like cutting trees on the interstate does involve us contacting abutters to advise that the work will be performed. In this case the landowners do not own the wood, but many don't want to lose the screening effect vegetation provides. Business owners tend to want more clearing than the department is prepared to do because they want visibility for their business. This scenario requires M&O to find a balance between competing public demands in its work.

9.0 Public Involvement and Partner Agencies

9.1 Tribal Governments

In order to maintain improved relationships with Tribal Governments in the state of Maine, MaineDOT established a department-wide Tribal Communication Policy. The

policy provides guidance to MaineDOT personnel when working with Tribal Governments in Maine regarding transportation-related issues.

MaineDOT coordinates with the Tribal Governments on all projects, studies, and other activities that may impact the Tribal Governments, Tribal Lands, or properties of traditional religious or cultural significance. The MaineDOT Tribal Liaison in the Bureau of Planning is the primary point of contact for tribal-related transportation matters. Project managers must also take an active role in contacting the Tribal Governments to ensure they are kept informed and involved.

9.2 Metropolitan Planning Organizations

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are established in federal law and subject to state DOT oversight. They do the same transportation planning work, including the prioritization and funding of transportation projects, for the urbanized portions of federally defined metropolitan areas as MaineDOT does for the rest of the state. Every two years, these MPOs receive an allocation of funds from MaineDOT for planning. Annually, they receive a capital improvement allocation to construct federally eligible projects.

MPOs must engage in a metropolitan planning process that creates opportunities for public involvement, participation, and consultation throughout the development of their long-range Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Under this requirement, MPOs must allow for:

- Adequate public notice of public participation activities.
- Review and comment at key decision points in the development of the MTP and TIP.
- Multiple, accessible participation formats, including electronic and in-person.

The MPO should develop a collaborative and comprehensive Public Participation Plan with the public and stakeholder communities to be used in the development of the MTP and TIP as well as to frame the strategies for public and stakeholder communication and collaboration in all phases of the planning process. The Participation Plan itself must be prepared by the MPO with a 45-day public review and comment period. Specific details and requirements can be found [here](#) in 23 CFR 450.316.

9.3 Regional Planning Organizations

Regional Planning Organizations were established by Maine State Statute (i.e. Planning Commissions, Councils of Governments) and receive funds from the Maine Legislature and Maine Coastal Program to provide general planning assistance to municipalities within their respective regions. The organizations are private nonprofits that work in coordination and collaboratively with MaineDOT and other state agencies per contract

assignment letters. Those contracts include tasks and activities that support MaineDOT's staff and regional offices with municipal outreach, safety planning, tribal liaison work, bicycle and pedestrian planning, transit planning, ADA data collection, comprehensive plan assistance, traffic data collection, traffic management collection, and public works.

Funding allocations will be mutually agreed upon based upon amount of work capacity anticipated for each selected task annually with contracts beginning on the first day of the new calendar year. This assistance is available upon request to the extent that the funding allows. At a minimum, this assistance will include answering general questions, advising on committee formation, explaining the Growth Management Act and the Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule, and providing presentations on interlocal resource planning.

10.0 Periodic Review of Public Involvement Plan

The Public Involvement Plan (PIP) document will be reviewed on an annual basis. In the instance of changes to federal and/or state regulations, the department will review in a timely manner and update accordingly.