

**Evaluation of Fiscal Year 2014**  
**Unified Planning and Work Program**  
**Public Involvement Activities**



**BANNOCK**

**Transportation Planning**

**O R G A N I Z A T I O N**

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## **Introduction**

Bannock Transportation Planning Organization (BTPO) serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Pocatello/Chubbuck urbanized area. MPOs are organizations created by Federal legislation with the requirement to plan for the long range transportation needs of their region. As an MPO we are required in 23 Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) §450.316 to develop a Public Involvement Plan (PIP) which outlines how BTPO will conduct public involvement for transportation projects and programs within the urban area. The PIP not only provides the how public involvement will be conducted it also provides information on how public comment is incorporated into the project or program review and approval process.

Public involvement is a very complex process especially when addressing such complex topics as the twenty-year plan for the transportation system of the urban area or for simple tasks of identifying projects which will be constructed over the next four years. The PIP recognizes the challenges of public involvement and requires an annual evaluation of what processes were used in the last year and how effective those processes were in involving the public in the planning process. This review is specifically address the public involvement for the projects within the BTPO 2014 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

This evaluation will provide a review of the projects where public involvement occurred and provide a qualitative evaluation of the effectiveness of the involvement. The last part of the evaluation is a review of possible improvements and changes which can occur in the upcoming year. This review is not intended as an evaluation of the public involvement legal requirements; it is designed to assist BTPO staff and committees in evaluating the public involvement and how to learn from those past efforts.

## **Project Descriptions and Evaluation**

The Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) were the projects where public involvement occurred in FY 2014. The transit bus stop and UPWP also receive review of the draft plans but not comments were received.

### **Metropolitan Transportation Plan**

The MTP is being completed by David Evans Associates. The project has a separate PIP for the implementation of the project, which is consistent with the BTPO PIP. The MTP is a twenty-year comprehensive evaluation and plan for future transportation projects and programs for the BTPO planning area.

During the year a scenario development and preferred scenario open houses were held. The open houses were advertised in the local newspaper, BTPO Website, Project Website, e-mail public outreach list, and BTPO's Facebook page.

The attendance at the January scenario development open house is ok at over 16 people, but the May attendance was very low. Both open houses were held at Chubbuck City Hall which looking back at

recent trends seems to have low turnout. A potential reason included the residence of Pocatello thinking a meeting at Chubbuck City Hall does not affect them. There were a number of hits on the website during the review process but the comments received were also low.

## Transportation Improvement Program

The TIP is an annual document which lists the federal project which will be completed during the next four-years. The FY 2013 TIP was appended during the year and the public review followed the process which no comments received. This was to be expected since the change was modification in transit funding not change in projects. The FY 2015 TIP and conformity had a public comment period and was approved. Three comments were received while only two were related to specific projects in the TIP.

Based on last year's review the notice was sent to agencies and one of the two comments came for an agency person. BTPO will continue to develop the mailing list try to improve the message as to get more activity on the website.

## Other Projects

The UPWP and transit bus stop were very technical documents. While the notice of public review was sent, staff did not expect comments. The UPWP is an administrative document and for the most part planning is the region is not controversial so the contents of the plan not of regional interest. The same is true for the Bus Stop analysis. The document is very technical and designed for the transit provider and regional planners as a tool to evaluate future transit route and stop changes. The audience was not intended for the general public.

## Public Involvement Evaluation

The PIP includes a matrix which provides five questions which were intended to ensure the public involvement process of BTPO meet the federal requirements. The evaluation was established as a matrix, but will be shown in this report as questions and answers. Additionally, there is evaluation of the potential improvements to the PIP for FY 2015. The answers to the first four questions are the same as in FY 2013's review.

Did the planning process allow citizens opportunity for participation in planning activities defined in the Unified planning Work Program? Yes, for all work tasks which required a public outreach the public was provide opportunity to comment.

Was information to the public complete, accurate, and timely? Yes, to the best of our ability the information provided was correct and provide within the established guidelines.

Were citizens provided the opportunity to participate in plan development and decision-making? Yes, the public involvement occurred during time when decisions were being made and comments could have altered those decisions.

Were there opportunities for continuous involvement? Yes, both the MTP and TIP Plan had many opportunities for public involvement during the development of the plans. During the development of

## Public Involvement Evaluation for FY 2014

the MTP BTPO worked with agency staffs to ensure plans were coordinated. This must have been successful as the final review open house scheduled in FY 2015 is a joint open hour with the Pocatello Comprehensive Plan update.

Did the Process comply with Title VI Civil Rights of 1964? Yes, to the knowledge of the staff all public involvement activities which occurred during the year were in compliance with Title VI.

### Potential Improvements for FY 2014

Public involvement is a critical in the effort to keep the transportation planning and programming as open and transparent as possible. To public comments usually come from people who are engaged in the process, but sadly people do not participate in many events including Government agency public meetings. Our PIP tried to explore ways to increase public awareness and involvement but for FY 2014 these efforts were not successful for the second year. The lack of success may not be due to BTPO's efforts but rather the lack a public participation in any activity. ITD's STIP process statewide resulted in 13 comments as compared of our three is good still does not indicate success.

The website continues to be successful in building awareness. Both the first time and returning views increased in 2014. In last year's review it was noted that the TIP had 29 people open the email line to the tip page this year the number was 50 which shows improvement. Building the website traffic and increasing number of people on email list and friends on Facebook should be a priority.

One area where improvement is still needed is use of traditional mailing lists. While recommended last year there was in increase in mailings to people mostly because the list is small and getting additional people on the list is challenging.

Take advantage of existing locations where information is accessed including the Pocatello and Chubbuck city halls. Additional locations should be identified and utilized.

Potential improvement for FY 2015:

Carryover from FY 2014

- Continue to improve and provide frequent updates of website information even if that information is not directly BTPO
- Use social media more
- Update BTPO's physical mailing list
- Develop a mailing list for agencies serving senior, disabled, and low-income populations
- Try to increase presence in new sources other than the newspaper
- Provide information at entrance to Pocatello and Chubbuck City halls.

New

- Contact FHWA and to get information on small MPO nationwide which are doing a great job in getting public participation.

