

Evaluation of Fiscal Year 2016
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 defines how public involvement is conducted and provides information on how to incorporate public comment 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. An annual evaluation of the allows Staff and advisory committees to evaluate previous years' activities and determine how effective those processes were in involving the public in the planning process. This review specifically addresses the public involvement for the projects within the BTPO 2016 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

This evaluation will provide a review of the projects where public involvement occurred and provided 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 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 Yellowstone Corridor and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) were the projects where public involvement occurred in FY 2016. The city of Pocatello led the public outreach for the transit route evaluation study.

Yellowstone Corridor

J-U-B Engineers is completing the Yellowstone Corridor Study. The project has a separate PIP for the implementation of the project, which is consistent with the BTPO PIP. The Yellowstone Corridor is an update of an earlier study and will provide the direction for the corridor for the next twenty years.

J-U-B conducted a public outreach effort and open house during the year. An online comment application, called 3P Visual, allowed the public to submit their comments electronically. J-U-B mailed public notices to the mailing list and property owners along the corridor. The response was good with 271 comments received and 35 people attending the open house. The effort was also very large with as much spent on public outreach and most UPWP planning tasks total budgets. The use of interactive online tools along with traditional public meetings seemed to be a good combination.

Transportation Improvement Program

The TIP is an annual document which lists the federal project which will be completed during the next four years. BTPO amended the FY 2016 TIP during the year, and the public review followed the process which no comments received. Staff expected no comments since the change was a modification in transit funding not a change in specific projects. The FY 2017 TIP and conformity had a public comment period and was approved. BTPO do not receive comments on the TIP. The same effort took place as the previous year, but there were three comments. The TIP web page did receive some hits, and the email notices had many views.

Other Projects

The UPWP is an administrative document, and the Travel Demand Model Update and Demographic Update report are very technical documents. Staff did not expect comments using the standard public review process. While both the Model and Demographic reports are important, the audience is not the general public, rather an internal tools update and validate the regional travel demand model.

Public Involvement Evaluation

The PIP includes a matrix which provides five questions which were intended to ensure the public involvement process of BTPO meets the federal requirements. The evaluation was established as a matrix, but will be shown in this report as questions and answers. Additionally, there is an evaluation of the potential improvements to the PIP for FY 2016. The answers to the first four questions are the same as in FY 2015'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 provided an 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.

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

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

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 2017 The Yellowstone Corridor project successful public engagement has reinforced the notion that specific projects are more likely to get public involvement than others. For those projects, an active and interactive program including social media and on-line applications help increase the public input. The Transit Master Plan and Bicycle – Pedestrian Plan Update are two

Public Involvement Evaluation for FY 2016

projects which will benefit from this active public involvement. No specific improvement is listed for FY 2017, rather continuing to use the interactive web-based outreach and continue actively updating the website and social media sites.