The Evolution of Memphis MPOs Public Participation Process

Challenges, Successes, & Lessons Learned

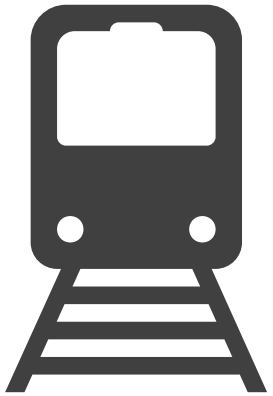
Jasmine Champion
Transportation Planner

Ethan A Greene, AICP-C
Transportation Planner

Memphis MPO
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

AMPO Annual Conference
Memphis Urban Area MPO
Date: October 6, 2021

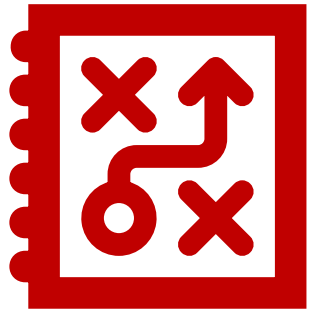
Presentation Outline



Introduction

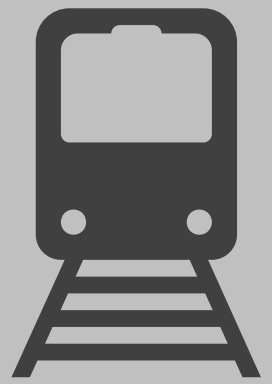
Where we were

Where we are



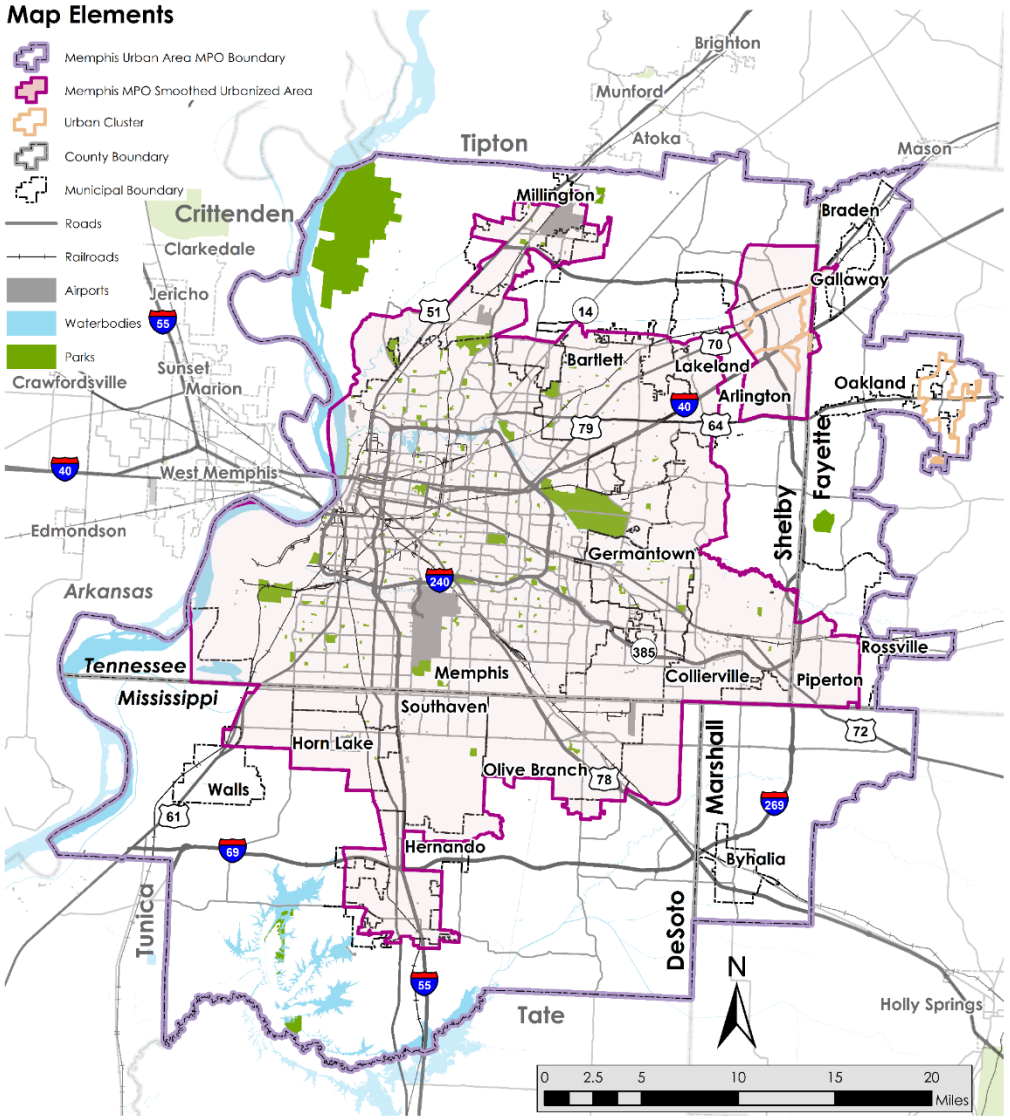
Where we are going

Introduction

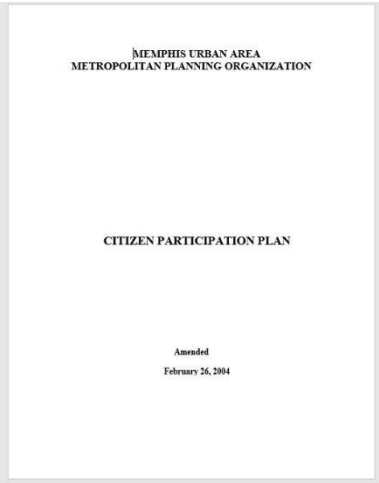


Memphis Urban Area MPO

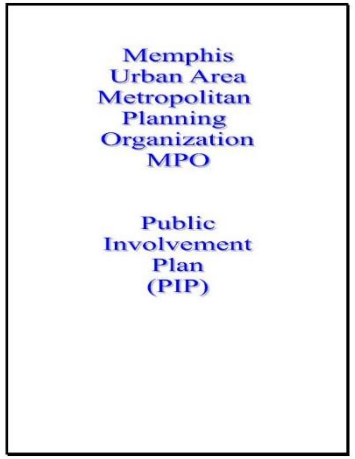
- Bi- State MPO – TN and MS
  - **Planning Area:** 2 full counties and 2 partial counties
  - Coordination with Various Stakeholder, Advocacy Groups and Partner Agencies
- 18 Municipalities
- Neighboring MPO: West Memphis, AR



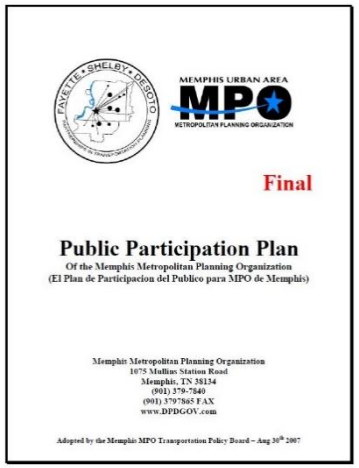
Evolution of the PPP



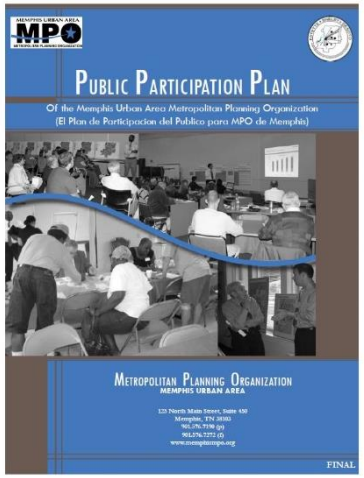
2004



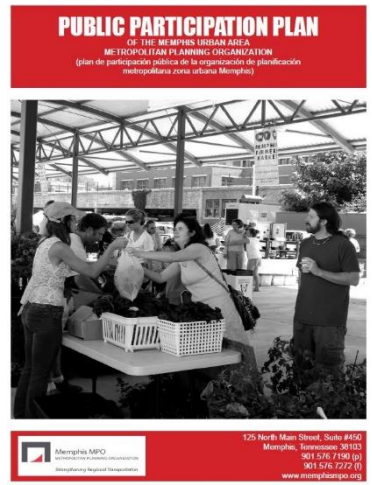
2005



2007



2011



2014

2020

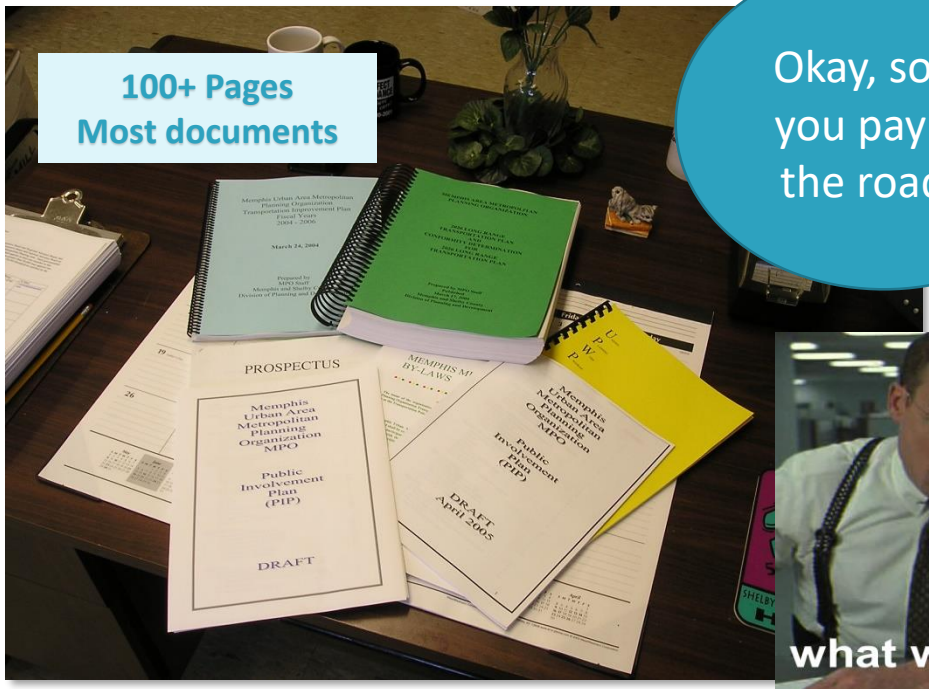
Where we were

Challenges

- Low participation

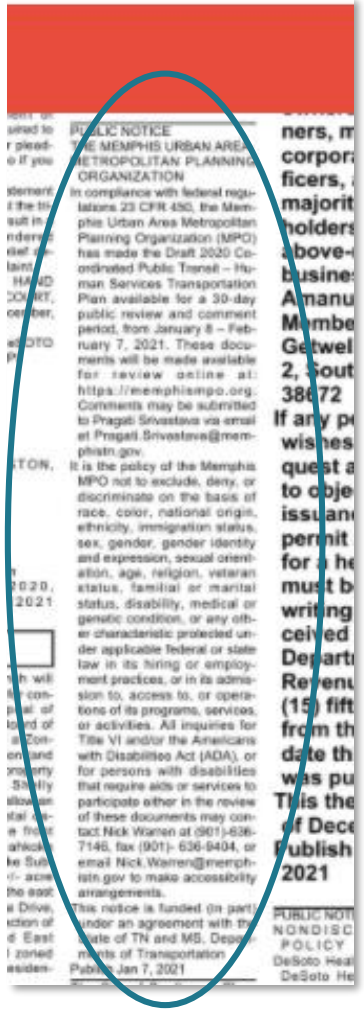
Challenges

- Understanding the role of the MPO & complexity of transportation topics



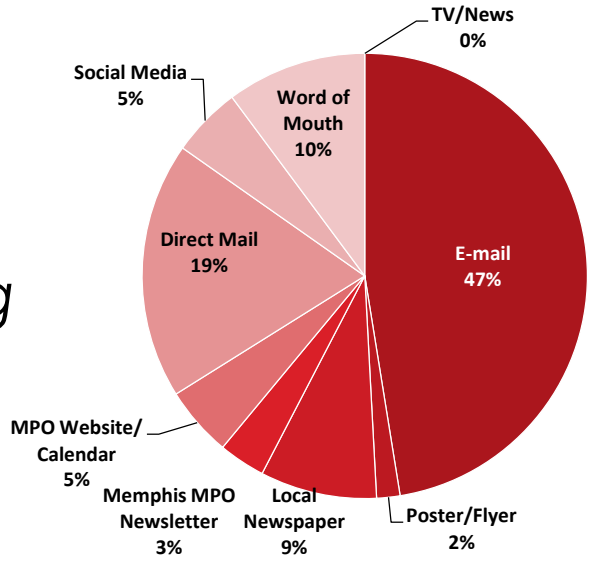
Challenges

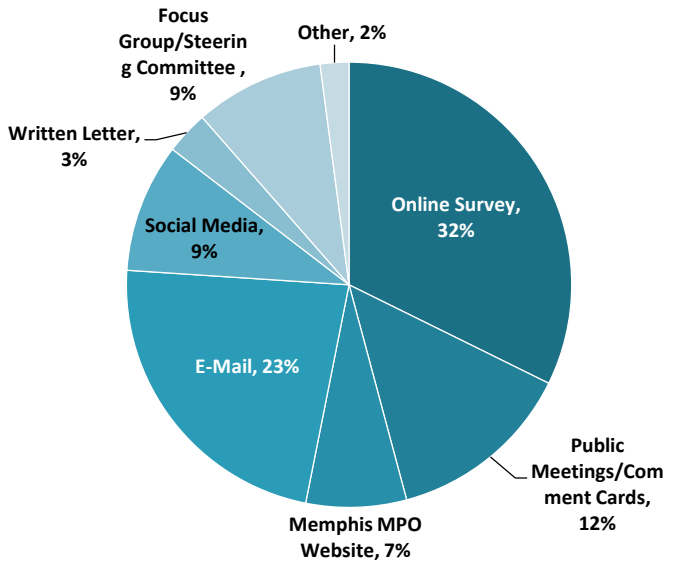
- Limited outreach strategies & Communication to Board and Public on engagement efforts

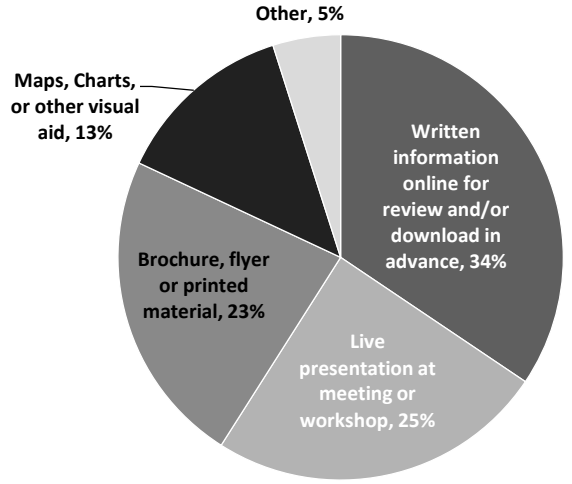

PUBLIC NOTICE
THE MEMPHIS URBAN AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
In compliance with federal regulations 23 CFR 450, the Memphis Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) has made the Draft 2020 Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan available for a 30-day public review and comment period, from January 8 – February 7, 2021. These documents will be made available for review online at: https://memphismpo.org. Comments may be submitted to Pragati Srivastava via email at Pragati.Srivastava@memphistn.gov.
It is the policy of the Memphis MPO not to exclude, deny, or discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, ethnicity, immigration status, sex, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, age, religion, veteran status, familial or marital status, disability, medical or genetic condition, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law in its hiring or employment practices, or in its admission to, access to, or operations of its programs, services, or activities. All inquiries for Title VI and/or the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), or for persons with disabilities that require aids or services to participate either in the review of these documents may contact Nick Warren at (901)-636-7146, fax (901)- 636-9404, or email Nick.Warren@memphistn.gov to make accessibility arrangements.
This notice is funded (in part) under an agreement with the State of TN and MS. Departments of Transportation
Public Jan 7, 2021

Approach

- Initiated major update in 2014
- Peer agency & best practices review:
  - *Cultivating Partnerships, Targeted Outreach, Presenting in the Community and Public Involvement, & Self-Reporting*
- Public input & stakeholder input
- Regular updates to the plan



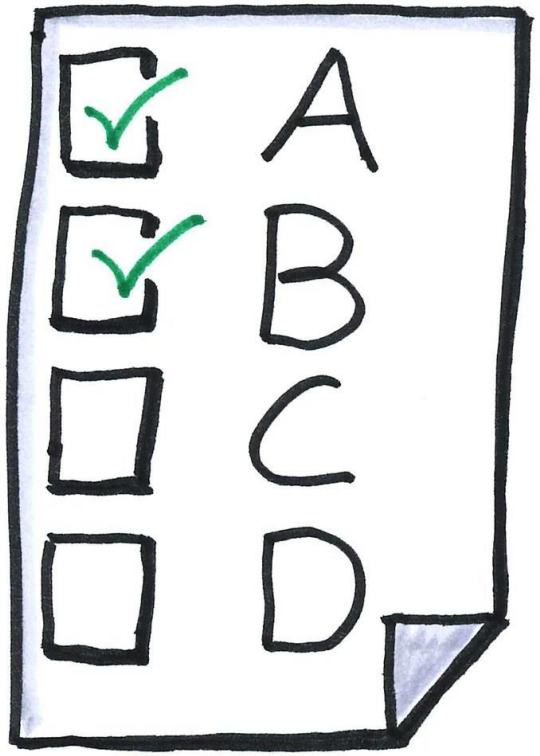




Where We Are

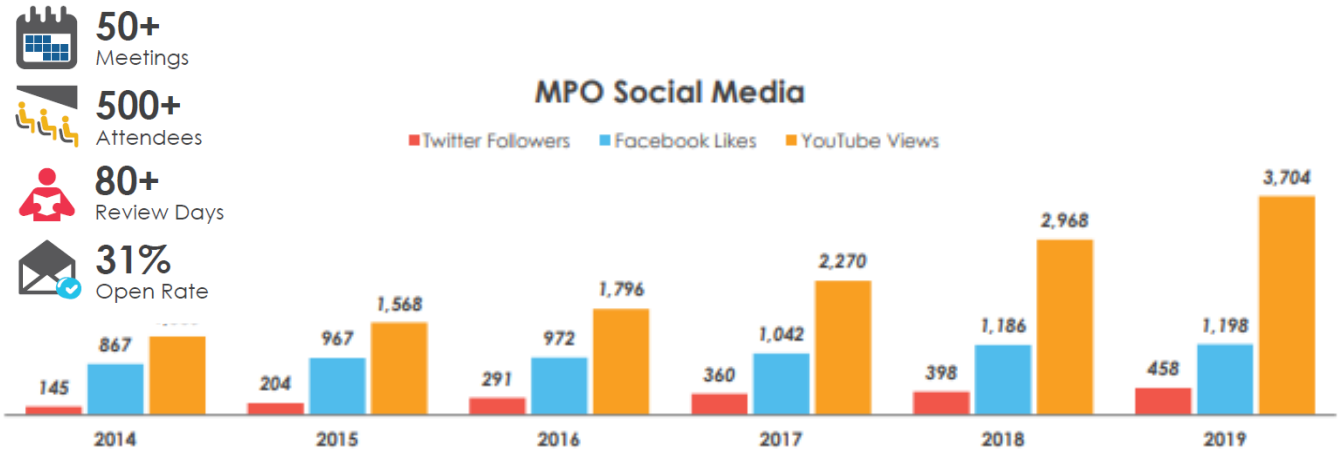
Choices Made

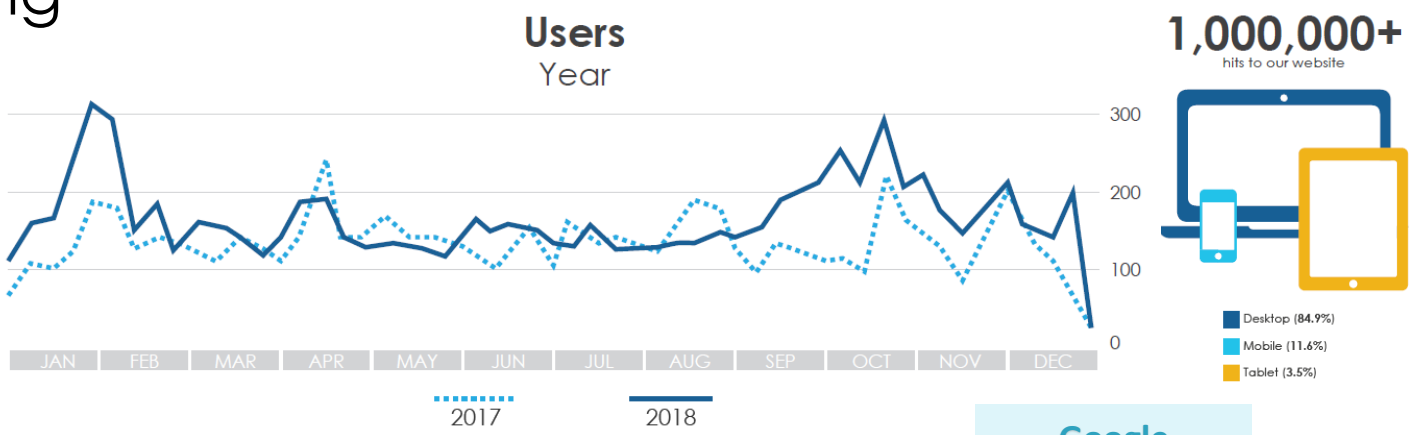
- Established Annual Outreach Report
  - Internal Tracking
- Enhanced Social Media Presence
- Videos
  - Narrated Presentation
  - Biteables
- Expanded outreach strategies
- Quarterly Newsletter + tracking
- Major update to the website
  - Interactive maps



Internal Outreach Tracking - Monthly

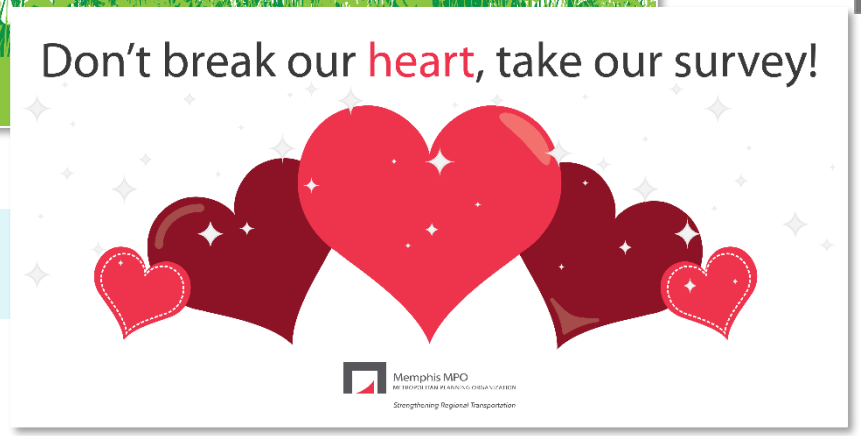
- Website (google analytics)
- Traditional Media – newspaper article, interviews
- Social Media – all platforms
- MPO Events tracking – public meetings, attendees (excluding staff),
- Email database tracking
- Quarterly newsletter reach – open rate



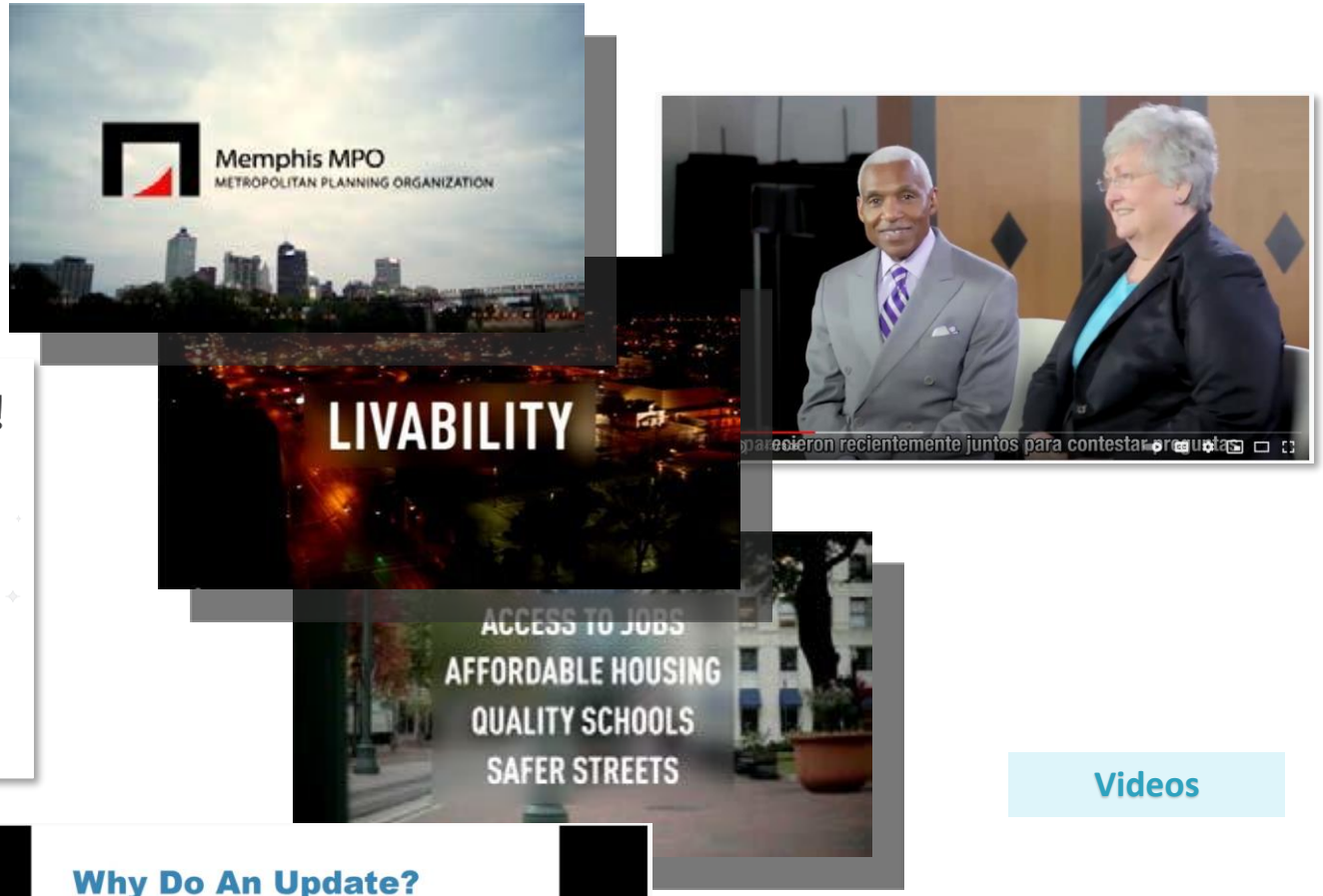


Google Analytics

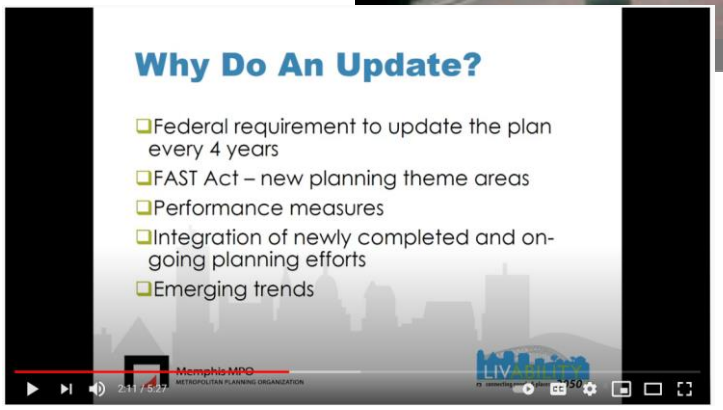
Enhanced Social Media Presence + Videos



Social Media Campaigns

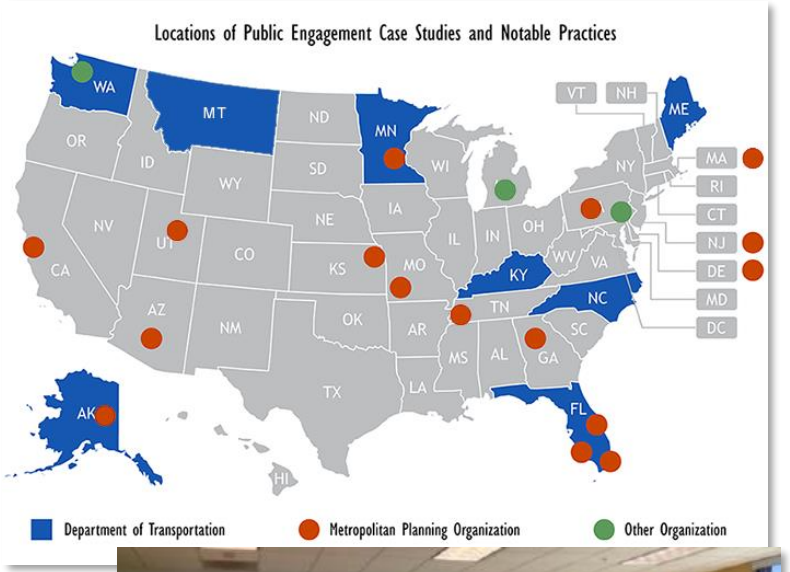


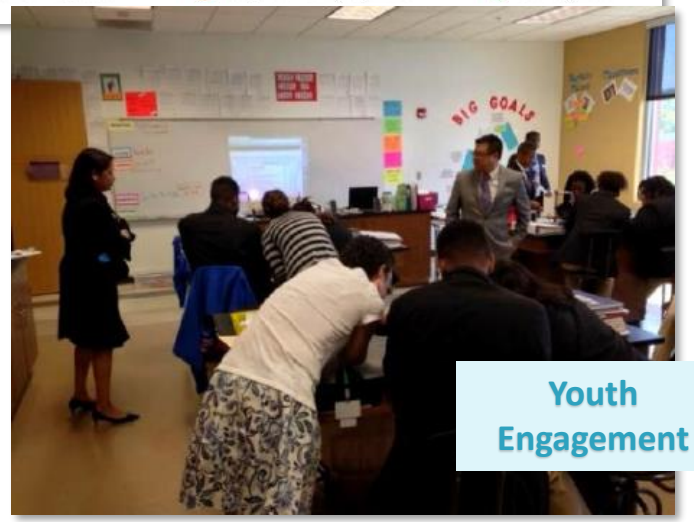
Videos



Memphis MPO
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

New outreach strategies





Youth Engagement

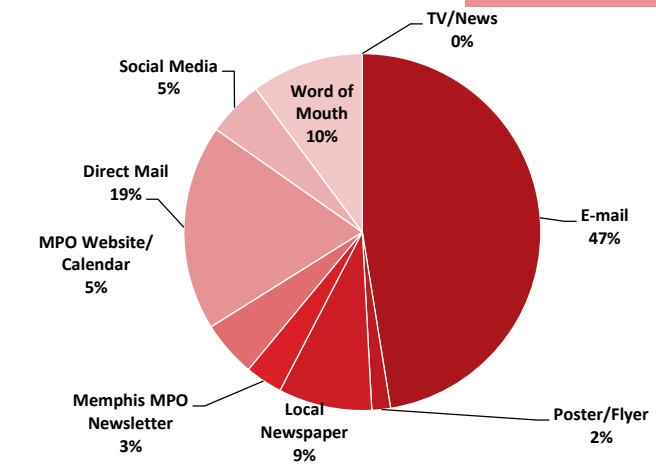
Bus Ads

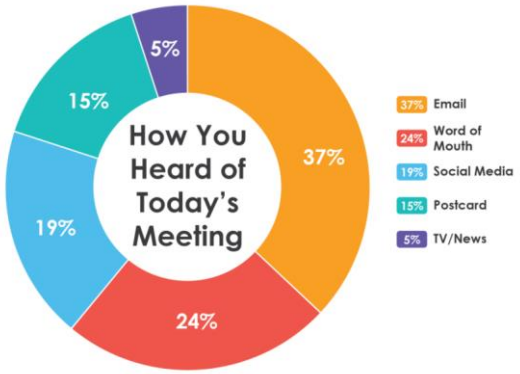
Postcards

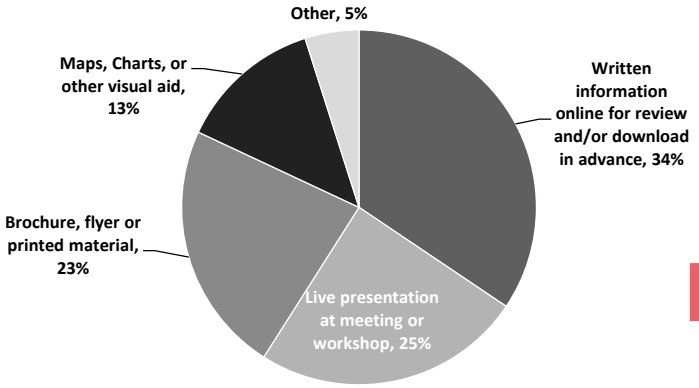
Metroquest (English/Spanish)

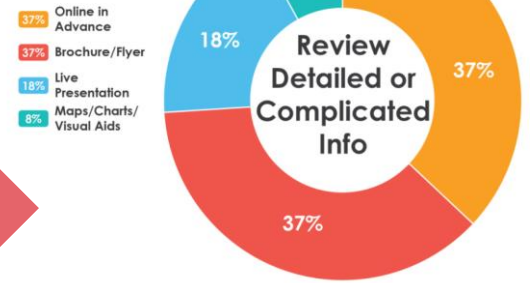
2020 Update

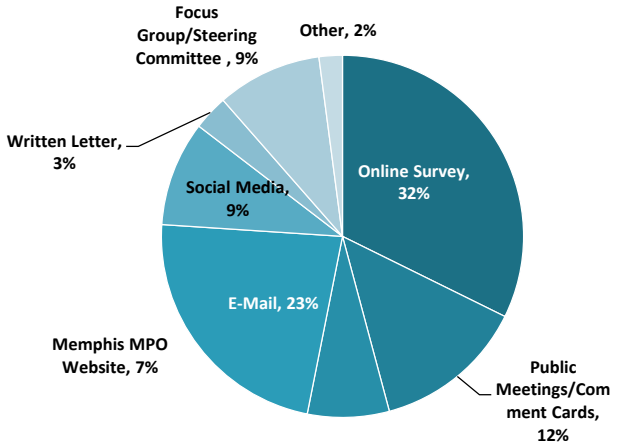
- Reviewed 20+ peer agency PPP's
- Public input – revisited questions from 2014

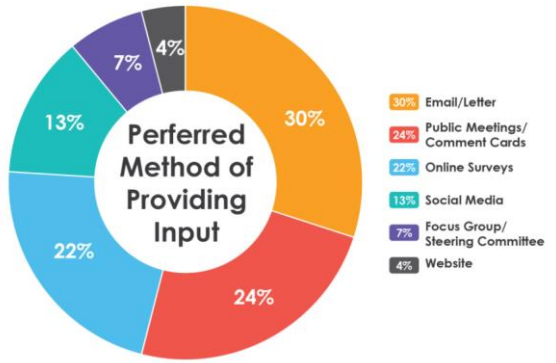












2020 Update

- Evolution of Annual reporting
  - Previously no format, only a few pages
    - In essence, a memo to the Board
  - State of MPO Report (current)
    - Uniform 4 section (Roughly 25 pgs)
    - Captures MPO and local partners update
    - *Inclusion of CMP reporting*

Memphis MPO
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
Strengthening Regional Transportation

Reporting: January 1st, 2014 thru December 31st, 2014

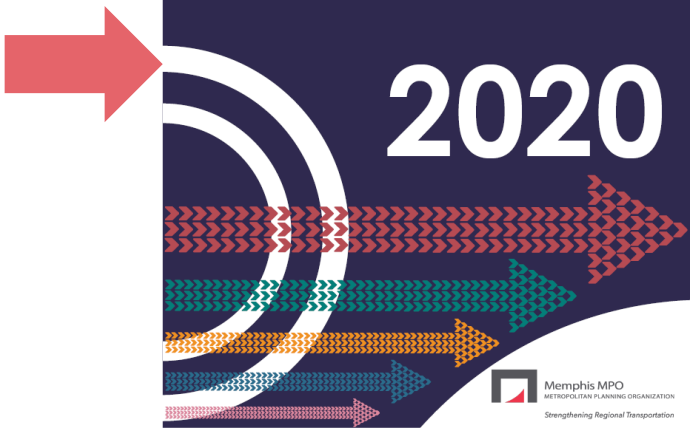
Annual Outreach Report

The Annual Report on the outreach efforts is covered in the Public Participation Plan. This report will describe the Memphis MPO's public participation process and engagement techniques captured at a glance. This summary provides a meaningful look at participation activities, which the MPO staff has implemented over the past year. Consistently throughout 2014, the MPO staff has recorded data regarding participation that can now be used to evaluate and display the reach of MPO activities.

The Extra Mile

The Memphis MPO often employs new and unique methods to engage and inform stakeholders and encourage participation on very important plans. The MPO planners attended MemFIX event where staff engaged hundreds of attendees to spread awareness and collect input on ongoing MPO plans and studies. Advertisements were placed on MATA transit buses to create familiarity with the MPO branding and direct citizens on how to participation with plans. An interactive mapping tool, Community Remarks, allowed the public and stakeholders to pinpoint transportation issues, questions, or concerns on a digital map where the MPO staff can then can tailor an approach unique to the comments indicated in that specific area.

It is the policy of the Memphis Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) not to discriminate on the basis of age, race, color, national origin or disability in its hiring or employment practices, or in its admission to or operations of its program, services, or activities. All inquiries for Title VI and/or the Americans with Disabilities Act, contact Mitchell Lloyd, at 901-576-7146 or Mitchell.Lloyd@memphistn.gov.



2020 Update

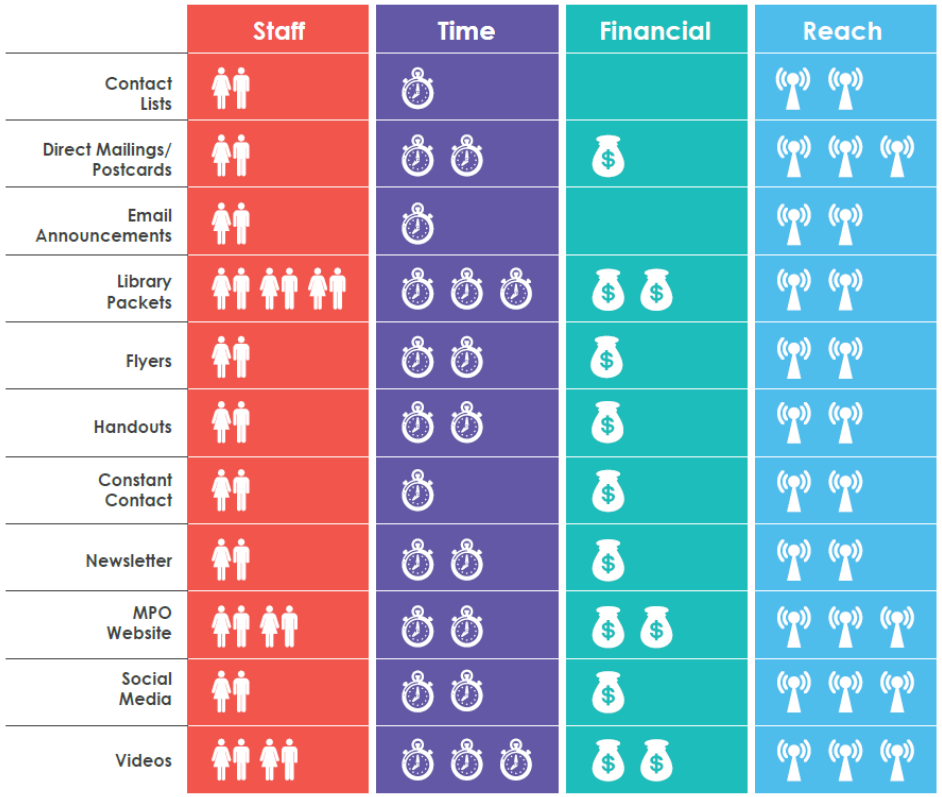
- Simplification of goals and objectives, tying them to Title VI and updated regulation
- Created a strategies score
- Outreach Tracking Visualized

Technique to Inform	Public Involvement Tool	Peformance Goals	Methods to Meet Goals
Interactive Devices	Website	5% increase in hits per quarter	Use other public involvement tools to increase advertisement of the website.
	Facebook	5% increase in people reached per quarter	Provide information, announcements, to access surveys, and meeting information; maintain and monitor account monthly.
	Twitter	5% increase in number of follower per quarter	Provide information, announcements, to access surveys, and meeting information; maintain and monitor account monthly.
	Surveys	25% of contacted persons participate in the survey - OR - 10% of mail recipients return the survey.	Encourage response by explaining the importance of receiving feedback to improve the planning process.
	Comment Cards	N/A	Encourage response by explaining the importance of receiving feedback to improve the planning process.

Getting the Word Out

Strategy	Maximizing Benefits	Performance Measures
MPO Website	• Update regularly to include information regarding MPO planning efforts	• Annual # of website hits and visits • Annual % change in # of website hits and visits
Strategy	**Maximizing Benefits**	**Performance Measures**
Social Media	• Update regularly with information regarding MPO meetings and activities, major regional accomplishments, and transportation-related news	• Annual # of Facebook Likes • Annual # of Twitter Followers • Annual # of YouTube Views • Annual # of LinkedIn Followers
Strategy	**Maximizing Benefits**	**Performance Measures**
Videos	• Share videos on social media • Provide easy to understand information in a simple and fun format • Provide spanish-language versions when possible	• # of views

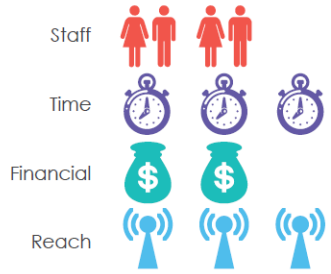
2020 Update - Historical tracking of Strategies + Details of each Strategy

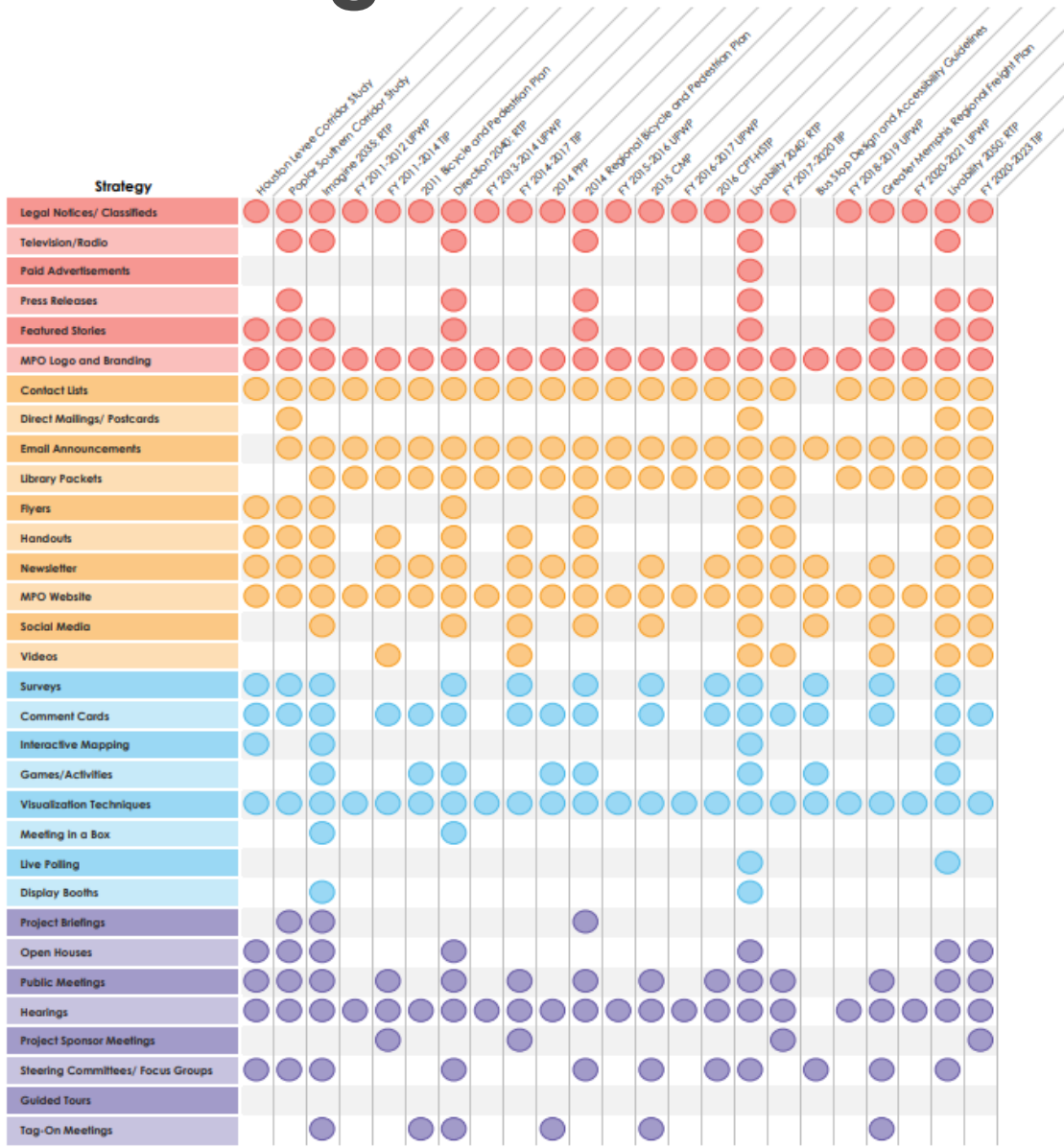


Videos

Videos may be created to promote ongoing plans or studies, to inform and/ or educate the public and stakeholders about planning activities, or encourage involvement in MPO plans/projects. Videos are published to the MPO's YouTube Channel and the Video Webpage on the website. As appropriate, information will be provided in Spanish.

Resource Needs:





The Biteable Video

January

February

March

April

May

June

July

August

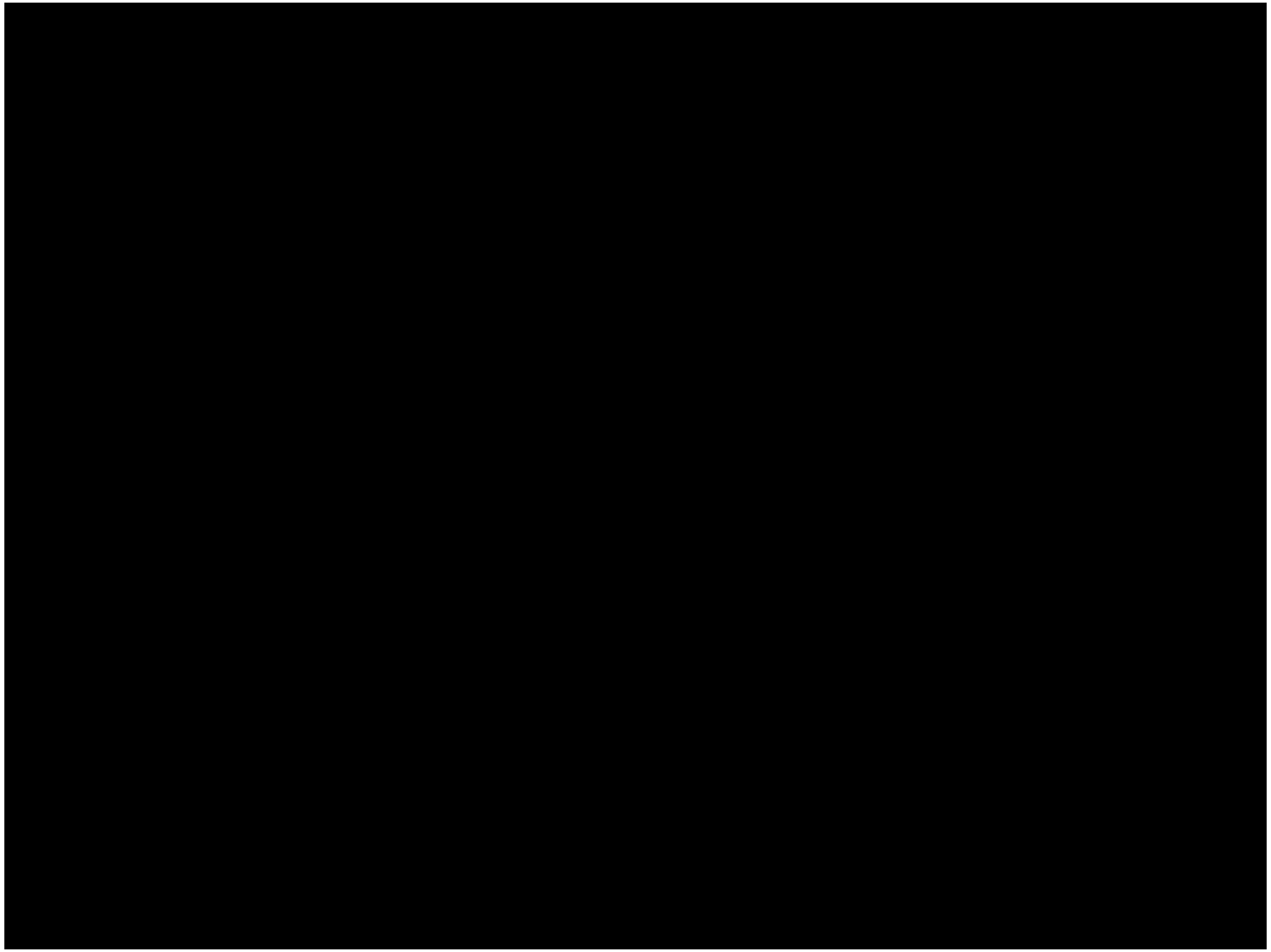
September

October

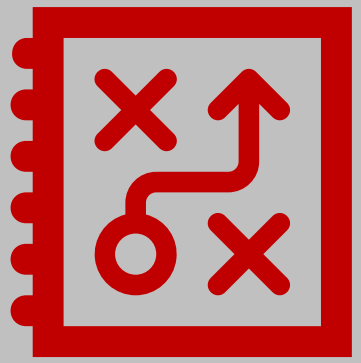
November

December

The Biteable Video



Where We Are Going



The Future

- Questions: How should MPOs go about with distance meetings, post-pandemic?
  - Pros and Cons of technology
  - Format of in-person meetings (traditional open house to pop-up events) – meeting the requirement
  - Continue to expand partnerships – tag on meetings
  - Continue peer review

Conversation/Discussion

- **Question 1**: How many people saw attendance go up for virtual meetings/how many saw decline?
- **Question 2**: Has anyone had discussions on virtual meetings and their impact on equity (such as childcare/travel time/internet access)?
- **Question 3**: Has anyone here thought about or had conversations with other staff about continuing virtual meetings as restrictions ease up?
- **Question 4:** Has anyone here thought about or had conversations with other staff about using hybrid meetings going forward?
- **Question 5:** Has COVID impacted your public participation plan in other surprising ways?