



**Customer Service and Operations Committee**

**Board Action Item III-A**

**September 11, 2014**

**Metro's Public Participation Plan**

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority  
**Board Action/Information Summary**

Action  Information

MEAD Number:  
200971

Resolution:  
 Yes  No

**TITLE:**

Metro's Title VI Public Participation Plan

**PRESENTATION SUMMARY:**

This presentation will provide details of Metro's proposed Public Participation Plan, the final requirement of Metro's 2014 Title VI Program update that requires Board approval.

**PURPOSE:**

Obtain Board approval of Metro's Public Participation Plan, which is the final component of the Title VI Program and which explicitly describes the proactive strategies and procedures Metro will undertake to eliminate barriers to active participation by all members of the community, including minority, low-income and Limited English Proficient (LEP) populations.

**DESCRIPTION:**

Effective on October 1, 2012, FTA revised its regulations in a new Circular 4702.1B. The revised Circular outlined several new and enhanced requirements including the mandate that Metro develop a formal Public Participation Plan that must be approved by Metro's Board of Directors prior to submission to FTA.

**Key Highlights:**

Metro conducted an 18-month long "*Speak Up! It's Your Ride*" public outreach campaign to aid in the development of its Public Participation Plan. *Speak Up!* was comprised of 23 public outreach events held at 20 unique locations. The distribution of 4,000 postcards in communities yielded 1,726 completed public surveys and another 1,787 public surveys were completed online. The campaign reached out to 200 community-based organizations (CBOs) that resulted in telephone interviews with 87 CBOs followed by 15 focus group meetings with 41 CBOs.

The U.S. Census Bureau shows that minorities represent 58 percent of the region's population, and persons living below the poverty level represent eight percent. Data collected from Metro's rider surveys show that 56 percent of riders (on all modes) are minorities, 24 percent are from low-income households and 11.5 percent are LEP. *Speak Up!* reached a representative sample of the area's population and Metro's ridership, as we collected communication and feedback preferences from 3,513 survey respondents, of which 69 percent were minorities, 28 percent were low-income, and 10 percent were LEP.

Highlights of the top three themes derived from the survey work that form the basis for the Public Participation Plan are:

- *Go where people are.* To communicate with large numbers of protected populations, it is best to go where they are and use a culturally and linguistically appropriate outreach approach.
- *Tailor communications to individual demographic groups.* Outreach must be sensitive to the preferences of the target populations.
- *Work with community-based organizations to build relationships and trust across diverse populations.* Trust is essential to building relationships with constituents, especially traditionally underserved populations. Community Based Organizations (CBOs) are among the most effective resources available to Metro to facilitate the frequent contact needed to build these relationships.

### **Background and History:**

Title VI of the Civil Rights of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin in programs and activities receiving Federal funding. To ensure compliance, FTA requires that Metro submit a Title VI Program, including its Public Participation Plan, no later than October 1, 2014 and provide documentation that the Board of Directors reviewed and approved the Title VI program.

On October 24, 2013 the Board reviewed and approved the policy definitions for major service change, disparate impact and disproportionate burden used for analysis of major service changes and fare change. On June 26, 2014 the Board approved additional Title VI program components including the equity analysis for the Southern Avenue garage; system-wide service monitoring standards and policies; public notification and complaint procedures; complaints received and investigated; racial composition of advisory councils; demographics of the Transit Zone and customers; and the Language Assistance Plan.

New and enhanced federal regulatory mandates require Board approval of an organization-wide Public Participation Plan that is designed to eliminate barriers to active participation by all members of the community including minority, low-income and limited English proficient (LEP) populations. The PPP, along with the other Title VI Program components already approved by the Board, will comprise the entire 2014 Title VI Program update.

### **Discussion:**

#### **Public Participation Plan Development**

Metro's Public Participation Plan was developed through a multi-step process over a year-long period. The PPP does not only describe the strategies that will be used, but through the PPP Toolkit and Public Outreach Plan, it creates a standardized process for planning and implementing inclusive, high-quality public participation that will establish Metro as a leader in the area of transit-related public outreach and participation.

The Public Participation Plan development process included the following components:

- The *Best Practice Review* catalogued inclusive public participation strategies at 10 transportation agencies across the country.
- *Speak Up! It's Your Ride Campaign*

Public Outreach Events and Survey: Twenty-three public outreach events, including pop-up events, community meetings, and in-depth group interviews, took place across the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia. At each event, participants were asked to complete a general public survey that solicited input on public participation preferences.

Survey of Community Based Organizations (CBOs): Representatives of 87 CBOs, located across the Metro service area were interviewed using a survey tool to determine the transit usage and information preferences of their constituents. This was followed by a series of 15 focus group meetings with representatives of 41 unique CBOs (170 staff members and constituents) to explore in greater detail how the Authority can communicate about transit topics. Interpreters and translated documents were available as required at the events.

- *Metro Staff and Board Interviews* provided an opportunity to understand current staff roles in public participation and how Metro could enhance its public involvement. A total of 61 Metro staff members participated in the interview process. Four Metro Board members were interviewed to secure their perspectives about Metro's public outreach efforts.
- *Metro Project Examples* includes a summary of public outreach in 2011 to 2013. A detailed description of three outreach projects is included.
- *A Review of the Federal Requirements* documented all of the federal requirements pertaining to public participation that apply to Metro.

The findings of these outreach and research activities form the basis for the recommendations presented in the Public Participation Plan.

### **Customer Preferences**

The extensive outreach conducted found the following customer preferences that can be implemented to engage all populations, including minority, low-income and LEP to participate in Metro's public events:

- To involve Title VI populations, go where they are. Just 10 percent of individuals who participated in the PPP's outreach had ever been to a Metro public meeting. Holding events where minority, low-income, and limited English proficient are, at transit centers, community-based organizations, shopping centers, and festivals, is the most effective method for reaching these populations.
- Know your audience and bring the appropriate Metro staff (subject matter, cultural and linguistic expertise) to events and meetings.
- When asked what would make it easier to attend a meeting, all demographic and cultural groups except LEP populations chose the same top three options: location,

near work or home, convenient time of day, and near public transportation. LEP groups choose the use of interpreters. Asian/Pacific Islanders, low-income, and LEP participants expressed a preference for meeting on weekends.

- Meeting formats should be tailored to the preferences of individual groups or communities.
- Informational materials should be available in the target population's native language and should be designed to have graphics and minimal text.
- Materials should be distributed through ethnic/racial media outlets such as the El Tiempo Latino newspaper and to transit locations that many riders frequent and to locations that are not necessarily transit related.
- All races, low-income and LEP respondents chose newspapers most often as a preferred way to receive community information; low-income and LEP respondents were far less likely to hear about events via the internet.
- Activities for children allow parents to attend and to be attentive.
- It should be explicitly evident how the public input will be used in decision making.

Below are some suggestions from staff and Board members interviews as well as from the findings in the best practice review:

- *Establish an institutional framework for public participation that includes a lead department:* Generally there should be a department that is specifically tasked with overseeing public participation and/or a process that facilitates the involvement of several departments.
- *Work with community-based organizations (CBOs) to build relationships and trust across diverse populations:* CBOs are nonprofit groups that support local communities and are among the most effective resources available to a transit agency to facilitate the frequent contact that is needed to build trust and mutually beneficial relationships. Many of the peer agencies have established CBO partnership committees to help develop and implement broad-based public involvement.
- *Meet people where they are:* Peer agencies and staff stressed the need to “meet people where they are” rather than expecting riders and other members of the public to attend the agency's meetings.
- *Use a variety of tactics to get the word out.* While getting the word out through community based organizations was universal, many agencies employed other innovative techniques as well to reach the public.
- *Use technology appropriately:* Several of the agencies interviewed feel that while technology has its place in public participation, it should supplement other forms of outreach. Technology was effective when used with online surveys, webinars, or for platforms like MindMixer.
- *Use a recurring public forum:* Staff suggested the creation of a recurring forum to allow members of the public to provide feedback to Metro on the issues they are concerned about in addition to the existing opportunities to comment on specific projects, proposals, and plans.

The resulting Public Participation Plan includes the following recommended strategies to ensure that Metro's public participation activities are effective, efficient and compliant with federal requirements for inclusive public participation.

*Strategy 1: Public Participation Toolkit and Public Outreach Plan*

Using customer preference information gathered during this project, Metro designed a toolkit to help project managers plan effective outreach. The centerpiece of the Toolkit is the Project Outreach Plan (POP). Every Metro project will use the POP to plan public participation activities. The POP includes matrices that will enable staff to select events, venues, media, and other activities that will effectively reach target populations for a particular project. One of the PPP matrices is included as Appendix A.

*Strategy 2: Performance Measures*

Performance measure data that focuses on participant demographics, participant feedback, and participant follow-up will be collected for each public participation project. An annual performance report will aggregate measures from the individual project and the results of an annual survey of CBOs. The annual performance report will provide an overview of outreach activities throughout the year, identifying practices or locations that were successful and will draw conclusions for future outreach based on lessons learned.

*Strategy 3: Public Participation Training*

To ensure the successful, uniform adoption of the Toolkit and an Authority-wide understanding of Title VI requirements for public participation, Metro staff involved in public outreach will be required to use the Toolkit and will receive training on the use of the Toolkit and the PPP.

*Strategy 4: Centralized Public Participation Office*

In addition to the Toolkit, the Public Participation Plan recommends that Metro establish a centralized office to manage public outreach. The Office of External Relations (EREL) will be tasked with providing expert assistance to project/planning staff for their individual projects and manage all project-based public participation activities, as well as provide overall oversight and coordination for public participation within Metro. EREL will ensure consistency across the Authority, quality control of communications and outreach materials, coordination with Marketing around advertising, and PPP plan compliance. Additionally, the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity (OEEO) will be tasked with additional functions related to managing relationships and outreach with community based organizations, as well as establishing a CBO outreach committee.

Metro will be accountable to the FTA for ensuring that the procedural strategies adopted by the Authority in the PPP are successfully implemented.

Appendix B is a table that presents details of organization functions under the realignment of public participation activities at Metro.

Since public participation costs at Metro are currently disaggregated among individual departments and many items and activities may represent duplicate costs, the incremental cost to Metro of implementing these strategies is difficult to quantify at this time. In fact, there are a number of efficiencies to be gained in consolidating public participation planning, implementation, and materials management. In the initial implementation phase, staff and non-staff resources are being reallocated within the approved FY2015 budget.

Metro project and planning managers will benefit from the new approach to public participation by having EREL staff manage their public participation activities. Metro's public outreach will be enhanced with OEEEO managing the central coordination of the relationships with community based organizations. Coordinated oversight and internal expertise will allow Metro to increase quality control, manage expenditures, monitor performance, improve transparency, allow for continuous improvement in public outreach strategies, and improve the quality and quantity of public feedback to Metro.

**FUNDING IMPACT:**

In the initial implementation phase, staff and non-staff resources are being reallocated within the approved FY2015 budget.	
Project Manager:	Deborah Coram
Project Department/Office:	GMGR/Office of Equal Employment Opportunity

**TIMELINE:**

<b>Previous Actions</b>	1/2014 – Staff update to the Board on the Public Participation Plan.
<b>Anticipated actions after presentation</b>	09/2014 - Board Approval of Title VI Required Public Participation Plan 10/2014 - Title VI Program Submittal to FTA

**RECOMMENDATION:**

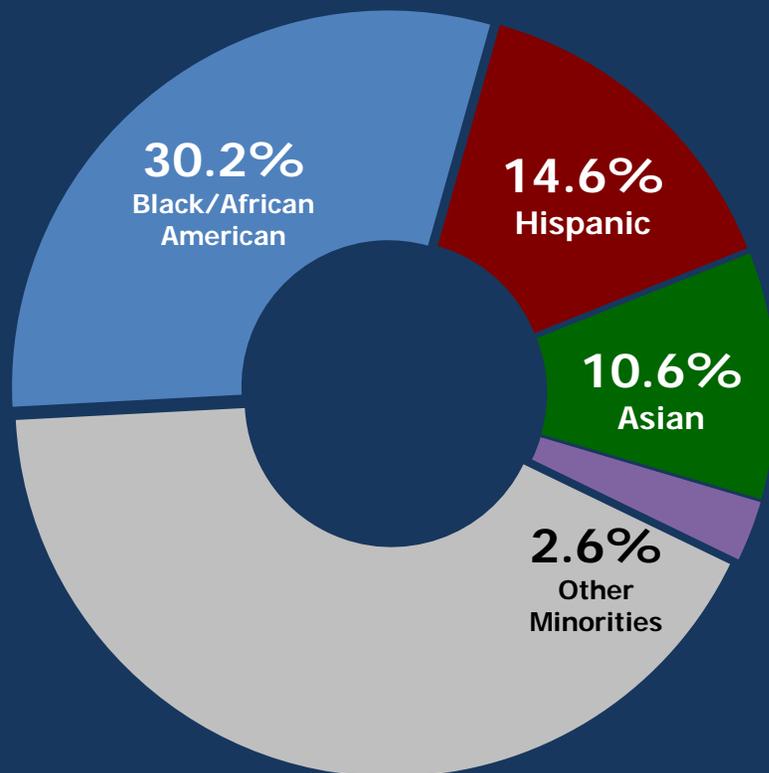
Approval of the final component of the Title VI Program – the Public Participation Plan.



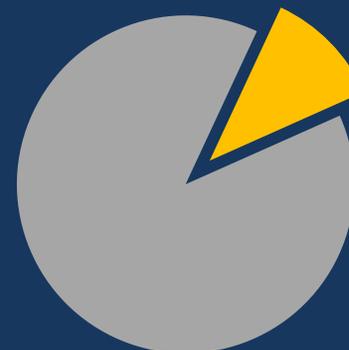


# Regional Demographic Profile

## 58% Minority



8% Low  
Income



11.5% Limited  
English Proficient  
(LEP)

- Spanish
- Chinese
- Korean
- Vietnamese
- African Languages



# Customer Demographic Profile

## Systemwide

56% Minority

24% Low Income

11.5% Limited English Proficiency (LEP)



### Metrorail

43% Minority

11% Low Income

4.9% LEP



### Metrobus

76% Minority

43% Low Income

24% LEP



### MetroAccess

69% Minority

51% Low Income

11.5% LEP



# Public Participation Plan (PPP) Goals



Inclusive



Collaborative



Responsive



Consistent



# What will trigger the PPP?



*Silver Line outreach*



*Budget outreach*

- Planning Projects
- Amenities & Infrastructure
- Environmental Analyses
- Service Changes
- Public Information Campaign
- Policy Alternatives



# PPP Development Process

Federal Requirements Review

Best Practice Review

WMATA Staff & Board Interviews

Community-Based Organization (CBO) Outreach

Speak Up! It's Your Ride Outreach Campaign



# Key Findings for Future Outreach

- **Traditional public hearings/meetings do not work for many Title VI groups**
- **Meet people where they are**
- Tailor strategies and staff to affected populations
- Show the public their feedback is utilized





# Key Findings for Future Outreach

- Offer alternatives to online outreach which is often ineffective for low-income and LEP groups
- Use culture and language-appropriate media to reach diverse groups
- Develop, nurture and maintain relationships with Community-Based Organization (CBO)





# Customer Preferences

Receiving information



Providing feedback





# Customer Preferences

## Meeting Preferences



## Other Preferences





# Recommendations for the Future



- CSCM-designated lead department and dedicated staff for public participation and outreach
- OEEO-designated staff to cultivate and maintain CBO relationships and establish a CBO Outreach Committee
- Use cultural and language-appropriate media to reach minority, low-income and LEP populations



# Recommendations for the Future



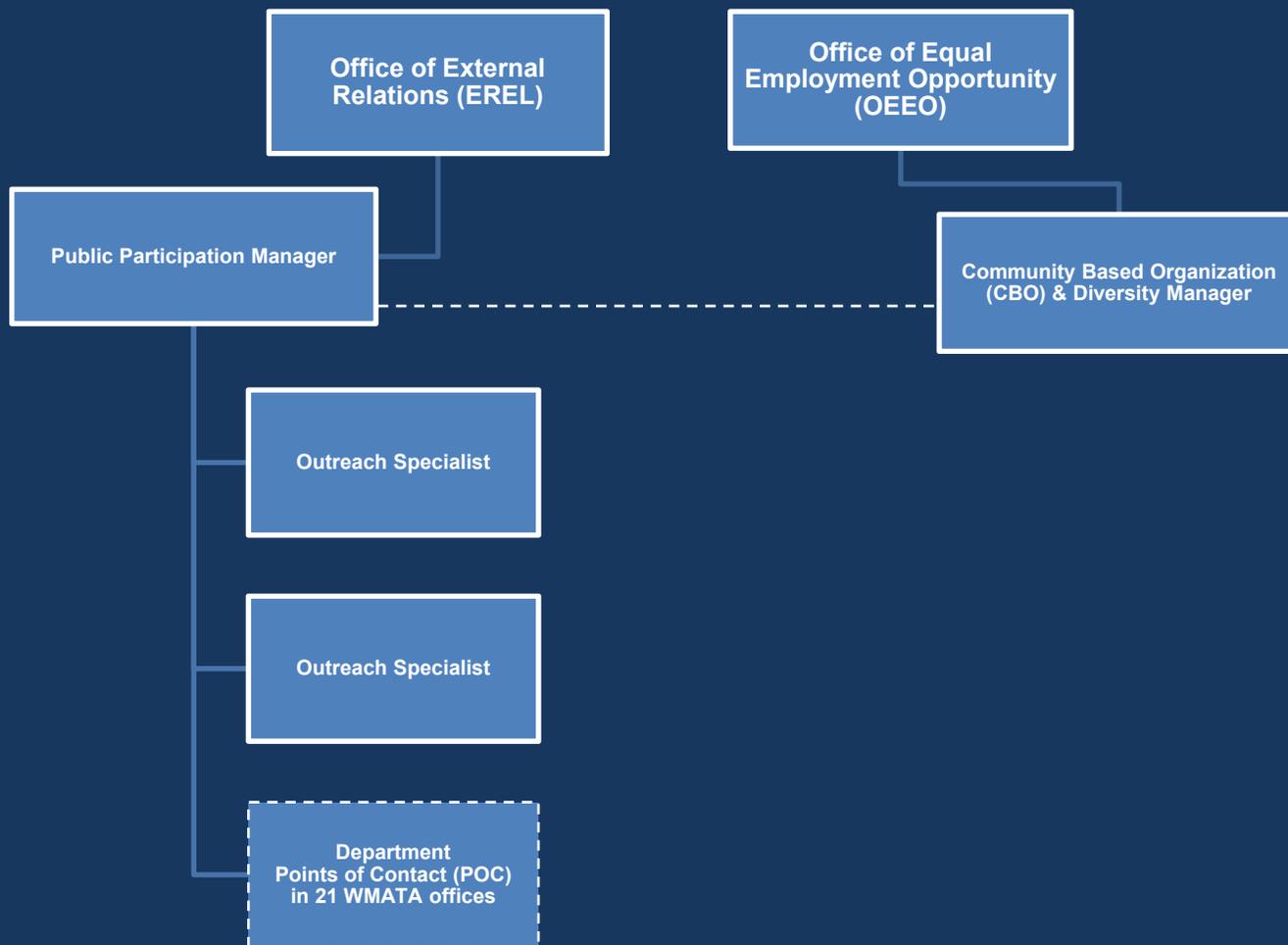
- Use non-traditional outreach formats and venues - meeting people where and when they gather



- Develop an internal toolkit to assist staff in managing on-going public engagement
- Measure and track performance, provide feedback to the public, and refine strategies



# FY15 Staff Plan for Public Outreach





# Public Participation Plan

## Chapter 1: Executive Summary

### Chapter 2: Introduction and Guiding Principles

- Purpose and Federal Requirements
- WMATA Overview
- PPP Development Process
- Guiding Themes, Goals and Objectives

### Chapter 3: Toward Inclusive, Broad-Based Public Participation

- Peer Agency Best Practices
- Project Examples

### Chapter 4: Internal Organizational Recommendations

- What WMATA Does Today
- Recommendations

### Chapter 5: Public Participation Toolkit

### Chapter 6: PPP Performance

- PPP Performance Measures
- PPP Monitoring and Update Process

### Appendices

- CBO List
- Community Events List
- Media Reference List
- Federal Requirements Review Technical Memo
- Best Practice Review Technical Memo
- Task 2 Technical Memo CBO Outreach
- Task 3 Technical Memo Speak Up! It's Your Ride
- Task 4 Technical Memo Performance Measures

- Board Review in September
- Executive Summary will be posted on the website and translated into numerous languages
- Once approved, the entire plan will be posted on WMATA's website



# Next Steps

- Metro Board approval in September
- FTA submittal in October
- Training and toolkit roll-out
- FY2015-FY2016: Staffing the public outreach branch in EREL & CBO/diversity staff in OEEO

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF TITLE VI PROGRAM PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

RESOLUTION  
OF THE  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
OF THE  
WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY

WHEREAS, The Board of Directors is committed to protecting minority and low-income communities from discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance, including disproportionately high and adverse environmental effects when providing regional transportation services; and

WHEREAS, The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) adopts policies and programs designed to ensure participation in and equal access to transit services for all citizens in the Transit Zone; and

WHEREAS, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 provides that no person on the grounds of race, color or national origin, be excluded from participating in, being denied the benefits of or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance; and

WHEREAS, WMATA receives federal financial assistance from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to improve regional mobility; and

WHEREAS, In its most recent Title VI guidance (Circular 4702.1B, effective October 1, 2012), the FTA requires recipients like WMATA to prepare and submit a Title VI program every three years that demonstrates how they are meeting Title VI obligations; and

WHEREAS, Circular 4702.1B also includes a requirement to establish a Public Participation Plan (PPP) – an outreach plan to engage minority, low-income and Limited English Proficient (LEP) populations – that explicitly describes the proactive strategies and procedures that WMATA utilizes, establishes desired outcomes from such public participation, and includes a summary of outreach efforts made since the last Title VI Program; and

WHEREAS, Circular 4702.1B requires that the Board of Directors review and approve the Title VI Program; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Directors, in Resolutions 2013-27 and 2014-30, previously reviewed and/or approved some Title VI Program components, including policy definitions for disparate impact and disproportionate burden used for analysis of major service and fare change; the equity analysis for the Southern Avenue Garage; system-wide service monitoring standards and policies; public notification and complaint procedures; complaints received and investigated, racial composition of advisory councils, demographics of the Transit Zone and customers; and the Language Assistance Plan; and

WHEREAS, Staff provided the Board of Directors for its review an Executive Summary of the final component of the Title VI Program – the PPP, Attachment A – which provides specific recommended protocols to be used in public outreach to minority, low-income, and LEP persons, including event strategies (e.g., pop ups, focus groups, etc.), preferred venues, performance measurements and disposition of public feedback, as well as a summary of outreach efforts made since the last Title VI Program submission; and

WHEREAS, Staff has also provided the Board of Directors with the completed PPP; now, therefore be it

*RESOLVED*, That the Board of Directors approves the final component of the Title VI Program – the PPP – based on the Executive Summary in Attachment A to this Resolution and its review of the completed PPP; and be it finally

*RESOLVED*, That this Resolution shall be effective immediately.

Reviewed as to form and legal sufficiency,



for Kathryn H.S. Pett  
General Counsel

# Executive Summary

## Background

This Public Participation Plan (PPP) has been prepared to expand the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority's (WMATA) outreach and two way dialogue with customers; supplement customer research feedback; provide non-customer input into decision-making; and fulfill the obligations under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which states that "no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."<sup>1</sup> In accordance with federal guidelines, WMATA must submit to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) a PPP that details the Authority's plans and strategies to engage minority and Limited English Proficient (LEP) populations in its planning and programming activities.

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*These efforts may be part of a broader framework that also includes outreach strategies for other traditionally underserved constituencies, such as people with disabilities and low-income populations.*

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As a recipient of federal funds and per Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its implementing regulations,<sup>2</sup> FTA directs WMATA to:

- Ensure that the level and quality of public transportation service is provided in a nondiscriminatory manner;
- Promote full and fair participation in public transportation decision-making without regard to race, color, or national origin;
- Ensure meaningful access to transit-related programs and activities by persons with limited English proficiency.<sup>3</sup>

The FTA requires public transit providers create a PPP that describes proactive strategies the Authority will use to engage minority and LEP populations, and the desired outcomes of this outreach. This plan can be part of a broader public participation strategy that also targets other traditionally underserved communities, including low-income populations and people with disabilities.

By developing and utilizing strategies that improve the accessibility of WMATA's outreach for those groups that have a number of constraints and barriers that limit participation, the accessibility of outreach for all persons, regardless of minority status, income level, or the ability to speak English, will improve. Public participation activities will be designed to be accessible to all persons, and planned through a single, inclusive process.

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<sup>1</sup> 42 USC Section 200d

<sup>2</sup> FTA C 4702.1B

<sup>3</sup> FTA C 4702.1B

## Developing the Plan

Metro’s PPP was developed through a year-long, multi-step process and led by a cross-departmental team with representation from offices and departments that currently lead public outreach activities. It establishes four thematic goals for agency-wide public participation: Inclusiveness, Collaboration, Responsiveness, and Consistency. It is against these goals that public participation outcomes will be measured. Figure 1 elaborates on these goals.

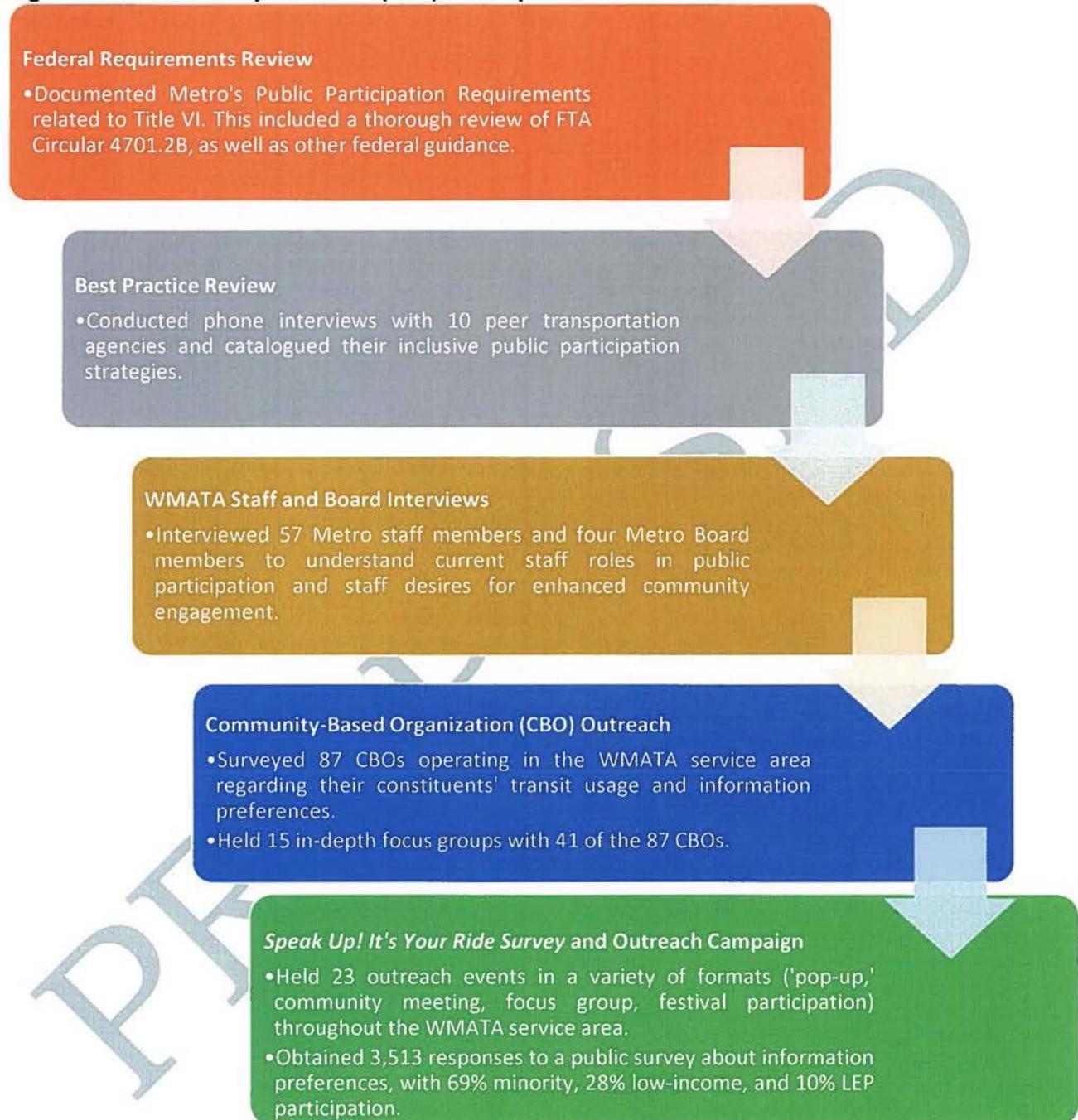
**Figure 1 - Public Participation Plan (PPP) Goals**

 <b>Inclusive</b>	<b>Actively facilitate the involvement of all communities that may be affected in the public participation process, including those that are traditionally hard to reach, through culturally sensitive methods.</b>
 <b>Collaborative</b>	<b>Work jointly with the community throughout the planning and project development process</b>
 <b>Responsive</b>	<b>Build trust through proactively linking public feedback to outcomes.</b>
 <b>Consistent</b>	<b>Ensure established guidelines from the PPP are followed throughout WMATA.</b>

The PPP development process included five major activities designed to identify industry best practices in this area, as well as public preferences regarding outreach and engagement specific to the WMATA service area. WMATA staff and Board of Directors interviews provided a comprehensive look at public participation practices at the agency today, as well as ideas for future practice. Figure 2 summarizes these activities.

At the heart of the project was a robust and multi-faceted public outreach campaign – *Speak Up! It’s Your Ride* - designed to obtain information about communications and public participation preferences from diverse groups in the WMATA service area. Audiences included many minority, immigrant, and ethnic groups, the disability community, seniors, the homeless, and the economically disadvantaged.

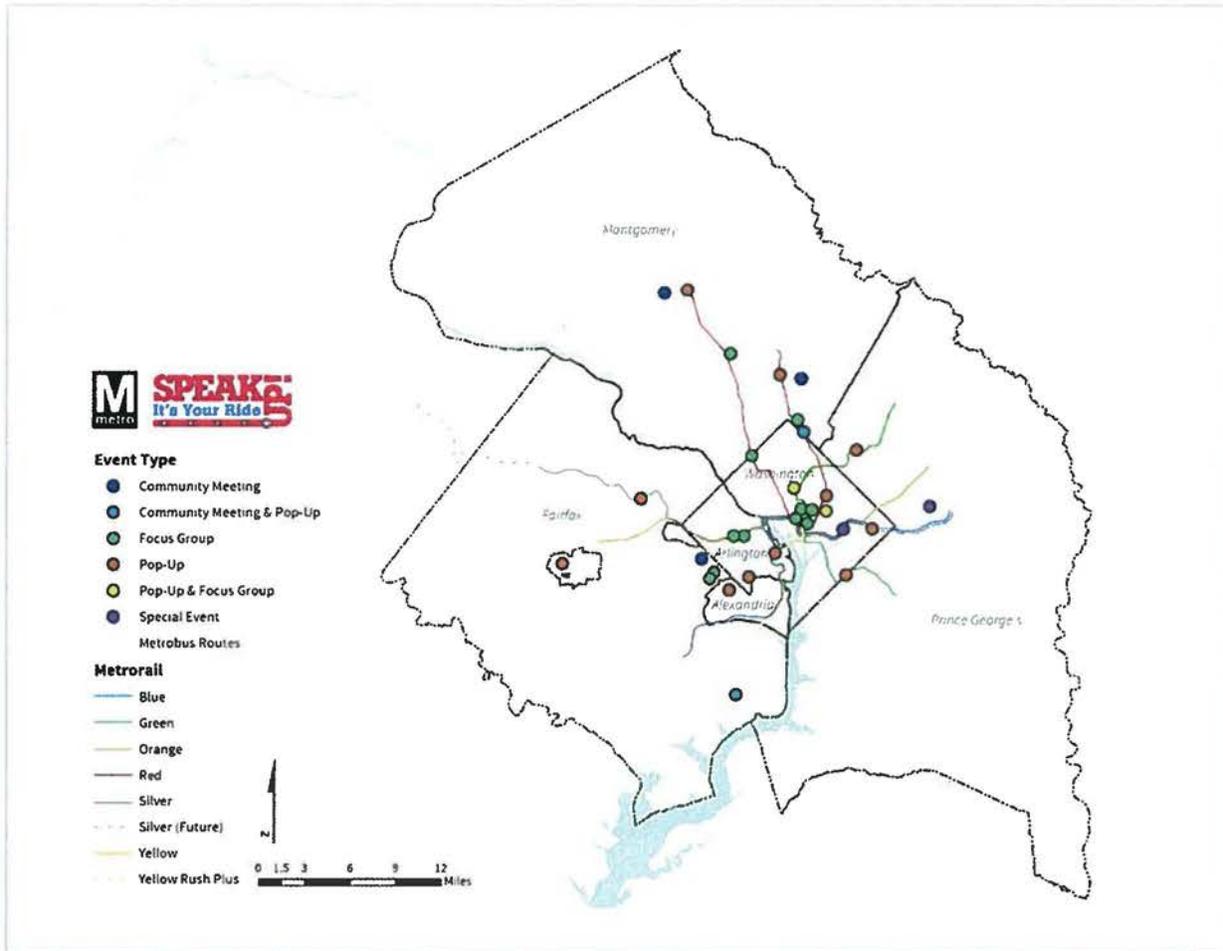
**Figure 2 - Public Participation Plan (PPP) Development Process**



The campaign encompassed 38 outreach events in the WMATA service area occurring over the course of three months from February through April 2014. It included 15 in-depth focus groups with 41 Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and 23 public outreach events ranging in size

and focus. Figure 3 shows the location and event type for the 23 Speak Up! events as well as the 15 focus group meetings where WMATA staff met with CBOs and their constituents.<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 3 - Speak Up! It's Your Ride Outreach Event Locations**



### Speak Up! It's Your Ride Survey

To capture information from participants about the methods of engagement that works best for them, the project included a survey administered at all events and available on-line. Surveys were generally administered on tablet computers, though some groups used paper versions, and were translated into the six major non-English languages spoken in the WMATA service area. In total, 1,726 surveys were completed at *Speak Up! It's Your Ride* events; an additional 1,787 surveys were taken online. Of the respondents, 69% were minorities, 28% were low-income, and 10% were LEP.

<sup>4</sup> Two locations were used to hold both a *Speak Up! It's Your Ride Survey* event and a focus group meeting.

The information collected from the outreach to the general public and from CBOs was used to inform the outreach strategies in the PPP to ensure that WMATA's public outreach efforts are inclusive and accessible for all. The results of the *Speak Up! It's Your Ride* campaign provided insights about:

- Strategies CBOs use to reach out to their clients and constituents and their perspectives about collaborating with WMATA;
- Communication and feedback preferences from 3,513 survey respondents; and
- Successes and challenges for each outreach event.

The next sections detail some of the key findings from the public outreach campaign and from peer, Metro staff and Board interviews.

### *Key Findings – Customer Preferences*

The extensive outreach conducted identified the following customer preferences that can be implemented to engage all populations, including minority, low-income and LEP in Metro's public events:

- *To involve Title VI populations, go where they are.* Just 10 percent of individuals who participated in the PPP's outreach had ever been to a Metro public meeting. Holding events where minority, low-income, and LEP population are — at transit centers, CBOs, shopping centers, and festivals — is the most effective method for reaching these populations.
- *Demonstrate cultural sensitivity.* Know your audience and bring the appropriate Metro staff (subject matter, cultural and linguistic expertise) to events and meetings.
- *Make it convenient to attend events.* When asked what would make it easier to attend a meeting, all demographic and cultural groups except LEP populations chose the same top three options: location near work or home, convenient time of day, and near public transportation. LEP groups choose the use of interpreters instead of convenient time of day. Asian/Pacific Islanders, low-income, and LEP participants expressed a preference for meeting on weekends, instead of during the week.
- *Tailor event formats to the preferences of groups whose input is sought.* Meeting formats should be tailored to the preferences of individual groups or communities. White/Caucasian, Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islander survey respondents all indicated "Question and Answer Session" as their most preferred meeting format; Black/African American respondents selected "Show of Hands Voting." Electronic voting at events did not work well with senior citizens. All demographic and cultural groups selected surveys, open discussions, and question and answer sessions highly as preferred meeting formats.
- *Translate materials and use graphics.* Informational materials should be available in the target population's native language and should be designed to have graphics and minimal text.

- *Use ethnic media and distribution outlets.* Materials should be distributed through ethnic/racial media outlets and to locations that many riders frequent, including on the bus (*Black/African American, Hispanic, low-income and LEP preferences*), at bus stops, and at Metrorail Stations (*all races, LEP and low-income populations*). Materials should also be distributed to locations that are not necessarily transit related, such as CBOs, libraries, grocery stores, and residences.
- *Newspaper advertising still works.* All races, low-income and LEP respondents chose newspapers most often as a preferred way to receive community information; low-income and LEP respondents were far less likely to hear about events via the internet.
- *Include children.* Providing activities for children allows parents to attend and to be attentive.
- *Acknowledge and use input.* It should be explicitly evident how the public input will be used in decision making.

### *Key Findings – Peer, Staff and Board Interviews*

Below are select recommendations from Staff and Board of Directors interviews as well as from the findings in the best practice review:

- *Establish an institutional framework for public participation that includes a lead department.* Generally there should be a department that is specifically tasked with overseeing public participation and/or a process that facilitates the involvement of several departments.
- *Work with CBOs to build relationships and trust across diverse populations.* CBOs are nonprofit groups that support local communities and are among the most effective resources available to a transit agency to facilitate the frequent contact that is needed to build trust and mutually beneficial relationships. Many of the peer agencies have established CBO partnership committees to help develop and implement broad-based public involvement.
- *Meet people where they are.* Peer agencies and staff stressed the need to “meet people where they are” rather than expecting riders and other members of the public to attend the agency’s meetings, and to structure participation activities so that they are as inclusive as possible.
- *Use a variety of tactics to get the word out.* While getting the word out through CBOs was universal, many agencies employed other techniques as well, such as using student report card distribution times to get information to families, door-to-door outreach in targeted areas, use of ethnic media, etc. Metro staff has experienced success using some of these techniques in their more recent public outreach.
- *Use technology appropriately.* Several of the agencies interviewed feel that while technology has its place in public participation, it should supplement other forms of outreach. Technology was effective when used with online surveys, webinars, or for platforms like MindMixer.

- *Use a recurring public forum.* Staff suggested the creation of a recurring forum to allow members of the public to provide feedback to Metro on the issues they are concerned about in addition to the existing opportunities to comment on specific projects, proposals, and plans.

## Recommendations

Per FTA requirements for the PPP, WMATA identified proactive strategies that engage minority, low-income, and LEP communities; created a process and set of procedures that will facilitate inclusive participation; and developed a set of performance measures that will track whether the agency is reaching its desired outcomes.

The PPP includes recommended strategies to ensure that Metro's public participation activities are effective, efficient and compliant with federal requirements for inclusive public participation. These strategies were developed from information gathered during the PPP development process. Metro will be accountable to the FTA for ensuring that the procedural strategies adopted by the Authority in the PPP are successfully implemented.

### Strategy 1: Public Participation Toolkit and Public Outreach Plan

Using customer preference information gathered in the *Speak Up! It's Your Ride* Campaign, as well as staff interviews and peer agency best practices, Metro designed a toolkit to help project managers plan effective outreach. The centerpiece of the Toolkit is the Project Outreach Plan (POP). Every Metro project will use the POP to plan public participation activities. The POP includes matrices that will enable staff to select events, venues, media, and other activities that will effectively reach target populations for a particular project. The Toolkit also includes population-specific media outreach lists, a CBO database, and a comprehensive list of annual festivals and other events in Metro's service area.

WMATA will establish a CBO Outreach Committee as a way of collaborating with local CBOs to develop strategies that are tailored to specific project proposals and to ensure meaningful, broad-based public participation and to build a new avenue for knowledge transfer between Metro and the CBOs. The committee will be a cross-section of the service area both geographically and by type of CBO.

### Strategy 2: Performance Measures

Performance measure data that focuses on participant demographics, participant feedback, and participant follow-up will be collected for each public participation project. An annual performance report will aggregate measures from the individual project and the results of an annual survey of CBOs. The annual performance report will provide an overview of outreach activities throughout the year, identifying practices or locations that were successful and will draw conclusions for future outreach based on lessons learned.

### Strategy 3: Public Participation Training

To ensure the successful, uniform adoption of the Toolkit and an Authority-wide understanding of Title VI requirements for public participation, Metro staff involved in public outreach will be required to use the Toolkit and will receive training on the use of the Toolkit and the PPP.

### Strategy 4: Centralized Public Participation Office

In addition to the Toolkit, the PPP recommends that Metro establish a centralized office to manage public outreach. The Office of External Relations (EREL) will be tasked with providing expert assistance to project/planning staff for their individual projects and manage all project-based public participation activities, as well as provide overall oversight and coordination for public participation within Metro. EREL will ensure consistency across the Authority, quality control of communications and outreach materials, coordination with Marketing around advertising, and PPP plan compliance. Additionally, the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity will be tasked with additional functions related to managing relationships and outreach with CBOs.

## Conclusion

WMATA's PPP is a comprehensive document that includes articulated and attainable goals, tested local strategies, internal organizational and procedural strategies, and detailed guidelines for executing inclusive, consistent, collaborative, and responsive public outreach. In creating this plan, WMATA set out to not only be compliant with FTA requirements, but to become a leader in progressive public participation. The POP and Toolkit and procedural strategies outlined in the PPP, will result in a more efficient and effective system of public participation that yields inclusive and meaningful public input by all groups in the community that WMATA serves, regardless of their socio-economic status, minority status, or ability to speak English.

**Figure 3 - Speak Up! It's Your Ride Outreach Pop-Up Event at DC USA Mall**

