INCLUSIVE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING TOOLKIT

2019

PACTS
PORTLAND AREA COMPREHENSIVE
TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

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The Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System (PACTS) was designated in 1975 as the federally mandated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Greater Portland Maine region. The PACTS region encompasses 18 municipalities with a total population of approximately 280,000 people. The region spans two counties and includes rural, suburban, and urban municipalities. It is the largest urbanized area in Maine and home to the State's largest public transit network. PACTS oversees transportation studies, identifies needs, and sets priorities for federal transportation funds available to the area as well as state and local contributions.

This document is included in the 2019 PACTS Public Involvement Plan and is available online at Pactsplan.org. To request translations, printed copies, or in large print, please contact GPCOG at:

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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations and thank you for making a commitment to leading more inclusive transportation planning!

The first goal of this Inclusive Transportation Planning (ITP) Toolkit is to help staff and consultants of the Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System (PACTS) and PACTS member communities more easily find and access guidance on inclusive transportation planning and decision-making.

Secondly, the Toolkit is meant to direct those users to a curated array of tools and resources that they can consult, use, and adapt to strengthen their capacity for engaging underrepresented communities in transportation planning and decision-making.

Finally, the Toolkit aims to help PACTS and its member communities integrate into their transportation planning and decision-making, protocols and practices that make them more inclusive and responsive to the particular needs of underrepresented communities.

Staff and consultants who utilize this Toolkit as a guide will strengthen day-to-day implementation, near-term outputs, and longer-range outcomes of their work. Teams can thereby help their organizations become more attractive to funders who often require evidence of inclusive, equitable, and culturally competent practices. Thus, the ITP Toolkit includes expectations for PACTS and its member communities to work toward in terms of integrating more inclusive practices, and corresponding recommendations for ways to meet those expectations.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT FOR THE TOOLKIT

Phase I of the ITP Project was initiated in 2018 to ensure that PACTS decision-making involves *underrepresented communities,* **which is defined here as older adults, people with disabilities, people of color, people with low incomes and others who have traditionally lacked representation within mainstream planning processes.**

To move PACTS toward inclusive decision-making, the Project Steering Committee prepared the document titled *Inclusive Transportation Planning Recommendations*. The document, designed to inform the 2019 update of the *PACTS Public Involvement Plan* and the update to the *PACTS Title VI and Non-Discrimination Plan*, was presented to the PACTS Policy Committee and approved by unanimous vote in January 2019.

In that document, the ITP Steering Committee identified six strategies for encouraging more inclusive decision-making across PACTS, its decision-making bodies, and those of its member communities.

One of these recommendations provides an over-arching mandate and framework for developing guidance materials–this Toolkit–to support PACTS and its member communities:

Develop protocols and guidance for inclusive engagement in PACTS-funded plans and studies. Develop and adopt procedures for PACTS meetings and communications to be used by staff and consultants that draw from best practices in the field of public participation.

In spring 2019, PACTS secured funding from the Transit Planning 4 All initiative for Phase II of the ITP project. Phase II is focused on development and curation of an ITP Toolkit, outlined here, for use by PACTS staff, leadership, consultants, and

member communities, and development of a companion ITP Training Curriculum to build the capacity of representatives of underrepresented communities who wish to engage as leaders in transportation planning and decision-making.

INCLUSIVE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS

Developed and Presented to PACTS by the Steering Committee of the Inclusive Transportation Planning Project

1. *Develop protocols and guidance for inclusive engagement in PACTS-funded plans and studies.*
2. *Strengthen partnerships with local organizations to provide ongoing connections with underrepresented communities.*
3. *Cultivate champions who can represent the interests of underrepresented communities in transportation planning.*
4. *Explore approaches for supporting meaningful involvement by underrepresented communities on PACTS Governance Committees.*
5. *Adjust the PACTS funding decision process to consider the needs of underrepresented communities.*
6. *Engage PACTS members in opportunities to learn more about the transportation needs and experiences of underrepresented communities.*

SETTING GOALS FOR WIDER INCLUSION & ENGAGEMENT

As outlined in the guiding document Public Involvement Policies and Practices of the Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System (PACTS), PACTS must follow federal and state rules and regulations regarding public participation in transportation planning.

As a regional planning organization, PACTS encourages its member communities to follow these requirements for public participation in transportation planning, particularly those that relate to groups that have been historically underrepresented, including people who experience barriers to transportation.

With respect to solicitation of public input among people who experience barriers to transportation (i.e., underrepresented communities), PACTS leadership encourages its member communities to:

Develop and integrate strategies for soliciting meaningful and constructive input from underrepresented communities– including older adults, people with disabilities, people of color, people with low incomes, and others– throughout any process of designing or implementing transportation plans and projects.

As the federally mandated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Portland region, PACTS must follow certain federal and state rules and regulations. Similarly, Maine's Sensible Transportation Policy Act (STPA) requires the state's four metropolitan planning organizations to establish and follow public participation processes that are effective, timely, and efficient.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

Designing and implementing an inclusive and engaging transportation planning process takes attention to detail, a commitment to robust public participation, and, perhaps most importantly, time. Below is a collection of guidance and resources curated to support and guide staff and consultants of PACTS member communities working to fulfill PACTS leadership's aspirations for advancing more inclusive and engaging transportation planning process.

1. DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS TO REACH & ENGAGE SPECIFIC COMMUNITIES.

Learn To Forge Partnerships And Be A Good Partner

To best reach populations that are underrepresented in transportation planning and decision-making, work to establish and formalize partnerships with nonprofit groups and organizations led by, and with deep ties to, the specific population(s) you seek to engage. Invest in building relationships with people affiliated with these groups. Offer authentic connections to decision-makers, and personalized invitations to join decision-making processes. Over time, you'll become more engaged with the audience(s) most relevant to your project.

Developing partnerships is by nature an open-ended process that requires time, effort, and dedicated resources. Be clear about your organization's goals. When contemplating a new initiative, consider and proactively engage with other organizations working in this arena. Prepare in advance of partnership conversations. Work to build trust and rapport with others. When sharing your respective missions and goals, work together to identify points of overlap and complementarity between your organizations.

Be prepared to provide fair compensation to those who do the work of connecting your

organization with relevant audiences. Ask those affiliated with your prospective partner organization for a quote that includes scope of work, specific expectations and deliverables (what you'll get as a result of the work), hours required to complete the work, and hourly rate. Plan to pay for these services from the outset by building your grant proposals and project budgets with a dedicated line item for compensating outreach and engagement partners.

Here are a few resources to guide your partnership-building work:

- Read this guiding document on developing partnerships and organizational collaboration to gain insight on how to develop your team's partnership strategy.
- See Appendix A for a list of organizations across the PACTS region that can provide access and outreach to underrepresented communities.
- Create a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to memorialize your community engagement partnership. Review and borrow language and structure from this sample MOU template to create your own. Be sure the MOU describes the project timeframe, scope of work, and expectations pertaining to specific goals, tasks, and outcomes.

2. USE ESTABLISHED BEST PRACTICES WHEN SOLICITING INPUT.

Seeking input, especially from people who have historically been underrepresented in planning and decision-making, takes careful management, a firm grasp of the "big picture", and sustained attention to details. Below are several field-tested, time-tested recommendations that draw from the discipline of community organizing.

Plan Universally Accessible Meetings

It is important to ensure that the meeting setting is conducive to the attendance and participation of all, particularly individuals with disabilities. The excellent resources below offer tips on designing and facilitating a meeting that goes the extra mile in terms of thoughtfulness and accessibility.

The "Planning Friendly Meetings" tips sheet (Transit Planning 4 All, 2015) offers simple considerations and guidance to help meeting organizers consider the experience and perspective of a person with a disability as they are:

- Getting to the meeting
- Navigating the area outside the meeting place
- Moving and participating inside the meeting facility

The "Accessible Information Exchange: Meeting on a Level Playing Field" guiding document (US Department of Justice, 2009) offers more detailed information and guidance on how to plan a meeting that is universally accessible, including:

- Accessible meeting location
- Accessible room set-up
- Accessible presentation of meeting content, including provision of auxiliary aids and services
- Evaluating the accessibility of a meeting site:
  - Parking and passenger drop-off areas
  - Routes to the building entrance
  - Building entrance
  - Routes to the meeting space
  - Meeting space
  - Restrooms
- Temporary barrier removal suggestions

Meet People Where They Are

Going directly to underrepresented communities for their input, rather than expecting them to come to you, will help improvement the quality of your public engagement strategy, especially with those who have historically been least involved in planning and decision-making. This also helps to drive home the value of people's input.

This case study features how the Indian Nation Council of Governments in Tulsa, Oklahoma met transportation users where they were by creating and using a mobile transit lab as part of their community outreach strategy (see the section titled "Reaching Out Physically and Virtually" on pp. 44). With the mobile lab, the organization was able to set up an engagement station wherever needed, eliminating the need for people to travel to a specific location for a meeting.

Develop A Thoughtful & Effective Community Engagement Strategy

The wider the variety of world views and lived experiences that inform a visioning or planning process, the more likely it is that the resulting plan or project will address the needs and opportunities of even the most vulnerable people in the community. Meaningful community engagement can take shape in a variety of ways. It requires time and flexibility. Building trusting relationships with people—and finding a variety of ways to enable their connection to a project, a process, or a group of people—requires thoughtful strategy and sustained effort.

"When INCOG needed to gather citizen input to identify priority corridors for long-term transit development, the agency took an ordinary, 40-foot bus and transformed it into a mobile transit lab. The bus, which traveled to 117 stops in 12 different jurisdictions over a four-month period in 2011, featured video screens, interactive displays and other educational tools. It went to community events, schools, libraries and shopping malls, welcoming more than 2,000 visitors, 88 percent of whom reported that they had never participated in a transportation planning event." For more information, please consult pp. 44-45 of Transportation for America's The Innovative MPO report.

The Boston Metropolitan Area Planning Council's Community Engagement Guide walks through details and considerations associated with the five steps to take when creating a community engagement and outreach strategy. The five steps include thinking through:

1. *Purpose of Engagement* – Why are people's input and involvement necessary to the process? What information and/or actions do you need from the community to help accomplish the project's goals?

2. *Stakeholders* – Who will be directly or indirectly impacted by the outcomes of the project? Think about local leaders, community groups, non-profits, business owners, and City or Town commissions that could influence the project and its implementation.

3. *Resources*, *Opportunities & Scale of Engagement* – Conduct an honest assessment of available resources and funding that may be allocated to outreach and engagement activities in the project. What are some restrictions, if any? What are some opportunities to take advantage of?

4. *Messaging* – Craft a message that will appeal to your audience and encourage their participation. The message is extremely important. The wrong message may turn people away. What message can be used to engage each person or group?

5. *Approach & Tips* – Now that you have chosen the purpose and scale of your engagement, and have identified a list of specific stakeholders and messages, you are ready to think through diverse approaches to reach stakeholders.

3. DEVELOP AND DISTRIBUTE MATERIALS WITH CONSIDERATION.

Plan, Prepare, And Share Flexibly, And Well In Advance

Developing and sharing agendas and related materials for review at least one week prior to a
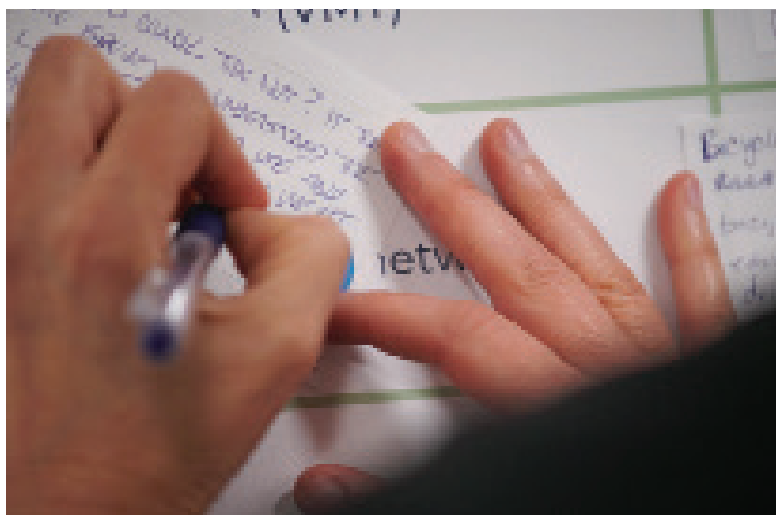
The more thought you put into who you want to engage and how you want to engage with them at the beginning of the project, the more efficient your outreach plan will be, helping save time and money throughout.

meeting (and longer if possible) will provide ample breathing room for both participants and organizers to prepare. An extended timeframe between the distribution of agendas and materials and the meeting itself allows participants to:

1. Review and comprehend written materials;
2. Generate thoughtful questions or commentary;
3. Request language translation or formatting specific to their need(s), especially readers who use assistance technology (such as a Braille reader, a screen reader, or TTY), people whose first language is not English, and/or people who are English language learners;
4. Determine whether virtual participation (i.e., via conference call or video conference call) for a particular meeting is plausible given the proposed agenda.

Provide Written Information In Multiple Languages

Prioritize the primary language of each committee member or meeting attendee to ensure they are able to participate and contribute substantively to a meeting conversation. There may be wide variation in the answers you receive in your community when you ask "what are the most commonly spoken languages here?". Because of this, be sure to ask before translating, and before assuming English competency–a person's primary spoken language may be different than their primary written language.

- Consult Maine Department of Transportation's Title VI Program Implementation Plan to see a list of interpretation and translation service providers in Maine (beginning on pp. 44).

Ensure Material Developed Is Useful To People With Diverse Abilities

Because of the wide variation in learning styles, and in the ways, people access information, how you develop materials for review (including meeting agendas) matters. Some people learn to grasp a new concept by seeing it in action. Others learn from reading or listening to a story about the idea. Still others learn best by doing an interactive, hands-on activity. Below are tips and resources for creating materials that are accessible to most people, and/or are flexible enough to accommodate a variety of accessible formats.

- Consider the Seven Principles of Universal Design as a resource for designing communications materials and meeting agendas.
- Use a combination of written and non-written (graphical and video) communication methods to share new and complex concepts.

- Refer often to, and encourage colleagues' use of, the Disability Language Style Guide developed by the National Center on Disability and Journalism.
- Review these reminders about how to develop and present meeting content accessibly.
- Learn how to fulfill accessible formatting requirements from Maine Department of Labor's Bureau of Rehabilitation Services Accessibility Guide.

Use Relationships & Technology To Make Participation Convenient

Today there are more digital technologies than ever before to enable remote or virtual participation in meetings. Practices such as making personal phone calls to participants in advance of meetings, using online applications to assist with scheduling, offering call-in capability for all meetings, arranging rides to and from meetings, and other flexible accommodations can make all the difference in ensuring an individual's participation in a planning process.

- Google Hangouts is a cost-free, internet-based application that allows for video conferencing, provided both users have access to a video camera or smartphone.
- Doodle is a cost-free, internet-based application that allows many potential meeting participants to review and share their availability for multiple meeting dates and times on one single screen.
- Anyone with a smart phone can organize a ride for another person using Uber "Request for a Guest" or Lyft (see company passenger use policies and options here). A passenger does not need to have smart phone to receive a ride you organize, though a phone that can send and receive text messages is helpful.

THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Principle 1: Equitable Use
The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.

Principle 2: Flexibility in Use
The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.

Principle 3: Simple and Intuitive Use
Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.

Principle 4: Perceptible Information
The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.

Principle 5: Tolerance for Error
The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

Principle 6: Low Physical Effort
The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.

Principle 7: Size and Space for Approach and Use
Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility.

4. INVEST IN THE CAPACITY AND KNOWLEDGE OF YOUR TEAM.

Increase Staff Awareness & Capacity For Navigating Difference

Helping staff, consultants, and decision-makers in your planning process become better attuned to the expectations, norms, and unique transportation barriers experienced by older adults, people with disabilities, people of color, and other underrepresented communities and people will encourage

increased accessibility of planning and decision-making process. Trainings and dialogues can cultivate understanding and empathy, and can encourage the development of a shared language and understanding of equity, diversity, and inclusion across all members of a team, a community, and the transit system that connects the people within it.

- Use, and encourage colleagues' use of, person-centered language, especially when engaging people with disabilities and others who experience barriers to transportation. Person-centered language names the person first and identity second (i.e., people of color, woman who uses wheelchair). Refer to, and share, this tool developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as a guide.

- Seek opportunities for, and offer incentives to staff who participate in, professional development trainings on cultural competency, implicit bias, gender in the workplace, using person-centered language, etc. Add such training goals to professional development plans for any and all planning, engineering, and transportation professionals across your transit system, including public works staff, transit operators (i.e., bus and van drivers), ticketing agents, etc.

- Create opportunities for hands-on experiential learning in pairs or small groups about transportation barriers and needs. Take a look at the Greater Portland Council of Governments' Stupendous Tournament of Transit event for ideas and inspiration.

CONCLUSION

The guidance and resources contained in this Toolkit are meant to inspire more inclusive and engaging transportation planning practices. We encourage you to test the concepts and resources that resonate with you, your team, and your community. Let the PACTS team know about your experiences. While these practices aren't yet a requirement for PACTS member communities to fulfill, integrating them into your funding proposals will make your projects dramatically more competitive and attractive to funding decision-makers. It will also yield better and more responsive results on the ground and in your transportation system. Good luck!

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