

CHAPTER 2: We Are Planning With People

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

We're busy. It's hard to be involved with things, even important things, when every segment of life clamors for attention. The TPO knows this and does its best to make involvement in Plan development as convenient as possible.

The TPO engaged the public in the development of the 2009 Knoxville Regional Mobility Plan through conventional means, such as meetings and workshops, and through new efforts like blogs and brand marketing. The internet was used for each step of the plan's development, from advertising meeting notices, to gathering comments and survey results to sharing the final document and the iterations leading up to it.

TPO staff conducted three rounds of regional workshops: one in May and June 2008, another in September 2008 and a third round in March and April 2009. At each stage of the plan's development, materials were available on the TPO's website (www.knoxtrans.org), including draft documents and public meeting presentations.

What We Heard—surveys and money boxes

Early in the planning process, the TPO conducted an informal public survey seeking the public's opinion on the existing transportation system. The survey was available online and at all of the public meetings.

The informal survey sought three key pieces of information. First, respondents were asked to rate the current transportation system. Second, respondents were asked to rate a series of transportation issues based on their perceived importance over the next 25 years. Finally, respondents were asked their preference on funding transportation projects in the future. This last question, "How would you spend transportation funds?" played an important role at the public workshops also. Each participant was given \$100 in fake money and asked to distribute the bills among nine different options in a box labeled with the choices. Some chose to spend all of their money in one category such as "Build New Roads" or "More Transit" while others divided their money between categories. Results of this funding exercise are shown in Table 3.

A similar informal survey was used in the 2005 Long Range Transportation Plan update, and staff compared the results to see if and how public views might be changing. Results from 2005 and the results from the comments for the 2009 plan are shared here. Tables 4 and 5 show how the respondents



A TPO booth at Knoxville's Market Square drew many participants.

Table 3.
How Respondents Distributed Transportation Funds (2009)

Category	Percentage of total
Better Traffic Signal	
Operations	4.9%
Add Lanes to Existing	
Roadways.....	5.3%
Build New Roads.....	3.7%
Encourage Alternative	
Transportation.....	17.5%
Provide Real-Time Traffic	
Information.....	2.3%
Maintain Pavement in Good	
Condition.....	11.4%
Improve Roadway Safety	7.1%
More Transit Services	20.9%
More Bicycle/Pedestrian	
Facilities	26.8%

Based on informal surveys.

rated the transportation system. Generally, most rated the various system components as good or fair, though few found any of the elements to be very good. Key elements rated poor were transit services, sidewalks and crosswalks, and bike lane and wide shoulders. However, this may not be a statement against existing services and facilities. When looking at the results of Table 3 that shows which issues the respondents thought were very important over the next 25 years, there is a general call for increased transit service, sidewalks and bike facilities. Therefore, the initial poor ranking most likely is the result that not all of the Knoxville region has access to transit services, sidewalks and bike lanes; people want these types of services and facilities and will rank the system poor if they do not have access to them.

The results of the informal surveys done in 2005 and recently are surprisingly consistent. Two changes should be noted. In 2005 more than one-quarter of respondents perceived that the traffic conditions on major roads were poor, while only 13 percent of respondents rated traffic conditions as poor in the later update. Also, the number of respondents rating the transit services as poor increased between 2005 and the 2009 update.

Table 4. Respondents Rate the Transportation System (2005)

Category	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
Traffic Conditions on Major Roads	4%	26%	43%	26%
Transit Services	2%	23%	35%	40%
Sidewalks and Crosswalks	1%	12%	31%	57%
Bike Lanes and Wide Shoulders	0%	4%	15%	81%
Greenways and Bicycle/Pedestrian Paths	5%	27%	35%	33%
Traffic Safety and Control Measures on Major Roads	1%	32%	46%	21%
Overall Rating for Transportation System	0%	15%	58%	27%

Based on informal surveys.

Table 5. Respondents Rate the Transportation System (2009)

Category	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
Traffic Conditions on Major Roads	8%	34%	45%	13%
Transit Services	2%	16%	34%	48%
Sidewalks and Crosswalks	2%	12%	32%	54%
Bike Lanes and Wide Shoulders	1%	4%	17%	78%
Greenways and Bicycle/Pedestrian Paths	7%	25%	33%	35%
Traffic Safety and Control Measures on Major Roads	4%	33%	43%	20%
Overall Rating for Transportation System	2%	18%	56%	24%

Based on informal surveys.

Table 6 shows how respondents prioritize transportation issues. Key issues identified include respondents wanting to see a transportation system that helps protect neighborhoods, historic places and natural resources and improves air quality. They want a system that promotes walkability and promotes the use of alternative modes. They want a system that is safe to use. And finally, respondents would like to see a stronger link between land use and the transportation system.

Table 6. Respondents Rate Transportation Issues for the Next 25 Years

Category	2005		2009	
	Most Important	Least Important	Most Important	Least Important
Better Traffic Signal Operations	8%	14%	9%	15%
Real Time Traffic Information	5%	29%	4%	22%
More Transit Services	30%	2%	44%	3%
More Sidewalks	42%	3%	45%	3%
Maintain Existing Transportation System	17%	9%	21%	6%
More Bike Facilities	48%	7%	52%	4%
Build New Roads	8%	53%	3%	50%
High Occupancy (HOV) Lanes	18%	21%	8%	20%
Improve the Movement of Goods and Freight	23%	15%	14%	15%
Protect Historic Resources	36%	4%	40%	5%
Walkable Neighborhoods and Commercial Centers	59%	1%	61%	3%
Protect Community Character	45%	2%	51%	3%
Safe Routes to School	69%	1%	65%	1%
Reduce Travel Time between Places	18%	13%	13%	11%
Improve Air Quality	76%	1%	69%	2%
Protect Natural Resources	65%	2%	67%	2%
Safety for Drivers	44%	2%	33%	3%
Safety for Bicyclists and Pedestrians	72%	1%	70%	1%
Coordinated Land Use and Transportation System	48%	3%	56%	2%

Due to rounding, percentages do not always add up to 100%. Based on informal surveys.

The changes between the responses to the 2005 update and the 2009 update include more people calling a “Coordinated Land Use and Transportation System” and “More Transit Service” the most important transportation issues for the Knoxville region. Fewer respondents selected “Improve the Movement of Goods and Freight,” “Safety for Drivers” and “High Occupancy (HOV) Lanes” as the most important issues in 2009 than in 2005.

Table 3, on page 15, answers the question, “How would you spend \$100 in transportation funds?” Nearly 700 people participated in this exercise, both online and in public meetings, everyone from shoppers at Knoxville’s Market Square, to county planning commissioners.

More than half of the money was put towards funding transportation alternatives, like transit and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. While the TPO’s survey was not scientific, it was used as an additional piece of public input into how the Mobility Plan’s policies, recommendations and projects were derived. This information cannot be interpreted as a future funding model but rather as the public’s general desire to shift funding priorities.

The results are surprisingly similar to a national scientific survey (Figures 6-7), where 81 percent of respondents support allocation of tax dollars toward the expansion and improvement of public transportation, sidewalks and bike paths in their communities.

However, research demonstrates that there is a disconnect between what people want transportation dollars to be spent on and where they are actually spent. On average in the United States, 79 percent of transportation dollars are allocated to roads.

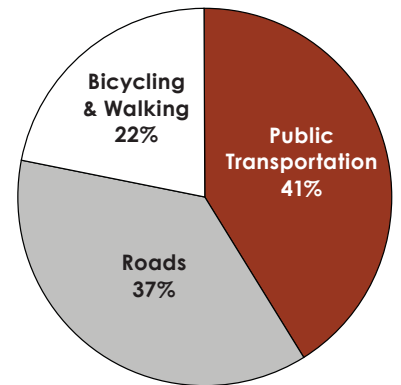


Figure 6. How Respondents would like to have Funds Allocated, National Scientific Funding Survey
Source: Active Transportation for America: The Case for Increase Federal Investments in Bicycling & Walking, 2008

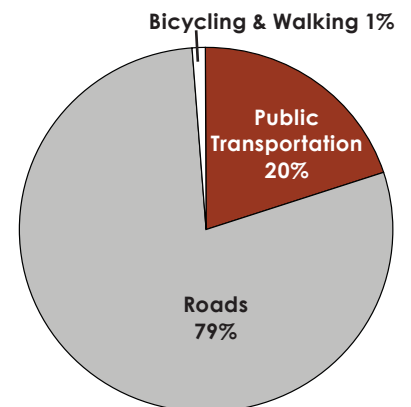


Figure 7. How Transportation Funding is Currently Allocated, National Scientific Funding Survey
Source: Active Transportation for America: The Case for Increase Federal Investments in Bicycling & Walking, 2008

What is Context Sensitive Solutions?

Context sensitive solutions (CSS) is a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach that involves all stakeholders to develop a transportation facility that fits its physical setting and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic and environmental resources, while maintaining safety and mobility. CSS is an approach that considers the total context within which a transportation improvement project will exist.

Many communities across the U.S. realize that designing neighborhoods, subdivisions, business districts and shopping centers around the automobile has diminished, not enhanced the quality of life. Some of the basic transportation elements that must be restored to improve community livability include:

- *A connected network of sidewalks and bike routes,*
- *Safe, dependable and accessible travel options for community members who cannot afford a car or can't drive,*
- *Affordable transit that gets people to job centers, retail centers and recreation facilities,*
- *Traffic management in neighborhoods, "main" streets, shopping centers and downtowns, that is compatible with bicycling and walking.*

While the car offers us a high level of accessibility, people's ability to move and to reach destinations is often constrained by traffic congestion. An important factor in our decision to use other modes of transportation is based on how long one could be stuck in traffic on the highways and freeways. Walking and bicycling, on the other hand, offer many people cost effective personal mobility, yet there are very few places that are easily accessible to non-motorized modes of travel. Many children can ride bikes in their neighborhoods, but visiting friends one to two miles away or riding to school is difficult or not safe, particularly if the trip involves crossing an arterial.

Most people opt not to walk or bike because the route to the store or park is indirect, does not have sidewalks and there are too many fast cars competing for the road space. Taking the bus can be equally frustrating. The bus stop is frequently too far from work or home, or the bus service is infrequent or slow, and few amenities are available. (Compare these travel conditions to the expectations, comfort features, and amenity options available for motorists: identified and paved path/travel lane, way-finding signs, carpeting, entertainment, music and news, climate control, many places to stop to refuel and a even place to rest your beverage!) These are only a few of the varying and valid transportation needs and objectives of a community that are typically considered in Context Sensitive Street Design (CSSD). Additionally, CSSD designers and planners must also take into account the role of the entire right-of-way as public space, and the role of the street in shaping the character, function and livability of adjacent land uses and neighborhoods.

Source: www.contextsensitivesolutions.org



Overview of the First Round of Public Meetings

At the first round of meetings, staff provided information on existing demographic information, the current transportation system, presented goals and objectives for the plan and sought input on major transportation issues for the Region. More than 100 people attended the nine workshops held in Knoxville, Blount, Loudon, Sevier and Anderson Counties.

Public meetings and workshops were held at the end of May and the first of June 2008. In an attempt to reach minority communities, two public meetings were held in Title VI designated areas. Additional meetings were held in the following locations to ensure adequate coverage throughout the Knoxville Region:

- Cedar Bluff Public Library (West Knoxville);
- Burlington Public Library (East Knoxville);
- City County Building (Downtown Knoxville);
- Bonny Kate Public Library (South Knox County);
- Halls Public Library (North Knox County);
- Loudon County Visitor's Bureau;
- Blount County Public Library;
- Anderson County Chamber of Commerce;
- Sevierville Civic Center (Sevier County).

The informal survey was distributed at various public meetings and was available through the TPO website. It was available online from April 2008 to June 5, 2008, and drew nearly 500 responses. The meetings took place between 6:00 and 8:00 pm. These hours were chosen in order to have public transit service available, and three of the locations were served by Knoxville Area Transit.

Meeting Announcements

MPC staff designed a specific logo to identify Mobility Plan products and it was first used on posters that were distributed to nearly 50 locations in the region, including public library branches and community boards in businesses. More than 800 postcards were sent directly to various TPO mailing lists, including neighborhood and community groups and interested individuals, at least two weeks before each round of meetings or workshops. Notice of the meetings was also posted on KnoxViews, a local political blog. Other blogs picked up on the chatter and also shared the meeting dates and locations. To further advertise the meetings, legal notices were posted in local and regional newspapers including two local minority-targeted newspapers, The Knoxville Enlightener and El Mundo Hispano. A press release was sent to a wider array of media outlets closer to the meetings.

Meeting Discussions

The turnout at meetings was higher than expected, partly due to the topics of interest: high gas prices, sustainable development, carbon footprints



TPO used a variety of methods to keep citizens informed and to gather feedback.



A workshop participant spends his transportation funds.

and alternative transportation. The open discussion of the workshops was successful and many participants commented favorably on the relaxed atmosphere and the opportunity to hear everyone speak instead of breaking into smaller groups and reporting back.

All of the public workshops can be characterized by good discussions and many questions. A major theme of discussion at many of the meetings was the land use side of transportation and community development. Several individuals were concerned that land use decisions made by cities and counties do not adequately address short and long range transportation impacts. There was also interest in encouraging land use development that would support increased public transportation services.

The concerns and discussion items raised at the workshops informed the next stage of the plan development, defining strategies and then developing actions.

Overview of the Second Round of Public Meetings

Below is a summary of comments received during second round of the Mobility Plan workshops. The workshops were held in four locations: three locations in Knox County and one location in Blount County. Approximately 55 people attended the four workshops the week of September 8, 2008.

Workshop attendees were asked to assist TPO staff in identifying potential strategies that support the following guiding principles:

- Preserve and Manage
- Link Transportation and Land Use
- Plan and Build for all Modes
- Develop the Region's Potential

As a reminder, these guiding principles were developed from the first round of public workshops held in June 2008 and gleaned from a number of recent regional visioning efforts. The actions identified in the second round of public workshops are organized under a set of strategies developed by staff that aims to support the guiding principles and the SAFETEA-LU planning factors (refer to Table 2 for the planning factors).

Potential strategies and actions developed by the public:

1. Potential Strategy: Maintain Good Infrastructure Conditions

Actions

- Improve the existing surface roads rather than create new interstates and thoroughfares
- Don't neglect road system.
- Have a plan and a schedule for maintenance.
- Maintain the roads – good repaving, pay attention to details.
- Coordinate with utility work.

2. Potential Strategy: Pro-actively Plan Vibrant Communities

Actions

- Use the maintenance as a time to reevaluate.
- Tie money to policies that support our priorities.
- Implement detailed, comprehensive land use policies.
- Pilot project to show successful transportation/land use project.
Addresses education also. *Ex: develop a town center at Karns traffic signal.*
- Create development incentives along existing corridors (rail lines and existing roads)
- Plan now.
- Consider social and health impacts.
- Form political advocacy effort to inform and influence decision-makers, local grassroots and progressive leaders
- Education of the community.
- Make density not scary. Show how density can support your community vision.
- Consider social and health impacts.
- TPO partner with local historical associations and provide information on how people used to travel around.
- Discourage sprawl - discourage building new roads into undeveloped areas
- Identify stakeholders, expand the range of stakeholders engaging in this discussion (e.g. Chambers of Commerce, Business Associations, etc. . .)
- Provide the analysis needed to gain access to a privately operated rail line
- Educate young people about these issues
- Give this presentation to our public officials and business leaders - present the same questions to them
- Continue education of elected officials in regards to air quality issues and possible solutions.
- Talk to county commissioners – express wants and vision.
- Be vocal about priorities.
- Include complete streets studies and corridor studies in the Knoxville-Knox County sector planning process
- Find a champion with a vision.
- Form political advocacy effort to inform and influence decision-makers, local grassroots and progressive leaders
- Make planning process more visible.
- Engage more people, local leaders.
- Share a regional vision.
- Listen to other viewpoints and interests.

In 1970, passenger train service to Knoxville via the Birmingham Special ended.

3. Potential Strategy: Plan for a Safer and More Secure Transportation System

Actions

- Publicize bike crashes.

Americans are more concerned than ever about the impact of growth and development on the changing climate. Nearly 90% believe new communities should be designed so we can walk more and drive less, and that public transportation should be improved and accessible.

*— October 25, 2007
National Association of Realtors
and Smart Growth America*

- Need driver education to increase bike safety.
- Change the driving age to 18

4. Potential Strategy: Enhance Management and Operation of the Regional Transportation System

Actions

5. Potential Strategy: Support Intermodal Transportation

Actions

- Investigate economic development opportunities with intermodal facilities.

6. Potential Strategy: Provide Reliable, Efficient and Accessible Transit Service

Actions

- Make KAT stops more visible, safe and comfortable.
- Expand transit service to county.
- Advertise KAT – give information to the public, help get people off the roads.
- Improve KAT operations – extend routes, partner with Pellissippi State.
- Since fares do not cover all transit costs, find other sources.
- Increase frequency of buses on major corridors.
- Have safe and comfortable transit stops/shelters.

7. Potential Strategy: Treat All Modes Fairly

Actions

- Promote mass transit first. Gives time to re-examine funds for other projects.
- Work towards establishing better public transit (e.g. van pool, shuttle, bus, etc) to and from UT and downtown Knoxville.
- Provide routine accommodation for all modes, all users in our retrofits and new constructions - a mandate for routine accommodation.
- Make alternatives (transit, biking) more visible.
- Increase frequency of buses on major corridors. Have safe and comfortable transit stops/shelters.
- More bike signage and bike lanes.
- Always include bike lanes in new construction and improvements.
- Overcome public objections to things like bike lanes.
- Recognize bicycling as a mode of transportation.
- Explore different surfaces for walking and bike paths to decrease cost.

8. Potential Strategy: Enhance Demand Management

Actions

- Create or designate, commuter or express lanes (separate from local traffic) during peak times.
- Partner better with UT – get students and faculty on KAT.

- Increase visibility of Park and Ride and route signs.
- Charge for parking at schools.
- Discourage the use of motor vehicle use.
- Need driver education to increase bike safety.

9. Potential Strategy: Ensure the Environmental Impacts of Transportation Actions are Considered

Actions

- Educate people on the true costs of roads.
- Identify hidden costs such as public health, environmental impacts.
- Address air quality before solutions are prescribed.
- Use transportation to clean up the air.
- Mandatory testing for vehicle emissions.

10. Potential Strategy: Explore Big Ticket/Big Idea Initiatives

Actions

- Discuss with CSX gaining access to a rail hub/corridor near the airport to connect Blount County to Knoxville
- Use interstate ROW for rail.
- Seriously look at regional passenger/transit rail, include examining operating costs.

11. Potential Strategy: Secure Adequate Funding to Fully Implement the Plan

Actions

- Keep more local taxes here to pay for what we need.
- Use some interstate monies for other uses – transit.
- Tax new development to pay for needed infrastructure. (impact fees)
- Work together to secure more funding.
- Increase fuel tax.
- Have separate funds that can be put towards strategic improvements during maintenance – piggyback money and labor/equipment.

Additionally, TPO staff participated in discussing the Mobility Plan at other community or agency meetings: Blount County Planning Commission, Louisville Planning Commission, Knoxville/Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission, the Smoky Mountain Greenway Council and the East Tennessee South Rural Planning Organization.

Americans strongly disapprove of increasing gasoline taxes as a way to discourage driving and reduce energy use, with 84 percent rejecting the idea.

— October 25, 2007
National Association of Realtors
and Smart Growth America

"A good sustainability and quality of life indicator: the average amount of time spent in a car."

– Paul Bedford

Overview of the Third Round of Public Meetings

The draft 2009 Regional Mobility Plan was presented to the public through a series of eight public meetings held throughout the region between March 23 and April 2, 2009. Approximately 50 people attended meetings held in Knox, Blount, Loudon, Sevier and Anderson Counties.

The eight public meetings were held in the following locations:

- Cedar Bluff Public Library (West Knoxville);
- Burlington Public Library (East Knoxville);
- City County Building (Downtown Knoxville);
- Halls Public Library (North Knox County);
- Loudon County Visitor's Center;
- Blount County Public Library;
- Anderson County Chamber of Commerce;
- Sevierville Civic Center (Sevier County).

Several methods were used to notify the public about the meetings. The draft document and the notice for the meetings were posted to the TPO website (www.knoxtrans.org). Staff sent out over 1,000 postcards directly to various TPO mailing lists, including neighborhood and community groups and interested individuals, at least two weeks before the meetings. Notice of the meetings was also sent to local newspapers and appeared in a widely-read regional weekly paper, the MetroPulse.

In a continued attempt to engage minority communities, two meetings were also held for the Title VI community and the Knoxville City Mayor's Council on Disability Issues.

The draft document was open for public review from March 2, 2009 through late May.

The TPO did not receive significant comments on the draft plan. Many questions were project specific. Other people were interested in the Air Quality Conformity Determination analysis. Some expressed dissatisfaction with the planning process in general and stated that they felt the TPO and local governments are not responsive to what the citizens are requesting.