

7. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS: SPECTRUM OF PARTICIPATION

The regional planning process involves a number of activities, including the preparation of regional plans, corridor studies, scoping studies, and technical documents. Public interest will vary considerably based on the project and issues. This varied response suggests that the regional public participation process should recognize these differences and provide diverse opportunities for participation.

Each program, project and activity of the CCRPC may have a different level of public participation. Depending on the size and scope of the project, goals, time constraints, level of program and community readiness, and capacity and resources, the level of participation can range from *Inform* all the way to *Empower*. The *Spectrum of Participation* identifies the various levels at which the public is involved in any projects performed by the CCRPC. It depicts a range of actions, from CCRPC-led information sharing to community-led activities, and can be used for both simple and complex efforts.

Table 2: Spectrum of Participation; Source: International Association of Public Participation; www.iap2.org

Spectrum of Participation				
INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
The CCRPC will provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	The CCRPC will obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	The CCRPC will work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered. <i>At the INVOLVE level and above, staff will complete the CCRPC Equity Impact Worksheet.</i>	The CCRPC will partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	The CCRPC will place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPATION				
· Primarily one-way channel of communication	· Primarily one-way channel of communication	· Two-way channel of communication	· Two-way channel of communication	· Two-way channel of communication
· One interaction	· One to multiple interactions	· Multiple interactions	· Multiple interactions	· Multiple interactions
· Term-limited to event	· Short to medium-term	· Medium to long-term	· Medium to long-term	· Medium to long-term
· Addresses immediate need of county and community	· Shapes and informs county programs	· Advancement of solutions to complex problems	· Advancement of solutions to complex problems	· Advances solutions to complex problems
STRATEGIES OF PARTICIPATION				
Website & online calendar, database, informational brochures, posters and flyers, display ads, press releases, social media, email announcements, newsletters	Public hearings & legal ads, work groups, comment forms, surveys and questionnaires, visualization techniques, analysis reports, technical assistance studies	Advisory/steering committees, project meetings/workshops/open houses/forums, direct mailings, staff outreach, CCRPC Equity Impact Worksheet	Community or co-led committees, advisory boards, coalitions and partnerships, policy development and advocacy	Community-led planning efforts, community-hosted forums

Note: This document is extracted from and can be found on pages 10-20 of the full 2014 Public Participation Plan.

As a project develops, the level of public participation may need to be adjusted to meet the changing needs and objectives. In order to best determine the appropriate level of public participation for a particular project at the beginning of the effort, the CCRPC will use the **CCRPC Public Participation Plan & Equity Impact Worksheet (Appendix C)** that asks the following questions:

1. *What is the purpose of your engagement?*
2. *Stakeholders: Who is potentially impacted by this project?*
3. *What strategies and tools will you use to ensure you have information from and research about the relevant groups and communities?*
4. *How will you effectively reach all of your audiences?*
5. *What are the potential barriers and risks to doing this work?*
6. *If there are decisions to be made, how does community participation fit into the overall decision-making process?*
7. *How will you inform the community of benchmarks or progress throughout the process?*
8. *How will you evaluate the success of your public participation plan, both in terms of processes and outcomes?*

If questions 1-3 in the CCRPC Equity Impact Worksheet determine there are groups that need additional engagement, further review will be done to assess equity impacts. It is important to remember that “stakeholders” include any person or group that is affected by a planning project, issue, or long-range plan, as well as any person or group who are not aware that they are affected.

In the following sections, participation strategies used by the CCRPC within each level of the *Spectrum of Participation* are described, followed by examples of specific activities. **Note that each level of the Spectrum builds on the previous levels (from left to right), including strategies of participation used to involve the public in CCRPC activities. Strategies are not repeated under each level, as it is implied that they are included in successive levels.**

7a. SPECTRUM OF PARTICIPATION LEVEL 1: *INFORM*

Under the **INFORM** level, the CCRPC will provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.

Characteristics of participation include:

- Primarily one-way channel of communication
- One interaction
- Term-limited to event
- Address immediate need of county and community

INFORM: Strategies of Participation

The following is a description of the **Strategies of Participation** the CCRPC will use to **INFORM** the public:

Note: This document is extracted from and can be found on pages 10-20 of the full 2014 Public Participation Plan.

Website & Online Calendar

The CCRPC website (www.ccrpcvt.org) provides a wealth of information, including the organization's structure, process, and contact information; meeting agendas, minutes, and online calendar of events; information about past and current projects; an electronic document and data library; links to member municipalities and other organizations; draft reports and studies; traffic, bicycle/pedestrian and other count data; and more. The website is maintained and updated regularly by CCRPC staff. Since not everyone has access to the Internet or knows about the CCRPC website, other public participation methods must be used in conjunction with electronic news and updates.

Database

In order to reach the broadest number of interested parties, the CCRPC will maintain an up-to-date database with contact information for residents, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation agency employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of people with disabilities, and other interested parties and segments of the community affected by the CCRPC's plans, programs and projects.

Informational Brochures, Posters and Flyers, Display Ads

Materials with general information about the CCRPC or announcing upcoming meetings or other events are distributed to public places such as city halls and town offices, public libraries, community centers, and local businesses. These may also be part of a direct mail campaign to residents and businesses. Content typically includes the date, time, location and brief description of the purpose or project. The CCRPC occasionally publishes ads to promote meetings that are not regularly scheduled, such as corridor study workshops. These are published in selected newspapers in order to reach a larger audience than those who typically read legal notices.

Press Releases

Press releases are sent to local media to inform the public about projects being undertaken or recently completed, funding opportunities and awards, and updates regarding CCRPC programs and services. Regular mention of the CCRPC in local media outlets reminds residents of our presence and projects that may impact them.

Social Media

The CCRPC will take advantage of various social media resources to share information about the organization and its projects. CCRPC Board meetings and other special meetings or events are videotaped and broadcasted at varied times on a local public access channel (Channel 17 - CCTV Vermont). These videos are also made available online and can be viewed on demand at: www.cctv.org/watch-tv/chittenden-county.

Email Announcements

Meeting announcements and supporting information are emailed to interested persons in the CCRPC master database. Email is also used to disseminate project updates, progress or other reports, and to announce funding or other opportunities.

Note: This document is extracted from and can be found on pages 10-20 of the full 2014 Public Participation Plan.

Newsletters

The CCRPC will use newsletters to inform the public of general and ongoing programs and projects, as well as targeted newsletters for specific communities or short-term projects.

INFORM: CCRPC Activities

The following are examples of **CCRPC Activities** within the **INFORM** category that use the Strategies listed previously. This information is also available via the CCRPC's website (<http://www.ccrpcvt.org>):

CCRPC Monthly Newsletter

The CCRPC's monthly newsletter provides ongoing regional updates, notices, event information, grant opportunities and more. Short-term, project-specific newsletters may also be used to share information and updates.

Traffic Alert Program

The Traffic Alert Program provides weekly emails during construction season to area media outlets and interested parties to alert the public of construction efforts.

Information Services

CCRPC staff provides specific services to municipalities, including:

- Traffic counts
- Infrastructure inventories (pavement, culvert, sign and/or sidewalk)
- Transportation safety information
- Bike and pedestrian counts

GIS and Online Searchable Library

The CCRPC provides ongoing information technology products and services to municipalities. The CCRPC website includes an archived and searchable library of completed plans and studies (<http://www.ccrpcvt.org/studies/>). GIS services include:

- GIS mapping/data
- Build-out analysis
- Data development
- Demographics
- Interactive Web mapping

7b. SPECTRUM OF PARTICIPATION LEVEL 2: *CONSULT*

Under the **CONSULT** level, the CCRPC will obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.

Characteristics of engagement include:

- Primarily one-way channel of communication
- One to multiple interactions

Note: This document is extracted from and can be found on pages 10-20 of the full 2014 Public Participation Plan.

- Short to medium-term
- Shapes and informs county programs

CONSULT: Strategies of Participation

The following is a description of the **Strategies of Participation** the CCRPC will use to **CONSULT** with the public, in addition to the strategies found in the previous levels of participation.

Public Hearings & Legal Ads

A public hearing is a formal process to solicit input and hold a vote on specific programs, policies or activities. In most cases items presented at a public hearing have already benefited from deeper engagement earlier in the process. Notification to municipalities for public hearings regarding CCRPC activities will include the full text of the document to be adopted or amended and a public hearing notice. The published legal notice (in *The Burlington Free Press* or *Seven Days*) will include the locations where documents are available for public review. At a minimum the locations include the CCRPC office and municipal offices of CCRPC member communities. These announcements meet the requirements of the Vermont Open Meeting Law, Title 1 V.S.A. § 310-314.

Work Groups

Work groups are assigned a specific task, with a time limit for reaching a conclusion or producing a draft document, subject to ratification by official decision-makers. The membership of these groups often includes local people or representatives from interest groups, appointed by elected officials or agency executives. This can allow us to engage people in their native language.

Comment Forms

Comment forms are often used to solicit public input on specific issues being presented at a workshop or other public meeting. Comment forms can be very general in nature, or can request very specific feedback.

Surveys and Questionnaires

In-person and telephone interviews, surveys, and Web-based questionnaires are sometimes used to gather information from the public about potential new programs and when updating existing programs and services.

Visualization Techniques

Visual media of different formats is used to convey information about the planning process, project alternatives and alternative scenarios. These techniques include computer models, maps, photos, renderings, charts and graphs, and video.

Analysis Reports

CCRPC staff can use existing or collect new data to perform detailed analysis of specific issues, policies or projects. The results are shared with member municipalities or other stakeholder groups to aid in their decision-making.

Technical Assistance Studies

The CCRPC coordinates with municipalities on smaller scale transportation issues, bicycle/pedestrian plans, project development and coordination, updating previous studies and more.

Note: This document is extracted from and can be found on pages 10-20 of the full 2014 Public Participation Plan.

CONSULT: CCRPC Activities

The following are examples of **CCRPC Activities** within the **CONSULT** category that use the Strategies listed previously.

Transportation Improvement Program

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a prioritized, fiscally constrained, multi-year list of federally funded, multimodal transportation projects and operations in Chittenden County. Under federal law, the TIP must cover at least a four-year program of projects and be updated at least every two years. Projects must be prioritized at the regional level and have clearly identified funding sources. All Chittenden County transportation projects, programs, and operations receiving federal funds must be authorized through the TIP process. Details on TIP Amendments may be found in **Appendix D**.

CCRPC Board Meetings

For monthly Board meetings, Board members and alternates will be sent meeting notification, agendas, and appropriate documents at least one week prior to the actual meeting date, except in the case of special meetings. Board agendas and meeting minutes will be mailed to all town/city managers/administrators, legislators, and others as requested. Information should be available in advance of the meeting and should include: agendas, meeting background information, previous meeting minutes, public notices, public comment period information, and a contact person. Board agendas and meeting minutes are available on the CCRPC website in accordance with Vermont's Open Meeting Law.

Fluvial Erosion Hazard Assessment

The CCRPC commonly contracts with engineering firms to conduct analyses of fluvial erosion. Fluvial erosion is erosion caused by rivers and streams, and can range from gradual bank erosion to catastrophic changes in river channel location and dimension during flood events. The CCRPC shares this information with its municipal governments and often presents the results of such assessments at public meetings of the municipal government.

Speed Studies

Municipalities occasionally wish to re-evaluate locations on their local roads where the posted speed limit may be questionable. Vermont State law (Title 23 V.S.A. Section 1007) authorizes local governing bodies to establish effective and enforceable speed limits on town highways at not more than 50 MPH or less than 25 MPH on the basis of a traffic engineering study. Such an investigation helps to establish that any posted speed limit is safe, justified, and reasonable, based on the prevailing conditions of the particular roadway.

7c. SPECTRUM OF PARTICIPATION LEVEL 3: INVOLVE

Under the **INVOLVE** level, the CCRPC will work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered. **At the INVOLVE level and all levels above (COLLABORATE and EMPOWER), staff will complete the CCRPC Public Participation Plan & Equity Impact Worksheet (Appendix C).**

Note: This document is extracted from and can be found on pages 10-20 of the full 2014 Public Participation Plan.

Characteristics of participation include:

- Two-way channel of communication
- Multiple interactions
- Medium to long-term
- Advancement of solutions to complex problems

INVOLVE: Strategies of Participation

The following is a description of the **Strategies of Participation** the CCRPC will use to **INVOLVE** the public, in addition to the strategies found in the previous levels of engagement.

Advisory/Steering Committees

For some plans and projects, an advisory committee of stakeholders is assembled to assist in defining the project purpose and need, represent the interests of various constituent groups, and provide input, feedback and guidance on project documents and process. Short-term project or plan-specific advisory committee members are eligible for the CCRPC's **Volunteer Stipend Policy** (Appendix F), which provides participants who are not already being compensated through their place of employment with a per-meeting stipend amount to account for their time and effort toward serving on the committee.

Project Meetings/Workshops/Open Houses/Forums

Public meetings and other similar events are arranged to disseminate information, provide a setting for discussion, and gather feedback from the public. Depending on the type of projects, they are often hosted a number of times to develop planning documents and shape alternatives. These meetings may be held in different formats, including poster sessions, open houses/interaction periods, hands-on activities, formal presentations, question and answer format, brainstorming sessions, small break-out groups, and charrettes. Some projects such as scoping studies typically follow a prescribed public participation process that includes at least two public meetings: a local concerns meeting and an alternatives presentation meeting. However, the specific outreach plan is tailored to the needs of each project.

Direct Mailings

Direct mailings are used to announce upcoming meetings or activities or to provide information to a specific group of people, such as those who may potentially be impacted by a project or those with a specific interest in a project. Materials should be provided in the appropriate languages based on the particular neighborhood or community.

Staff Outreach

CCRPC staff or consultants can do direct outreach to residents, including vulnerable populations, and translation services should be available.

CCRPC Public Participation Plan & Equity Impact Worksheet

The Equity Impact Worksheet is both a process and a tool to identify, evaluate, and communicate the potential impact - both positive and negative - of a policy or program on equity.

Note: This document is extracted from and can be found on pages 10-20 of the full 2014 Public Participation Plan.

INVOLVE: CCRPC Activities

The following are examples of **CCRPC Activities** within the **INVOLVE** category that use the Strategies above.

Unified Planning Work Program

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) defines the regionally agreed-upon transportation planning priorities and the roles and responsibilities of various participants in the transportation planning process for Chittenden County. The work elements are to be completed by the end of the organization's fiscal year (June 30). The UPWP provides an overview of the CCRPC's process and describes how all of the municipalities, agencies, partners, stakeholders and other interests involved in the activities of the CCRPC work together in a comprehensive, continuing, and cooperative process to meet the critical transportation needs of Chittenden County.

Planning Advisory Committee

The Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) oversees the CCRPC's regional planning activities and policy development. The PAC includes representatives from municipalities, transit, state, public/interest groups and others. They are responsible for reviewing municipal plans, recommending Act 250 and Section 248 policy and projects of regional significance, making regional planning policy recommendations for Board consideration and/or action, providing guidance to MTP, UPWP, and TIP development, and other transportation and regional planning processes.

Transportation Advisory Committee

The Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) oversees the CCRPC's transportation activities and policy development which are funded primarily through the Federal Highway Administration Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) program. The TAC is comprised of municipal public works and planning staff, as well as representatives of stakeholder and interest groups (e.g., transit, rail, environment, bicycle/pedestrian, etc.). The TAC reviews and amends the MTP, TIP and UPWP, makes recommendations on grant program awards, discusses transportation policies at all levels, provides feedback on technical issues, and more.

Scoping Studies

Project "scoping" is the phase in the Project Development process that moves a recognized problem from an idea through the development of alternatives and environmental screening.

7d. SPECTRUM OF PARTICIPATION LEVEL 4: *COLLABORATE*

Under the **COLLABORATE** level, the CCRPC will partner with the public in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.

Characteristics of participation include:

- Two-way channel of communication
- Multiple interactions
- Medium to long-term

Note: This document is extracted from and can be found on pages 10-20 of the full 2014 Public Participation Plan.

- Advancement of solutions to complex problems

COLLABORATE: Strategies of Participation

The following is a description of the **Strategies of Participation** the CCRPC will use to **COLLABORATE** with the public, in addition to the strategies found in the previous levels of engagement.

Community or co-led committees

For some projects a local community may provide project leadership, or partner with the CCRPC to co-lead a specific effort. This approach may attract strong public participation due to the local level leadership rather than a project led solely by the CCRPC or other organization/agency. This “insider” approach can result in greater buy-in from the public because people feel more directly connected to the project.

Advisory boards, coalitions and partnerships

Collaborative projects require regular, consistent participation and input from the public, key stakeholders, partners and others. Advisory boards, coalitions and partnerships comprised of these varied interests provide the necessary guidance and feedback to CCRPC staff, consultants and others performing the day-to-day activities to bring a project to successful completion. These groups can be appointed by the CCRPC Board or created by a project’s core team.

Policy development and advocacy

Through collaboration with member municipalities and the public, the CCRPC can update existing or create new policies that guide future projects and development within communities. Since these are important decisions with long-term implications, it is vital that the public be informed and participate in the process. The CCRPC can also advocate for necessary policy changes at all governance levels based on the involvement and support of the public throughout the policy development process.

COLLABORATE: CCRPC Activities

The following are examples of **CCRPC Activities** within the **COLLABORATE** category that use the Strategies above:

Metropolitan Transportation Plan

Federal law and regulations require that metropolitan areas such as Chittenden County develop and periodically revise and update a long-range transportation plan, known as the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP).

Regional Plan

Vermont state statute requires that each region in the state adopt a Regional Plan to encourage the appropriate development of land that will protect the County’s resources, and promote the general welfare of the public.

Public Participation Plan

Under federal law, the CCRPC must actively involve all affected parties in a continuing, cooperative, and collaborative process that provides meaningful opportunities to influence transportation decisions. Federal statute requires a separate, written plan that details the process for collecting public input on

Note: This document is extracted from and can be found on pages 10-20 of the full 2014 Public Participation Plan.

CCRPC documents. The Public Participation Plan (PPP) describes the CCRPC's policies and guidelines for providing opportunities for the public to be involved in projects and planning activities.

Corridor Studies

These studies review and analyze current and future corridor conditions related to transportation; develop corridor vision and goals; as well as develop and evaluate strategies to address congestion, safety and other issues within the corridor and area of influence.

Land Use Studies

By examining current land use zoning regulations, we can help member municipalities and other partners plan for possible transportation impacts of future growth associated with improvements. Engaging the public in scenario planning workshops is one way to help determine the desired development patterns and associated transportation system. We can also work with municipalities to explore current trends in land use planning, such as form based codes.

7e. SPECTRUM OF PARTICIPATION LEVEL 5: *EMPOWER*

Under the **EMPOWER** level, the CCRPC will place final decision-making in the hands of the public.

Characteristics of participation include:

- Two-way channel of communication
- Multiple interactions
- Medium to long-term
- Advances solutions to complex problems

There are generally few projects that fall under the Empower section due to the CCRPC's process of work program development and the types of projects undertaken by the organization. Member municipalities, through their local elected officials, are empowered in that they have the final approval and acceptance of transportation planning activities completed on their behalf. Similarly, the CCRPC bylaws are determined and approved by the governing bodies of member municipalities.

The CCRPC is a catalyst and facilitator for interest groups and municipalities to be empowered through our planning processes and specific projects. For example, a specific interest group (e.g., walk/bike) may form an ad hoc committee to advocate for improvements as part of a CCRPC corridor study. Municipalities are empowered at the conclusion of a local scoping study to pursue construction or implementation funding.