



# Public Participation Plan

September 2024

Approved by the BACTS Policy Committee - September 2024



The preparation of this document has been funded in part by the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The contents of this document do not necessarily state or reflect the official views or policies of the funding agencies.

## *Non-Discrimination Policy Statement*

The Bangor Area Comprehensive Transportation System (BACTS), as a recipient of Federal financial assistance and under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes and regulations, is committed to ensuring that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, gender, age, disability, income, or limited English proficiency, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefit of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity conducted by BACTS, regardless of whether programs and activities are federally funded or not.

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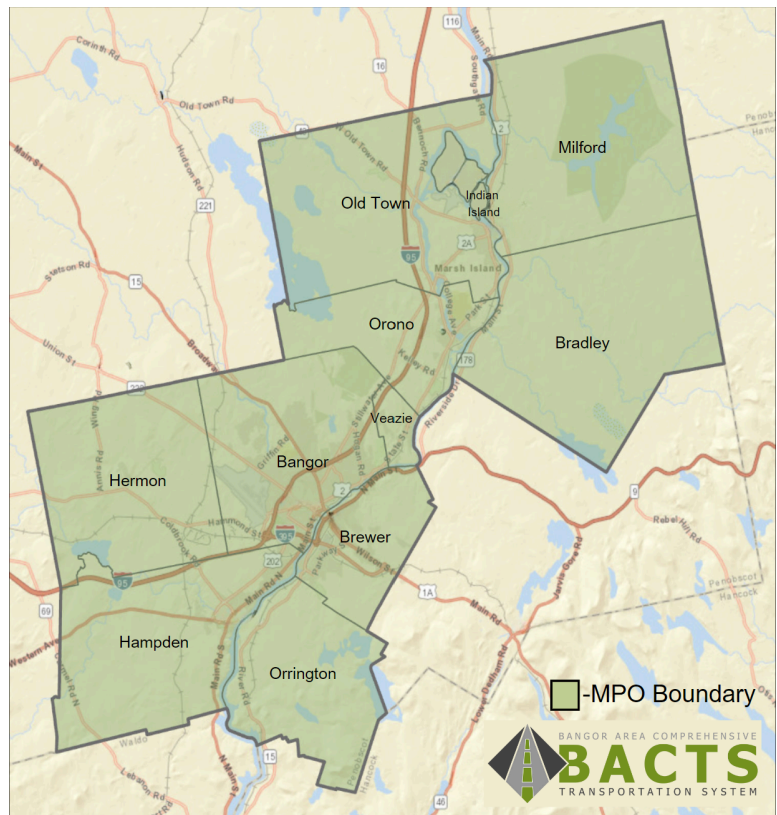
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## Purpose of the Public Participation Plan

The Bangor Area Comprehensive Transportation System (BACTS) metropolitan planning area is a relatively small but growing region, a single transportation project can impact community well-being, economic opportunities, and access to goods and services. Every project in the region should seek to understand these potential effects on the public. Engaging the public is critical because individuals who use the transportation system know best the impact on their lives and communities. BACTS seeks participation from residents, agency partners, business owners, and civic organizations, including but not limited to minorities, low-income individuals, the elderly and disabled, and those with limited English proficiency. Early and targeted incorporation of these groups in plan or project development will be key to effective and inclusive public processes in the BACTS region. This Public Participation Plan aims to lay out a path to inform and engage the public about transportation issues in the BACTS region. This plan recognizes that successful planning processes allow and encourage meaningful public input while following applicable federal and state regulations / standards (23 CFR 450.316 and State of Maine procedures for various programs mentioned throughout this document).

## Metropolitan Planning Area

BACTS metropolitan planning area includes Bangor, Bradley, Brewer, Hampden, Hermon, Milford, Old Town, Orono, Orrington, Veazie and Penobscot Indian Island. The BACTS region has a population of nearly 85,000. There is one fixed route transit operator in the greater Bangor Urbanized Area (UZA), the Community Connector. The Community Connector serves the municipalities of Bangor, Brewer, Hampden, Veazie, Orono, Old Town, and the University of Maine.



## What is BACTS

BACTS is a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) designated by the federal and state government to carry out a comprehensive, continuing, and cooperative transportation planning process for urbanized areas (as defined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census).

BACTS is focused on improving transportation services in the Greater Bangor area. BACTS pursues this aim by evaluating and programming transportation improvement projects throughout the region. Another major function of BACTS is to facilitate communication between stakeholders, such as its own member communities, the regional transit agency, and state and federal transportation agencies

As is the case with most MPOs, BACTS does not own or operate the transportation system it serves and, therefore, is not involved in implementing the transportation project priorities established. Rather, BACTS serves an overall coordination and consensus-building role in planning and programming funds for projects and operations. BACTS involves local transportation providers in the planning process by including transit agencies, State and local highway departments, airport authorities, maritime operators, rail-freight operators, private providers of public transportation, and others with an interest in the transportation system within the greater Bangor UZA.

### Membership and Governance

BACTS membership is limited to those municipalities, tribes, and the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT), within the greater Bangor Federal UZA as defined by the most recent United States Decennial Census and MaineDOT.

BACTS is governed by a Policy Committee. Each member municipality and tribe have the right to appoint one voting member for every three thousand (3,000) people in their urbanized area to the Policy Committee, with a minimum of one member and a maximum of four (4) members per municipality or tribe. MaineDOT also has the right to appoint one (1) voting member. Additionally, FHWA and FTA each have one (1) non-voting seat on the Policy Committee.

#### Voting Members per Bylaws\*

Bangor - 4    Bradley - 1    Brewer - 3    Hampden - 2    Hermon - 2    Milford - 1  
Old Town - 2    Orono - 3    Orrington - 1    Penobscot Nation - 1    Veazie - 1

*\*A Voting Member may vote in proxy of any absent Member representing their Municipality.*

### Committees

**Executive Committee** - The Executive Committee sets the overall strategic direction for BACTS. Duties include proposing amendments to bylaws; approving policies and procedures; and reviewing/renewing the Executive Director's contract and performing their annual performance evaluation.

**Policy Committee** - The Policy Committee is the governing body of the MPO. Duties include establishing subcommittees and working groups; hiring/firing of the Executive Director; setting strategic direction for the regional long-range plan and UPWP; endorsing the programming of the annual federal funding allocation; adopting the annual TIP; establishing/amending bylaws; and approving/directing the Executive Director to sign and enter contracts on behalf of BACTS.

**Transit Committee** - The Transit Committee provides input on overall strategic direction for Community Connector, the fixed route transit service in the greater Bangor UZA. Duties include providing input on the Community Connector capital plan, assisting with the annual budget development, and providing input on all transit planning efforts and studies.

#### Committee Meetings

All committee meetings are open to the public. Notifications, cancellations, and any special announcements for regular meetings conducted by BACTS are posted on the BACTS website and Facebook page. Meeting notices, agendas, and materials are provided to all members of the Committee at least seven (7) calendar days prior to a scheduled meeting. Meeting notices and agendas for committee meetings are posted to the BACTS website at least seven (7) calendar days prior to a scheduled meeting. Meeting minutes are available on the BACTS website after committee approval.

There is opportunity for public input at each BACTS committee meeting during the standing public comment agenda item. Public input is limited to five minutes per person. The Committee Chair has the discretion to allow additional time for public input or limit public comments when they determine comments are redundant.

#### Meeting Accessibility

The transportation needs and opinions of all persons shall be included in the transportation planning process. The planning process will be made accessible by ensuring that all public meetings are held at convenient and accessible locations and times. When possible, public meetings shall be held at facilities accessible by public transit. Meetings shall also be offered virtually and/or by telephone when



possible. Individuals needing special accommodations to participate in meetings or individuals with limited English proficiency should contact BACTS staff at Office Phone Number: (207) 974-3111, Office Email Address: [info@bactsmpo.org](mailto:info@bactsmpo.org), or TTY Number - Dial 711 or 1-800-833-6388, at least three (3) business days prior to the scheduled meeting in order to make arrangements to accommodate their needs.

### **BACTS Plans and Programs**

BACTS' primary responsibility as an MPO is to establish a setting for effective decision making in the metropolitan area and develop regional planning products. This includes the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), long-range Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Title VI Plan, and Public Participation Plan (PPP).

#### ***Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)***

The UPWP lists the transportation studies and tasks that BACTS staff and member agencies will perform to support the metropolitan transportation planning process. The UPWP identifies the funding source for each project, the schedule of activities, and the agency or agencies responsible for each task or study.

The UPWP covers a two-year period and typically includes the following elements:

- Planning data and analysis tasks, such as data collection and trends monitoring, and studies of a variety of demographic, development, transportation, and environmental factors.
- Public outreach activities conducted in accordance with the Public Participation Plan, including collaborative development and periodic evaluation of its effectiveness.
- Preparing the MTP and TIP, including supporting studies and products that will result from these activities.

See Appendix A for relevant public comment period requirements. All relevant comments or changes will be compiled, reviewed/approved by the Policy Committee, and documented, as applicable.

#### ***Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)***

The MTP covers a 20-year horizon and must be updated at least every five (5) years. The MTP serves as the region's comprehensive plan for transportation investment to support the safe and efficient movement of people and goods. Federal law requires that the MTP "...include both long-range and short-range strategies/actions that provide for the development of an integrated intermodal transportation system... to facilitate the efficient movement of people and goods in addressing current and future transportation demand."

The MTP is prepared through active engagement with the public and stakeholders using an approach that considers how roadways, transit, nonmotorized transportation, and intermodal connections are able to improve the operational performance of the multimodal transportation system. Developing and updating the MTP can take several months, if not longer. Throughout the long-range planning process, the public will be engaged at key stages of development. Once the revised MTP is in final draft form, a comment period of thirty (30) calendar days will be provided for public review. If the final MTP differs significantly from the version that was made available for public comment, a second public comment period of at least ten (10) calendar days will be held before final approval by the BACTS Policy Committee.

See Appendix A for relevant public comment period requirements. All relevant comments or changes will be compiled, reviewed/approved by the Policy Committee, and documented, as applicable.

### *Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)*

The TIP identifies transportation projects and strategies covering a four-year timeframe and is updated every year. All projects receiving funding by the FHWA and FTA must be listed in an approved Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) before they are eligible for federal expenditures. These projects reflect the investment priorities detailed in the MTP.



The TIP lists the immediate program of investments that, once implemented, will go toward achieving the performance targets established by the MPO and documented in the MTP. The TIP is the region's means of allocating its transportation resources among the various capital, management, and operating investment needs of the area, based on a clear set of short-term transportation priorities prepared through a performance-driven process.

The City of Bangor, as a direct recipient of FTA Section 53 federal funds and fixed route urban public transit provider in the greater Bangor UZA, uses the BACTS TIP public involvement process to satisfy their program of projects (POP) public involvement requirements.

See Appendix A for relevant public comment period requirements. All relevant comments or changes will be compiled, reviewed/approved by the Policy Committee, and documented, as applicable.

### *Title VI Plan*

BACTS is committed to ensuring that the fundamental principles of equal opportunity are upheld in all decisions and ensuring that the public-at-large is afforded access to our programs and services. To that end, no person shall be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any BACTS program or activity on the grounds of race, color, and national origin. BACTS assures all of its programs and activities will be free from discrimination, whether those programs and activities are federally funded or not.

BACTS will ensure all individuals have meaningful access to programs and activities by seeking full representation from the community, considering public comments and feedback, and incorporating that feedback into final deliverables when possible. As part of that process, BACTS will provide reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities and/or limited English proficiency. Auxiliary aids and/or sign language interpretation services will be provided upon advanced notice.

For individuals who speak English less than well, BACTS uses a language card, and LanguageLine Solutions to provide free over-the-phone translation services at public meetings. Individuals needing accommodations to participate in meetings should contact BACTS staff at: BACTS Office Phone Number - (207) 974-3111, Office Email Address - [info@bactsmo.org](mailto:info@bactsmo.org), or TTY Number - Dial 711 or

1-800-833-6388 at least three (3) business days prior to the scheduled meeting in order to make arrangements to accommodate their needs.

The BACTS Title VI Plan is reviewed and updated annually and submitted to MaineDOT by October 1st of each year. BACTS is also required to submit an annual report of Title VI related accomplishments and goals to MaineDOT annually. The Plan is available to the public on the BACTS website and at the BACTS office.

Inquiries concerning BACTS' policies, investigations, complaints, compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and concerns regarding compliance with Title VI, may be directed to the Title VI Coordinator:

Paige Nadeau, Office Manager  
Bangor Area Comprehensive Transportation System  
12 Acme Road, Suite 204, Brewer, ME 04412  
(207) 974-3111  
[info@bactsmmpo.org](mailto:info@bactsmmpo.org)  
TTY Number - Dial 711 or 1-800-833-6388



### **Public Participation Plan (PPP)**

This Public Participation Plan (PPP) is designed to provide all interested parties, including the public, local organizations, local public agencies, and planning partners, with information on how BACTS engages the public in the transportation planning and programming processes.

BACTS will review this PPP and the procedures and strategies used to solicit public participation and feedback and ensure a full and open participation process at least once every three years. A Notice of Public Comment will be posted on the BACTS website and sent to the list of *Interested and Affected Parties* when the PPP is revised. A period of at least 45 calendar days will be provided during which comments may be submitted to BACTS for consideration. BACTS will make available the proposed Plan with a brief description of significant changes on the BACTS website and at the BACTS office.

BACTS Staff will compile all relevant public comments, or a summary of similar comments, for consideration and response (if warranted) by the BACTS Policy Committee. BACTS will prepare the final PPP after carefully considering all of the comments and input received from the public process.



All relevant written or oral public comments received on the draft Plan, with Policy Committee response, will be included in the final Plan. Copies of the approved PPP will be provided to FHWA and FTA for informational purposes and be posted on the BACTS website.

## Metropolitan Transportation Planning Key Product Update Schedule

Plan / Program	Time Horizon	Contents	Update Frequency
UPWP	2 Years	Planning Activities and Studies	Biennially
TIP	4 Years	FHWA and FTA Funded Projects	Annually
MTP	20 Years	Future Goals, Strategies, and Products	5 Years
PPP	NA	Opportunities for Involvement in the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process	3 Years
Title VI	NA	Methods of Considering Impacts to Protected Groups	Annually

## Public Involvement Procedures

### Public Outreach Strategies

Public outreach is essential to the planning and transportation programming process. A variety of techniques and tools should be used to ensure transparency and increase opportunities for the public to participate. BACTS regularly tracks key demographic information so we have an accurate picture of our region’s makeup. This information not only informs our outreach strategy when scoping a new plan but it is also a helpful checkpoint during the planning process to inform whether we are reaching all target groups. We adapt our outreach strategy throughout the plan development to respond to any identified participation gaps.

### Annual List of Obligated Projects

In order to give the public an accurate understanding of how federal funds are being spent, MPOs must produce an annual listing of projects in the region for which federal funds have been obligated. These listings must be posted via publicly accessible means within 90 calendar days of September 30th, the end of the federal fiscal year. For each project the following information will be provided:

- The amount of federal funds requested in the TIP
- The type of work done
- The beginning and end points of the project
- The project length, in miles
- The federal funding that was obligated during the previous year
- The federal funding remaining and available for subsequent years

Visit the BACTS website for the most current list of Obligated Projects (find under Transportation Improvement Plan section): <https://bactsmpo.org/current-programs/>

### Interested And Affected Parties Distribution List

In order to promote active, informed public participation in the transportation planning process, a broad range of organizations and individuals are included in the *Interested and Affected Parties* list. Any agency or individual can request to be added to the distribution list by contacting BACTS staff at Office Email Address - [info@bactsmpo.org](mailto:info@bactsmpo.org), BACTS Office Phone Number - (207) 974-3111, or TTY Number - Dial 711 or 1-800-833-6388 .



## Outreach Methods

BACTS solicits stakeholder feedback in a variety of ways throughout the development of MPO programs and projects. Depending on information needs and the stakeholder group(s) being targeted, a variety of methods are employed such as surveys, presentations, webinars, public meetings, public workshops, steering committees/advisory boards, and other community outreach events. Public notices will be posted widely in ways (such as social media, news outlets, website, flyer, etc.) and places (town halls, libraries, post offices, etc.) frequently visited by the public to ensure equal opportunity for engagement. Staff may also determine whether a virtual, in-person, or hybrid format best suits the information needs of the outreach and best aids accessibility of the target audience.

## Website

The BACTS website, [www.bactsmmpo.org](http://www.bactsmmpo.org), is the primary means by which BACTS makes information available to the public. Interested parties may be directed to the site using traditional media, social media, emails and other forms of notification. The website provides public access to a variety of documents, containing both policy and technical information used in the transportation decision-making process. The *Events* section of the website <https://bactsmmpo.org/events/> lists all meetings and current public participation and comment opportunities.



## Social Media

Social media has become an essential way to reach individuals. BACTS uses social media to share ideas and information on a variety of transportation-related topics, post meeting announcements, and inform the public about activities related to the metropolitan transportation planning process and public participation activities. Although BACTS will read and consider all comments made on social media platforms, only comments that are submitted in accordance with requirements described in the formal Notice of Public Comment will be part of the official public comment record for a product that is out for public review and comment.



Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/BangorAreaComprehensiveTransportationSystem>



Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/bactsmmpo/>

## **Scheduling And Notice Procedures**

See Appendix A - “*Chart of Comment Periods and Minimum Notice*”

## **Access to Information**

All documents for public review and comment will be posted on the BACTS website. There is a translation feature available on the BACTS website for a variety of languages, if an individual’s language is not available, this individual is encouraged to contact BACTS staff at BACTS Office Phone Number - (207) 974-3111, Office Email Address - [info@bactsmmpo.org](mailto:info@bactsmmpo.org), or utilizing the TTY Number - Dial 711 or 1-800-833-6388 for additional assistance.

BACTS staff will make printed materials available to the public upon request. When appropriate, a fee may be collected for copies of publications. The fee will cover the cost of production and, if applicable, the cost of mailing the materials. All such materials are available for viewing at the BACTS office at no cost.

## Goals and Performance Measures

Effective public participation is essential to the successful implementation of any planning program or project. Without the involvement of local citizens, it is difficult to design a program that effectively meets the needs of the public. A proactive public involvement process leads to a transportation system that reflects the needs and values of the community. To that end, BACTS actively seeks to incorporate the involvement of the public in its planning efforts.

Public participation efforts are intended to include and afford individuals, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, public ports, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation (including intercity bus operators, employer-based commuting programs, such as carpool program, vanpool program, etc.), representatives of affected users, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.

To assess the effectiveness of BACTS' public involvement activities, the following strategies, performance measures, and evaluation criteria shall be used:

Strategy	Performance Measure	Evaluation Criteria	Method to Meet Goal
Interested and Affected Parties Distribution List	Keep database current	Number of returned items	Immediate corrections when items returned
BACTS Website	Increase number of unique website visitors	Number of hits	Use other tools to increase awareness of website
Meeting and Public Hearing Advertisements	Advertise all required meetings and public hearings 7 days in advance	All required meetings and public hearings are advertised 7 days in advance	Ensure system is in place to advertise appropriately
Translation and Interpretive Services	Satisfy all requests	Number of made and filled requests	Advance notice of meetings; opportunity for translation service is prominent and clear on all notices
Social Media	Maintain and post content regularly	Calls, messages, number of followers	Provide information, announcements, access to surveys, and meeting information; maintain and monitor account
Comment Forms; Surveys; Questionnaires	50% of meeting attendees complete; OR 25% of mail/email recipients complete	Number of responses received; number of persons reached	Encourage response, explain importance of receiving feedback to improve planning process
Public Forums, Meetings, Hearings, Workshops, Project Meetings	Attendance reflects public interest; progress is able to be made using input from affected parties	Attendance, emails, letters, etc.	Schedule at convenient times and locations; hold multiple workshops to allow for options; use tools to increase awareness

### Appendix A - Comment Periods and Minimum Public Notice

The following table clarifies the required notice for meetings or public hearings for each of BACTS planning activities. All notices of public meetings and public hearings will be posted to the BACTS website.

Plan or Program	Minimum Public Comment Period	Notes
New or Updated PPP	45 Days	<i>Plan reviewed every three years, or as deemed necessary through the planning process.</i>
New UPWP	10 Days	<i>Prior to UPWP development, odd numbered years</i>
New or updated MTP Draft	30 Days	<i>Comment period is 30 days from notice of public hearing, and at least 10 days from date of the first public hearing</i>
Final MTP	*10 days	<i>*Only if the Final Plan contains substantive changes from the draft made available for public comment, or raises new material issues that interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts</i>
MTP Amendment	10 Days	
New TIP	10 Days	
TIP Amendment	10 Days	
TIP Project Rating Criteria	10 Days	<i>Only for substantive changes to rating criteria</i>
Other Transportation Studies or Plans	TBD	<i>At the discretion of the BACTS Policy Committee</i>

Meetings	Dates	Notice of Meeting	Notes
Policy Committee	At least once each quarter. Usually the third Tuesday of the Month.	Seven (7) calendar days prior to scheduled meeting	<i>Meetings may be held more often or at different dates and times as deemed appropriate by the Committee Chair.</i>
Executive Committee	At least once each quarter.	Seven (7) calendar days prior to scheduled meeting	<i>Meetings may be held more often or at different dates and times as deemed appropriate by the Committee Chair.</i>
Transit Committee	At least once each quarter. Usually on the second Wednesday of the month.	Seven (7) calendar days prior to scheduled meeting	<i>Meetings may be held more often or at different dates and times as deemed appropriate by the Committee Chair.</i>
Public Hearing		Ten (10) calendar days prior to scheduled meeting	
<p><i>Meetings shall be open to the public in accordance with applicable law; provided however, that the Board shall have the power to go into executive session and exclude the public when authorized under applicable law. There is opportunity for public input at each BACTS committee meeting during the standing public comment agenda item. Public input is limited to five minutes per person. The Committee Chair has the discretion to allow additional time for public input or limit public comments when they determine comments are redundant.</i></p>			



## **Appendix B - Public Comments Received During Public Comment Period and Responses**

No public comments received during the public comment period.