Public Participation Plan

Southwest Michigan
Planning Commission

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The public participation process described herein is used to satisfy the public participation process for the Program of Projects (POP), as prescribed in accordance with Chapter 53 of Title 49, United States Code (FTA requirements), and the metropolitan and statewide planning regulations under the FAST Act, for the following public transit agencies: Twin cities Area Transportation Authority (TCATA), Niles Dial A Ride, Buchanan Dial A Ride.

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INTRODUCTION

The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) is a regional planning agency, which serves Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties. SWMPC works on many different programs, with most falling into the following categories: transportation, economic development, community planning, and environmental protection. SWMPC's transportation planning includes two metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), the Twin Cities Area Transportation Study (TwinCATS) and the Niles-Buchanan-Cass Area Transportation Study (NATS).

The vision of the SWMPC is "Planning Great Communities Together." At the heart of this vision is working together with regional partners and the public. The only way to ensure our plans benefit the residents of Southwest Michigan is for them to be involved in the process. At SWMPC we realize that planning is not an act done only by trained experts; it is a collaboration between many parties, including the public, who each have important and unique contributions to make. SWMPC believes that no one is more of an expert on their own community than the people who live there. The main goal of SWMPC's public participation is to ensure that the actions undertaken by SWMPC reflect the wishes and best interests of the public.

There are many different ways to work with the public and it is critical that the participation tools SWMPC uses are appropriate for the project at hand. As such, the following plan documents how SWMPC chooses the most effective strategies for engaging the public. This plan lays out steps to evaluate projects and their impacts so SWMPC can match the project with the best participation strategies.

Our promise to the public:

- Keep the public informed about our activities
- Allow everyone to have meaningful input in the planning process
- Respect all people and all ideas
- Seek out feedback on our actives so we can continuously improve our processes
- Make special efforts to involve persons and groups typically under-represented in planning or with special needs, including low-income, minority, elderly, and disabled populations
- Make providing feedback simple and easy
- Make all efforts for our plans to reflect the feedback from the public
- Treat the public as an equal partner in our process
- Continuously update our public participation methods based on public feedback and effectiveness

As a public agency, every project SWMPC undertakes is designed to benefit the community. Therefore, there are always impacts to the public due to our action. Because of this, the Public Participation Plan applies to all SWMPC activities. This includes being the official public participation plan for both MPOs. In addition, it also covers the public transit providers who serve the urbanized area, which are:

- Twin cities Area Transportation Authority (TCATA)
- Niles Dial A Ride
- Buchanan Dial A Ride
- Berrien Bus
- Cass County Public Transit

FRAMEWORK FOR DECIDING WHAT STRATEGIES TO USE

For every project SWMPC undertakes, we will go through a series of steps to construct a public participation plan specific to that project. These plans will indicate the resources dedicated to public participation and what activities we intend to use. Most public participation plans will be simple and short, but large projects will have longer public participation plans, which include multiple activities. As part of these plans, SWMPC will record the outcomes of the participation activities and how they influenced the outcome of the project.

Every project is unique. The impacts on the community differ depending on the project details and location. The key to great engagement is tailoring the tools used to the specifics of the project at hand. Most of SWMPCs daily actives are simple and have incremental impact or the decisions are straightforward. In many cases, the best public participation may only involve minimal public involvement. The most important outcome of public participation is that SWMPC creates the best possible outcome with a satisfied public. The purpose of this public participation plan is not to choose the most in-depth strategies but rather, the one most appropriate for specific circumstances. On the other hand, when SWMPC carries out special programs that have large interest and wide reaching impacts it is crucial that we make all efforts toward a more detailed strategy to include public input into the project, and devote greater resources to public participation efforts.

SWMPC uses the following process to assess which participation methods are most appropriate:

1. Assess the level of public concern or interest
2. Understand who may be affect and who should be consulted
3. Identify the appropriate level of participation
4. Select the best participation tool(s) to use & document the decisions
5. Monitoring and Evaluation

Step 1: Assess the level of public concern or interest

The questionnaire below is used to help determine how much interest the project is likely to receive.

Assessment Questions	Very low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
What is the anticipated level of conflict, opportunity, or concern on this or related issues?					
How significant are the potential impacts to the public?					
How much do major stakeholders care about this issue, project, or program?					
What degree of involvement does the public appear to desire or expect?					
What level of public participation does the board, or committees desire or expect?					
What is the potential for public impact on the proposed decision or project?					
How significant are the possible benefits of involving the public?					
How serious are the potential ramifications of NOT involving the public?					
What is the possibility of broad public interest?					
What is the probable level of difficulty in solving the problem or advancing the project?					

Step 2: Understand who may be affected and who should be consulted

SWMPC want to ensure a wide range of people get involved in the process.

Decision makers	Decision makers are the people ultimately in charge of deciding what occurs
People affected by the project	This includes both positive and negative effects. SWMPC also looks at the region-wide effects alongside the effects in the immediate vicinity of a project
People who have knowledge that could affect the project	In many instances, local residents have the most knowledge about their community and this knowledge is invaluable in ensuring project success. Also includes subject matter experts on a topic
People who are able to promote or block the project	Local community leaders, advocacy groups
People who are not usually involved in the process	Non-English speakers, minorities, low income residents

Step 3: Identify the appropriate level of participation

Using the results of Steps 1 and 2 of the framework, SWMPC aska a series of questions to gauge what level of public participation is required.

1. What is the purpose of engagement?
2. How will we effectively reach all audiences?
3. What are the potential barriers and risks to doing this work?
4. If there are decisions to be made, how does public participation fit into the overall decision-making process?
5. How will you inform the community of benchmarks or progress throughout the process?

Categorizing participation into levels helps differentiate strategies by the various goals and needs for a specific project. Participation goes from the most basic level of informing the public all the way to the highest level of "empower," where the public is ultimately in charge of the final outcomes. While SWMPC values robust public involvement, we understand that it is not possible or even appropriate to always use the highest levels of participation. SWMPC strives to align the level of participation we use to the specific activity we are working on. Using the results of the level of impact assessment and stakeholder analysis, SWMPC categorizes the project based on the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2)'s Spectrum of participation. The more impactful a project, the higher the level of public participation strategy chosen.

The spectrum of participation build upon each other like a pyramid. When you "consult," you also must "inform," when you "involve" the public you need to both "consult" and "inform." The higher level the project entails, the greater the previous levels need to be. Like a pyramid, the base can be large even if the pyramid is not going to reach the highest level, but it is not possible to use the highest levels of participation without having a strong foundation.

The table in Step 4 provides a brief explanation of each participation level, when they are most suited, and a few examples of activities that fall into each category.

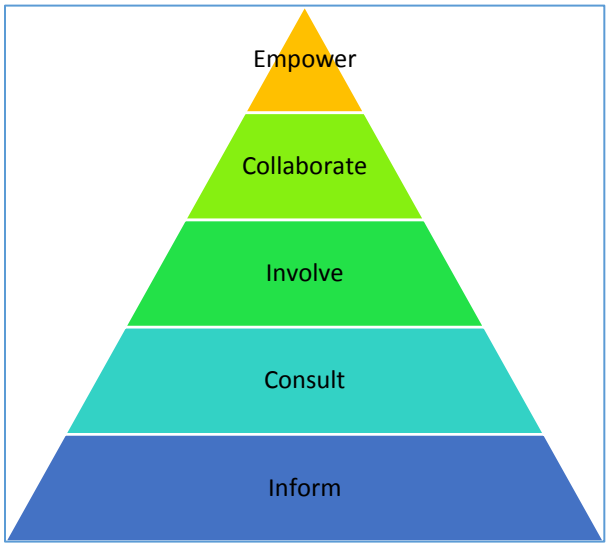
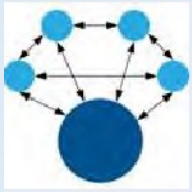
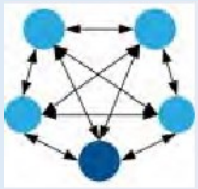


Figure 1. Levels of Participation pyramid

Step 4: Select the best participation tool(s) to use & document the decisions

The following table breaks out tools by the level of participation. This table is used for SWMPC to match the level of participation required with the appropriate tools. A more detailed explanation of the public participation tools follows the table.

The Levels of Participation and the Public Participation Tool Selection Table were adapted from the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum (2000). For more information on this tool see http://www.iap2.org

Public Participation Tool Selection Table Increasing Level of Public Involvement →					
	INFORM	**CONSULT**	**INVOLVE**	**COLLABORATE**	**EMPOWER**
The Public:	**Learns**	**Contributes**	**Participates**	**Partners**	**Decides**
					
Goal	Provide the public with objective information to assist them in understanding the issues.	Obtain public feedback on issues and possible solutions.	Work directly with the public throughout the process, engaging the public in finding solutions.	Collaborate with the public in all aspects of the process including the creation of proposed solutions, the identification of the preferred option, and implementation.	The final decision is in the hands of the public.
When	The activity has low impact, is highly technical, and the public is unlikely to come up with different outcomes.	The options have been narrowed and we want to ensure the final decision reflects public desires.	The project has larger impacts, with a variety of possible outcomes and we want to keep the process transparent and find the best solutions.	There are large impacts and difficulty in implementation. We need assistance in all stages and must rely on the public and other groups for help.	There is such a wide reaching impact that only the public should be able to make the decisions.
Public Promise	We will keep you informed of what is happening.	We will listen to you, acknowledge your concerns, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decisions.	We will work with you to ensure your concerns are directly reflected in our solutions.	We will look to you for advice and assistance in formulating solutions.	We will implement what you decide.
Sample Tools	Fact Sheets, Website, Press Releases.	Surveys, Comment Forms.	Public Meetings Workshops, Visioning sessions.	Citizen Advisory Committees, Consensus Building, Charrettes.	Ballot Measures, Citizen Juries.

INFORM

Because the spectrum of participation is a pyramid, with each level building upon the previous one, the higher the level we are utilizing, the more resources SWMPC must devote to the previous levels. Informing the public is the foundation of all participation strategies because every other strategy requires the public to have a basic awareness of what is happening. Furthermore as the public gains, more knowledge they are better able to make informed decisions and to provide more in-depth feedback on how a project will affect them.

Every effort will be made to ensure the public comprehends the messages we send. This means using plain language in all public involvement materials, including newspaper ads, flyers, and mailings. The Plain Writing Act of 2010 is one guideline that can be used, which states that federal agencies use "clear government communication that the public can understand." For more information on writing in plain language, please visit www.plainlanguage.gov. Although SWMPC is not bound by this act, this is still a goal we strive to achieve.

Strategies to inform the public can be passive or active. Passive forms of communication rely on the public seeking out the information. Active informing means going to where the public already is and directing a message to them. When a project might have wide reaching effects and we require a lot of public input SWMPC will use active outreach to ensure we reach the intended audiences.

The following is a listing of the main tools SWMPC will use to inform the public:

Website: SWMPC website www.swmpc.org is the place to find basic information on the agency. The website includes a document library for all our major planning documents. The website also is a tool for educating people on the topics we work on and how SWMPC plays a role. The website is updated regularly by SWMPC staff so it will always contain the relevant information for the public. The website contains a calendar of events for all SWMPC sponsored activities.

Social Media: Since many people regularly check Facebook & other social media sites as a source for news and events, this is an important tool for providing short communications. Like the website, Facebook allows for comments, messages, and a calendar of events

Newsletter: At least four-times a year, the SWMPC publishes a newsletter that is full of updates on projects, workshops, and important public input meetings, and much more. When released, the newsletter is available on the website or in hardcopy by contacting the SWMPC. By mailing the newsletter to groups, we actively distribute information without relying on people to come to our website

Email: When messages need to be sent to a group of stakeholders, email provides the quickest method to reach a targeted audience. SWMPC maintains a list of contacts who need to be contacted on projects. This includes soliciting input and announcing funding opportunities.

Public Notices or Legal Ad: A public notice or legal ad represents the minimum required to notify the public about a meeting. All notices will be published at least 7 days before the meeting. Notices should be accompanied by other advertising methods to ensure a wide audience is reached.

Press Releases: A Press Release is a tool that allows us to get a message out to people who might not otherwise seek out SWMPC for information. It is used when we wish to produce education to a broad group of people on a topic with wide reaching impact. We cannot rely solely on digital communication because many people do not have easy access to a computer. For most digital methods one must already know about SWMPC through our website, have subscribed to our Facebook page or gotten on an email list.

Flyers & Fact Sheets: To further reach people who might not receive our digital communication or subscribe to a newspaper, we will use flyers to advertise important meetings. Flyers will be placed in locations frequently traveled by the target audience. Fact sheets are a simple way to provide information in a more compact form than a press release or written segment on our website.

CONSULT

SWMPC strives to make it easy for the public to provide feedback to us at all times. We strive to incorporate this feedback into our programs.

Contact information: Directly contacting staff is simplest way to give feedback. Therefore All of our communications from the previous section will include contact information to a SWMPC staff member to direct questions to or to request more information on any topic.

Comment forms: Comment forms will be provided at all of our public meetings so people have an anonymous way to submit concerns if they were unable to verbally make their comments during the meeting.

For comments either directly sent to a SWMPC staff member or through a comment form, SWMPC will:

- Share the comment with the project decision makers
- Provide a response on how the comment was used
- Include the comment as part of the public record on the project

Surveys: When we deem that, a large sampling of the public is warranted we use surveys. Digital survey methods can be used to make completion of a survey easy and maximize our resources. In addition, all of our surveys will have a paper option, available upon request, to reach those who do not have easy access to a computer.

INVOLVE

Public Meetings: The primary tool for involving the public is the public meeting. We strive to make all meetings we hold participatory events. Meetings are not merely opportunities for us to communicate to you or for you to provide comments but for us to engage in an open dialogue. Most meetings SWMPC holds are open to the public and we attempt to attract a diverse group of people and ideas at all our meetings. All of our events will be posted on our website and Facebook page. We also use public notices, flyers, and other non-digital methods to reach a wide audience. We will specifically look for methods of advertising that will reach traditionally underrepresented groups. Following the spirit of Inclusiveness set out in Section 3 we strive to make all meetings accessible to every resident regardless of disability. We set our meetings in locations and at times, which are most convenient for the community.

Meeting materials will be made available at least five business days* prior to all public meetings. All of our advertisements for meetings will include a contact to send questions, comments, or requests for accommodation. For regularly scheduled meetings a yearly notice will be published with the tentative upcoming meeting dates that will direct readers to check the website or call to check for cancelations.

In addition to the traditional meeting format of presenter and audience, SWMPC will utilize more interactive meeting structures such as:

- Workshops
- Discussion groups
- Open houses
- Visioning sessions

Virtual meetings: On October 16, 2020, the Governor signed Michigan Senate Bill 1108 which amended the Michigan Open Meeting Act to allow the use of virtual public meeting. Under the bill, anyone may participate in a meeting virtually due to a medical condition or military service. A public meeting may be held entirely virtually if there is a statewide or locally declared state of emergency that would put committee members or the public at risk if a meeting were held in person. A virtual meeting must follow all other rules for an in person meeting. Meetings must permit 2-way communication that allows the members of the public body and the public to hear and be heard by each other. Any requirement for a public meeting can be satisfied by virtual meeting if the rules of the Open Meetings Act are followed. See appendix B for more information.

Visualization Techniques: Involving the public often includes methods to present information in a way that elicits more feedback. Visualization techniques include mapping exercises where the community locates assets on a map. Map can also be used for groups to mark on a map what they would like to see certain developments occur. Visualization techniques will be used during meetings and as online to increase participation by a wide range of stakeholders.

*Business days are Monday-Friday excluding holidays. The minimum number of calendar days to reach five business days prior to an event is 7 days. If a meeting is scheduled for Friday, then 4 business days prior is Monday, skipping over the weekend means material would need to be out by the previous Friday. Using business days means if a holiday falls before a meeting material would need to be sent a day sooner than usual.

COLLABORATE

Citizen Advisory Committees: A citizen advisory committee is a group of interested citizens who are organized to provide oversight for a project. Unlike a technical advisory committee who looks at the feasibility of a project, the citizen advisory committee looks at projects from the impact they have on the community. As the name suggest the committee is advisory and makes recommendations to a main steering committee.

Advisory Boards, Coalitions, and Partnerships: In many cases, SWMPC is not the lead agency but a partner with others on a larger project. Partnerships and coalitions are groups made up of a wide variety of stakeholders who have come together for a particular purpose.

Discussion Tables: At meetings, discussion tables allow citizens to talk among themselves about projects. This strategy allows SWMPC to provide citizen feedback and better incorporate the ideas into our projects.

Charrettes: A charrette is a multiday design event, consisting of a series of public meetings within a short time (a full charrette is a week, but smaller versions can be done). After each meeting, a working group incorporates the feedback into the design and reports back the results. This allows quick feedback loops to both the public and working group.

EMPOWER

Empowerment refers to relinquishing the role of decider. Here SWMPC becomes an equal participant in the project to the public. Under this strategy, the ultimate decision is in the hands of the public and SWMPC agrees to implement what they choose.

This level of engagement is the most difficult as it requires significant effort in all the previous levels. This includes extensive education of the public. Ample opportunity must be provided for the public to have input in the outcome so they feel they have as much ownership of the project as SWMPC does.

Step 5: Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of our participation activities is the key to this plan's success. We evaluate which activities are effective so we know which strategies to use again so we can build upon previous success. On the other hand, despite our best efforts our strategies might not be effective. Therefore, we also evaluate outcomes so we can either adapt or discontinue strategies that are ineffective. Analysis falls into two categories: the quantity, and the quality of participation.

SWMPC records the amount of participation including the number of meeting attendees or the number of websites in which outreach appears. This provides an objective and quantifiable method for evaluating the effectiveness of our efforts. Below is a sample if the quantitative data we collect to asses our participation efforts:

Public Participation Tool	Performance Goal	Evaluation Criteria	Method to Meet Goal(s)
SWMPC Website	Number of page views. Usefulness of website content	Goggle Analytics to measure website views. Survey of users to determine if the website provides needed information	Use other public participation tools to increase awareness of the website as an effective resource
Social Media	Maintain and post content regularly	Number of fans/followers, and shares of posts	Provide information, announcements, access to surveys, and meeting information; maintain and monitor account

Public Participation Tool	Performance Goal	Evaluation Criteria	Method to Meet Goal(s)
SWMPC Newsletter	Number of people reached. Favorable comments from readers.	Comments from readers	Update recipient list based on undeliverable email and or postal addresses. Continue items that receive favorable comments and remove or rework items that receive negative comments.
Legal Advertisements	Advertise all public hearings within timeframe; see other methods of advertising to compliment legal ads.	Save copies of papers with legal ad and request an affidavit of publication.	Improve the size, layout, or placement of the ad to increase visibility
Informational flyers, posters, brochures	Materials readily available and distributed on request	Calls, emails/letters, number of persons reached	Locate additional places to distribute material. Write material in ways that relate to readers
Emails	Database of contacts is up to date	Number of returned items. Calls, emails/letters, number of persons contacted	Update recipient list based on undeliverable email; fine-tune recipient list to accurately target affected areas; provide surveys to track usage of tools; monitor email opening rate
Press Releases	Seek coverage from media outlets that reach the target audience	Number of calls, letters, and email responses; number of news stories generated.	Provide information in a 'ready to print' or broadcast format; pursue print publication in a prominent location; modify material based on public feedback

Public Participation Tool	Performance Goal	Evaluation Criteria	Method to Meet Goal(s)
Comments	Number of forms filled out/ Number of comments received via website	Ensure comments are recorded and addressed	Encourage response by explaining the importance of receiving feedback to improve the planning process; provide incentives to fill out surveys (raffle to win gift certificate to restaurant in project area, etc.)
Surveys	Number of Responses	Survey responses are representative of the target distribution	Encourage responses by explaining the importance of receiving feedback; offer incentives for returning surveys
Public forums, meetings, hearings, project meetings, workshops, open houses	Attendance, calls, emails/letters, etc.	Attendance reflects the public interest in a project (includes representatives or groups from affected neighborhoods, organizations, businesses, etc.); progress is able to be made using input from affected parties	Schedule at convenient times and locations; hold multiple workshops to allow for options; use multiple online and offline tools to increase awareness
Advisory/ steering committee	Percent of member participation across the length of the project	Percent of member participation	Schedule at convenient times and locations; ensure timely distribution of materials; keep members engaged and informed

It is also equally important to ask about the quality of participation.

Some of the questions we ask are:

- Did the level of interest match the expected impact on the community?
- Was participation representative of the community demographics?
- Was any person or group absent from the process?
- Did the tools we choose effectively engage the public?
- Did we meet the public expectations?
- Did our final product reflect the input we received during the public participation process?

INCLUSIVENESS

One of the most important and hardest tasks in public outreach is ensuring all members of the community have their voices heard. Historically some groups have been left out of the process. The response to this has been regulations prohibiting any overt attempts to exclude underrepresented groups. SWMPC strives to go beyond this to actively consider inclusiveness from the beginning and throughout the planning process. We want all individuals to not only be able to participate but to feel welcomed into the process.

To promote an environment of inclusion SWMPC will:

- Proactively seek out underrepresented groups for input
- Ask people how they would like to be involved in the process
- Consider any subtle bias which might make any person uncomfortable participating
- Hold events that are at convenient times and locations for identified stakeholders
- Where possible hold meetings in places that are served by public transit
- Be aware of cultural, language, and technical knowledge barrier, which could limit participation.

Environmental Justice

Historically low income and minority populations have received a disproportionate amount of health and environmental impacts from federally funded projects without seeing the full benefits. Environmental Justice (EJ) seeks to minimize this. EJ is mandated under a federal directive (Executive Order 12898, enacted in 1994) requiring all federal programs to identify and address, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority populations and low-income populations as the result of its programs, policies, and activities. Populations that fall under the EJ mandate include historically marginalized groups such as African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic or Latino Americans, Native Americans, and low-income households.

SWMPC maintains a map of areas of high minority and low-income populations, which are referred to as EJ locations (see appendix D). For every project SWMPC works on, we check if it falls within an EJ area to see if we need to conduct further scrutiny. We also periodically assess how much of our overall work is being done within EJ areas, to ensure an equitable distribution of resources.

It is not merely enough though to make plans and then check to see if they have EJ implications. Typically, enforcement of the law focuses mostly on adverse effects such as pollution in EJ areas. SWMPC takes a further step, to ask, during the project development phase, not only whether a project may have adverse effects, but also how we can provide benefits to those who need them the most.

In addition to looking only at the EJ locations, we realize that often projects outside of EJ areas can still have major impacts to EJ populations in the region. Thus, we actively seek involvement from EJ populations to ensure that their desires and concerns are addressed in our work.

Title VI and Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 mandates that no one is discriminated against based on race, color, or national origin. As part of required Title VI reporting each year, SWMPC compiles a report on public participation activities and efforts to ensure inclusiveness. The SWMPC also maintains a Title VI complaint form to fill out for anyone who feels discriminated against. Beyond avoiding direct discrimination, we strive to increase participation among underrepresented groups. This involves ensuring all people feel comfortable and welcome participating in the process.

Southwest Michigan has a small population of residents who identify as speaking English "less than very well." They are as much a part of the community as native English speakers and we value their participation therefore:

- If a request is made to make meeting materials available in Spanish 14 business days prior to a meeting, then those meeting materials will be translated into Spanish.
- If a request is made at the meeting (the day of the meeting) to provide meeting materials in Spanish, then the SWMPC will have 14 business days to transcribe the meeting materials into another language and provide them to the requested party via email or mail.

In addition to this Public Participation Plan, SWMPC maintains a Title VI and Limited English Proficiency Plan (http://www.swmpc.org/downloads/final_plan_nov_2011.pdf), which includes additional measures SWMPC takes to ensure compliance with the letter and spirt of civil rights laws. SWMPC has a Title VI complaint form for any individual who believe they faced discriminated against by SWMPC. This form is available on the SWMPC website, in the SWMPC office, or can be obtained by contacting a staff member.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) states that “no qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of a public entity.” Simply put no person should ever feel excluded because of a disability. This includes mobility issues, sensory impairments, or any other disability.

All transit agencies included in this plan will maintain an accessibility plan to ensure that all individuals are able to use public transit, regardless of any disability. To ensure the transit system is meeting user’s needs, transit agencies will convene a local advisory committee to seek input from the public. This committee will consist of at least 50% seniors or those with disabilities. In addition, agencies will maintain a process to certify ADA eligible persons, as well as a process for filing ADA complaints, hearing, reviewing, and resolving them.

In order to serve those with disabilities SWMPC will:

- Include an accommodation statement in all event advertisement letting people know how they can request accommodations.
- Hold all events in places that are accessible to those with mobility issues.
- Have all meeting materials available at least five business days prior to meetings so those who need them, can get the documents into a readable form.
- Make sure our website is compatible with voice reading software for the visually impaired.

Tribal Outreach

Southwest Michigan is home to the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians who have tribal lands throughout Berrien, Cass and, Van Buren Counties as well as parts of northern Indiana. The Pokagon Band as a federally recognized tribe is acknowledged to have the sovereign right to govern itself. SWMPC seeks to treat the Pokagon Band with the respect due to any other sovereign nation. Yet while the tribe is self-governing, they are still an integral part of the community and SWMPC will work with them and solicit participation as we do with any other citizens in the SWMPC planning area.

Whenever a project occurs in an area that contains tribal land or is expected to impact tribal citizens, SWMPC will:

- Send a message to a representative of the tribe informing them about the project and seek input.
- Seek tribal representation on any committees formed
- Ensure that any outreach or advertising is done in a way that reaches tribal citizens
- Include tribal government on any outreach to local governments in the SWMPC planning area.

MAJOR PROGRAMS

Transportation Planning has several major documents that are routinely produced. These documents have legal requirements. SWMPC will not only meet these requirements but utilize our framework to excel in including public input into our projects. Most of the requirements are for allowing public comment after a draft document has been prepared. SWMPC hopes to use our outreach efforts so that public input is already included in the initial draft of these documents.

The general approval process for a transportation-planning document is as follows:

1. Draft approval recommendation by the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC);
2. Draft approval by the Policy Committee;
3. Public comment period;
4. Final draft approval recommendation by the TAC;
5. Final draft approval by the Policy Committee;
6. Final document approval by SWMPC full board;
7. Submission to MDOT;
8. Approval by MDOT and submission to FHWA and FTA.

For the public comment periods, SWMPC will actively reach out to inform the public that a draft has been prepared and solicit comments. SWMPC also will have at least one public meeting where the public can make comments. These public meeting may be a regularly scheduled committee meeting where the public is always welcome to attend. The SWMC website will indicate if a document is being voted on at a committee meeting.

Public comments are reported anonymously in the appendices of documents. Committee members' responses to the comments are submitted to MDOT along with the documents. SWMPC will use other public participation strategies earlier in the process. It is our goal that by the time the first draft of any document has been written, the public has had ample opportunity to have their voices heard and reflected in the plan. If warranted SWMPC may extend comment periods or delay voting on any document until the concerns of the public are addressed.

Document	Action	Minimum Public Comment Period	SWMPC Approval Required
Long Range Transportation Plan (LRP)	Adopt new plan	14 days	Yes
	Amendment	7 days	No
	Administrative amendment	none	No
Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)	Adopt new plan	14 days when projects are released 14 days when document is released	Yes
	Amendment	7 days	No
	Administrative amendment (modification)	none	No
Unified Work Program (UWP)	Adopt new plan	10 days	Yes
	Major amendment (more than 20% change in budget or scope)	10 days	Yes
	Minor amendment	Public can comment at meeting where amendment is reviewed	No
Public Participation Plan (PPP)	Adopt new plan	45 days	Yes

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Milestone	Public Participation Procedures	Advertising methods	Minimum Public Comment period length
Start of the TIP development	• Inform the public • Request Comments	• Notice on Website • Email/Mailing to Consultation List • Newspaper Press Release	N/A
Draft Project Lists, Environmental Justice Air Quality Analysis (if Applicable)	• Comment Period • Public Meeting	• Newspaper Advertisements or legal notice • Email/Mailing to Consultation List • Flyers • Posting on SWMPC & MPO member websites	14 days: Begins when SWMPC releases a draft project list before the committee meeting when the final projects are selected.
Adoption of draft document	• Comment Period • Public Meeting	• Legal Notice • Email/Mailing to Consultation List • Flyers • Posting on SWMPC & MPO member websites	14 days: Begins on the date of the MPO committee meeting when they approve the draft plan before SWMPC board approves the final version.
Amendments	• Occur at regular MPO meetings	• Notice on Website a week prior to the meeting and included in meeting packets	7 days

TIP Amendments

It is frequently necessary to amend the TIP because of changes to projects within the document. TIP amendments are approved at MPO committee meetings. A week before all MPO meetings SWMPC will list on our website if there will be amendments occurring at the meeting. A full description of all TIP amendments will be included in meeting packets available on the SWMPC website. For additional information on TIP amendments please see the TwinCATS and NATS TIP Amendment Policy.

Long Range Transportation Plan (LRP)

The purpose of the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRP) is to create a vision, goals, objectives, and specific strategies to follow over a 25-year time frame. The Plan is used as a guide for all MPO transportation activities including project section for the TIP. Therefore, SWMPC takes great effort to ensure the public's input is included into the LRP. The LRP is updated every 5 years.

Milestone	Public Participation	Advertising methods	Minimum Public Comment period length
Start of the LRP process	• Extensive Informational campaign to raise awareness about the LRP • Surveys gather input on current perceptions of the transportation system	• LRP Information added to website • Emails to Interested Citizen/Agency List • Transportation issues survey developed and circulated • Press releases	N/A
Goal, Objective & Strategy Development	• Multiple public meetings to discuss transportation needs and identify key goals. • Public Comment period	• Notice on website • Direct mailing to Interested Citizen/Agency • List • Press release • Flyers	14 days
Adoption of Document	• Comment Period • Public Meeting	• Legal Notice • Email/Mailing to Consultation List • Flyers • Posting on SWMPC & MPO member websites	14 days: Begins on the date of the MPO committee meeting when the draft plan is approved and before SWMPC board approves the final version.
Amendments	• Occur at regular MPO meetings	• Notice on website a week prior to the meeting and included in meeting packets	7 days

LRP Amendments

Similar to the TIP, the LRP sometimes needs to be amended to reflect regionally significant projects being proposed. Making an amendment to the LRP follows the same participation procedures as amendments to the TIP. A week before all MPO meetings the SWMPC will list on its website if there will be amendments occurring at the meeting. A full description of all TIP amendments will be included in meeting packets available on the SWMPC website.

Unified Work Program (UWP)

The UWP is the annual program of work activities for the NATS and TwinCATS MPOs. The UWP is the product of regional participation and collaboration between the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the SWMPC. When complete, it is submitted to MDOT and the Federal Highway Administration for approval.

Milestone	Public Participation	Advertising methods	Minimum Public Comment period length
Start of the UWP process	• Meeting with MDOT and discussion with MPO committees	N/A	N/A
Adoption of the UWP	• Comment period • Discussion at regular MPO meeting	• Legal Notice • Email/Mailing to Consultation List • Posting on SWMPC website	10 days
Amendments	• Requires both MPO committee and SWMPC board approval	• Notice on website a week prior to the MPO meeting and included in meeting packets	10 days

UWP Amendments

Major amendments and/or revisions, representing a change of more than 20 percent of the total budget or any program element budget, or a change in scope, will require a ten-day public review and comment period and approval by the SWMPC Board.
Minor amendments that do not represent a change of more than 20 percent of the program budgets only require the approval of the respective Policy Committee at a public meeting.

Public Participation Plan (PPP)

The PPP is reviewed annually to ensure it continues to provide for effective public engagement. Furthermore, as new participation tools such as digital technologies are developed the public participation plan must reflect the current state of best practices. Since this public participation plan covers the entire SWMPC, both TwinCATS and NATS must approve the plan before moving to the full SWMPC board for approval. In addition, the plan is reviewed by several state and federal agencies to ensure regulatory compliance.

Milestone	Public Participation	Advertising Methods	Minimum Public Comment Period Length
Draft Public Participation Plan developed	The draft plan is presented to MPOs and then to the SWMPC board. The SWMPC board will vote on a conditional approval which will begin the comment period	• Posting on website prior to MPO meetings • Legal Notice for the start of the comment period • Direct emails to stakeholders	45 days
Public Participation Plan Approval	If no comments are received during the public comment period, the plan will go into effect. If there are comments that require changes to the plan, the plan will return to the MPOs and SWMPC board for another vote.	• Posting on website	N/A

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Federal Regulations

The majority of federal regulations related to participation in transportation decision-making can be found in **Title 23; Section 450.3.16, Code of Federal Regulations**, as enacted in the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST)) Act. These regulations leave the methods for carrying out participation to the discretion of each state; however, participation processes must provide the following:

- Early and continuous opportunities for involvement.
- Public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times.
- Timely information on transportation issues, processes and procedures.
- Reasonable access to technical and policy information.
- Electronic accessible and available public information via the web.
- Adequate notice of involvement opportunities at key decision points.
- Methods for considering and responding to public input.
- A course of action for seeking out and considering the needs of traditionally underserved groups.
- Periodic review and evaluation of the participation process.

In addition to the FHWA rules, transit is regulated under Title 49 and has regulations under Program of Projects:

Public Participation Requirements. —Each recipient of a grant shall—
(1) make available to the public information on amounts available to the recipient under this section and the program of projects the recipient proposes to undertake;
(2) develop, in consultation with interested parties, including private transportation providers, a proposed program of projects for activities to be financed;
(3) publish a proposed program of projects in a way that affected citizens, private transportation providers, and local elected officials have the opportunity to examine the proposed program and submit comments on the proposed program and the performance of the recipient;
(4) provide an opportunity for a public hearing in which to obtain the views of citizens on the proposed program of projects;

(5) ensure that the proposed program of projects provides for the coordination of public transportation services assisted under section 5336 of this title with transportation services assisted from other United States Government sources;
(6) consider comments and views received, especially those of private transportation providers, in preparing the final program of projects; and
(7) make the final program of projects available to the public.

The **Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)** states that "no qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of a public entity." Sites for participation activities, as well as the information presented, must be accessible to persons with disabilities. ADA requires specific participation – particularly for developing paratransit plans – such as the following:

- Outreach by developing contacts, mailing lists, and other means of notification
- Consultation with disabled individuals
- The opportunity for public comment
- Accessible formats
- Public hearings
- Summaries of significant issues raised during the public comment period
- Ongoing efforts to involve persons with disabilities in planning

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, together with related statutes and regulations, provide that "no person shall on the ground of race, color, and national origin be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal funds. The entire institution, whether educational, private or governmental must comply with Title VI and related Federal civil rights laws, not just the program or activity receiving federal funds."
Executive orders regarding environmental justice and outreach to persons with limited English proficiency are also regulated under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.
Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, 1994, states that; "each Federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies and activities on minority populations and low-income populations." Traditionally underserved groups such as low-income and minority populations must be identified and given increased opportunity for involvement in order to ensure effective participation. **Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency, 2000**, requires that recipients of federal financial aid must ensure that the programs and activities normally provided in English are accessible to persons with limited English proficiency.

Appendix B: State Regulations Concerning Public Participation

The Michigan Open Meetings Act 267 of 1967 applies to any "public body," defined as a state or local legislative or governing body, including a board, commission, committee, subcommittee, authority or council, empowered by state constitution, statute, charter, ordinance, or resolution to perform a governmental or proprietary function. The law states the following provisions:

- All meetings of a public body shall be open to the public and shall be held in a place available to the general public. All persons shall be permitted to attend any meeting (except a permitted closed meeting) and shall be permitted to record the proceedings of the meeting.
- A person shall not be required to provide his or her name or to register as a condition of attendance at a meeting.
- A person shall not be excluded from a meeting otherwise open to the public except for a breach of the peace actually committed at the meeting.
- For regular meetings of a public body, there shall be posted within 10 days after the first meeting of the public body in each calendar year or fiscal year a public notice stating the new dates, times, and places of its regular meetings.
- For a rescheduled meeting, a public notice stating the date, time, and place of the meeting shall be posted at least 18 hours before the meeting.
- The public notice shall include the name, telephone number, and address of the public body to which the notice applies, and it shall be posted at the principal office of the public body.
- Each public body shall keep minutes of each meeting showing the date, time, place, members present, members absent, any decisions made at a meeting open to the general public, and the purpose for which a closed session is held. The minutes shall include all roll call votes taken at the meeting.
- Proposed minutes shall be available for public inspection not more than 8 business days after the meeting to which the minutes refer. Approved minutes shall be available for public inspection not later than 5 business days after the meeting at which the minutes are approved by the public body.
- Corrections in the minutes shall be made not later than the next meeting after the meeting to which the minutes refer. Corrected minutes shall be available no later than the next subsequent meeting after correction. The corrected minutes shall show both the original entry and the correction.

On October 16, 2020, an amendment to the Open Meeting Act (OMA) was approved that allows for virtual meetings. From January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2021, public bodies may only meet remotely under the following circumstances requiring accommodation of absent members due to:

- military duty;
- a medical condition; the OMA is amended to define a "medical condition" as an illness, injury, disability or other health-related condition;
- a statewide or local state of emergency or state of disaster declared pursuant to law or charter by the governor or a local official or local governing body (and meeting held in person would risk the personal health or safety of members of the public or the public body).

The following rules apply to virtual meetings:

- Electronic meetings must be "conducted in a manner that permits 2-way communication so that members of the public body can hear and be heard by other members of the public body, and so that public participants can hear members of the public body and can be heard by members of the public body and other participants during a public comment period."
- Public bodies must post notice at least 18 hours in advance of a meeting held electronically if the public body "directly or indirectly maintains an official internet presence." The advance notice must be posted on the public body's website on either the homepage or on a separate webpage dedicated to public notices for non-regularly scheduled or electronic meetings that is fully accessible to the public, and must include, among other things:
- A statement as to why the public body is meeting electronically;
    - How members of the public may participate in the electronic meeting;
    - If the public body has prepared an agenda for the meeting, the agenda must be made available to the public on the public body's website at least 2 hours before the electronic meeting begins.
- Further, the amendments impose a new requirement for any member of the public body participating remotely to publicly announce, at the outset of the meeting, that he or she is participating remotely. If the announcing member's remote participation is for any reason other than military duty, the member must announce his or her physical location "by stating the county, city, township, or village and state from which he or she is attending the meeting remotely." The member's public announcement must be included in the meeting minutes.

Appendix C: Public Participation Worksheets

When To Use This Worksheet
Use the worksheet if you will be working on an effort that falls under *Involve, Collaborate, or Empower* (see the *Spectrum of Participation*, pages 6-8). Use it early for alignment with equity goals and desired outcomes. Use the results of this worksheet to inform the planning project's scope of work around public participation. Develop your public participation and equity impact plan by entering your answers in the blank worksheet at the end.

How To Use This Worksheet
This worksheet will assist you in considering your process, purpose, primary audience, potential barriers, impacts and strategies to inform and involve your intended audience before you begin a project. You can also use this as a reference during all stages of your engagement process. Below are some key questions with prompts to guide and direct you. Also, reference the *Spectrum of Participation* to determine the level and methods of participation that best suit the project.

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 engagement fit into the overall decision-making process? (What stages? What methods?)
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 you are working in an area with underrepresented community and you have draft recommendations, use the following (see instructions as part of step 5).

EQUITY IMPACT REVIEW WORKSHEET

(1) Population(s) affected disproportionately (populations from Step 2 list)	**(2)** Describe potential positive impact (beneficial)	**(3)** Describe potential negative impact (adverse)	**(4)** Actions to enhance positive or mitigate negative/other comments

Based on your review of actions in step 4, please list your recommendations for the policy/program and why you chose them. Please describe the next steps for implementation.

1. What Is The Purpose Of Your Engagement?
CONSIDERATION POINTS: What do you hope to achieve? What is your main purpose for involving community members? Where does your engagement fit on the Spectrum of Participation*?*

2. Stakeholders: Who Is Potentially Impacted By This Project?
CONSIDERATION POINTS: Who are the interested parties? Who are the potentially impacted communities? Who are the adjacent property owners? Are there resident or neighborhood organizations? Are stakeholders groups defined (neighborhoods, topic area, ethnic or racial, language, gender, tribal, etc.)?
GROUPS TO CONSIDER: municipal government, residents, business owners, underrepresented populations (minority, new American, aging, low-income communities), schools, youth, persons with disabilities.

3. What Strategies And Tools Will You Use To Ensure You Have Information From And Research About The Relevant Groups And Communities?
CONSIDERATION POINTS: Have you gathered adequate background information about the affected populations you intend to reach (i.e., language spoken, customs, historical or geographic data, relevant data reports)? What other resources will you need in order to better know and understand your audiences?
Identify the demographics of the area, particularly by race/ethnicity, income level and limited English proficiency (attach maps or other data as necessary).
Resources
The following resources can help you determine who may be impacted:

- SWMPC Environmental Justice Maps
- American Community Survey: http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml
- Community Commons: http://www.communitycommons.org/maps-data/

4. How Will You Effectively Reach All Of Your Audiences?
CONSIDERATION POINTS: What steps will you take to ensure impacted communities are included in all stages of the project? Do you or others involved in the project have appropriate partnerships or contacts in place to initiate and support the adequate level of participation throughout all stages of the project? How will you utilize internal staff, consultant expertise, or contracted partners to provide technical assistance or consultation to ensure inclusive stakeholder involvement? Would the utilization of the Stipend & Reimbursement Procedure lead to greater participation in the project? How do you plan to address language and literacy needs including translation, interpretation and reading levels? What alternative and non-traditional approaches will you utilize? Does your intended audience have their own engagement practices that should be considered? Consult the Spectrum of Participation (pages 10-20) *documents to help determine an appropriate range of participation methods.*

5. What Are The Potential Barriers And Risks To Doing This Work?
CONSIDERATION POINTS: Are there trust or communication issues among members of the public or a community that may prevent full participation (i.e., social, political, tribal, gender-specific)? How will you address the diverse cultural differences among affected communities? Is there adequate justification for proceeding with your project concept (i.e. time, cost, level of interest)? Is there community and public support for the planning project? What are some unintended consequences of the project if not completed effectively? Are there strategies in place to address unintended consequences?

When recommendations are first developed, if underrepresented communities will be impacted, examine how to mitigate negative impacts and enhance positive impacts. Use the table in the worksheet at the end for this purpose. Here is the guidance for that table:

Identify the impacts of the proposal from an equity perspective. The goal is to develop a list of likely impacts and actions to ensure that negative impacts are mitigated and positive impacts are enhanced. Have the project steering/advisory committee complete the rest of the worksheet. If the steering advisory committee does not include representatives from the underrepresented communities, they should be added to the group for this task.

Complete Column 1 of the **Equity Impact Worksheet** using the responses from step 3. Columns 2 and 3 are a detailed discussion of the positive and negative impacts of the proposal on the identified population groups by race/ethnicity, income, and limited English speakers. In Column 4, describe any recommendations or actions, which arise from your discussions about impact. These might include:

- Ways in which the program/policy could be modified to enhance positive impacts, to reduce negative impacts for identified population groups;
- Ways in which benefits of modifying program/policy to remove differential impacts outweigh the costs or disadvantages of doing so;
- Ways in which existing partnerships could be strengthened to benefit the most affected.

The goal of the Equity Impact Worksheet is to propose a set of recommendations for modifying the proposal. When modifications are not possible, the option of not proceeding with the proposal needs to be addressed. Occasionally, it is possible to find a single, clear solution which will provide the optimum impact. However, in most cases a series of options will be defined and presented. Recommendations should be prioritized as appropriate.
It may prove impossible to consider all potential impacts and identified actions. In this stage, participants are encouraged to prioritize or rank the actions based on the likelihood to impact equity. For each of the actions the following should be considered:

- the costs of the action;
- is the impact on equity high or low;
- what needs to happen to increase the feasibility of the action;
- what other resources are needed;
- who will implement the action;
- the timing of the actions

6. If There Are Decisions To Be Made, How Does Community Participation Fit Into The Overall Decision-Making Process?

CONSIDERATION POINTS: Are there processes in place to involve affected communities in decisions at different levels and phases, as shown on the Spectrum of Participation*? Will there be diverse representation from affected communities in the decision-making process? Is there a standard point of contact for community members? What decisions will need to be made after the community participation process, and how will the community be involved then? How will the affected community be informed of final decisions? Describe the points in the process when community participation will be sought including the methods to be used.*

7. How Will You Inform The Community Of Benchmarks Or Progress Throughout The Process?
CONSIDERATION POINTS: Will there be opportunities for formal project/program updates and feedback (i.e. meetings, website updates, phone calls, e-mail, and/or mail)? Is there a budget for printing and circulating an outcomes report? How will you recognize the contributions of community members? How will the community be informed about the potential impacts of final decisions? What steps will be taken to maintain developed relationships and opportunities for future collaboration or participation?

8. How Will You Evaluate The Success Of Your Public Participation Plan, Both In Terms Of Processes And Outcomes?
CONSIDERATION POINTS: Based upon the participation tools selected in response to question 4; what evaluation metrics (see page 21, Evaluating the Public Participation Plan*) will be reported during and at the conclusion of the project?*

Logistics & Planning Tips
The logistics of community participation are critical for turnout and community interest. Paying close attention to a number of logistical issues throughout the entire public participation process will enhance involvement and improve the overall effort. Some items to consider:
Accessibility: *Is the location wheelchair accessible and code approved for persons with disabilities?*
Venue: *Making meetings geographically close to communities or stakeholders is critical to a good turnout. Choosing a site that is community centered may be more familiar and comfortable for attendees. Is the venue accessible, and does it accommodate multiple transportation and parking options?*
Host: *Clarify the role for all those involved, including public officials, project lead, public participation project manager, consulting staff, community members, etc. prior to each public involvement tool.*
Staffing: *Will you use consulting staff, CCRPC staff and/or partner staff to help with set-up, welcoming, and meeting facilitation?*
Budget: *Is your budget adequate to provide resources for translation services, interpretation services, advertising, communication, promotion, rental space, refreshments/food, transportation, child care, and other applicable stipend/reimbursement options?*
Time: *Can you accommodate community members to hold meetings at times that are most convenient for them, including nights and weekends?*

This worksheet was adapted from the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) 2014 Public Participation Plan: Equity Impact Worksheet. http://www.ccrpcvt.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/CCRPC_PPP_Equity_Impact_Worksheet.pdf

Evaluation Worksheet

This worksheet is intended for use in evaluating the effectiveness of public participation for a project in order to ensure that SWMPC continuously improves the process.

The following questions are meant to act as a guide for discussion during project debrief:

- Did the level of interest match the expected impact on the community?
- Was participation representative of the stakeholders identified?
- Was any person or group absent from the process?
- Did the participation tools chosen effectively engage the public?
- Did we meet the public expectations?
- Were resources in time and money effectively used given the level of impact of the project and the actual participation?
- Did the final product reflect the input received during the public participation process?

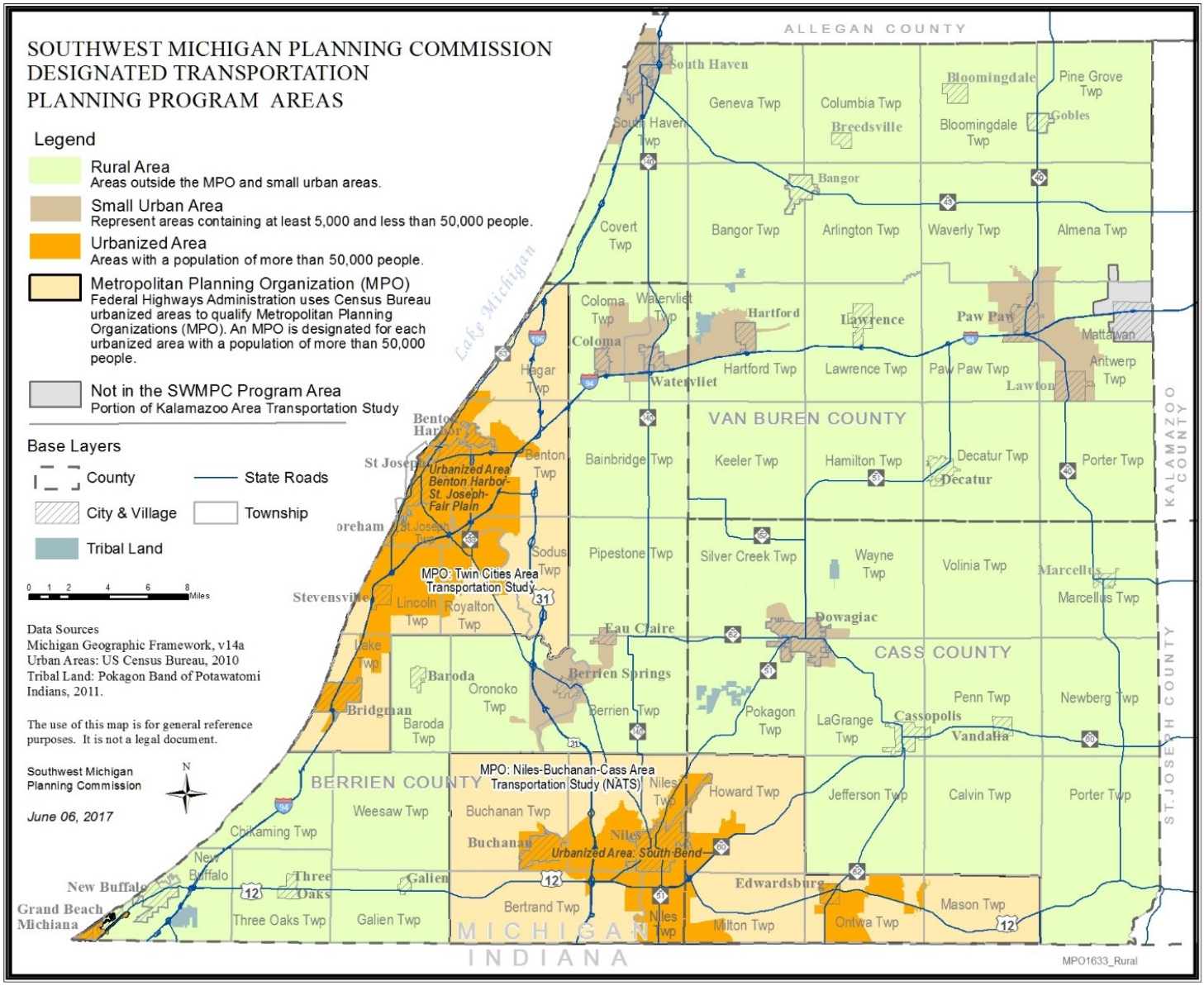
Check all of the participation tools used for this project and then fill in the target and actual results based on the performance goal and evaluation criteria.

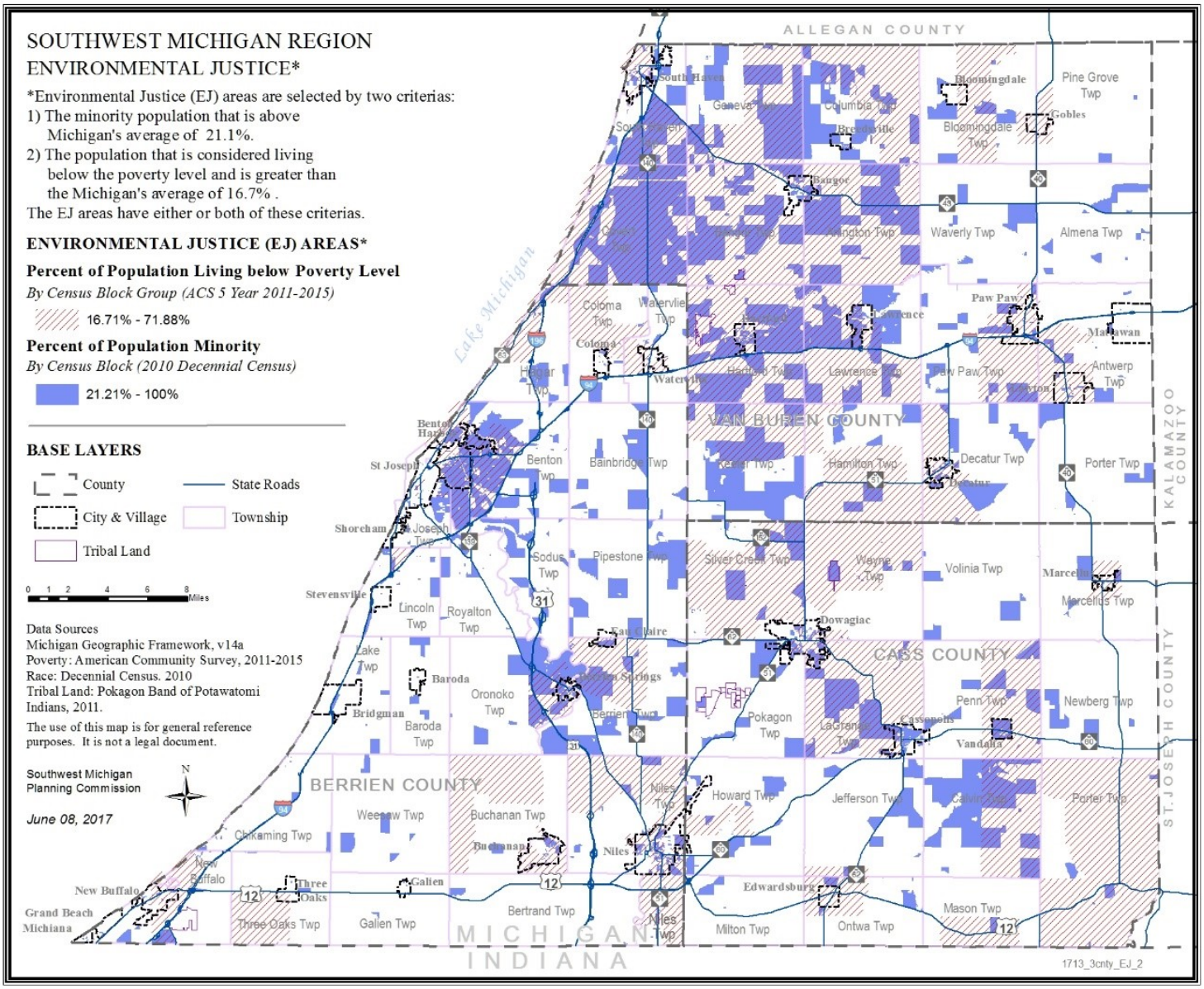
Check if Used	Public Participation Tool	Performance Goal	Evaluation Criteria	Target	Actual
	SWMPC Website	Number of webpage views	Survey of users to determine if the website provides needed information		
	Social Media	Maintain and post content regularly	Calls, letters, messages, number of fans/followers		
	SWMPC Newsletter	Number of people reached. Favorable comments from readers.	Comments from readers		
	Legal Advertisements	Advertise all public hearings within timeframe; see other methods of advertising to compliment legal ads.	Save copies of papers with legal ad and request an affidavit of publication.		
	Informational flyers, posters, brochures	Materials readily available and distributed on request	Calls, emails/letters, number of persons reached		
	Emails	Database of contacts is up to date	Number of returned items. Calls, emails/letters, number of persons contacted		
	Press Releases	Seek coverage from media outlets that reach the target audience	Number of calls, letters, and email responses; number of news stories generated.		
	Comments	Number of forms filled out/ Number of comments received via website	Ensure comments are recorded and addressed		

	Surveys	Number of Responses	Survey responses are representative of the target distribution		

	Public Participation Tool	Performance Goal	Evaluation Criteria	Target	Actual
	Public forums, meetings, hearings, project meetings, workshops, open houses	Attendance, calls, emails/letters, etc.	Attendance reflects the public interest in a project (includes representatives or groups from affected neighborhoods, organizations, businesses, etc.); progress is able to be made using input from affected parties		
	Advisory/ steering committee	Percent of member participation across the length of the project	Percent of member participation		

Appendix D: Planning Area Maps




SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN REGION
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE*
*Environmental Justice (EJ) areas are selected by two criterias:
1) The minority population that is above Michigan's average of 21.1%.
2) The population that is considered living below the poverty level and is greater than the Michigan's average of 16.7% .
The EJ areas have either or both of these criterias.
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE (EJ) AREAS*
Percent of Population Living below Poverty Level
By Census Block Group (ACS 5 Year 2011-2015)
16.71% - 71.88%
Percent of Population Minority
By Census Block (2010 Decennial Census)
21.21% - 100%
BASE LAYERS
County
State Roads
City & Village
Township
Tribal Land
0 1 2 4 6 8 Miles
Data Sources
Michigan Geographic Framework, v14a
Poverty: American Community Survey, 2011-2015
Race: Decennial Census. 2010
Tribal Land: Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians, 2011.
The use of this map is for general reference purposes. It is not a legal document.
Southwest Michigan Planning Commission
June 08, 2017
N
ALLEGAN COUNTY
VAN BUREN COUNTY
CASS COUNTY
BERRIEN COUNTY
KALAMAZOO COUNTY
ST. JOSEPH COUNTY
MICHIGAN
INDIANA
Lake Michigan
South Haven
Bloomingdale
Pine Grove Twp
Gobles
Bloomingdale Twp
Waverly Twp
Almena Twp
Paw Paw
Antwerp Twp
Coloma Twp
Watervliet Twp
Lawrence Twp
Paw Paw Twp
Benton Twp
Bainbridge Twp
Hamilton Twp
Decatur Twp
Porter Twp
St Joseph
Shoreham
Sodus Twp
Pipestone Twp
Silver Creek Twp
Volinia Twp
Marcellus Twp
Stevensville
Lincoln Twp
Royalton Twp
Dowagiac
Lake Twp
Baroda
Oronoko Twp
Bridgman
Baroda Twp
Berrien Twp
Pokagon Twp
Penn Twp
Newberg Twp
Vandalia
Niles Twp
Howard Twp
Jefferson Twp
Porter Twp
Weesaw Twp
Buchanan Twp
Chikaming Twp
Niles
New Buffalo
Three Oaks
Galien
Edwardsburg
Grand Beach
Michiana
Three Oaks Twp
Galien Twp
Bertrand Twp
Milton Twp
Ontwa Twp
Mason Twp
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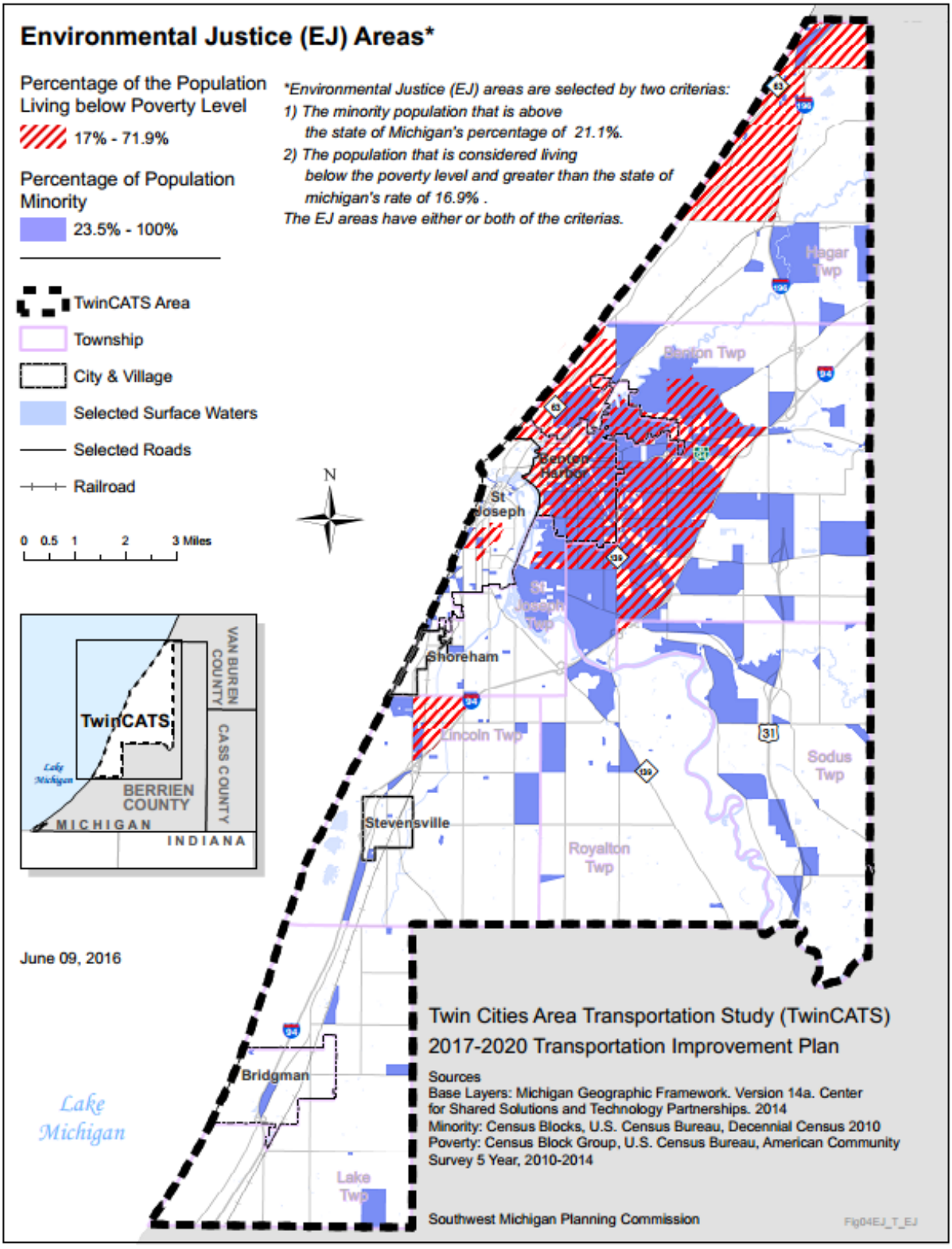
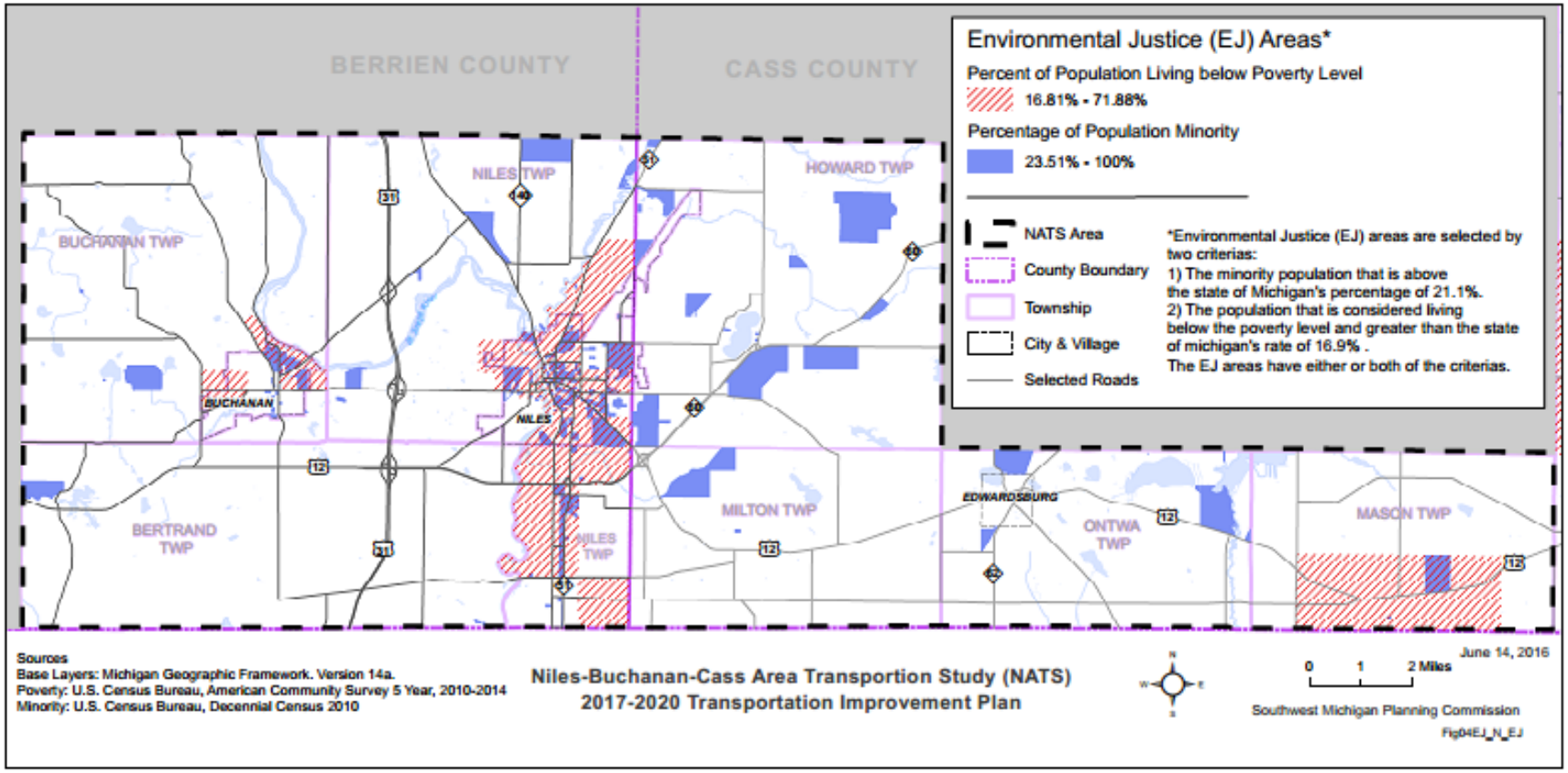

Environmental Justice (EJ) Areas*
Percentage of the Population Living below Poverty Level
17% - 71.9%
Percentage of Population Minority
23.5% - 100%
*Environmental Justice (EJ) areas are selected by two criterias:
1) The minority population that is above the state of Michigan's percentage of 21.1%.
2) The population that is considered living below the poverty level and greater than the state of michigan's rate of 16.9% .
The EJ areas have either or both of the criterias.
TwinCATS Area
Township
City & Village
Selected Surface Waters
Selected Roads
Railroad
0 0.5 1 2 3 Miles
N
TwinCATS
VAN BUREN COUNTY
CASS COUNTY
BERRIEN COUNTY
MICHIGAN
INDIANA
Lake Michigan
Hagar Twp
Benton Twp
Benton Harbor
St Joseph
St Joseph Twp
Shoreham
Lincoln Twp
Sodus Twp
Stevensville
Royalton Twp
Bridgman
Lake Twp
June 09, 2016
Twin Cities Area Transportation Study (TwinCATS)
2017-2020 Transportation Improvement Plan
Sources
Base Layers: Michigan Geographic Framework. Version 14a. Center for Shared Solutions and Technology Partnerships. 2014
Minority: Census Blocks, U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census 2010
Poverty: Census Block Group, U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5 Year, 2010-2014
Southwest Michigan Planning Commission
Fig04EJ_T_EJ


BERRIEN COUNTY
CASS COUNTY
Environmental Justice (EJ) Areas*
Percent of Population Living below Poverty Level
16.81% - 71.88%
Percentage of Population Minority
23.51% - 100%
NATS Area
County Boundary
Township
City & Village
Selected Roads
*Environmental Justice (EJ) areas are selected by two criterias:
1) The minority population that is above the state of Michigan's percentage of 21.1%.
2) The population that is considered living below the poverty level and greater than the state of michigan's rate of 16.9% .
The EJ areas have either or both of the criterias.
NILES TWP
HOWARD TWP
BUCHANAN TWP
BUCHANAN
NILES
BERTRAND TWP
NILES TWP
MILTON TWP
EDWARDSBURG
ONTWA TWP
MASON TWP
Sources
Base Layers: Michigan Geographic Framework. Version 14a.
Poverty: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5 Year, 2010-2014
Minority: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census 2010
Niles-Buchanan-Cass Area Transportion Study (NATS)
2017-2020 Transportation Improvement Plan
June 14, 2016
0 1 2 Miles
Southwest Michigan Planning Commission
Fig04EJ_N_EJ