



Sun Corridor Metropolitan Planning Organization
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PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

A Public Participation Process for the Development of the Transportation Improvement Program,
Regional Transportation Plan, Human Services Transportation Plan and Unified Planning Work
Program

Public Participation Plan Endorsed and Approved By:
Sun Corridor Metropolitan Planning Organization
Executive Board
On: **September 8, 2020**

Public Participation Plan Endorsed and Approved By:
Sun Corridor Metropolitan Planning Organization
Technical Advisory Committee
On: **August 13, 2020**

A 3D graphic of a blue and grey cube, partially open, with the year "2021" displayed in large, bold, black font on its right side.

2021

Table of Contents

1.	Introduction.....	2
2.	Purpose	3
3.	Public Participation	5
4.	Public Involvement Procedures	6
5.	Public Notification Tools, Techniques and Activities.....	8
6.	Evaluating Public Involvement Activities.....	14
7.	Development, Adoption, and Revision of the Public Participation Plan	15
	Preparation of a preliminary draft plan.....	15
	Plan Revisions.....	15
8.	Sun Corridor MPO’s Commitment	16
9.	Contact Information:	16

The Sun Corridor Metropolitan Planning Organization (Sun Corridor MPO) hereby gives public notice that it is the Agency’s policy to assure full compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title II of the Americans Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), and related authorities in all of its programs and activities. The Sun Corridor MPO’s Title VI and ADA Programs requires that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, or disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any Federal Aid Highway program or other activity for which Sun Corridor MPO receives Federal financial assistance. Any person, who believes his/her Title VI or ADA rights have been violated, may file a complaint. Any such complaint must be in writing and filed with the Sun Corridor MPO, Title VI Coordinator within one hundred eighty (180) days following the date of the alleged discriminatory occurrence. Title VI Discrimination Complaint Forms may be obtained from the Sun Corridor MPO Office or website. For more information, or to file a complaint, please contact the Title VI Coordinator at (520) 705-5143.

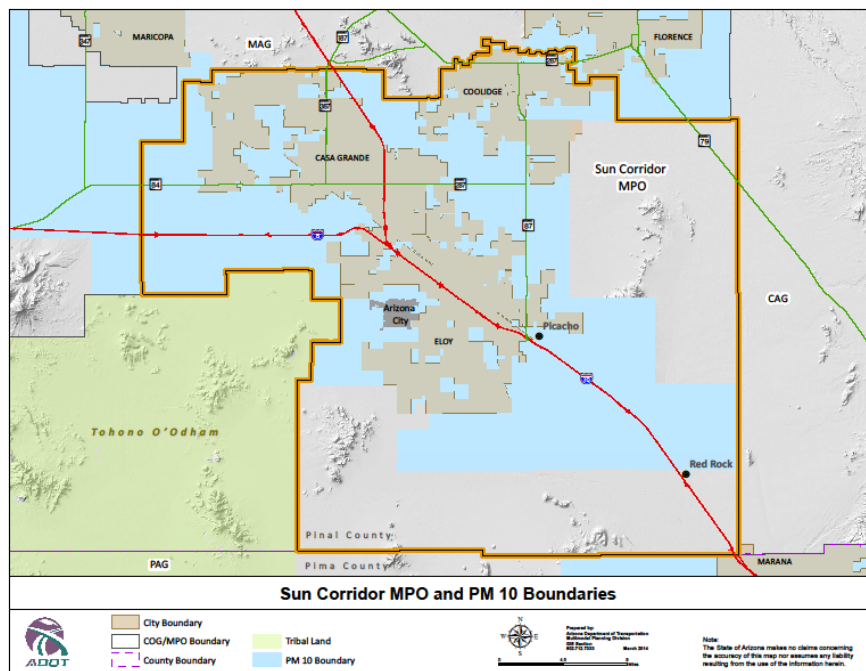


1. Introduction

Sun Corridor Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) was created in 2013 in response to a Federal mandate that requires an urbanized area with a Census-designated population of 50,000 or more residents to form such an organization in order to be eligible for Federal transportation funds. The MPO provides transportation planning services to the cities of Casa Grande, Coolidge, Eloy, and a portion of Pinal County. The MPO planning boundary (**Figure 1**) covers 1,155 square miles and includes approximately 112,807 Pinal County residents.

The Sun Corridor MPO objective is to provide continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive short and long-range transportation planning that improves the performance of the transportation network. The Sun Corridor MPO engages in cooperative decision-making through working relationships and financial partnerships among the member governments, the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

Figure 1



2. Purpose

Governmental agencies recognize the importance of involving the public as they plan, organize, and implement transportation plans and programs. The purpose of a public participation plan is to ensure a proactive public involvement procedure that allows the public to be involved in all phases of the planning process by providing complete information, timely public notice, opportunities for making comments, full access to key decisions, and early and continuing involvement in developing transportation plans and programs.

Within these plans and programs, the following components are defined for establishing the proper participation protocols:

Regional Transportation Plan (RTP): For the long-range plan, the Sun Corridor MPO is responsible for preparing a 20-year Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). Federal law requires that these documents be updated at least once every four years. Both the TIP and RTP must undergo an annual air quality conformity analysis to ensure that transportation activities do not contribute to violations of the federal air quality standards. The Sun Corridor MPO will consult with the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) on all air quality conformity activities to ensure continued coordination of public involvement activities within the Sun Corridor MPO planning boundary.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP): For its short-range plan, the Sun Corridor MPO develops a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) that programs the most immediate implementation priorities for transportation projects as outlined in the Regional Transportation Plan. All transportation projects must be included, regardless of how they are funded. Under federal guidelines, the TIP is a sequential, five-year program with the first four years financially constrained.

Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan: This plan establishes goals, criteria, and strategies for delivering efficient, coordinated services to elderly, underemployed, or otherwise financially disadvantaged persons and persons with disabilities.

Public Participation Plan (PPP): The public participation plan is to ensure a proactive public involvement procedure that allows the public to be involved in all phases of the planning process by providing complete information, timely public notice, opportunities for making comments, full access to key decisions, and early and continuing involvement in developing transportation plans and programs.



Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP): The UPWP documents the transportation studies and tasks performed by the Sun Corridor MPO along with the corresponding budget in each fiscal year.

The goals of public involvement are to ensure that:

- Residents are given the opportunity (through their respective community representative) to participate in the transportation planning process.
- The issues and concerns of residents are given consideration in the selection of transportation investments.
- Transportation investments do not disproportionately burden any population with adverse impacts.

Transportation Studies

Amendments to Adopted Documents

Amendments to the RTP and the TIP are occasionally necessary after they have been adopted. With the exception of emergency or exempt projects, amendments will utilize the following process:

- Amendment will go out for a minimum 15 day consultation period for Air Quality Conformity Analysis;
- Sun Corridor MPO will announce the proposed amendment via agenda posting;
- Amendments will be reviewed by the TAC with a recommendation to the Executive Board for approval;
- Upon review by Executive Board, the amendment will either be approved or denied;
- If approved by the Executive Board, the amendment will be sent to state and federal partners for review and approval.

Amendments Exempt from the Public Participation Plan

Certain amendments to adopted documents will be exempt from the public involvement process:

- Emergency projects, necessary for the safety and welfare of the citizenry;
- Movement of a project from the Parking Lot to the main body of the TIP;
- Minor revisions or technical amendments, such as:



- Minor cost changes to locally funded projects
- Changes in cost shares between agencies

Interested Parties, Participation, and Consultation

As part of the public involvement process, the Sun Corridor MPO conducts agency consultation directly with local, state, and federal resource agencies. The Sun Corridor MPO also consults, as appropriate, with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities within the metropolitan planning area that are affected by transportation. To coordinate the planning functions to the maximum extent practicable, such consultation includes the comparison of the Sun Corridor MPO RTP and TIP, as they are developed, with the plans, maps, inventories, and planning documents developed by other agencies. This consultation includes, as appropriate, consultations with state, federal, tribal, local, and private agencies responsible for planned growth, economic development, environmental protection, public transportation, airport operations, freight movements, land use management, natural resources, conservation, historic preservation, tourism, and natural disaster risk reduction. The Sun Corridor MPO also seeks input and comment from neighboring counties or planning areas as appropriate.

Additionally, Sun Corridor MPO reaches out to federal, state, tribal, regional, local, and private agencies to consult on environmental and resource issues and concerns. Specific topics of interest include: land use management, wildlife, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, historic preservation, and potential environmental mitigation activities. An important consideration in the consultation process is the recognition that previously adopted projects in the RTP undergo extensive environmental and resource assessment by the implementing agencies, such as the Arizona Department of Transportation, public transportation, cities, Pinal County, and the Pinal Regional Transportation Authority (RTA). With these processes already well established, including requirements for input on mitigation and resource issues, the primary goal of the consultation effort is to gain insight regarding concerns that may involve future transportation planning efforts.

3. Public Participation



Public participation implies an open process. This means that anyone who is potentially affected, or is just interested in the process, is welcome to participate. Some of the reasons for encouraging this openness are:

- Project leaders may gain new information;
- Participants, who want a project to be completed, can provide additional resources in the form of assistance, goods, or services;
- Public participation can be a forum for dispute resolution.
- Progress can be made and implementation occur because:
 - The project itself will be better designed with public input;
 - The community better understands what the project is about;
 - Input can be a warning mechanism for potential problems.
- Participant comments help the project leaders understand areas where additional people may have concerns or misunderstandings. This can be used to provide better information to others who are not participating.

4. Public Involvement Procedures

To have a proactive public involvement process, the Sun Corridor MPO will provide time for public comment at each public meeting. The procedures (**Table 1**) will inform the public about how, when, and where they may participate.

The public involvement plan contains the following elements:

- Involvement Opportunities – Provide the opportunity for the public to be involved in all phases of the planning process.
- Communication – Establish mechanisms for maintaining communications between the public and local officials such as process like legal ads, web site notifications, and displays.
- Information – Assure that technical information is available and in a simplified, understandable form.
- Response to Public Input – A description of the methods used to respond to comments from the public.
- Advisory Committees – The use of committees and the means of providing a cross-section of affected citizens on the advisory committees.



Table 1 – Summary of Sun Corridor MPO Public Participation Procedures

Public Participation Component	Meetings	Public Comment Period	Typical Public Participation Techniques	Additional Comment
Federal Required Documents, Plans, and Programs				
Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)	Initial & Subsequent Public Meetings TAC Executive Board	30 Days	Legal Notice Website	Update Every 4 Years; Requires Air Quality Conformity Analysis; Public Comments Included in Final RTP
Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)	Initial & Subsequent Public Meetings TAC Executive Board	30 Days	Legal Notice Website	Updated At least Every 2 Years; Requires Air Quality Conformity Analysis; Public Comments Provided to Executive Board
Human Services Transportation Plan	TAC Executive Board	30 Days	Legal Notice Website	Update Annually; Full Update Every 3 Years
Public Participation Plan	TAC Executive Board	45 Days	Legal Notice Website	Updated As Required Public Comments Provided to Executive Board
Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)	TAC Executive Board	N/A	N/A	Biennial; Amended as Necessary; Developed in Cooperation with ADOT, FHWA, FTA and Transit Operators
Amendments To Adopted Documents	TAC Executive Board	N/A	Legal Notice Website	Non-Exempt Amendments
Amendments Exempt from Public Participation	N/A	N/A	N/A	Emergency Projects and Minor Revisions
Open Public Meetings				
Executive Board Meetings	Every Second Tuesday of Every Other Month	Public Comment Accepted at Meeting	Public Notice; Master Distribution List; Website	Held at 10:00; Location Rotates Between Member Agencies
Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)	Fourth Thursday of Every Other Month	Public Comment Accepted at Meeting	Public Notice; Master Distribution List; Website	Held at 1:00; Location Rotates Between Member Agencies



5. Public Notification Tools, Techniques and Activities

There are numerous and varied tools/techniques/activities to provide the opportunity for public involvement. Any combination and number of these may be used depending on the scope of the specific plan, program, or project. These techniques/activities are defined in detail in **Table 2**. As funding permits, the Sun Corridor MPO will select from the various activities to provide the most effective public participation in each particular situation.

Virtual Public Involvement

Virtual public involvement is a new opportunity for information sharing and public involvement in the transportation planning, programming, and project development process. These new opportunities include, but are not limited to techniques, such as telephone town halls and online meetings, pop-up outreach, social meetings/meeting-in-a box kits, story maps, quick videos, crowdsourcing, survey tools, real-time polling tools, social media following, and visualization. These techniques offer convenient, efficient, and low-cost methods for informing the public, encouraging participation, and receiving input.

Table 2

Activity	Description
Brochure	Written material to distribute generally contains more information than a flyer. It is often folded to create a small piece for distribution.
Charrette	An intensive brainstorming session using visual methods to define alternatives.
Conference	A meeting with two or more people where the participants confer and discuss. (This can also be a series of meetings and/or events focused on a unifying subject.)
Display	Information and materials are displayed in an informal setting where people are free to move about and consider whatever is of interest to them.
Email	Using the Internet to contact people with electronic mail addresses.
Social Media	Various; Facebook, Twitter, others
Focus Group	A small carefully selected group of individuals who meet together to give feedback to the organizer on a specific topic.



Activity	Description
Forums	A public meeting that is designed to help attendants better understand a subject by hearing different points of view. Usually several people with differing opinions, each make a short presentation and then answer questions. It is not designed for decision making.
Information Booths	Place an information exhibit at fair-type events.
Meetings	These are opportunities for larger groups of people to get together for a multitude of purposes. The meetings may be done in person, telephonic, or using online tools for video and audio conferencing (e.g. Go-To-Meetings, Zoom, Webex, Google Teams, etc.).
Modeling	Computer and/or physical modeling can be used to help people better visualize or better understand a particular concept or project.
Newspaper Advertisement	Information that a newspaper prints in their paper that is not part of the news. The person/group placing the advertisement has control of the content.
Press Releases	This official release tells the press there is news they might be interested in reporting. It generally follows a specific format and includes who, what, when, where, and a contact for more information.
List of local Newspapers	Casa Grande Dispatch; Maricopa Monitor; Coolidge Examiner; Eloy Enterprise; Arizona City Independent; Tri Valley Dispatch
Posters	A large written announcement posted in a public place.
Presentation Meetings	These meetings allow the organizer to provide information and answer questions for a large group at once.
Public Hearings (Meetings)	This is a legal meeting that is often required to make sure there is some opportunity for public comment. It is normally done with elected officials sitting at the front and allowing community members very specific conditions to speak under. The meetings may be done in person, telephonic, or using online tools for video and audio conferencing (e.g. Go-To-Meetings, Zoom, Webex, Google Teams, etc.).
Public Notice	These are official notices posted prior to meetings. The notice is posted on the Sun Corridor MPO website and Office, and select locations and local newspapers.
Public Service Announcements	These are short announcements usually on radio or television, for which there is no charge and announce something important for the public to know. (use all newspapers)
Web Site	A series of pages on the Internet that relate to a specific subject.



Activity	Description
	They can be reached by anyone who has access to the Internet by typing a particular address or by doing a search.

Visualization Techniques

The Sun Corridor MPO will utilize a variety of tools to educate and inform the public, which may include the interweaving of *visualization techniques* (Table 3). Use of these individual techniques or a combination thereof, will assist in the communication process.

Table 3

Maps	Chart/Flow Charts
Drawings/ Sketches	Illustrations
Tables/Graphs	PowerPoint Presentation
Video	Diagrams
Graphics	Photographs
Geographic Information Systems (GIS)	Narrative Description

Master Distribution List

A master email distribution list will be developed and maintained; interested persons may ask to be placed on or removed from the list by contacting Sun Corridor MPO office. This continuously updated list will be used to notify interested parties of upcoming meetings and other opportunities for public involvement. Furthermore, this list will include news media, community groups, business and professional groups, special interest groups, elected and appointed officials, 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, transit benefit program, parking cash-out program, shuttle program, or telework program), representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.



Sun Corridor MPO Website

The Sun Corridor MPO will develop and maintain an Internet website to provide the most current information available on various topics. The website contents are expected to include:

- Contact Information
- Current Executive Board and Technical Advisory Committee Information
- Meeting Calendars
- Meeting Agendas and Minutes
- Public Notices
- Work Products and Publications
- Title VI Policy
- Federally Required Documents
- Request for Proposals
- Employment Opportunities

Media Contact and Advertising

The media plays a crucial role in getting information regarding significant transportation activities and issue to the public. The Sun Corridor MPO will maintain ongoing communication with the media through various means, including press releases and interviews.

The Tri-Valley Dispatch newspapers will be utilized as the primary print medium for advertising transportation issues of interest to the general population. Public service announcement and interviews may be broadcast on local radio stations.

Public Meetings

Meetings and hearings, which are open for public participation, will be scheduled to allow the best opportunity for attendance by the general public and other entities whenever possible. These meetings are used to both inform the public of the planning process and solicit input, ideas, and feedback. The Sun Corridor MPO Executive Board and Technical Advisory Committee meetings each include time on the agenda for general public comment on transportation related items.

Meetings may include informal presentation at regional sites, open house, round tables, or other community forums, virtual meetings, and formal presentations to various service clubs, civic, and professional groups.



Transportation meeting dates, times, and locations are available on the Sun Corridor MPO website at www.scmpo.org

Pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Sun Corridor Metropolitan Planning Organization endeavors to ensure the accessibility of all of its programs, projects, and services to all persons with disabilities. If you need an accommodation for this meeting, please contact Irene Higgs at 520-705-5143 at least 48 hours prior to the meeting so that accommodations may be arranged.

Public Comment and Response to Comments

Written comments received through the public involvement process will be included along with responses as an appendix to the document under review, as appropriate, or will otherwise be summarized and presented to the Executive Board or other body for awareness purposes.

Title VI and Environmental Justice

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires outreach to underserved groups. *"No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."*

A further 1994 Presidential directive dictates, "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." Executive Order 12898

Public participation implies an open process. This means that anyone who is potentially affected, or is just interested in the process, is welcome to participate.

Just opening the process to the public is not enough. There are numerous populations that are not likely to get involved unless a special effort is made to reach out to them. In this Plan, groups that need a more focused effort to get involved are referred to as "underserved populations". These include, but are not limited to:

- Minority (Hispanic and/or non-white) community members;
- Low-Income community members;
- Physically and mentally challenged community members;
- People who rely on alternative transportation;
- People with limited English proficiency;
- Aging populations.



The Sun Corridor MPO will make every effort to hold public meetings in facilities that are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); and, arrange for reasonable accessibility and accommodation to persons with disabilities. Further, to provide equally effective communication, Sun Corridor MPO will make do preparation, when appropriate, for persons requiring assistance, such as the hearing or visually impaired, upon request.

The Sun Corridor MPO will assist persons with limited English proficiency (LEP) to participate in the transportation planning process. Staff will make every effort to provide Spanish translators and document translation, where feasible, upon request. Individuals who are not able to attend meetings may make a request for the information at Sun Corridor MPO offices for delivery of materials to their homes. Sun Corridor MPO staff, coordinating availability, is willing to go speak to groups to eliminate participation barriers and involve citizens in the transportation process. By making a reasonable extra effort to include these populations, the Sun Corridor MPO hopes to ensure that the interests and input of all residents are given equal consideration.

The Sun Corridor MPO has provided other means of outreach other than from the traditional methods. One method used was providing a survey in English and in Spanish to seek input on a transit study, with a chance to win a Gift Card. Surveys were available on-line and provided to the local agencies and to specific site locations that were identified having heavy foot traffic such as community centers, senior centers, libraries, after school programs, and schools. Other untraditional methods will be used pending the nature of the project to engage LEP persons and environmental justice populations.

Listed below are various outreach processes that may be used by the Sun Corridor MPO to ensure Title VI, Limited English Proficiency (LEP) persons and Environmental Justice (EJ) populations have access to participate in Sun Corridor MPO transportation decision-making process:

- Translate outreach materials based on a LEP Four-Factor analysis conducted on a project-by-project basis.
- Advertise meetings, public notices, and other materials in the Tri-Valley newspapers, SCMPO and local agency websites, and other high traffic locations frequented by the public.
- Advance demographic research of potentially impacted communities for transportation-related study projects to determine the level and targeted outreach tools needed for public involvement based on LEP, EJ and Title VI Data collection.



- Include Spanish text on Sun Corridor MPO materials to the public notifying them of the opportunity to request language services, if needed.
- Forming partnerships between member entities, public and private sectors.
- Consider the proximity to public transportation routes when selecting a meeting location.
- Schedule public meetings at the appropriate time of day based on community assessments.
- Use of Title VI Self-identification cards at meetings.
- Use of various types of modes to communicate Sun Corridor MPO meetings.

6. Evaluating Public Involvement Activities

A continuing focus on evaluation and enhancement of the public participation process should help to improve the outcome of each new Sun Corridor MPO plan, project, or program. Evaluating public participation is a multi-dimensional task.

- First, there is the quantitative aspect which uses measurements such as the number of activities held, the number of notices sent, and/or the number of people who participated. While valid and important, these factors may not show the complete picture.
- Second, it is important to evaluate the qualitative aspects relating to perceptions, attitudes, and effectiveness. Did the people who participated feel they were heard? Were all the potentially affected interests (including the underserved) actually represented? Were the materials provided easy to understand? Were announcements received in a timely manner?
- Third, is the question of how the public input was used. This information needs to be recorded and made available. It also needs to be considered in the decision-making process.
- Fourth, is the need to evaluate the reason something happened. Understanding why there was good or poor participation is important to assessing effectiveness.

The ultimate point to consider in an evaluation is the existence of respect and trust. It is not possible to please everyone, but it should be possible to proceed forward with an atmosphere of respect and trust, and Sun Corridor MPO intends to earn this by being fair and open with everyone at all times.



7. Development, Adoption, and Revision of the Public Participation Plan

This Public Participation Plan has gone through several stages during its development:

Preparation of a preliminary draft plan

- Evaluation of this plan to ensure compliance with all federal regulations;
- Review of the plan by Sun Corridor MPO Technical Advisory Committee;
- Review of the plan by stakeholders including the general public, governmental entities, and transportation professionals/businesses, for 45 days;
- Circulation of the draft plan for at least 45 calendar days. This includes notice to all potentially affected interests that this final draft plan is available for review, including posting on the Sun Corridor MPO website and hard copies of the document available at the Sun Corridor MPO office.

Plan Revisions

- Revision of the plan based on the above reviews;
- Completion of a final draft plan;
- Review and evaluation of any further recommended changes;
- Adoption of the final plan by the Sun Corridor MPO TAC, and Executive Board;
- Ongoing implementation of the plan by the Sun Corridor MPO;
- Availability of alternative formats i.e. large prints, Braille, audio/video cassettes (as appropriate) upon request for individuals who are blind or individuals with hearing/vision impairments. Due to the time and expense required to develop such materials, this will only be done upon request and a minimum of two weeks' notice must be provided to ensure timely preparation of such materials.

The plan will be officially reviewed at a minimum of every five (5) years. This re-evaluation will involve significant public input and a minimum 45 calendar day review period prior to adopting any changes. All efforts to involve the public and other organizations will follow the steps outlined in the current plan.



Other periodic revisions may occur, as new and better approaches are determined. Each time any significant content revisions are made (other than technical or grammatical revisions) the public will be given a 45-calendar day review and comment period prior to implementing the changes. Sun Corridor MPO will update the plan as needed and submit an annual accomplishment and goal report to the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) Civil Rights Office.

8. Sun Corridor MPO's Commitment

This plan contains background material, guidelines, and commitments that the MPO is undertaking to incorporate an effective public process into future plans, projects, and programs. Specifically the Sun Corridor MPO is committed to:

- Inclusive and meaningful public involvement;
- Open and honest communications with all individuals and entities;
- Timely public notice;
- Full public access to information and key decisions;
- Creating a sense of shared responsibility and ownership for regional transportation/congestion problems and a shared sense of pride in the development of solutions to those problems;
- Helping form partnerships between member entities, and the private and public sectors to plan and implement transportation/congestion solutions;
- Establishing policies and prioritizing needs based on valid data and using objective, fair, and consistent processes;
- Providing information and gathering input so that decision makers will be able to make informed decisions.

9. Contact Information:

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