

# Public Participation Plan

## UPDATE

September 2023



Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council

The Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC) last updated its Public Participation Plan in 2017. Since that time the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way planning agencies engage the public. This update to the Public Participation Plan (PPP) takes into account an increased focus on environmental justice and equity in transportation planning as well as recent advances in the deployment of virtual meeting technology and online platforms. The updated PPP is an opportunity to provide guidance to ensure that all residents benefit from transportation investments and have a voice in the metropolitan planning process.

The PPP covers a full range of opportunities for members of the public to engage in the transportation decision-making in the region, from in-person and virtual Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) meetings, social media, and other engagement events and activities. The PPP states the principles and policies that the GBNRTC has committed to for all public participation activities. This document details various opportunities and engagement approaches, including virtual formats, for public participation in the GBNRTC's planning process.

A public meeting for GBNRTC's Region Central Study held at Canisius College in July of 2022.  
*Image source: GBNRTC*



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# GBNRTC Background

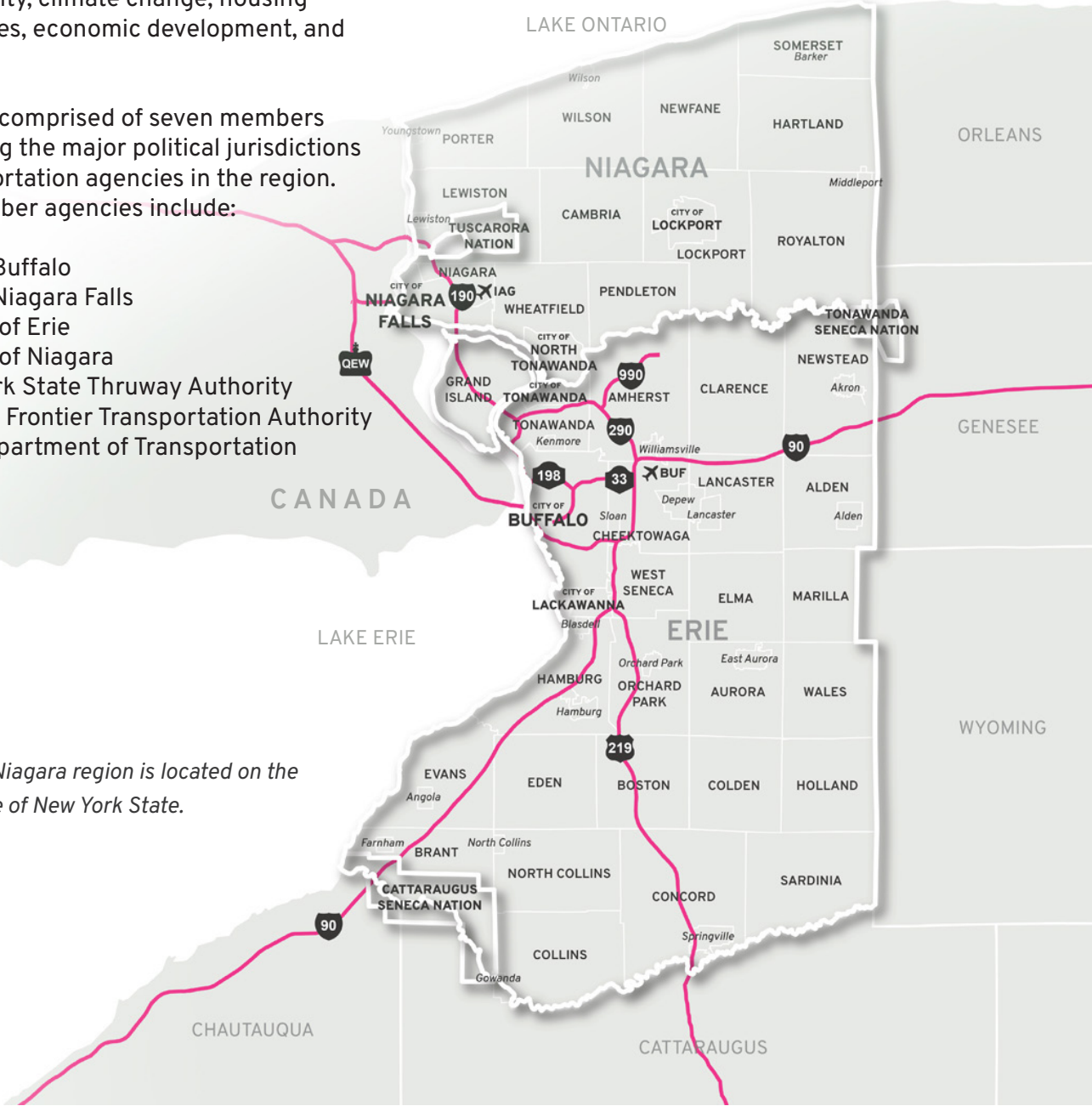
The GBNRTC is the designated MPO for Erie and Niagara Counties. By federal law, an MPO is designated by each state’s governor for every urban area in the United States with at least 50,000 residents. MPOs devise solutions to regional transportation problems, which involves addressing land use, air quality, equity, climate change, housing opportunities, economic development, and commerce.

The Seneca Nation of Indians, the Logistics and Transportation Council of the Buffalo-Niagara Partnership, and the Empire State Development Corporation serve formally as Regional Strategic Stakeholders.

GBNRTC is comprised of seven members representing the major political jurisdictions and transportation agencies in the region. These member agencies include:

- City of Buffalo
- City of Niagara Falls
- County of Erie
- County of Niagara
- New York State Thruway Authority
- Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority
- NYS Department of Transportation

*The Buffalo Niagara region is located on the western edge of New York State.*





## What is a Metropolitan Planning Organization?

A metropolitan planning organization (**MPO**) is a federally mandated and federally funded transportation policy-making organization that is made up of representatives from local government and governmental transportation authorities created and designated to carry out the metropolitan transportation planning process.

MPOs are required to represent localities in all urbanized areas (UZAs) with populations over 50,000, as determined by the U.S. Census. Congress created MPOs in order to ensure that existing and future expenditures of governmental funds for transportation projects and programs are based on a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive (“3-C”) planning process. Transparency through public access to participation in the planning process and electronic publication of plans is required by federal law.

Image source: GBNRTC (2022)

# GBNRTC Structure

In order to achieve the MPO objectives and comply with federal requirements, GBNRTC has the following structure:



The **Policy Committee** is the decision making body of the GBNRTC and as such is responsible for approving resolutions regarding GBNRTC actions and provides final GBNRTC approval of plans, programs, and projects. The Policy Committee sets regional policies for transportation and associated development activities in the Buffalo Niagara region, while providing a pathway through external political and legislative systems.

The **Planning and Coordinating Committee (PCC)** is responsible for advising the Policy Committee on the approval of transportation plans, programs, and projects. Through its representatives and subcommittees, the PCC participates in the development of the GBNRTC certification documents (the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, the Unified Planning Work Program, and the Transportation Improvement Program). The PCC has approval authority for significant administrative modification and most amendments to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) as well as Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) budget revisions, and provides general oversight for GBNRTC staff and operations.

**Regional strategic stakeholders** review and provide comments and recommendations on such GBNRTC documents as the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program. Stakeholders isolate and bring forward key issues requiring GBNRTC consideration as they relate to GBNRTC policy and the development of GBNRTC plans and projects.

***GBNRTC supports a coordinated transportation planning process for Erie and Niagara Counties primarily through the following activities:***

**Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)**

Addresses at least a 20-year planning horizon, and includes both long-range and short-range strategies and actions that lead to the development of an integrated transportation system facilitating the efficient movement of people and goods. The MPO reviews and updates the transportation plan at least every 4 years in air quality nonattainment and maintenance areas and at least every 5 years in attainment areas to confirm the transportation plan’s validity and consistency with current and forecasted transportation and land use conditions and trends.

**Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

A regionally agreed upon list of priority projects, as required by federal law. The TIP is updated at least every three years, and lists all projects that intend to use federal funds, along with non-federally funded projects that are regionally significant.

**Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)**

A one to two-year schedule of all urban transportation planning activities. The UPWP includes detailed descriptions of the transportation and air quality planning tasks, and a summary of the amount and source of state and federal funds to be used for planning activities and linkage to federal and MPO performance measures.

As an MPO, GBNRTC is responsible for selecting projects to receive federal funding from the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration. Projects selected to receive funds undergo a public comment and review period prior to GBNRTC Policy Committee approval as part of the MTP and TIP process.

The region’s transportation projects are typically sponsored by government agencies, who design the projects and may conduct additional public and stakeholder engagement. GBNRTC’s committees review and approve projects to ensure federal and state regulations and planning goals are met, as well as to see that individual projects align with the goals of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and meet Air Quality Conformity standards. Environmental compliance with NEPA is completed at later project stages following MPO approval.

# Purpose of the Public Participation Plan

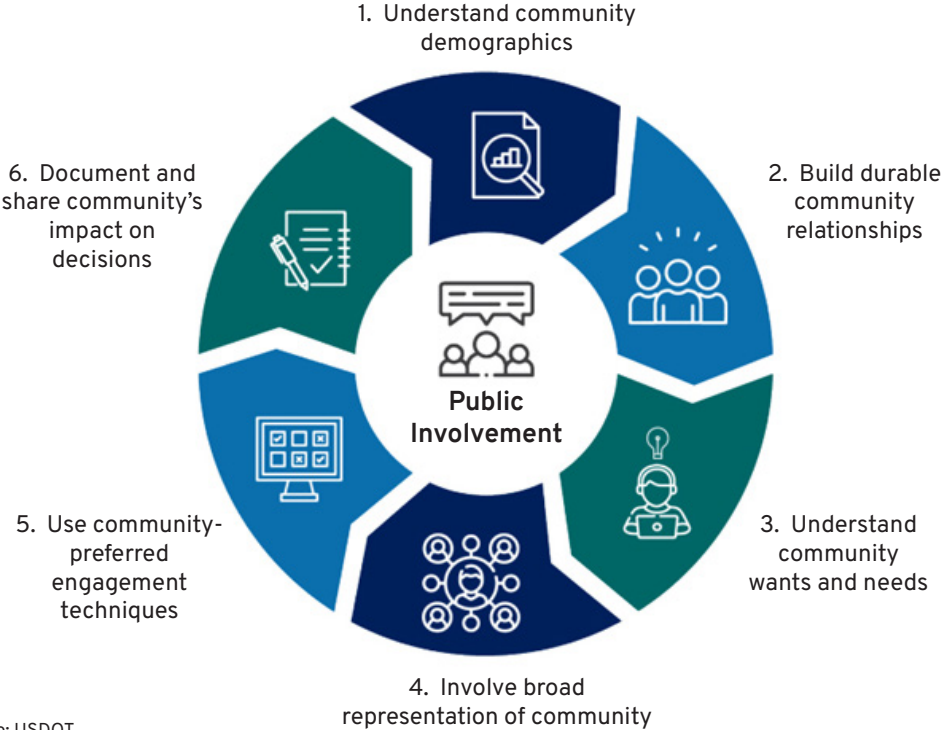
Public involvement is a critical component in the transportation decision-making process, allowing for meaningful consideration and input from interested individuals. As daily users of the transportation system, the public can offer useful opinions, insights, and observations to share with the MPO and local agencies on the performance and needs of the transportation system or on specific projects.

The purpose of GBNRTC’s Public Participation Plan is multifold:

- Provides a framework for GBNRTC staff and member agencies to guide participation processes in the planning of transportation projects and programs.
- Identifies ways to continuously improve participation and engagement efforts to better involve a range of stakeholders—particularly residents who have been traditionally underserved and underrepresented, such as minority and low-income populations, and those with limited English proficiency.

*Continues on page 9*

## Features of Meaningful Public Involvement



Source: USDOT



- Facilitates a culture of practices in which the public, transportation agencies, and other stakeholders actively and collaboratively address concerns and identify solutions.
- Describes to the public and other stakeholders how to become involved in transportation planning decisions that impact them and their communities.
- Specifies GBNRTC’s goals for participation, and provides guidance to evaluate participation processes.
- Demonstrates GBNRTC’s compliance with federal requirements for public participation. Overall, these requirements call for MPOs to establish early and continuous public involvement opportunities in a variety of formats to a full range of interested parties.

**GBNRTC’s public and stakeholder participation and engagement processes aim to achieve several goals:**



Receive **early** and **active** public input on transportation planning activities and decisions, and provide timely responses if necessary.



Ensure that the products of transportation planning reflect the **needs** and **concerns** of Erie and Niagara Counties’ constituents.



Effectively involve a **full range** of stakeholders, including those who have been traditionally underserved and underrepresented, such as minority, low-income or mobility impaired populations, and residents with limited English proficiency.



**Educate and inform** the community about transportation planning issues and processes, and provide equal access to these opportunities.

This PPP is guided by federal laws, regulations, and Executive Orders that govern public involvement procedures for MPOs including:

<b>Title VI</b>	Title VI under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 states that no person in the U.S. 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.
<b>American with Disabilities Act (ADA)</b>	The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 specifies that programs and activities funded with federal dollars are prohibited from discrimination based on disability. ADA encourages the involvement of people with disabilities in the development and improvement of transportation and paratransit plans and services.
<b>Environmental Justice</b>	Executive Order 12898 of 1994 directs federal agencies to develop strategies to address disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of their programs on minority and low-income populations. 23 CFR 450.316(a)(1)(vii) requires that the needs of those “traditionally underserved” (Communities of Concern) by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and/or minority households, be sought out and considered.
<b>Limited English Proficiency (LEP)</b>	Executive Order 13166 of 2000 requires federal agencies to examine the services they provide, identify any need for services to those with LEP, and develop and implement a system to provide those services so LEP persons can have meaningful access to them. The Executive Order also requires that the federal agencies work to ensure that recipients of federal financial assistance provide meaningful access to their LEP applicants and beneficiaries. The LEP requirement applies to GBNRTC and its member agencies as designated recipients of federal funds.
<b>Federal Transit Administration Program-of-Projects Requirements and Section 5307 Grant Program</b>	While a Federal Transit Administration grant applicant may choose to maintain a separate approach for complying with the public participation requirements of 49 U.S.C. Section 5307(c)(1) through (c)(7) concerning the applicant’s proposed Section 5307 grant program, the grant applicant is encouraged to integrate compliance with these requirements with the locally adopted public involvement process associated with the TIP.  Grantees that choose to integrate the two should coordinate with the MPO and ensure that the public is aware that the TIP development process is being used to satisfy the public hearing requirements of Section 5307(c). The grant applicant must explicitly state that public notice of public involvement activities and time established for public review and comment on the TIP will satisfy the program-of-projects requirements of the Urbanized Area Formula Program. A project that requires an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement will involve additional public involvement, as presented in joint FHWA/FTA environmental regulations, “Environmental Impact and Related Procedures,” 23 C.F.R. Part 771.

# Stakeholder Participation

Participation from a range of stakeholders—including residents, businesses, community organizations, and local governments in the transportation planning process is important because transportation is vital to our quality of life, and transportation projects can have significant impacts on different groups of stakeholders. The public participation process should be designed to be flexible to adapt to each stakeholder groups' needs. This means different groups may require different engagement tools and strategies. Active participation by a range of stakeholders improves the understanding of different viewpoints, different needs and concerns, and helps to identify common goals and give underserved communities a voice.

GBNRTC engages with a range of stakeholder to ensure full and fair participation by all potentially impacted communities. The GBNRTC is committed to engaging and using input from a range of stakeholders, including but not limited to:

- Residents
- Affected public agencies
- Tribal nations
- Representatives of public transportation
- Federal Land Management Agencies
- Public ports
- Freight transporters
- Private transportation providers
- Representatives of public transportation users
- Representatives of pedestrians and cyclists
- Motor vehicle users
- Micromobility operators
- Representatives of the disabled
- Senior citizens and the elderly
- Limited English Proficiency residents
- Minority groups/people of color
- Organizations involved in other planning related activities:
  - Land use management
  - Natural resources
  - Conservation
  - Environmental protection
  - Historic preservation
  - Local economic development
  - Environmental protection
  - Housing
  - Airports
  - Human services
  - Safety

*Image source: GBNRTC (2022)*

# Public Review & Comment Period

The GBNRTC planning process includes a public review and comment period for all major planning documents including the TIP and MTP. Prior to the start of a public review and comment period, GBNRTC member agencies are given a minimum of 30 calendar days to review draft planning documents and provide comments to GBNRTC staff.

An official public notice of the public review and comment period is posted to the GBNRTC website and shared through social media and the email distribution list. Written comments are responded to in writing with copies forwarded to members of the PCC. The PCC is given a summary and/or presentation by GBNRTC staff of the public comments received prior to making an action recommendation to the Policy Committee. All comments, both written and verbal, received during a public review and comment period are addressed and documented in the appendix of the final document.

GBNRTC Document	Public Comment Periods	Update Schedule
Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)	30 calendar days	Updated every five years
Metropolitan Transportation Plan Amendment	30 calendar days	As needed
Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)	30 calendar days	Every three years
Transportation Improvement Program Amendment	30 calendar days	As needed
Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)	30 calendar days	Every two years
UPWP Amendment	30 calendar days	As needed
Public Participation Plan (PPP)	45 calendar days	As needed
Public Meeting Notice	One week prior	NA

# GBNRTC Public Participation Strategies

GBNRTC currently employs a variety of participation and engagement strategies in its primary responsibilities related to the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program.

*Image source: GBNRTC (2022)*

# Public Meetings

## Policy Committee

Policy Committee meetings are held at least twice a year, are open to the public and include an opportunity for public comment on any agenda item. Advance notice of meetings and agendas are distributed no later than one week prior to the meeting to members of the public. Meeting information including date, time, location, and agenda are posted on the GBNRTC website and social media platforms, and sent via email through the GBNRTC distribution list. Meetings can be attended either in-person or virtually by the public and interested stakeholders via Facebook Live. The Facebook Live video is posted on GBNRTC's Facebook Page and is available for all to view, even those without a Facebook account.

## Planning and Coordinating Committee (PCC)

Planning and Coordinating Committee meetings are regularly held on the first Wednesday of each month. ***An annual schedule with locations is established at the first meeting of each year and is listed on the GBNRTC website.*** All regular meetings are open to the public and include time for public comment. Advance notice of meetings and agendas are distributed no later than one week prior to the meeting to members of the public. Meeting information including date, time, location, and agenda are posted on the GBNRTC website and social media platforms, and sent via email to the GBNRTC distribution list. Meetings can be attended either in-person or virtually by the public and interested stakeholders via Facebook Live. The Facebook Live video is posted on GBNRTC's Facebook Page and is available for all to view, even those without a Facebook account.

***In addition to the public meetings specified above, the GBNRTC may hold public meetings, workshops, open houses, speaking engagements or informational sessions as part of any GBNRTC planning initiative. The number of public meetings will depend on the type, intensity, and length of the study.***

# Virtual Engagement

Using virtual communications tools and platforms enhances and broadens the reach of public engagement efforts by making participation more convenient and affordable for greater numbers of people. Virtual tools provide increased transparency and access to transportation planning activities and project development and decision-making processes. Many virtual tools also provide information in visual and interactive formats that enhance public and stakeholder understanding of proposed projects and plans. Virtual tools and platforms can be made accessible to communities efficiently, many at a lower cost than traditional public engagement methods.



A variety of **social media** platforms (including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn) are used to share information about meetings, transportation related events and news items, and to respond to followers' questions and comments. These platforms are also used to advertise opportunities for participation in the planning process.

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GBNRTC meetings are available virtually to the public via **Facebook Live**. The Facebook Live video is posted on **GBNRTC's Facebook Page** and is available for all to view, even those without a Facebook account. Email and social media announcements are made to inform the public about the availability to view and provide comments on the video recordings of the meetings

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GBNRTC maintains a **website** which is updated frequently to keep the public informed. The site contains information on GBNRTC role and responsibilities, programs, publications, TIP change summaries, meetings and events, contact information, a search function, Title VI information, including complaint procedures, and a comment form so visitors may comment directly to GBNRTC on any subject.

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GBNRTC uses **online surveys** to obtain public feedback and public preference as it relates to transportation related needs and concerns.

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GBNRTC maintains an **email distribution list** that is open for anyone to join and receive meeting information, TIP and MTP updates, and information about opportunities for public comment and feedback.

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GBNRTC employs **visualization techniques** such as videos, PowerPoint presentations, GIS overlays and maps, photo simulations, infographics and traffic simulation models to draw attention and make material more understandable to a wider audience.

# Equity and Public Participation

Meaningful participation of minority, low-income, limited English proficiency (LEP) populations and others is a critical component to implementing Title VI and Environmental Justice. Through effective public participation, the GBNRTC is able to identify and understand the needs of the community as a whole, including traditionally underserved communities, and incorporate those needs into transportation plans and programs.

## Title VI and Engaging Environmental Justice Communities

GBNRTC’s Equity Statement and Title VI Plan describes strategies to integrate the needs and concerns of underrepresented populations into planning efforts, including creating demographic profile maps of these populations for the GBNRTC planning area. These maps help in understanding which communities are prone to environmental justice concerns and assists in targeting public outreach efforts to these groups.

Direct outreach to individuals and engagement with organizations that represent members of the EJ community are methods to determine the needs and concerns of environmental justice populations. Reaching out to the EJ populations in their community is critical. Public engagement is not a one-size-fits-all approach and should be scaled to the specific impacts of the proposed action, as well as the resources available.

### Techniques for Engaging Environmental Justice Communities

- Hold in-person meetings in meeting rooms that are accessible to all people and in buildings in close proximity to a transit route.*
- Engage with residents at locations in the community (at farmer’s markets, festivals, churches, health centers, etc.).*
- Conduct personal interviews and focus groups.*
- Use visual materials, including maps and graphics to illustrate data, trends, impacts, options, etc.*
- Work with community-based organizations and institutions to conduct outreach and organize activities.*
- Include on public notices that accommodations will be provided for anybody to participate in the meeting despite disability or proficiency in English, upon request.*



# Limited English Language Proficiency

An individual who does not speak English as a primary language and has a limited ability to read, speak, write or understand English is considered Limited English Proficient, or LEP. An individual is considered to be LEP if he or she speaks English less than - very well according to the US Census Bureau. A household where no one over the age of 14 speaks English is considered linguistically isolated. LEP individuals may be entitled language assistance with respect to a particular type of service, benefit, or encounter.

## Techniques for Engaging Residents with Limited English Language Proficiency

*Google translate available on the GBNRTC website.*

*Use of visuals to help people with limited reading and/or language skills to understand content more easily.*

*Create a list of outside sources, including the cost of such services that can provide oral translation services.*

*Develop a list of paid and unpaid translation services.*

*Make efforts to partner with state and local agencies to provide language translation and interpretation services within the scope of the funding available.*

*Include a statement on public meeting notices for significant updates to MPO products to encourage people to contact GBNRTC prior to meetings, and GBNRTC will make every reasonable effort to accommodate particular needs upon request.*



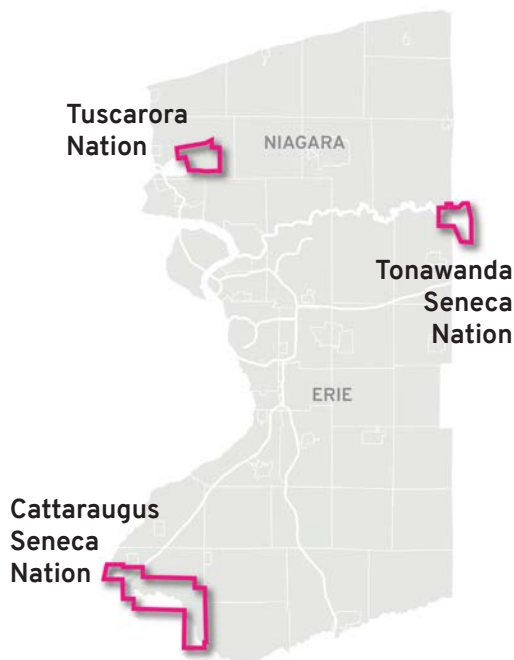
*The GBNRTC continues to explore new opportunities for information sharing and public involvement in the transportation planning, programming, and project development process.*

***See Appendix B for more details on designing public participation and engagement activities.***

# Consultation and Engagement with Tribal Nations

Under federal planning law, the concerns of Tribal Nations should be considered in the MPO planning process. Specifically, the provisions set forth in U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) joint Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Agency (FTA) planning regulations, 23 CFR Section 450.316, which provides as follows:

- When the MPO includes Indian Tribal lands, the MPO shall appropriately involve the Indian Tribal government(s) in the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP.
- MPOs shall, to the extent practicable, develop a documented process(es) that outlines roles, responsibilities, and key decision points for consulting with Indian Tribal governments and agencies.



The GBNRTC acknowledges the land on which much of the Buffalo Niagara region is located, which is in the territory of the Seneca Nation, a member of the Haudenosaunee/Six Nations Confederacy. Some of the advantages of this involvement include:

- Build stronger relationships and trust
- Increase understanding of issues facing Tribal Nations
- Assist in defining a future vision for the region
- Improve understanding of the MTP
- Participate in the identification system needs/new projects
- Provide opportunity to comment on projects before construction begins
- Avoid potential impacts to sensitive and important resources
- Review draft documents and planning studies
- Provide data assistance and sharing
- Better understand each others culture and governance structure

The Seneca Nation of Indians serves formally as a GBNRTC Regionally Significant Stakeholder. As such, the Seneca Nation participates in GBNRTC meetings and offers recommendations and positions on transportation plans, projects, and processes. Notification of GBNRTC planning activities is also provided to other tribal governments in the planning area, including the Tuscarora Nation and the Tonawanda Band of Senecas.

# Measuring the Effectiveness of Public Participation Strategies

GBNRTC’s Public Participation Plan is a living document that represents an evolving framework to guide—and improve upon—participation and engagement activities. Regular monitoring and evaluation can help assess the effectiveness of GBNRTC public participation and engagement efforts.

The **Engagement Output and Outcome Metrics**, developed by U.S. Department of Transportation, and documented in *Promising Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-Making* (October 2022) will be used to guide GBNRTC public participation evaluation efforts.

## Engagement Output and Outcome Metrics

**OUTPUTS** Outputs of an engagement activity can be assessed as soon as the activity is complete and are easily observable. Output metrics include:

- Count of the number of people who attend an event
- Number of public comments and inquires
- Average response time to inquiries from the public
- Presence of public officials at each event
- Number of project website hits
- Cost of putting together the public engagement plan

*Outputs are often evaluated through descriptive statistics or content analysis.*

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**OUTCOMES** Outcomes describe the changes in the planning process resulting from the outputs of an engagement activity. Outcome metrics include:

- Measuring if the participants felt they had adequate notice of a public engagement activity
- Measuring if participants felt their input was valued in the process
- Tracking how public input was used
- Measuring how public input impacts the resulting planning documents

*Outcomes can be evaluated using a combination of both opinions and facts.*



## **How to reach GBNRTC**

Visit our website at [www.gbnrtc.org](http://www.gbnrtc.org)

Follow us on Facebook at [Facebook.com/GBNRTC](https://Facebook.com/GBNRTC)

Follow us on Twitter at [Twitter.com/GBNRTC](https://Twitter.com/GBNRTC)

Follow us on LinkedIn at [Linkedin.com/company/gbnrtc](https://Linkedin.com/company/gbnrtc)

Follow us on Instagram at [Instagram.com/gbnrtc](https://Instagram.com/gbnrtc)

Send email comments to [staff@gbnrtc.org](mailto:staff@gbnrtc.org)

Write to us:

**Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council  
438 Main Street Suite 503  
Buffalo, NY 14202**

*Image source: Google Earth (2022)*

**Public  
Participation  
Plan**

**UPDATE**  
July 2023

## **Appendix A**

### ***Highway Code of Federal Regulations***

# APPENDIX A

## Highway Code of Federal Regulations

Regulations in Highway Code of Federal Regulations (23 CFR 450.316) detail a number of requirements for MPOs including:

Federal Requirement	GBNRTC Action
<p>The MPO shall develop and use a documented participation plan that defines a process for providing individuals, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, public ports, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation (including intercity bus operators, employer-based commuting programs, such as carpool program, vanpool program, 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.</p>	<p>The GBNRTC Public Participation Plan provides guidelines for public involvement activities to be conducted by the MPO and contains the policies and procedures for actively engaging the public, identified stakeholders and interested parties in the transportation planning process.</p>
<p>Providing adequate public notice of public participation activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP.</p>	<p>GBNRTC email distribution list, website, social media platforms, and in person and virtual public meetings are some of the methods GBNRTC uses regularly to promote MTP and TIP development activities.</p> <p>Public notices are published at least 7 calendar days prior to a scheduled public participation activity, and include meeting information such as date, time, location, and description of the activity.</p> <p>Public review and comment periods on updates to major planning documents including the MTP, TIP, and UPWP are at a minimum of 30 calendar days.</p>

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Federal Requirement	GBNRTC Action
The MPO shall develop and use a documented process that provides timely notice and reasonable access to information about transportation issues and processes.	Public notices are published at least 7 calendar days prior to a scheduled public participation activity and related materials are made available on the GBNRTC website. Members of the public are also able to request information via USPS or visit the GBNRTC offices for meeting materials.
Employing visualization techniques to describe metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs.	GBNRTC employs visualization techniques such as videos, PowerPoint presentations, GIS overlays and maps, photo simulations, infographics and traffic simulation models to draw attention and make material more understandable to a wider audience.
Making public information (technical information and meeting notices) available in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the World Wide Web.	GBNRTC publishes the MTP, TIP and other major planning documents to the GBNRTC website. The GBNRTC email distribution list, website, and social media platforms are regularly used to provide meetings notices to the public. GBNRTC member sites may also be used to provide public notices and MPO related activities.
Holding any public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times.	GBNRTC makes every effort to hold public meetings in locations that are ADA compliant and located on transit routes. Public meetings are held at various times during the day and early evening to accommodate different schedules. Virtual options to attend public meetings are also available to improve accessibility.
Demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input received during the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP.	<p>All public comments, both written and verbal, received during a public review and comment period are addressed and included in the appendix of major planning documents including the TIP, MTP, and PPP.</p> <p>Written comments are responded to in writing with copies forwarded to members of the Planning and Coordinating Committee (PCC).</p> <p>Technical clarifications and other minor questions are answered by GBNRTC staff or project sponsors.</p> <p>Significant comments are considered before any recommended action. The PCC is given a summary and/or presentation by GBNRTC staff of the public comments received prior to making an action recommendation to the Policy Committee.</p>

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Federal Requirement	GBNRTC Action
<p>Seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved communities by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services.</p>	<p>GBNRTC maintains and updates a demographic profile of the metropolitan planning area that includes identification of the locations of socio-economic groups, including low-income and minority populations. The PPP outlines a number of strategies the GBNRTC uses to actively seek out and engage traditionally underserved populations.</p>
<p>Providing an additional opportunity for public comment, if the final metropolitan transportation plan or TIP differs significantly from the version that was made available for public comment by the MPO and raises new material issues that interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts.</p>	<p>Should the final MTP or TIP differ significantly from the version presented to the public, the GBNRTC will initiate an additional 30 day public comment and review period. Notice of the additional opportunity for public review and comment will be posted on GBNRTC social media platforms, website and sent via email to the GBNRTC list distribution list.</p>
<p>Coordinating with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes.</p>	<p>As appropriate, GBNRTC coordinates public involvement and agency consultation processes on specific plans, programs, and projects with the NYS Department of Transportation, Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority and the NYS Thruway Authority.</p>
<p>Periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the participation plan to ensure a full and open participation process.</p>	<p>GBNRTC's Public Participation Plan is periodically reviewed to determine its effectiveness in achieving its goals.</p>
<p>When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft metropolitan transportation plan and TIP (including the financial plans) as a result of the participation process in this section or the interagency consultation process required under the EPA transportation conformity regulations (40 CFR part 93, subpart A), a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made as part of the final metropolitan transportation plan and TIP.</p>	<p>All comments, both written and verbal, received during a public review and comment period and/or agency consultation process are addressed and documented for major planning documents including the final MTP and TIP.</p>

Continues on page 25.



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Federal Requirement	GBNRTC Action
<p>A minimum public comment period of 45 calendar days shall be provided before the initial or revised participation plan is adopted by the MPO. Copies of the approved participation plan shall be provided to the FHWA and the FTA for informational purposes and shall be posted on the World Wide Web, to the maximum extent practicable.</p>	<p>Updates to the GBNRTC Public Participation Plan initiates public notification and a 45 day public review and comment period before it is adopted. Upon GBNRTC adoption, copies are forwarded to FHWA and FTA for information purposes and the adopted document posted to the GBNRTC website at <a href="http://www.gbnrtc.org">www.gbnrtc.org</a> and social media sites.</p>
<p>In developing metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs, the MPO should consult with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities within the MPA that are affected by transportation (including State and local planned growth, economic development, tourism, natural disaster risk reduction, environmental protection, airport operations, or freight movements) or coordinate its planning process (to the maximum extent practicable) with such planning activities. In addition, the MPO shall develop the metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs with due consideration of other related planning activities within the metropolitan area.</p>	<p>GBNRTC consults with federal, state and tribal agencies responsible for land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, and historic preservation in developing transportation plans. Consultation activities involve, as appropriate, comparisons of resource maps and inventories and discussions on potential environmental mitigation activities.</p>
<p>When the MPA includes Indian Tribal lands, the MPO shall appropriately involve the Indian Tribal government(s) in the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP.</p>	<p>The Seneca Nation of Indians serves formally as a GBNRTC Regionally Significant Stakeholder. As such, the Seneca Nation participates in GBNRTC meetings and offers recommendations and positions on transportation plans, projects, and processes. Notification of GBNRTC planning activities is also provided to other tribal governments in the planning areas, including the Tuscarora Nation and the Tonawanda Band of Senecas.</p>
<p>When the MPA includes Federal public lands, the MPO shall appropriately involve the Federal land management agencies in the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP.</p>	<p>GBNRTC consults with Federal land management agencies, including the Army Corp. of Engineers, in the development of the MTP and TIP.</p>
<p>MPOs shall, to the extent practicable, develop a documented process(es) that outlines roles, responsibilities, and key decision points for consulting with other governments and agencies.</p>	<p>GBNRTC’s Public Participation Plan describes decision points in which other governments and agencies are consulted.</p>

**Public  
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Plan**

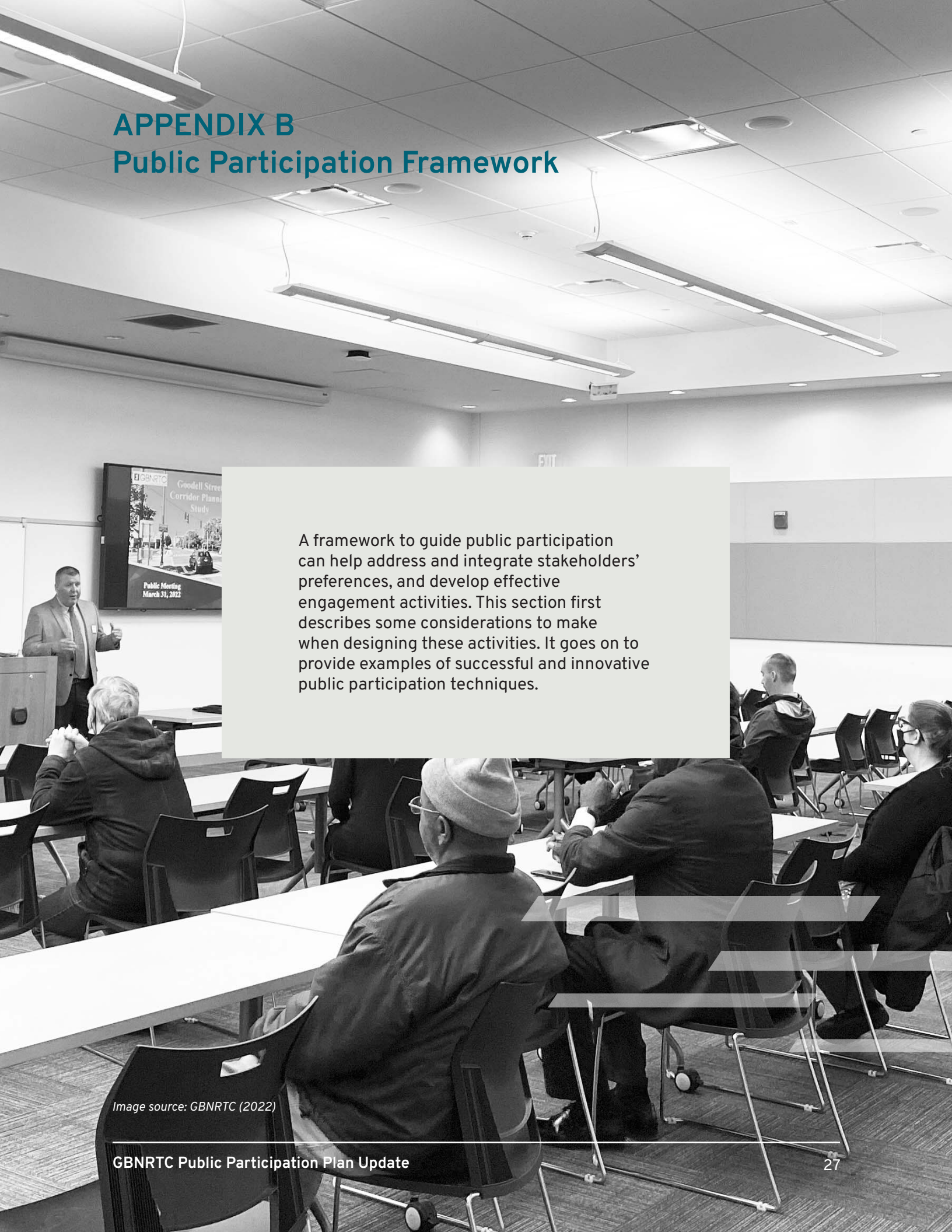
**UPDATE**  
July 2023

## **Appendix B**

### ***Public Participation Framework***

# APPENDIX B

## Public Participation Framework



A framework to guide public participation can help address and integrate stakeholders' preferences, and develop effective engagement activities. This section first describes some considerations to make when designing these activities. It goes on to provide examples of successful and innovative public participation techniques.

*Image source: GBNRTC (2022)*

## Designing Public Participation and Engagement Activities

Based on Bryson et al (2013)<sup>1</sup>, the following set of questions act as design guidelines for public participation and engagement activities:

1. Is stakeholder participation required or needed here? Why or why not? How does the issue at hand benefit from participation?
2. What is the purpose of this participation activity? What are the desired outcomes? See the Public Participation Spectrum, Table 1 below.<sup>2</sup>
3. Who needs to be involved and how? Conduct a stakeholder analysis and/or assess the community where the project will be located. Ensure an appropriate range of interests are engaged, including those who might normally not be at the table—go beyond the “usual suspects”.
4. How will stakeholders’ input influence the project? Identify how you will communicate this to participants.
5. How will you manage power dynamics? Formal meetings may be dominated by only those comfortable with that format. Consider using small groups or one-on-one conversations. Don’t privilege expert knowledge over “local” knowledge; residents’ first-hand experience can help improve project design to better meet local needs.

**Table 1 | IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum**

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
<i>Public Participation Purpose</i>	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that the public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.

1 Bryson, J. M., Quick, K. S., Slotterback, C. S., & Crosby, B. C. (2013). Designing public participation processes. *Public Administration Review*, 73(1), 23-34.

2 International Association for Public Participation. “IAP2’s Spectrum of Public Participation.” <http://ymaws.com>

## Example Participation and Engagement Methods across the Participation Spectrum

These methods have demonstrated success elsewhere, and can augment existing activities. More detailed descriptions of some new and innovative methods are listed below (Table 2). Together with the design guidelines above, GBNRTC staff and member agencies can select from an array of options to develop participation and engagement activities. Specific strategies and the extent of public participation will be customized for each individual plan or program.

**Table 2 | Innovative Public Participation Methods**

Method	Description	Location Used
Bus Stop Theatre	Audience moves from scene to scene using public transportation, engaging with the environment, transit system, and community the subject matter is addressing.	Minneapolis, MN
Mobile Transit Lab	Transformed a bus into a mobile educational center and gathered input about transit needs; visited community events, schools, libraries and shopping malls.	Tulsa, OK
Deliberative Polling	A random sample of residents are polled, and then some members are invited to discuss the issues; participants also engage in dialogue with experts and political leaders.	Various including San Mateo County, CA
Online Feedback Platforms	Comment on proposed plans, participate in surveys and polls, discussion forum with other residents.	Austin, TX, San Luis Obispo, CA, Vancouver, BC, Hampton, VA, Decatur, GA, and others
Text Message	Input and feedback submitted via text.	Various locations, including One Region Forward
Street Team	Attends events to gather input through interactive activities.	Boston, MA
Virtual Public Workshop	An online town hall meeting.	San Francisco, CA
Meetings-in-a-Box	Provide materials to community groups, businesses, and individuals to host their own meetings at their convenience.	Austin, TX

Table 2 continues on page 30.

Table 2 continues from page 24.

Method	Description	Location Used
Happy Hour Engagement	Table tents and coasters in bars (residents write on coasters; text, tweet or email ideas); follow-up questions are sent each month.	Minneapolis, MN
City Making Jeopardy	Participants answer questions about planning issues (e.g., housing, transit); responses help identify people's priorities.	Minneapolis, MN
Community Think Tank	Comprised of people normally not usually invited to be part of an engagement process, such as a teenager or a person experiencing homelessness, who discuss community issues.	Minneapolis, MN
21st Century Meeting	Small discussion groups in-person and via web video.	
Conversation Cafes	Hosted conversations held in a public setting for anyone to attend	
Walkshop	Community members and planners walk the neighborhood to better understand assets and needs.	Various, including Village of Williamsville, NY
Neighborhood Participation Zones	Split neighborhood into "participation zones" and each area has a zone captain and assistants, all provided with stipends; they distribute newsletters and posters, and recruit residents for visioning workshops.	Niagara Falls, NY
Community Asset Mapping	Interactive creation of a map of the community's resources to help identify key assets and opportunities to improve them.	Vancouver, BC
Citizen Jury	A selection from a random sample of city residents who meet regularly to provide advice on a project.	Hamilton, ON
Participatory Budgeting	Residents directly decide how to spend part of a public budget by developing project or program ideas and voting on them.	Various locations, including Buffalo, NY

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## **Appendix C**

### ***GBNRTC Public Participation Plan Update Outreach Activities***

# APPENDIX C

## GBNRTC Public Participation Plan Survey

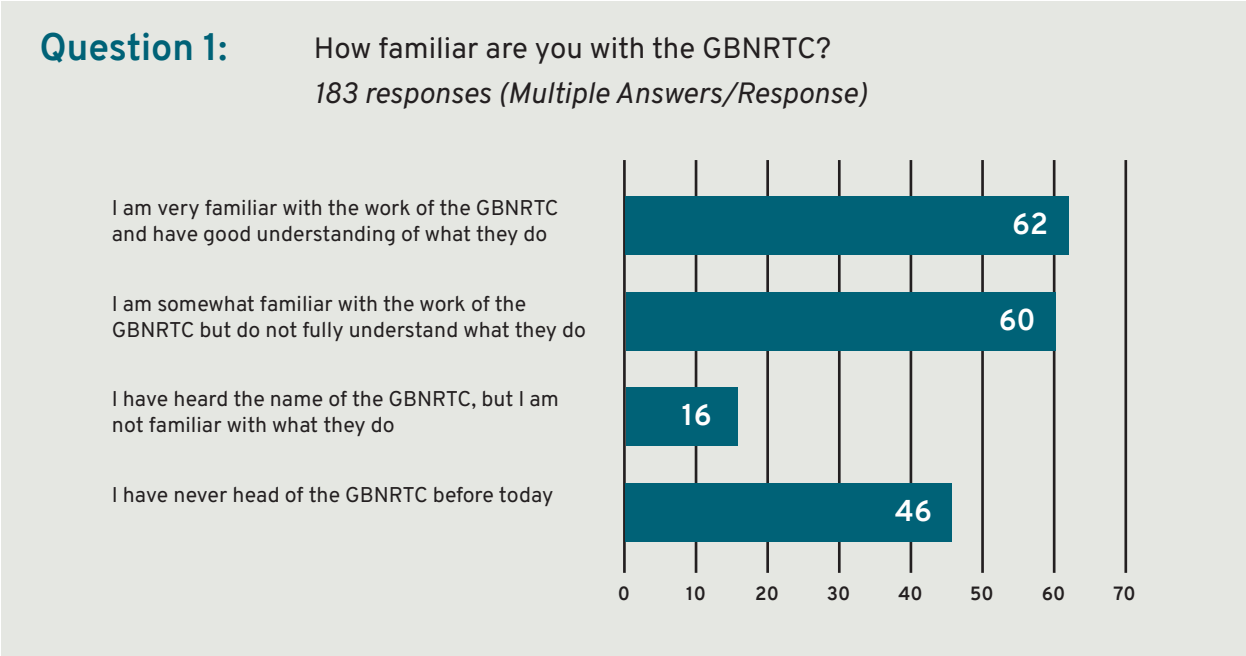
### Background

In July 2022 and June 2023, the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council conducted two rounds of surveys to gather information from the general public and key stakeholders to seek input on, and enhance methods in engaging the public in the MPO planning process. Members of the public and key stakeholders were notified of the online Public Participation Plan survey through the GBNRTC website, social media platforms and email distribution list. Paid advertisements were placed on Facebook and through Panorama Hispano News. A paper version of the surveys was made available and assistance with filling out the survey form was offered to all.

### Survey Results

The survey results are intended to be used to establish baseline data for measuring GBNRTC performance in public participation. The GBNRTC utilizes performance measures to review and, where needed, improve outreach techniques across various MPO planning efforts. The survey results help identify discrepancies between existing outreach techniques and the audience’s preferred methods of public engagement. Where discrepancies are identified, the GBNRTC can adjust outreach techniques to better engage the general public and MPO stakeholders.

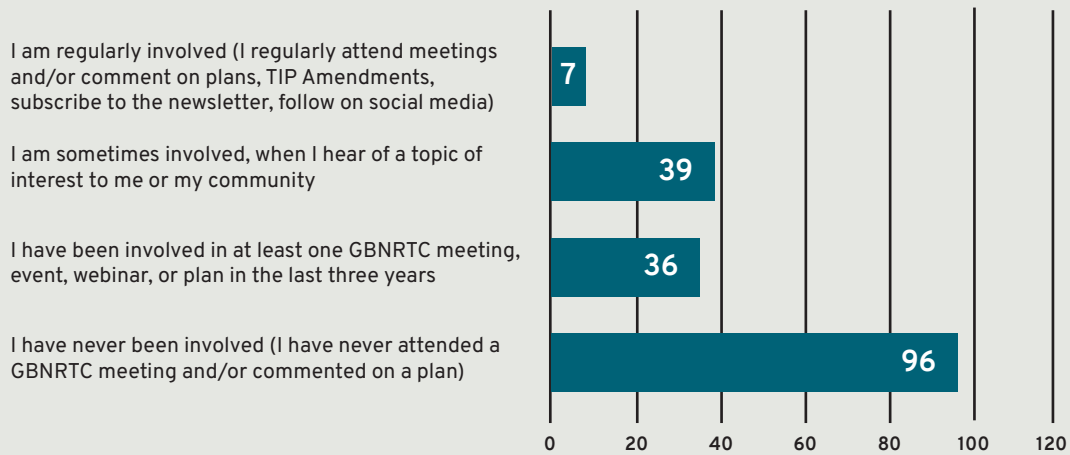
The combined results of the surveys completed are summarized in the tables and graphics below.





**Question 2:** How would you describe your current involvement with the GBNRTC?

183 responses (Multiple Answers/Response)



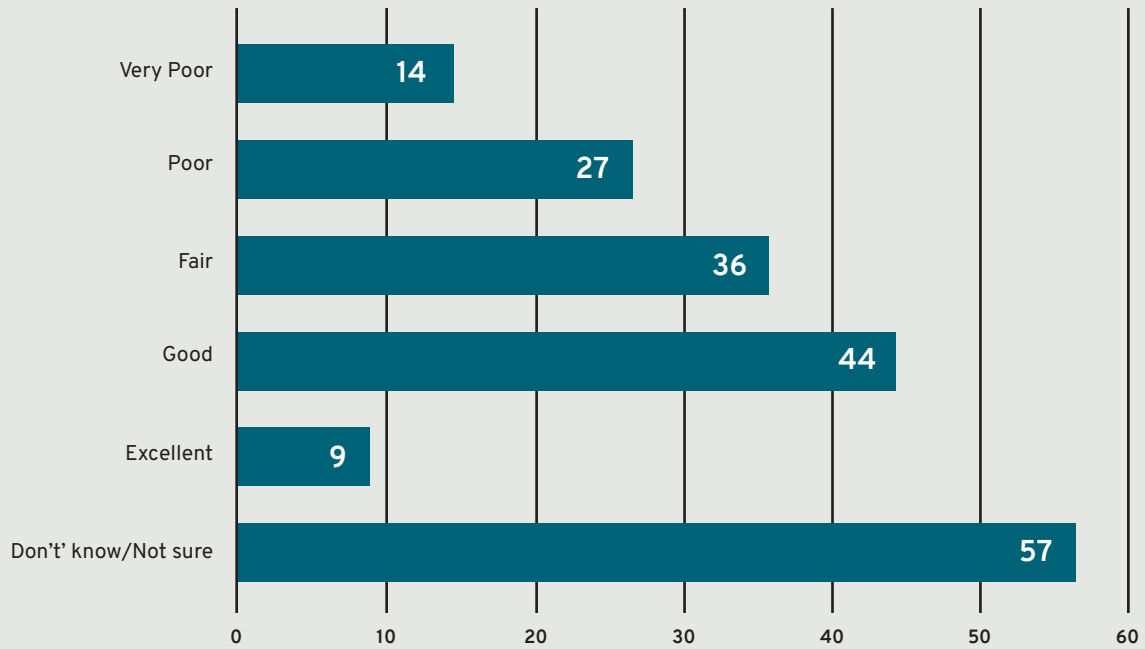
**“Other” responses:**

1. I would pick #2 if it said the last 5 years.
2. Is it related to the Buffalo Green Code? I attended public info sessions for that
3. Involved because of my job
4. I’ve heard of GBNRTC plans through others at village community meetings
5. I worked on a project with a representative of GBNRTC
6. Recommended something at a meeting over three years ago
7. Former intern
8. I attended meetings while a councilman in the town of Tonawanda.
9. “Other” unspecified

**Question 3:**

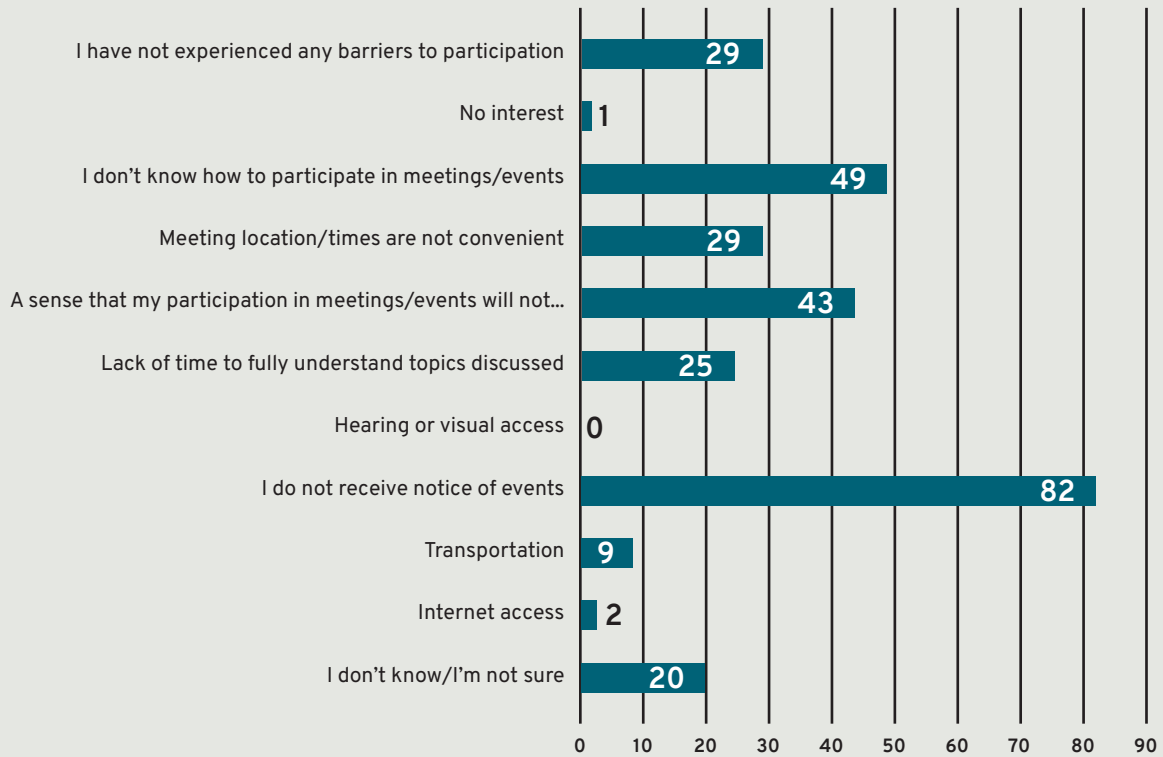
How would you rate GBNRTC's performance of informing people of opportunities to participate in transportation planning?

183 responses (Multiple Answers/Response)



**Question 4:** Which of the following present a barrier to your involvement with the GBNRTC?

184 responses (Multiple Answers/Response)



**“Other” responses:**

1. Retired
2. I don't have enough free time
3. I wish that zoom meetings for the PCC meetings would come back so that people can comment verbally on items. Commenting via a Facebook Live comment doesn't seem as official.
4. Work schedule
5. Most topics (that I've seen) don't apply to me. Usually I see local road improvements
6. No time
7. Lack of time in general- will go to things related to public transit, pedestrians/walkability, disability, or an area I feel I have input on.
8. No idea what is actually being discussed; Agendas (as pics in Facebook) for meetings and Executive Summaries (not for download; easily viewed on FB) for planning docs would be helpful - list items to be addressed so it reaches more people
9. This is an accessible format for me
10. I have never heard of them before now. I will sign up for notices.
11. I serve on Grand Island's Long Range Planning Committee. Shouldn't we be involved?
12. I would like snappy fun announcements that I can share on FB
13. Based on other scheduled activities and commitments

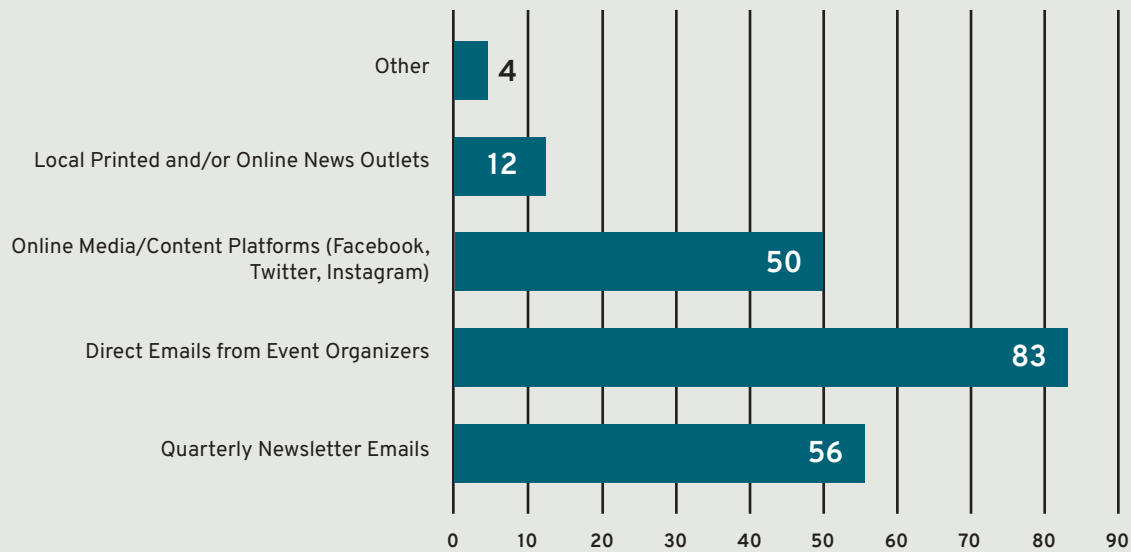
**Question 5:**

Please rank your preference for receiving information about upcoming meetings and/or events.

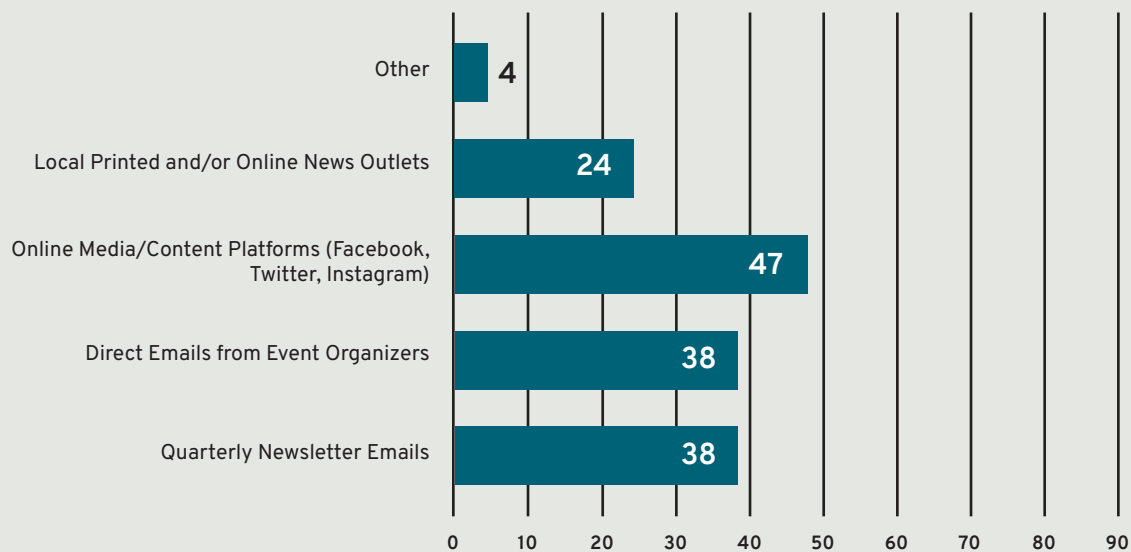
Rank your highest preference as “1” and your lowest preference as “5”.

183 responses (Multiple Answers/Response)

**Ranked as First Preference**



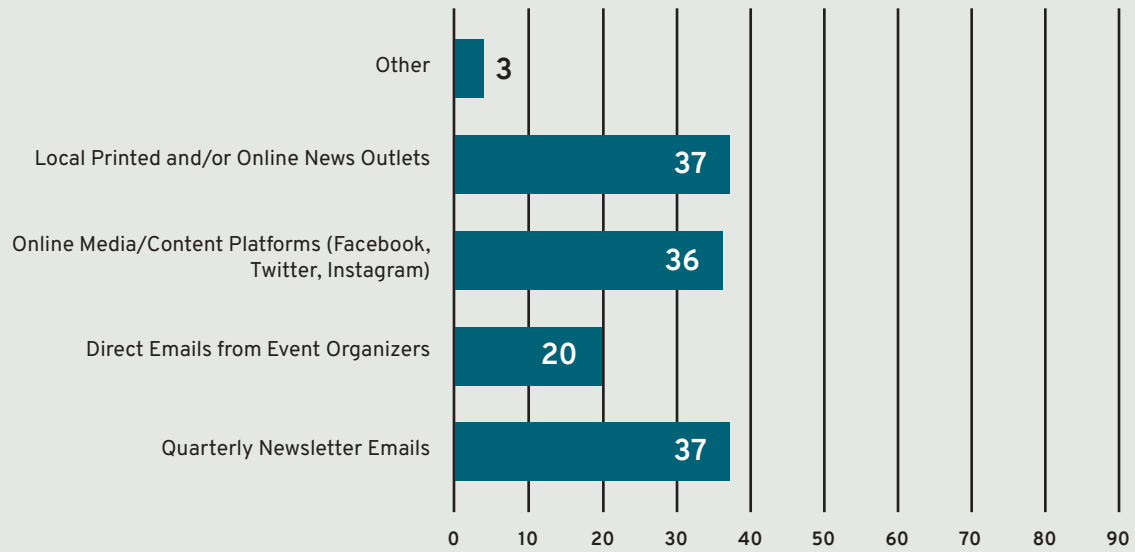
**Ranked as Second Preference**



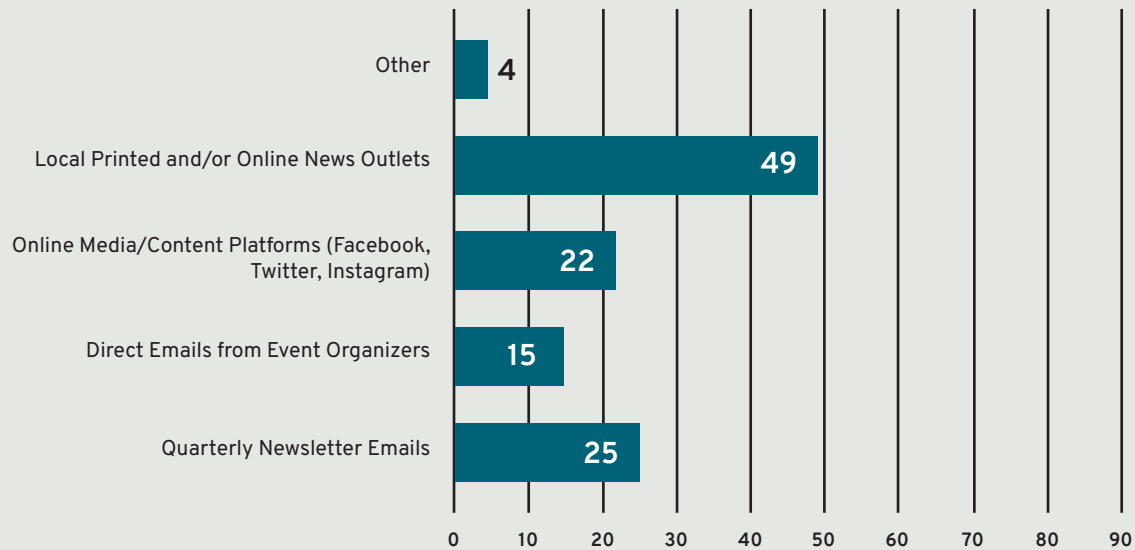
Additional responses on pages 37 and 38.

### Question 5 (continued)

#### Ranked as Third Preference



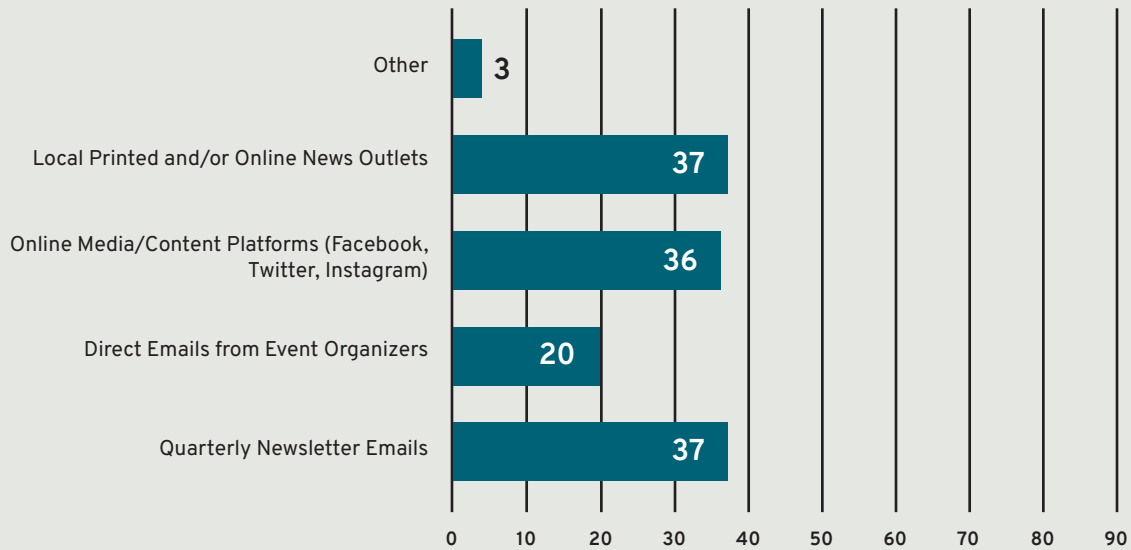
#### Ranked as Fourth Preference



*Additional responses on page 38.*

## Question 5 (continued)

### Ranked as Fifth Preference



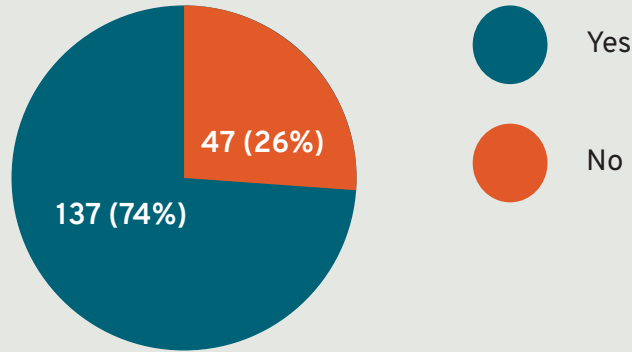
#### “Other” responses:

- Not aware of other options
- Announcements at meetings
- Prominent public radio and buffalo news articles directing to website for more info
- Text
- I don't get notices.
- TV News
- I don't understand the ranking system.
- Weren't we supposed to rank them in order of preference?
- Attend meetings at Board of Block Clubs of Buffalo & Erie County
- Direct mailings
- Tabling events announcing events
- Big difference between printed vs on-line Many of my east side neighbors won't find it unless it's delivered door-to-door or through church
- It was left
- Text message.
- Technically I had to select 'other' since it's the 5th option, but I think it'd be nice to have flyers with QR codes to meetings/surveys placed in places where the target audience members would already be.
- That rating scale makes no sense
- TV news outlets, Direct mail
- Other options you may think of: electronic billboards perhaps.
- Tabling at farmers markets
- TV
- Number one source for dissemination should be advanced notices on local radio and TV.
- Mailer

**Question 6:**

Do you currently receive the GBNRTC’s e-newsletter and emails?

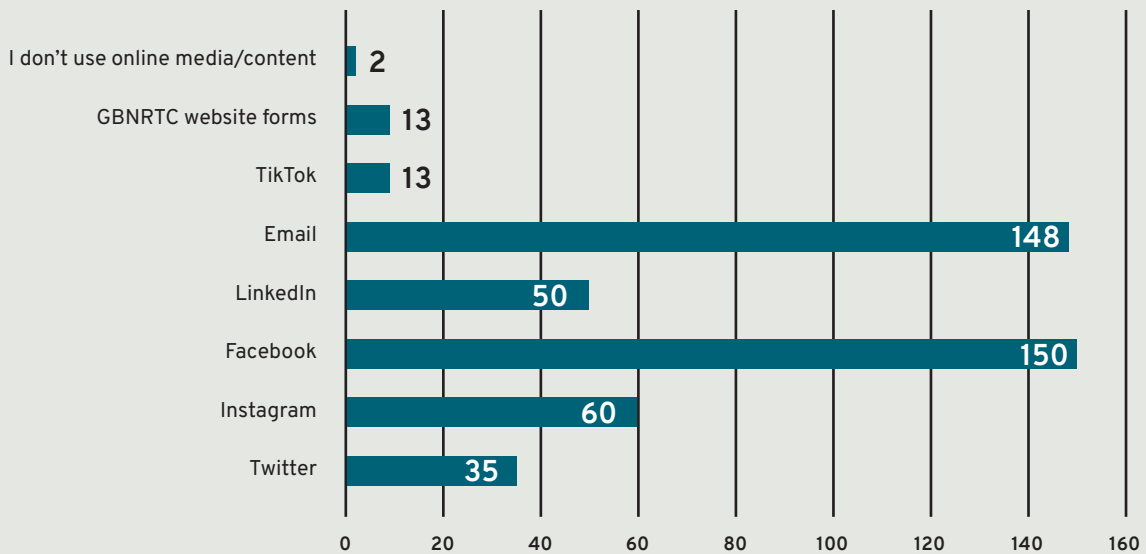
184 responses



**Question 7:**

Which online media/content platforms do you regularly use?

184 responses (Multiple Answers/Response)



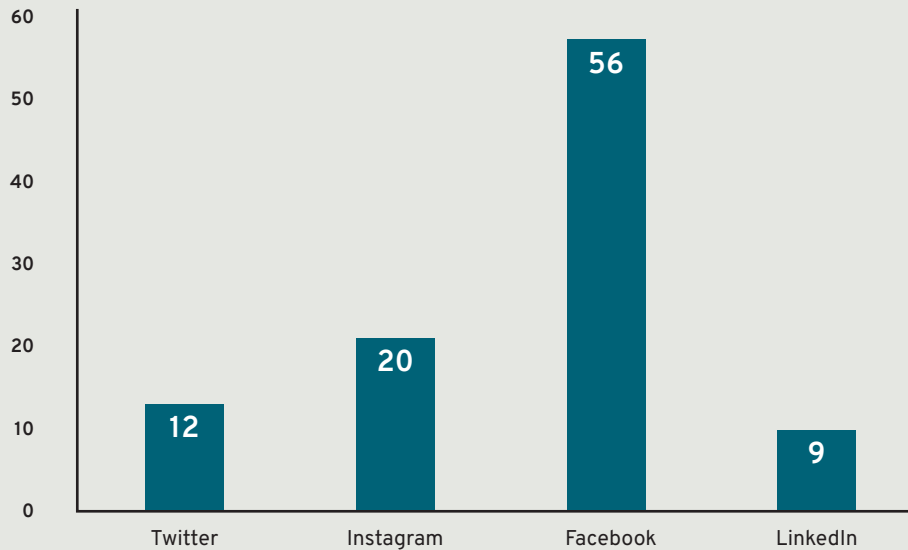
**“Other” responses:**

- Buffalo news e-edition, websites
- Instagram
- I don't use on line any more than I have to
- Whats app, slack

**Question 8:**

Do you currently follow any of the GBNRTC social media sites?  
If so, which ones?

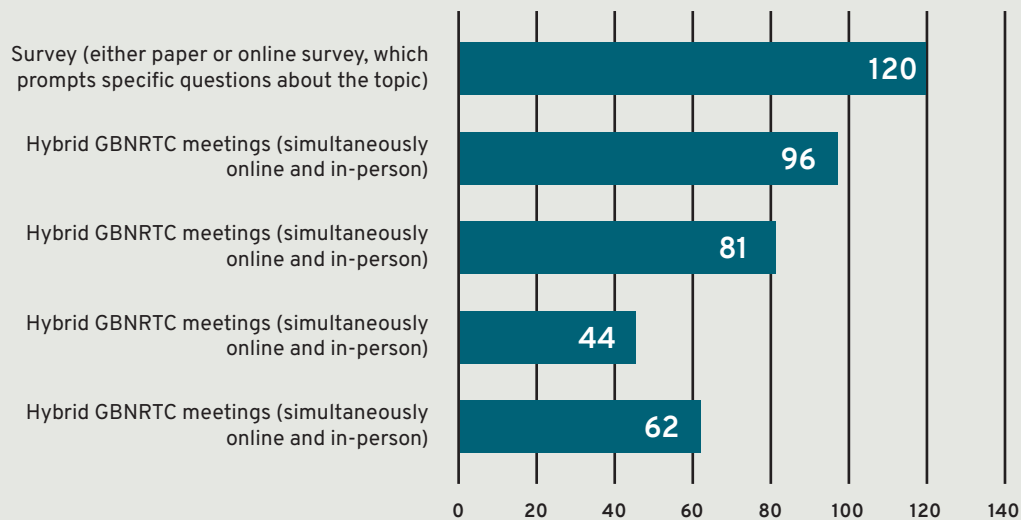
71 responses (Multiple Answers/Response)



**Question 9:**

What are your preferred methods for giving feedback on GBNRTC plans and/or activities?

180 responses (Multiple Answers/Response)



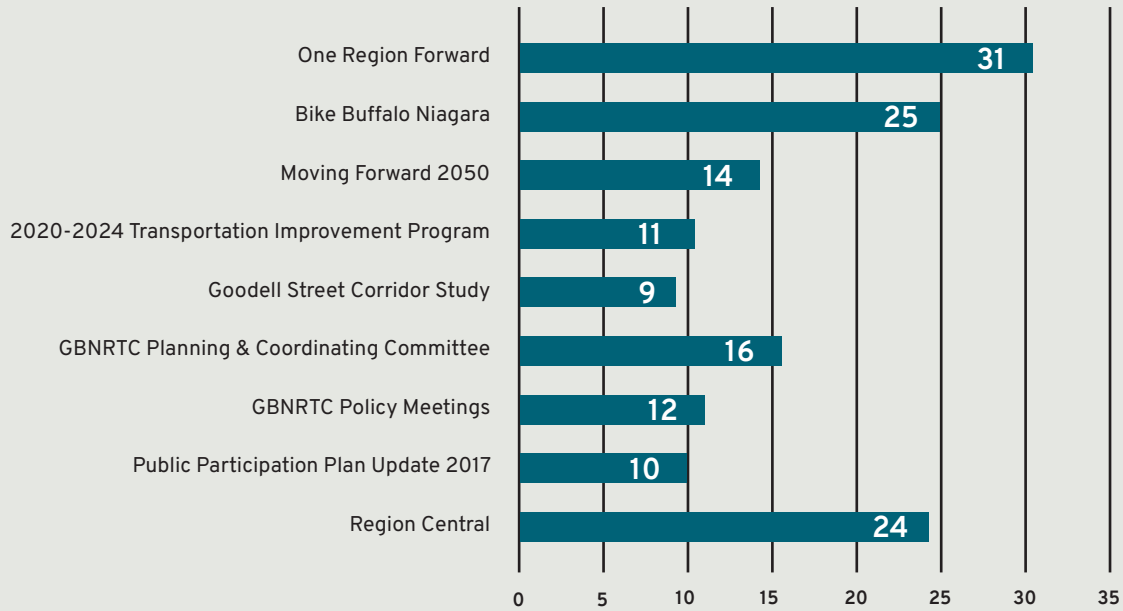
**“Other” responses:**

- Not sure
- I mostly take notes. I don’t expect to be able to influence your decisions, per question 4. I haven’t bother giving you feedback on the issues which affect me because I don’t have a lot of faith in the process.
- AFTER work or with a roaming deadline at info fair/community outreach events
- Maybe post a 5 min or less “elevator pitch” of the project on YouTube, share that, and provide a link for more details and a link to the survey either when posting, in the YouTube description, or at the end of the video. That way it’s not time sensitive and people can be informed at their leisure
- Ain’t no working parent got time for meetings.



**Question 10:** Have you ever participated in any of the following GBNRTC hosted meetings, events, or webinars?

87 responses (Multiple Answers/Response)

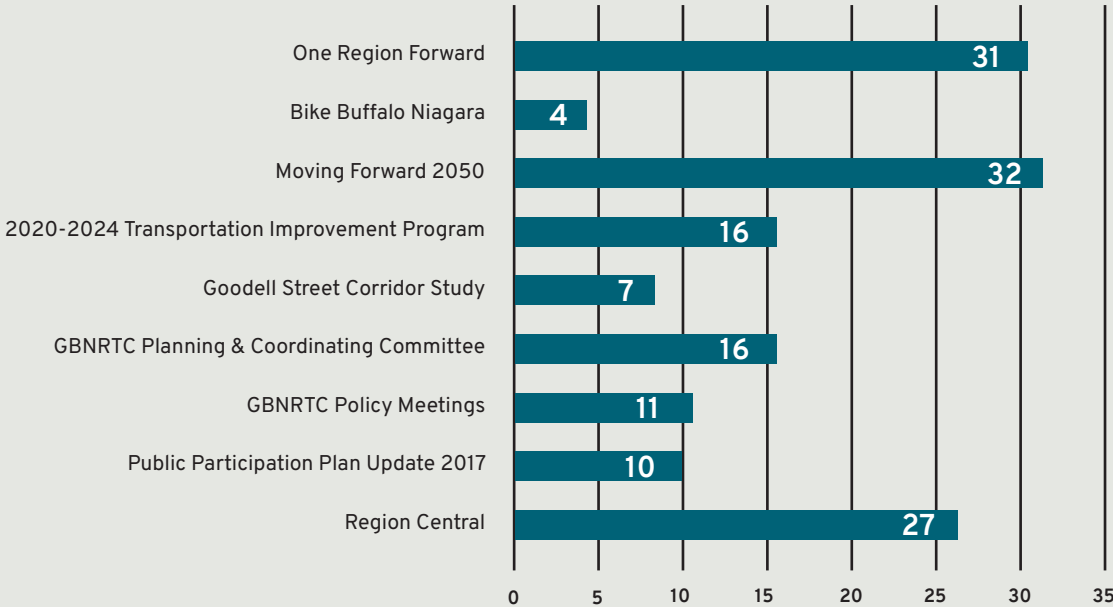


**“Other” responses:**

- Share maps with visitors on various FB groups
- Unsure of title/ UB CFT, summer/fall 2019
- Smart Mobility Summit
- Meeting them to propose alternate Route 5
- Bicycle planning meeting at ECC South , pre-COVID

**Question 11:** Are you familiar with or have you ever provided public comments on any of the following GBNRTC plans and/or notices?

83 responses (Multiple Answers/Response)



**“Other” responses:**

- Proposed an alternate Route 5 after NYSDOT said there was none
- Tonawanda rail expansion
- Maybe more, but I don’t honestly remember!
- Spoke at a meeting to revive interest in Skyway removal
- NFTA rail invasion through Amherst

## Public Participation Review and Comment Period

The Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC) held a 45-day Public Review and Comment period for the 2023 Draft Public Participation Plan (PPP) from September 7, 2023 to October 21, 2023.

Two public meetings were held to present and discuss the draft plan. A presentation was made followed by a question and answer period at each meeting. In advance of the meeting date, parties were requested to advise the GBNRTC if a sign language interpreter, an assistive listening system or any other accommodations were required to facilitate participation in the meetings. The following public meetings were held:

### Thursday, September 21, 2023 – Hybrid

Thursday, September 21, 2023 – Hybrid  
Downtown Central Library  
West Room (Main Floor)  
1 Lafayette Square, Buffalo, NY 14203  
Virtually on Facebook:  
<http://facebook.com/GBNRTC>  
10:30-11:30am

### Tuesday, September 26, 2023 – Virtual Only

Virtually on Facebook:  
<http://facebook.com/GBNRTC>  
5:30-6:30pm

An electronic version of the draft plan was made available at <https://www.gbnrtc.org/participation>. Hard copies were made available for viewing at 438 Main St. #503, Buffalo, NY 14202 and provided upon request.

The Public Review and Comment period and public meeting notices were shared through the GBNRTC email distribution list, website, and social media platforms. No public comments were received.



Notices of the public comment period for the 2023 Draft Public Participation Plan on GBNRTC's social media platforms.