

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN FOR REGIONAL PLANNING FOR SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN



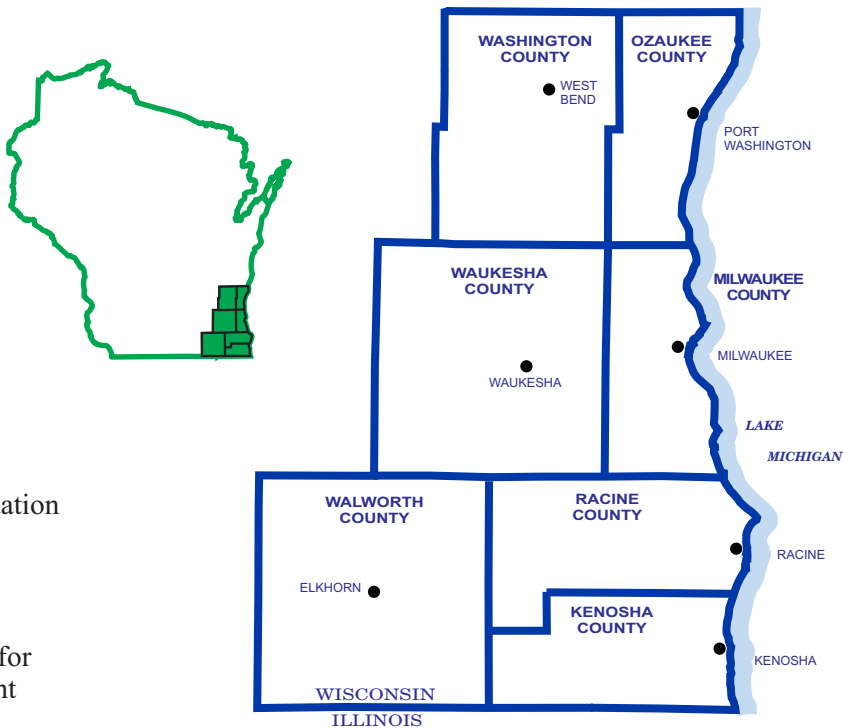
Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission



PLANNING FOR OUR REGION

In Southeastern Wisconsin, regional planning for land use, transportation, and other elements of public works and facilities (for example, parks, sanitary sewerage, water supply, and stormwater management) is done by the **Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission**, serving seven counties:

- Kenosha County
- Milwaukee County
- Ozaukee County
- Racine County
- Walworth County
- Washington County
- Waukesha County
- 146 cities, villages, and towns
- More than 2 million people
- About 1.2 million jobs
- Over \$190 billion in equalized valuation
- More than one third of Wisconsin's population, jobs, and wealth



We invite you to participate in planning for the future of our Region, and this document discusses many opportunities.



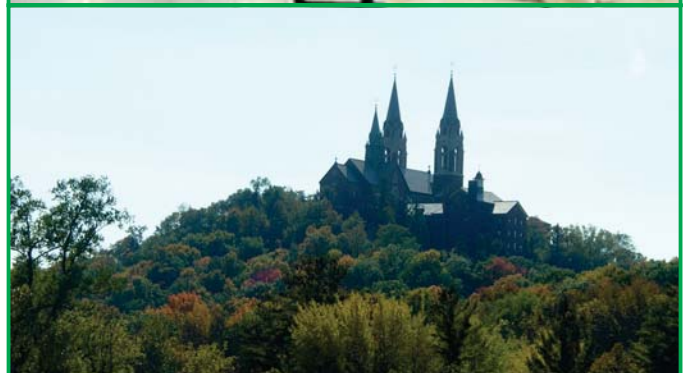
The Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) works to provide basic information and planning services **to solve problems and explore opportunities which go beyond single units of government**. In our Region, there are 146 cities, villages, and towns, in addition to the seven counties containing many public and private interests.

Planning for needs like efficient highways and public transit systems, beneficial parks and open spaces, major land use changes and employment centers, and a quality environment including clean water cannot be done well without working together. These and other needs require a multi-county planning effort and **benefit via the participation of many people**.

IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public participation has become an important part of government decisions affecting many aspects of our lives. The Regional Planning Commission believes that having people participate in its work can help to accomplish positive things:

- **Let the public know what's going on** and give people a voice
- **Present opportunities** to both provide and get back useful information
- **Explain issues** and choices that are sometimes complex using non-technical language
- **Encourage residents to suggest ideas and make comments** which can improve planning
- **Guide planning** through advisory committees containing key representatives and topic experts
- **Create plans that are more likely to be carried out** due to understanding and support
- **Expand knowledge** so that participants are better equipped to act or to join in public debate
- **Do the right thing**, as well as meet important law requirements, by reaching out to all
- **Build important partnerships** and maintain key connections for success





The rest of this document explains in detail how the Regional Planning Commission plans to provide opportunities for public participation, how it will use the ideas and comments received, and how it is prepared to evaluate success and make improvements. **Suggestions are welcome** on how the Commission can meet participation needs and best receive public comments (please see back cover). **The SEWRPC website at www.sewrpc.org is a ready source** of full information—from newsletters and meeting details to draft recommendations and complete plans—offering an **open opportunity to comment on regional planning 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.**

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL

The Commission's goal for public participation has three major parts:

- **Ensure early and continuous public notification** about regional planning;
- **Provide meaningful information** concerning regional planning; and
- **Obtain participation and input** to regional planning.

HOW PEOPLE MAY RELATE DURING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

In pursuing its three-fold public participation goal, the Commission recognizes and appreciates that diverse audiences or clientele groups will approach regional planning topics from different perspectives. Some people may initially be unaware, or struggle to see the relevance. Others may wish to become active participants or even outreach partners.

The Commission will use a range of informational materials, activities, and events which meet a variety of needs. In this process, it will be respected that some people may want to participate only at a distance, if at all, while others may seek a great deal of information and involvement. In all cases, providing meaningful opportunities for participation will be considered a key for success by the Commission. The following describe different and generally growing levels of planning involvement upon which people often focus. However, the Commission wishes to be flexible and encourages involvement in whatever way is desired and convenient.



- **Recipient** – a person or group perhaps merely wanting to become or remain informed, that may receive materials via U.S. Mail or other means
- **Attendee** – someone taking the step of travelling to a meeting or other event, or consulting the SEWRPC website for updates, where discussion may begin
- **Participant** – an attendee who becomes engaged, at which point discussion increases as well as the opportunities for commenting
- **Stakeholder** – a person or represented interest that initially had a tie to the planning effort, or that developed a stronger interest via public participation, so that they actively pursue the process
- **Partner** – usually a specific interest or grouping of interests that will work cooperatively with the Commission staff on completing key activities such as outreach events
- **Implementer or Plan Advocate** – participants extending beyond direct roles of the Commission, but directly using plan information, as implementation reflects a final step in the planning cycle and advocacy of plan recommendations by key groups is strongly related

RECOMMENDED PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

The Commission will work to achieve its public participation goal cooperatively with other public agencies and units of government by coordinating efforts when possible. It will coordinate particularly with the Region's counties, cities, villages, and towns, and the Wisconsin Departments of Transportation and Natural Resources.

The components of public participation will include:

- *Open Meetings*
- *Advisory Committee Meetings*
- *Document Availability*
- *Notification by Mail*
- *Website Updates*
- *Meeting Presentations or Briefings*
- *Public Meetings*
 - *Targeted Format and Frequency*
 - *Broad Notification*
 - *Convenient Scheduling*
- *Public Comment Periods*
- *Ensuring Environmental Justice in Planning*
- *Environmental Justice Task Force*
- *Public Outreach*
- *Incorporation of Public Input*
- *Evaluation of Public Participation*

PLANNING FOR HOUSING IN SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN

A plan for housing in southeastern Wisconsin is now being prepared. Work began in 2009 and will be finished in 2012. The plan should benefit people, communities, neighborhoods, businesses, and the economy.



REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE TO MEET

The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission will hold the next meeting of its Environmental Justice Task Force, and anyone interested is invited to attend:

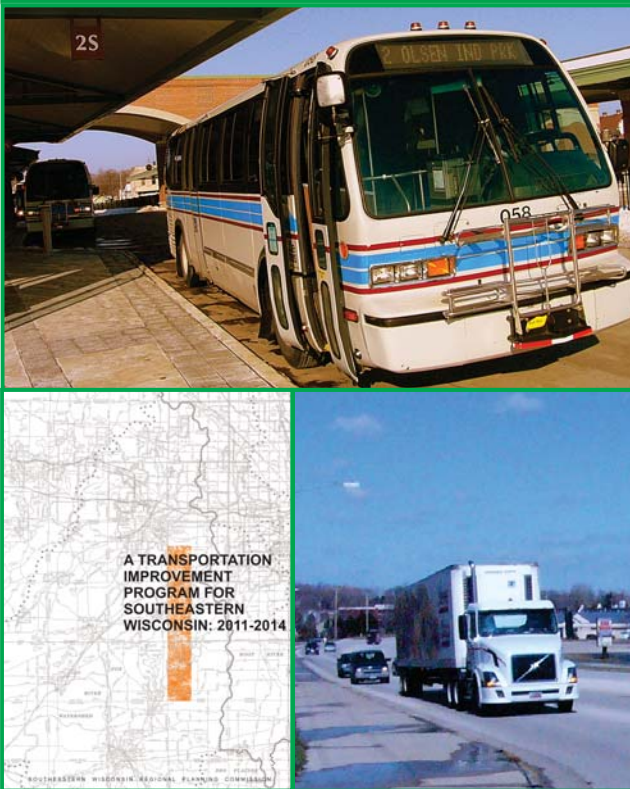
Month, Day, Year, Time
IndependenceFirst
540 South 1st Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

"Environmental Justice" is a Federal policy regarding minority and low-income populations. It helps to: prevent disproportionately high and adverse effects of decisions; ensure full and fair participation in decision-making; and assure proportionate and timely receipt of benefits. The Task Force may review and comment upon topics including land use, transportation systems, housing, the environment, public outreach, and comprehensive planning. Recommendations from all regional planning programs are advisory in nature, with final decisions and implementation carried out by governmental units, public agencies, and other groups.

An agenda for the meeting and related materials may be obtained on the Commission's website at www.sewrpc.org, or by contacting the Commission offices:

Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission	Phone: 262-547-6721
W239 N1812 Rockwood Drive, P.O. Box 1607	Fax: 262-547-1103
Waukesha, Wisconsin 53187-1607	Email: gkorb@sewrpc.org

Persons with special needs are asked to contact the Commission offices a minimum of 48 hours before the meeting so that suitable arrangements can be made. This may involve site access or mobility, materials review or interpretation, or submission of comments.



Evaluating Public Participation

The effectiveness of the Commission's public participation will regularly be monitored and evaluated, and modified as needed to ensure that needs are successfully met. The Commission will continue to seek improvements to its public participation process when possible.

Following the conclusion of each major planning effort, Commission staff will complete an evaluation of the public participation process for that particular effort. The evaluation will indicate the public involvement techniques used with brief evaluations of those techniques, and conclusions regarding the overall public participation effort.

Individual public participation activities, including events, will also be reviewed. Criteria will include participation level, feedback provided by attendees and/or reviewers, and periodic sampling using surveys or other techniques. Any improvements could then immediately be implemented for the future.

Beginning on the next page is a summary listing of the materials, activities, and events which the Commission will use under each of its public participation plan components (see also back cover to obtain more details).

Engaging Minority and Low-Income Populations: An Example

The Commission will seek to involve all interested and concerned segments of the public in its planning. Some practical applications, shown immediately below, identify how certain public participation steps unfold in major planning efforts to engage minority and low-income populations:

- **Personal letters are sent to lead contacts** of groups and organizations at each major stage of planning corresponding to study newsletters and/or public meetings, highlighting key points of potential interest.
- **Telephone campaigns, emails, or regular contacts** occur to arrange meetings, encourage participation, answer questions, and take any comments.
- **Opportunities are explored for more intensive engagement**, including co-sponsored events, special meetings involving full memberships, and employing small group assessment techniques.
- **Primary organizational contacts** are identified and cultivated, to provide a basis of regular or ongoing involvements with a subset of very active and broad-based representative groups.
- **Partnerships and/or other deeper relationships** will be sought with key target groups tied to their interests, clientele, and/or the subject matter of particular planning efforts.

PLAN SUMMARY

The Regional Planning Commission will seek to provide timely notices of important steps in planning, free and open access, and multiple means of participation within the Region in a number of ways, as described below:

Open Meetings

- Meetings of the Commission and its advisory committees are **open to the public**.
- **Agendas are posted** on the SEWRPC website and at the Commission offices at least five days in advance.
- **Locations accessible by public transit** are considered desirable and will be used for committee and public meetings if practical, especially for transportation planning, depending upon the subject matter and expected audience.
- **Persons with special needs are welcome** to participate, with Commission arrangements made to help, and all locations comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Advisory Committee Meetings

- Advisory committee meetings take place **throughout each planning process**.
- **Concerned government officials** who can represent residents or are specialists in the planning topic serve on the committees, as well as other knowledgeable people.
- **The Commission seeks committee diversity**, especially members of minority population groups.
- **Plan chapters are carefully reviewed** by committees for approval, along with planning data.
- **Agendas may provide an opportunity for public comments**, and the committees review all comments.

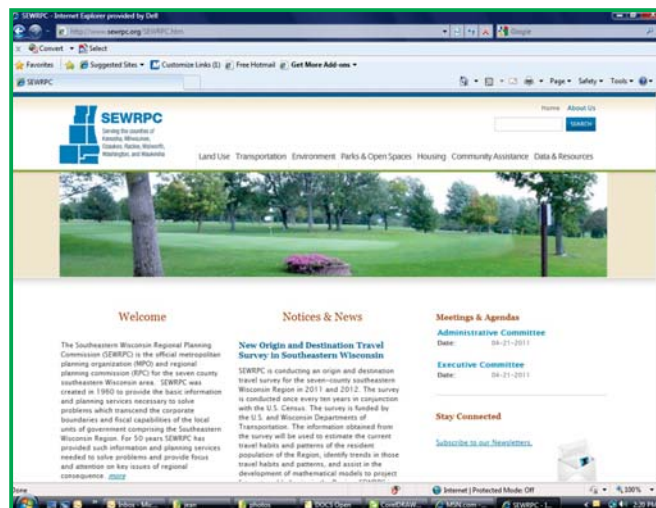
Document Availability and Notification by Mail

- **All draft preliminary plans are available for public review** at the Commission offices and on the SEWRPC website.
- **Documents including published plans are sent to all public libraries** in the Region. These are also available for public review at the Commission offices and on the website. A charge to cover production and mailing costs may be applied to purchases.
- **The Commission maintains a mailing list** of governments, individuals, agencies, groups and organizations that have expressed interest in receiving information including free newsletters.
- **Newsletters** are prepared and sent during each major study **to some 2,000 recipients**.
 - Provide study updates, announce public meetings, and describe planning content
 - Serve as condensed but relatively thorough summaries of plans or plan progress
- **Summary fact sheets or brochures** are used to further shorten newsletter content.
 - Used as public meeting handouts and provided to groups as appropriate
 - Typically translated into Spanish and also would be made available in other languages
 - Mailed with personal letters to minority and low-income group contacts
 - Sometimes substituted for newsletters in smaller, shorter term, or local planning studies



Website Updates – www.sewrpc.org

- **The SEWRPC website** contains both background and comprehensive current information about the Regional Planning Commission.
- **Detailed information** about transportation planning and other planning activities is featured.
- **Committee meeting materials** including agendas, minutes, and chapters reviewed are regularly updated.
- **Current studies as well as historic plan materials** can be consulted.
- **Postings also include** newsletters, fact sheets, brochures, meeting announcements and ads, public meeting presentations and handouts, and draft sections of reports.
- **Contact information is available, and online comments** are possible at any time.



Meeting Presentations or Briefings

- **Presentations or briefings are given throughout planning efforts** at any point in time.
- **These are specifically offered** to governmental units, as well as to central city, minority, and low-income groups and organizations accepting invitations.
- **Any group may request a presentation or briefing**, which is welcome and encouraged.
- **Comments are directed into the planning process**, and given equal weight to public meeting comments.

Public Meetings – Targeted Format and Frequency

Public meetings and informational materials used with them will provide opportunities to obtain public input, as well as to inform the public about transportation and other planning.

- **A variety of techniques** provide information, including summary handouts, visual displays, and availability of Commission staff to answer questions and make presentations.
- **All meetings include the opportunity to provide comments** in writing or orally in-person with Commission staff.
- **An opportunity for oral testimony** in town hall format and/or one-on-one with a court reporter occurs for meetings at which alternative plans or a preliminary recommended plan are presented.
- **Annually at least one public meeting will be held**, whether for a major or routine transportation plan update, where the regional transportation plan will be available for review and comment.
- **During major regional plan updates, at least two series of public meetings** will be held, one early in the process to address the study scope and/or inventory findings, and the other later for comment on alternatives and/or a preliminary recommended plan.
- **For other efforts** including a routine regional transportation plan review taking place every three or four years, for studies affecting only part of the Region, and during the preparation of the transportation improvement program, a single public meeting may be held.

Public Meetings – Broad Notification

- **Paid advertisements** will be placed by the Commission in newspapers appropriate for the study area and meeting locations, published at least 5 to 10 days prior to the first meeting announced.
- **Newspapers serving minorities and low-income populations** will also be used for paid ads, with translations into non-English languages as appropriate, notably Spanish.

- **Press releases** announcing public meetings may be distributed for an area appropriate for each planning effort, and a **media list** will be maintained for this purpose.
- **Development and distribution of summary materials** may also be used for notification of public meetings – brochures, fact sheets, and/or newsletters.
- **Website updates** will be used to make meeting notifications and associated materials quickly and readily available.

Public Meetings – Convenient Scheduling

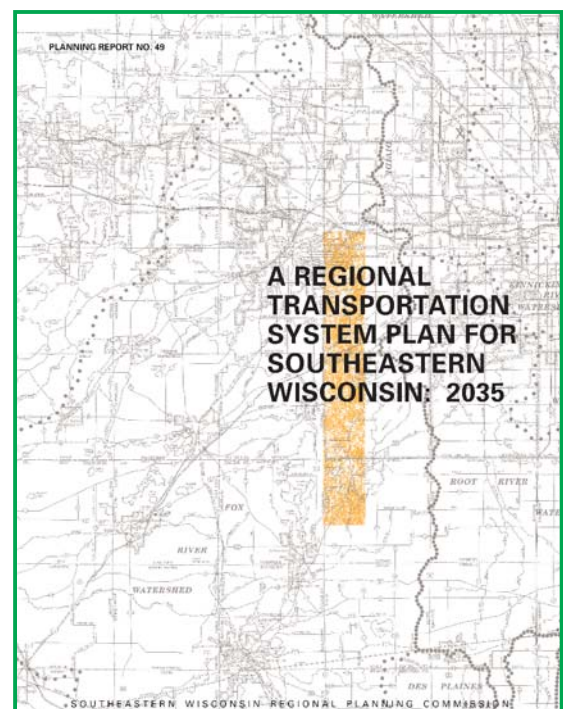
For major regional plan updates, involving at least two series of public meetings, the following are routinely considered:

- **At least one meeting per county** is held during each of the meeting series, all at accessible locations substantially complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- **Central city locations** are sought for meetings held in Kenosha, Milwaukee, Racine, and Waukesha Counties.
- **Minority neighborhood centers** are sought for two of three meetings typically held for each meeting series in the City of Milwaukee.
- **Public transit availability** is considered in selecting meeting sites, notably in urban areas.
- **Limited English proficiency steps** are taken, including arrangements for requested translators, and typically providing a translator in Hispanic/Latino neighborhood locations.

Public Comment Periods

As mentioned earlier, ongoing public comments are sought in many different ways. Formal comment periods will be used at times, with minimums noted below, often because studies reach conclusion.

- **30 days for most updates, amendments, or adoptions:**
 - Update or amendment of the regional transportation plan
 - Adoption of the transportation improvement program
 - Transportation improvement program amendment when it requires a plan amendment
 - Adoption of a transit development plan
 - Adoption of a jurisdictional highway system plan
- **45 days for the adoption of the public involvement process.**
- **30 days for other planning or programming efforts**, if a public meeting is determined necessary by the Commission or one of its advisory committees.
- **A public meeting, if conducted**, will be scheduled during these formal comment periods.
- **If significant changes are made** to a preliminary plan or program following completion of a public participation process, an additional notification and formal comment period may be provided prior to adoption.



Ensuring Environmental Justice in Planning

The Commission will continue working to ensure that environmental justice occurs in all its efforts, including public participation.

- **“Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations”** is an Executive Order signed by President Clinton in 1984.
- **Ensuring full and fair participation of minority and low-income populations** is one of the principles of environmental justice, along with avoiding, minimizing, or relieving unfair harmful effects and preventing the denial, reduction, or delay in benefits involving any Federal funds.
- **Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 forms the basis** of environmental justice, stating in part that, “No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin be excluded from participation...”
- **The population that may be affected, and the potential benefits and impacts** of a plan or program to be considered, will help determine the amount and type of public participation efforts.

Environmental Justice Task Force

The Commission has an advisory group called the Environmental Justice Task Force to enhance environmental justice throughout the regional planning process.

- **Membership is appointed** by the Regional Planning Commission after consultation with organizations representing low-income, African-American, Latino, Asian, Native American, disabled, and/or transit-dependent populations as appropriate.
- **Up to 15 total Task Force members** represent the seven counties in southeastern Wisconsin (one each); the four largest Cities including Milwaukee (three members), Kenosha, Racine, and Waukesha; the remainder of the Region; and an at-large regional representative.
- **Meetings are usually held at least quarterly** in accessible locations served by public transit, are publicly announced, and include a reasonable opportunity for public comment.
- **The Task Force may meet in smaller or needs-based groups** with invited local or specific subject representatives, depending on agenda topics including geographic or subject matter considerations – for example, transit planning or another issue affecting a portion of the Region.

Public Outreach

Beyond Commission efforts to notify, inform, and obtain input from the general public, and to involve representatives on its Environmental Justice Task Force, the Commission will seek outreach opportunities to work directly with those most likely to be impacted by transportation proposals.

- **Community groups in an affected/concerned area** will be contacted, with an offer of briefings and presentations either held specially or during regularly scheduled meetings of those groups.
- **User-friendly, lay language** will be used to the extent possible for outreach contacts and materials, with offers to work with group or organization leaders to develop options.
- **Minority and low-income populations** will particularly be approached for such outreach, both early in each study, and later as alternatives have been developed and evaluated. Resulting meetings, including comment sessions, will be conducted anytime there is interest by the groups.



- **Limited English proficiency group and organization** leaders will be contacted to determine how best to inform, and obtain input from, their communities.
- **Continuing attempts to broaden group participation** will occur by adding groups and organizations to contact lists, and renewing offers to meet on their turf as locally convenient.
- **Other means will continue to be tried** to obtain public participation, for example, focus groups, small group techniques, visioning or brainstorming, and non-traditional meeting places and events such as fairs, festivals, Internet social media sites, or the like.

Incorporation of Public Input

The results of public participation will be documented and taken into account by the Commission and its advisory committees guiding planning efforts.

- **The results of each regional plan public participation process will be documented**, provided to the Commission and the study advisory committee, published on the SEWRPC website, and made available at the Commission offices.
- **Individual comments in written form will be published**, whether submitted in writing, offered as public hearing testimony, or provided orally to a court reporter.
- **Either a full account or a summary of public comments** will be contained in the primary plan or program document being produced.
- **Responses to public comments will also be documented**, addressing each issue raised, and will be included in the primary document being produced.
- **Prior to any final recommendations or actions** the above steps will be taken, and the results considered by the Commission and its advisory committees.

Evaluation of Public Participation

The effectiveness of the Commission's public participation will be monitored and evaluated, and improved when possible.

- **At the conclusion of planning and programming efforts**, Commission staff will complete an evaluation of the public participation used, which will be reviewed by the advisory committee for guiding public participation in future planning efforts:
 - Commission publications, public participation techniques, and conclusions regarding the overall public participation
 - How public participation shaped the planning effort and the final plan
 - Any comments that were received during the planning about public participation
- **Evaluations will be provided** to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and the U.S. Department of Transportation.
- **Ongoing public participation will be modified** while a planning program is underway, as necessary and practical, factoring in any public comments which may apply.
- **Individual activities and events will also be evaluated** in response to measures such as participation level, feedback, and periodic sampling regarding effectiveness.





FOR MORE INFORMATION

Public Participation Plan for Transportation Planning

A more detailed discussion of public participation for the Commission's regional transportation planning, *"Public Participation Plan for Transportation Planning Conducted by the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission,"* is available as an appendix to this document.

Your participation is valued! To get more information, offer a comment, request a meeting, be added to a Commission mailing list, or other needs, please contact the:

Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

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