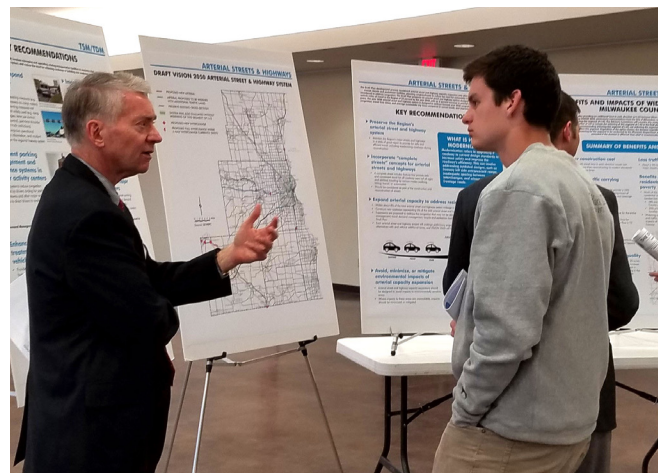




PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

FOR REGIONAL PLANNING IN SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN



PLANNING FOR OUR REGION

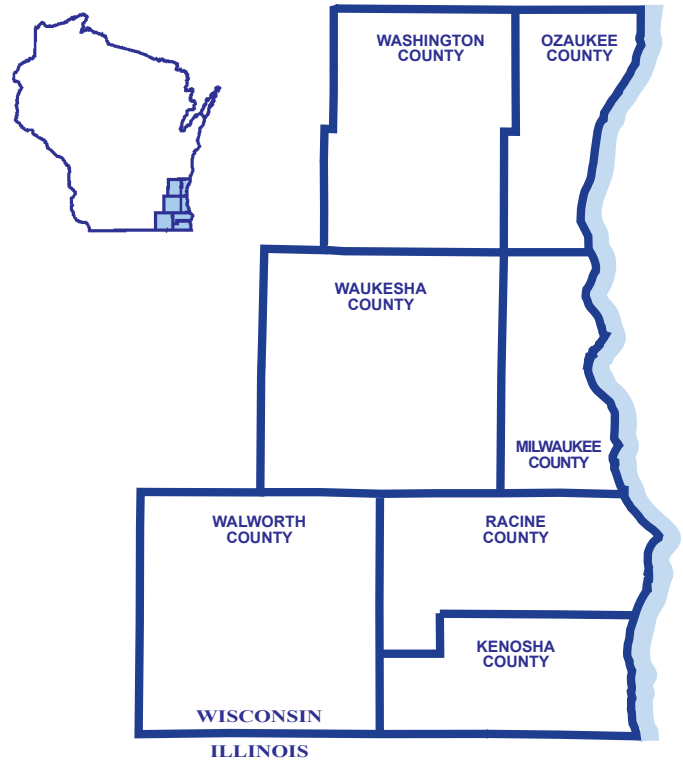
In Southeastern Wisconsin, regional planning for land use, transportation, and other elements of public works and facilities (for example, parks, sanitary sewerage, water supply, and stormwater management) is done by the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, serving seven counties:

- Kenosha County
- Milwaukee County
- Ozaukee County
- Racine County
- Walworth County
- Washington County
- Waukesha County
- 148 cities, villages, and towns
- More than 2.1 million people
- About 1.2 million jobs
- Over \$170 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 the many opportunities to get involved.

The Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) works to provide basic information and planning services **to solve problems and explore opportunities that go beyond single units of government**. In our Region, there are seven counties and nearly 150 communities, containing many public and private interests.

Planning for needs like efficient highways and public transit systems, beneficial parks and open spaces, affordable housing, 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 from the participation of many residents, providing many unique perspectives**.



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:

- 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 that 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
- Give residents a voice while also meeting important legal requirements
- 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
- Obtain participation and input in 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 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 to meet a variety of needs. In this process, the Commission will respect 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 strives to be flexible and encourages involvement in whatever way is desired and convenient.

GREATER INVOLVEMENT



- **Recipient** – a person or group perhaps merely wanting to become or remain informed, that may receive materials via mail, e-mail, or other means
- **Attendee** – someone taking the step of traveling to a meeting or other event, or consulting the SEWRPC website for updates
- **Participant** – an attendee who engages in discussion or provides comments and input
- **Stakeholder** – a person or represented interest that initially had a tie to the planning effort, or that developed a stronger interest via public participation, and that continues to actively participate during the process
- **Partner** – usually a specific interest or grouping of interests that works cooperatively with the Commission staff on completing key activities such as outreach events
- **Implementer or Plan Advocate** – participants that have the authority to implement plan recommendations or that use plan information or results in seeking to achieve plan recommendations

Credit: Milwaukee Community Journal



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 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.

The components of public participation will include:

- Open Meetings
- Advisory Committee Meetings
- Public Meetings and Comment Periods
 - o Targeted Format and Frequency
 - o Broad Notification
 - o Convenient Scheduling
- Website Updates
- Document Availability and Notification
- Ensuring Environmental Justice in Planning
- Engaging Minority Populations, Low-Income Populations, and People with Disabilities
- Environmental Justice Task Force
- Public Outreach and Briefings
- Incorporation of Public Input
- Evaluation of Public Participation



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.
- People needing disability-related accommodations are encouraged to participate, and reasonable accommodations will be made upon request. All locations will 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.

Public Meetings and Comment Periods

Ongoing public comments are sought in many different ways. Formal comment periods will be used at times, with minimums noted below.

- 30 days for most updates, amendments, or adoptions:
 - o Update or amendment of the regional transportation plan
 - o Adoption of the transportation improvement program
 - o Transportation improvement program amendment when it requires a plan amendment
 - o Adoption of a transit development plan
 - o 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.

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 efforts.

Targeted Format and Frequency

- A variety of techniques provide information, including summary handouts, visual displays, keypad polling, interactive small group discussions, 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 to 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, multiple series of public meetings will be held, with at least one early in the process to address the study scope and/or inventory findings, and later for comment on alternatives and/or a preliminary recommended plan.



- A single public meeting may be held for other efforts, including during 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.

Broad Notification

- Paid advertisements will be placed by the Commission in newspapers appropriate for the study area and meeting locations, published at least 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 via mail and e-mail 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.

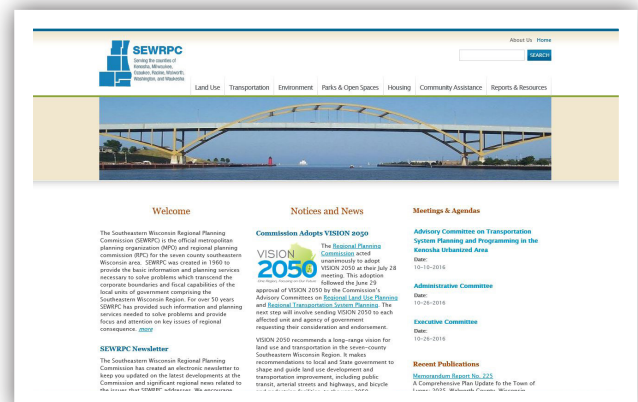
Convenient Scheduling

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

- At least one meeting per county is held during each 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.
- As appropriate, community partners will hold meetings at the same time as similar public meetings.
- 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.

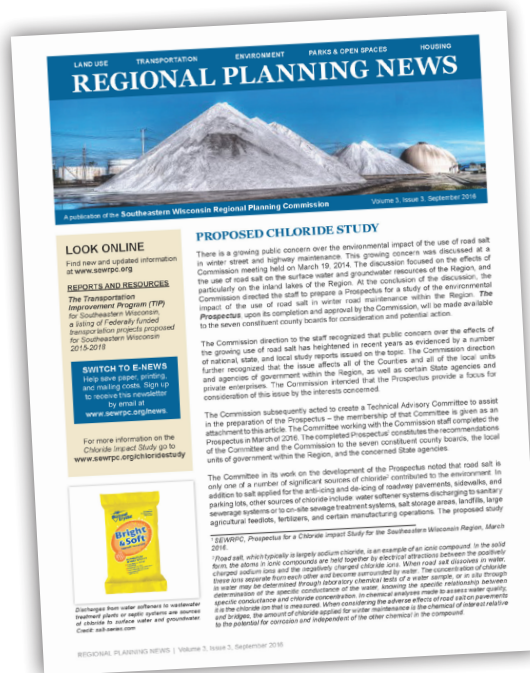
Website Updates – www.sewrpc.org

- 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 accessed.
- Postings also include newsletters, fact sheets, meeting announcements, public meeting presentations and handouts, and draft sections of reports.
- Contact information is available, and online comments can be submitted at any time.



Document Availability and Notification

- All draft preliminary plans are available for public review at the Commission offices and on the SEWRPC website.
- Documents including published plans are provided to all public library systems in the Region. They 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 and e-mailing list of governments, individuals, agencies, groups, and organizations that have expressed interest in receiving information.
- Newsletters are prepared and sent during each major study to some 3,000 recipients, including local elected and appointed officials, and anyone who requests receiving the newsletters or electronic newsletters.
 - o Provide study updates, announce public meetings, and describe planning content
 - o Serve as condensed but relatively thorough summaries of plans or plan progress
- Summary fact sheets or brochures are used to further shorten newsletter content.
 - o Used as public meeting handouts and provided to groups as appropriate
 - o Typically translated into Spanish
 - o Mailed with personal letters to minority and low-income group contacts
 - o Sometimes substituted for newsletters in smaller, shorter term, or local planning studies



Ensuring Environmental Justice in Planning

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

- 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...”
- “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations” is an Executive Order signed by President Clinton in 1994.
- Ensuring full and fair participation of minority populations 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.
- 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.

Engaging Minority Populations, Low-Income Populations, and People with Disabilities

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 populations, low-income populations, and people with disabilities:

- 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.
- Partnerships and other deeper relationships will be continued with eight community partners that serve and represent the Region's minority populations, low-income populations, and people with disabilities.
- Opportunities are explored for more intensive engagement, including co-sponsored events, special meetings involving full memberships—particularly with the Commission's eight community partners—and employing small group discussion techniques.
- At the same time as certain public meetings are held for the general public, the Commission works with its community partners to host meetings for their constituents, as a way to enhance or maintain engagement with minority populations, low-income populations, and people with disabilities.
- 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.

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 one or more of the following communities: low-income, African-American, Latino, Asian, Native American, people with disabilities, 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 held as appropriate and necessary, usually on a quarterly basis. Meetings will be 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 as appropriate.

Credit: Jake Rohde



Public Outreach and Briefings

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

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 to provide 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 populations, low-income populations, and people with disabilities 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 a group.
- 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, interactive activities, focus groups, small group techniques, visioning or brainstorming, and non-traditional meeting places and events such as fairs, festivals, 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 prior to any final recommendations.

- The input received during each 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 or a separate document.

Evaluation of Public Participation

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

- At the conclusion of planning efforts, Commission staff will complete an evaluation of the public participation used, which will be used to guide public participation in future planning efforts. This evaluation will consider:
 - o Commission publications, public participation techniques, and conclusions regarding the overall public participation
 - o How public participation shaped the planning effort and the final plan
 - o Any comments that were received during the planning effort 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 effort is underway, as necessary and practical, factoring in any public comments that may apply.
- Individual activities and events will also be evaluated in response to measures such as participation level, feedback, and periodic sampling regarding effectiveness.

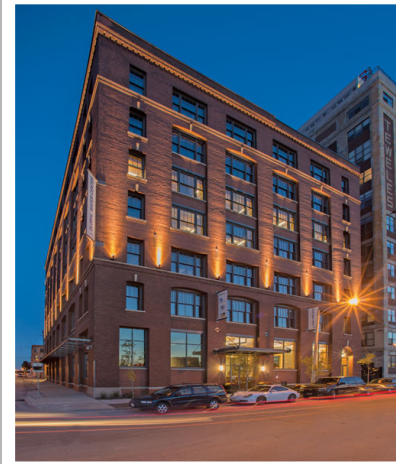


Regional Transportation Consultation Process

In addition to actively seeking participation by Southeastern Wisconsin residents, the Commission obtains considerable input during its transportation planning and programming efforts through its consultation process. This process involves coordination with and gathering input from agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities affected by transportation, as well as transit operators for public and other transit services, Indian Tribal governments, and Federal land management agencies. This valuable consultation is conducted primarily through Commission advisory committees, task forces on key issues, work with community partners, and consulting with numerous minority and low-income groups.

Credit: SEWRPC Staff





FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more detail on public participation specifically as it relates to the Commission's regional transportation planning, see *Appendix A* to this document. For more detail on the Commission's consultation process, see *Appendix B* to this document.

Your participation is valued! For more information, to provide comments, to request a meeting, or to be added to the Commission mailing or e-mailing list, please contact the:

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