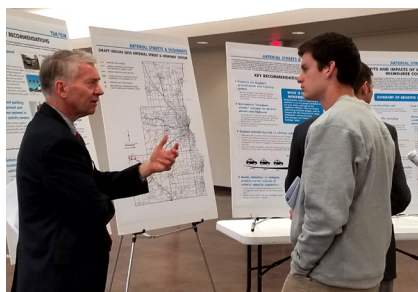
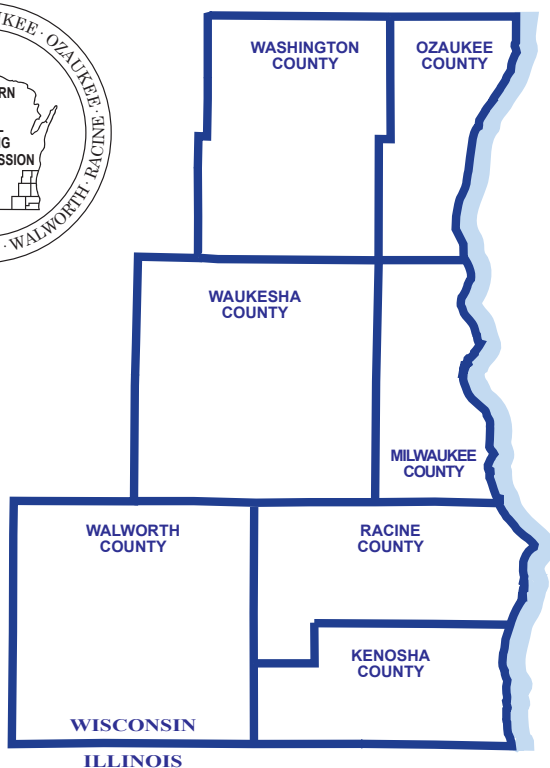


# PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN REGIONAL PLANNING FOR SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN

## SUMMARY



## PLANNING FOR OUR REGION

**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
- **Use non-technical language** to explain issues and choices that are sometimes complex
- **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

This brochure summarizes 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](http://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

## 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 Commission will be accommodating**, providing timely notices of important steps in planning, free and open access, and multiple means of participation.

### The components of public participation will include:

- Open Meetings
- Advisory Committee Meetings
- Public Meetings and Comment Periods
  - Targeted Format and Frequency
  - Broad Notification
  - 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

A few of the key components are summarized on the following pages. For more detail on each component, please see the full Public Participation Plan, available on the Commission's website.



## 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 show steps typically used 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 organizations 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.
- **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.

## OBTAINING AND INCORPORATING PUBLIC INPUT

Public input is documented and taken into account by the Commission and its advisory committees guiding planning efforts prior to any final recommendations. Ongoing public comments are sought in many different ways. Formal comment periods are used, with a minimum of 30 days for most efforts (45 days for the adoption of the public involvement process), when public meetings are held for an effort. For major regional plan updates, involving multiple series of public meetings, the Commission often considers:

- **Holding at least one meeting per county** during each series, all at ADA-accessible locations

- **Seeking central city locations** in Kenosha, Milwaukee, Racine, and Waukesha Counties
- **Selecting meeting sites with public transit availability**, particularly in urban areas
- **Working with its eight community partners to hold meetings** at the same time as public meetings
- **Accommodating individuals with limited English proficiency**, including providing translators as needed

A variety of techniques are used to provide information, including summary handouts, visual displays, keypad polling, and interactive small group discussions. All meetings include the opportunity to provide comments in writing or orally. Public meetings and comment periods are broadly noticed using paid newspaper advertisements (including newspapers serving minorities and low-income populations), press releases, distribution of summary materials via mail and e-mail, and website updates. Staff also gives presentations or briefings throughout planning efforts to any group that requests one.



## 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 evaluate the public participation used, identifying improvements for future planning efforts. Ongoing public participation will be modified while a planning effort is underway based on feedback.

## 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 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.



## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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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