DRAFT

Public Engagement Plan

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Prepared for: City of Mankato — Leading the way...

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Introduction

Project Overview

As the Mankato-North Mankato area continues to grow, the demands on the region's transit and transportation system are changing. In 2012, Mankato embarked on an ambitious restructuring of the bus system, and since then the number of people riding transit has more than doubled. Now, the City of Mankato is producing the region's first transit development plan to identify opportunities for continued improvement in service and operations that meet a wider variety of transit needs in the Mankato-North Mankato area. Throughout 2017, the City of Mankato will chart a way forward, documenting recommendations from community stakeholders and technical experts in the Mankato Transit Development Plan (TDP).

The Mankato TDP will provide recommendations for how Mankato's transit system can grow. The plan will evaluate and make recommendations for:

- The design of the transit system
- Investments in capital improvements such as buses, transit hubs, and support equipment
- Ways to fund increased and improved transit service
- Marketing, management, and policy issues

The plan will also address factors that help make transit a feasible transportation option for residents and visitors, including fares, schedules, routes, and marketing.

Purpose

The purpose of this public engagement plan is to provide an overview of proposed techniques, target audiences and stakeholders, intended messages, and timing relative to milestones within the greater project schedule. The project decision-making structure, as well as staff roles and responsibilities, are also defined.

Goal

The goal of the public engagement efforts for the Mankato TDP is to gather stakeholder input, respond to comments and concerns, and keep decision-makers and other stakeholders informed at key project milestones.

Principles of Effective Public Engagement

Successful public engagement is about:

- providing community members an opportunity to influence decisions
- ensuring a diverse representation from our community
- creating an environment that encourages informed participation
- effective meeting design and facilitation

This requires a process that is characterized by technical competence, honesty, integrity, and good listening skills. These principles will create the framework within which public engagement will occur for the transit development plan.

These principles are reflective of both Kimley-Horn's philosophy of engagement and the Art of Hosting approach to engagement that the City of Mankato embraces.

Decision-making Process

The Mankato TDP is led and managed by the City of Mankato, with input from other agencies through the Project Management Team (PMT). The PMT consists of staff representatives from the City of Mankato, the City of North Mankato, the Mankato/North Mankato Area Planning Organization (MAPO), the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), and the Kimley-Horn consultant team.

Potential Stakeholders

One of the initial and ongoing tasks will be to identify stakeholders and confirm that these organizations and individuals are represented in the study process. A preliminary list of potential stakeholders is provided below.

- Federal, state, and regional agencies
  - Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
  - Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)
  - Mankato/North Mankato Planning Organization (MAPO)
  - Minnesota River Valley Transit
  - Region Nine Development Commission
- Local agencies
  - Blue Earth County
  - Nicollet County
  - Le Sueur County
  - City of Mankato
  - City of North Mankato
  - City of Eagle Lake
  - City of Lake Crystal
  - City of Mapleton
  - City of Skyline
- Educational institutions
  - Minnesota State University, Mankato (MSU)
  - Bethany Lutheran College
  - South Central College
  - Community education
  - Independent School District 77—Mankato Area Public Schools
- Businesses
  - Greater Mankato Growth, Inc.
  - Individual businesses
    - Friesen's Bakery
    - The Tailwind Group
    - Drummer Companies
    - Land to Air Express
    - Lloyd Management, Inc.
    - Kiecker Construction
  - Major employers
  - Second-chance employers

- Public stakeholders
  - Residents (including renters and homeowners and residents of both single-family and multifamily residences)
  - Students
  - Traditionally underrepresented and underserved populations, such as people with low incomes and new Americans
  - People with disabilities
  - Senior housing residents

- Other stakeholders
  - Social service providers
    - Mankato Clinic
    - Mayo Clinic Health Systems
    - Echo Food Shelf
    - Nicollet County Public Health
    - Blue Earth County Public Health
  - Non-profit organizations
    - Feeding Our Community Partners
    - Open Door Health Center
    - Mankato Rehabilitation Center, Inc. (MRCI) WorkSource
    - Harry Meyering Center
    - Pathstone
    - Greater Mankato Diversity Council
    - Salvation Army
  - Advocacy groups
  - Faith-based groups
    - VINE
    - Young Men Christian's Association (YMCA)
    - Young Women Christian's Association (YWCA)

Public Engagement Techniques

Throughout the TDP process, there will be multiple opportunities for the public to learn about the study and provide meaningful input online and in person. The specific techniques to be used fall into three primary categories:

- Stakeholder communications
- Surveys
- Meetings

Timing and details of the various activities are provided in Table 1.

Stakeholder Communications

The following methods are proposed to facilitate and maintain communications throughout the course of the project.

Website

A website, www.mankatotraniststudy.com, will be unique to the project and live throughout the project's duration. Featured on the City's and MSU's websites, the website will serve as a central place for people to find information about the plan, surveys, or any other project materials and will be accessible and available in multiple languages.

Contact Database

The Kimley-Horn team will develop and maintain a contact database that includes contact information for those interested in receiving project updates. People can provide their contact information on the website, a survey, a comment form, or at a meeting. These individuals will receive notice when new information is available or when the project is at key progress points.

Email Updates

A unique project email template will be created. Periodic email updates to corridor stakeholders will be provided.

Public Comments and Comment Database

The project website will provide a place for people to leave comments throughout the project. Comments may be reactions to project materials or thoughts or stories related to someone's experiences. Comment cards will also be available on buses and at any project-related meetings. The Kimley-Horn team will work with staff to respond to comments and questions as necessary and keep a log of comments and responses received throughout the project. The project website will also include a frequently asked questions page to help people more easily find answers to common questions.

Additional Materials

Additional materials that are easily understood by a wide range of project stakeholders will be prepared. These materials will use nontechnical, easy-to-understand language to present project information. Additionally, custom graphics and figures will present information graphically where possible.

A project brochure or handout will be distributed at various meetings and events. Two updates to the initial brochure/handout are planned:

- The first update prior to the second round of community meetings and a second update at the end of the project for use by the Greater Mankato Transit System (MTS) and project partners
- The final brochure/handout will summarize final study results and maintain a consistent message

A project business card that includes project contact information and a link to the project website will also be developed. This business card will be distributed at various meetings and events.

Notifications and Online Media

For both community meetings, a general media release will be prepared and distributed to local newspapers. Meeting flyers and email notifications will be provided to each city and stakeholder group to be posted to each entities' website and social media accounts. Existing government social media accounts that could be used include:

- City of Mankato
    - City News online newsletter
    - Email subscribers
    - #FAQFridayMankato
    - City Update
    - KTV and online
    - Facebook
    - Twitter
    - YouTube
    - Instagram
    - LinkedIn

- City of North Mankato
  - Facebook
- City of Eagle Lake
  - Facebook
- City of Mapleton
  - Facebook
- City of Skyline
  - Facebook
- Blue Earth County
  - Facebook
  - Twitter
  - YouTube
  - LinkedIn

An email notification will be provided to the entire project contact list, including housing management companies and mobile home park managers. The project team will coordinate the distribution of announcements on-board and at transit stations.

Issues and Alternatives Matrix

Toward the end of the project, an issues and alternatives matrix will be developed that includes all recommendations under consideration. The matrix will provide a statement of need, identify the difficulty to implement, and expected effectiveness of each option. The last portion of the matrix will be tied to stakeholder outreach. It will speak to the source of the recommendation (e.g., current user, non-user, or decision-maker) and the level of endorsement received from the stakeholder engagement phase of the plan. Issues and alternatives matrices are an effective way to communicate recommendations at decision-maker and community meetings.

Surveys

Surveys are essential for gathering information from various stakeholders at the beginning of the project. Surveys will be distributed to current transit users, non-users, and decision-makers. Surveys will be available in paper format as well as on the project website.

User/Non-User Surveys

Surveys will be administered to both current users and non-users of the system. Each will focus on a few key questions rather than an extensive list of questions. While exact survey questions will be discussed with City of Mankato staff, user surveys will focus on their experiences, including what currently works well and any issues with the current system. Non-user surveys will focus on barriers to using the system and changes that could be made to make the transit system work for their travel needs.

User surveys will be available in paper form on buses and electronically on the project website. Project flyers will be available on buses to direct users to the project website for those who are interested in responding to the survey by phone. Non-user surveys also will be available on the website, and they will be distributed through other means as well. **A specific effort will be made to reach people who are traditionally underrepresented in planning processes.** Rather than trying to create new networks of relationships for this project, existing networks will be leveraged. Surveys and project materials will be distributed to community members through local organizations. Some organizations that it's planned to partner with to reach people include:

- YWCA Mankato
- Life-Work Planning Center
- MN Council of Churches – Refugee Services
- Committee Against Domestic Abuse (CADA)
- Greater Mankato Area United Way
- Lincoln Logs Learning Center
- Adult Basic Education
- Salvation Army
- Lutheran Social Services – The Reach Drop-In Center
- Partners for Affordable Housing
- Minnesota Valley Action Council (MVAC)
- Leisure Education for Exceptional People (LEEP)
- Greater Mankato Diversity Council

Decision-Maker Surveys

Decision-makers are great resources for information, because constituents often contact them about issues with or desires for the transit system. Decision-makers also influence the distribution of resources and make choices that affect the system, so it is important to understand their perspective of and priorities for the system at the beginning of the study. Surveys will be distributed to decision-makers throughout the service area to collect information regarding issues with the existing system and their priorities. Decision-makers will be sent a survey via mail and/or email. Since they receive a significant amount of mail and email, it will be beneficial to express why their response is valuable.

Meetings

Meetings will be used to share project information and discuss specific topics with the general public and stakeholder groups.

Decision-Maker Meetings

There will be four meetings with local decision-makers, two with the Mankato City Council, one with the MAPO Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and one with the MAPO Policy Board. The first city council meeting and the MAPO TAC and MAPO Policy Board meetings will focus on reviewing issues identified, goals and objectives, and draft recommendations and releasing them for public comment. The final city council meeting will be to approve the final plan.

Stakeholder Advisory Committee

Bi-monthly meetings will be held with the Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC). This committee will be comprised of representatives from community organizations, institutions, and businesses. The SAC will provide feedback on project direction and recommendations.

University, Business, and Non-Profit Meetings

There will be one meeting with each of the following five groups: university representatives (from MSU, South Central Technical College, and Bethany Lutheran College), local businesses, non-profit organizations, Mobility Bus riders, and high school students from underrepresented populations. These meetings will be opportunities for them to learn about the project and provide input regarding the transit system.

Community Meetings

Two community meetings will be held during the planning process to give people an opportunity to learn about the project and to also provide input regarding the transit system. The community meeting at the beginning of the project will focus on the existing system and lay groundwork to help those interested better understand data about how the system functions today. Questions for this meeting will focus on what aspects of the transit system work well for current travel needs and what aspects need improvement.

The second meeting will focus on recommendations for the system and results from the Title VI analysis. Community members will be able to learn and provide feedback about recommendations and provide feedback regarding whether the recommendations will address their issues. Both community meetings will be held at transit accessible and convenient locations and will incorporate the Circle Way from Art of Hosting so that every participant has an opportunity to share and can see each other. The general public will be welcome to attend the meetings, and the Kimley-Horn team will work with the City to identify individuals and groups to invite specifically. As meetings are planned, consultants will work with the project team and stakeholders to identify and resolve potential barriers to participation such as language, childcare, or travel.

Pop-up Meetings

Pop-up meetings will be a way to reach those unable or uninterested in coming to a community meeting or who have not heard about the project. Pop-up meeting times and locations will focus on reaching either existing transit riders or current non-riders. Pop-up meetings focused on existing riders will be held at places with a high number of transit boardings, such as outside of the MSU student union. Pop-up meetings focused on non-riders will take place at locations where potential users are already gathering. This may include employers in North Mankato, food banks, or events such as the United Way's Project Community Connect. An emphasis of the pop-up meetings will be to connect with people who are traditionally underrepresented including new Americans, seniors, and those with disabilities and low incomes.

Mankato staff will return to MSU in late August for an additional pop-up meeting to promote transit ridership and gain additional feedback from students.

Table 1: Public Engagement Schedule

TECHNIQUE	TARGET AUDIENCE/ PARTICIPANTS	PURPOSE/INTENDED MESSAGE	TOOLS	FREQUENCY/TIMING	ROLES/ RESPONSIBILITIES
Project Website	◆ All stakeholders ◆ General public	◆ Plan information and updates ◆ Access to surveys ◆ Project materials ◆ Notice of upcoming meetings ◆ Contact information	◆ Maps ◆ Meeting notices ◆ Surveys ◆ Email sign-up form ◆ Comment submittal form	◆ Initial content and updates as needed	◆ Kimley-Horn: content development, website design and maintenance ◆ City: content review
Contact Database	◆ Project team ◆ Stakeholders	◆ Collect stakeholder contact information ◆ Categorize by stakeholder type	◆ Constant Contact ◆ Collect via project website, surveys, comment forms, public meetings	◆ Ongoing	◆ Kimley-Horn: compile, categorize, and maintain list
Email Updates	◆ Stakeholders	◆ Project information and updates ◆ Notice of upcoming meetings	◆ Email	◆ Periodically	◆ Kimley-Horn: email template, content development ◆ City: content review
Comment Database	◆ Project team ◆ Stakeholders	◆ Track comments and responses ◆ Be transparent	◆ Sortable Excel spreadsheet ◆ Document coding	◆ Ongoing	◆ Kimley-Horn: compile and code database ◆ City: review for information

TECHNIQUE	TARGET AUDIENCE/ PARTICIPANTS	PURPOSE/INTENDED MESSAGE	TOOLS	FREQUENCY/TIMING	ROLES/ RESPONSIBILITIES
Project Brochure/ Handout	◆ All stakeholders ◆ General public	◆ Purpose of project ◆ Project schedule and progress ◆ Summarize results	◆ Plain language ◆ Custom graphics	◆ Initial draft before first round of community meetings ◆ 1^{st} update prior to second round of community meetings ◆ 2^{nd} update at end of project	◆ Kimley-Horn: develop content ◆ City: review content
Project Business Cards	◆ All stakeholders ◆ General public	◆ Provide contact information and link to project website	◆ Custom graphics ◆ QR code	◆ Beginning of project	◆ Kimley-Horn: design and print ◆ City: review
Notifications and Online Media	◆ All stakeholders ◆ General public	◆ Provide notice of upcoming community meetings	◆ Media releases ◆ Email notifications ◆ Social media posts	◆ Prior to 1^{st} and 2^{nd} rounds of community meetings	◆ Kimley-Horn: develop content, send email notification ◆ City: review content, distribute media release, post to social media accounts
Issues and Alternatives Matrix	◆ All stakeholders ◆ General public ◆ Project team	◆ Summarize recommendations ◆ Tie recommendations to stakeholder outreach	◆ Reader-friendly matrix	◆ End of project	◆ Kimley-Horn: develop content ◆ City: review content
User Survey	◆ Current system users	◆ Gather information on user experiences (issues and what is working well)	◆ Paper surveys on buses ◆ Electronic survey on project website	◆ Beginning of project	◆ Kimley-Horn: develop and distribute survey ◆ City: review content

TECHNIQUE	TARGET AUDIENCE/ PARTICIPANTS	PURPOSE/INTENDED MESSAGE	TOOLS	FREQUENCY/TIMING	ROLES/ RESPONSIBILITIES
Non-User Survey	◆ Current system non-users	◆ Gather information on barriers to use and suggested changes	◆ Electronic survey on project website ◆ Distribute through existing networks	◆ Beginning of project	◆ Kimley-Horn: develop and distribute survey ◆ City: review content
Decision-Maker Surveys	◆ System decision-makers	◆ Gather information on issues with the system and priorities	◆ Paper surveys distributed via mail ◆ Electronic surveys distributed via email	◆ Beginning of project	◆ Kimley-Horn: develop and distribute survey ◆ City: review content
Decision-Maker Meetings	◆ Mankato City Council, MAPO TAC, MAPO Policy Board	◆ Review issues identified, goals and objectives, and draft recommendations ◆ Approve final plan	◆ PowerPoint presentations	◆ Two meetings with the Mankato City Council ◆ One meeting with MAPO TAC ◆ One meeting with MAPO Policy Board	◆ Kimley-Horn: create PowerPoint and present to decision-makers ◆ City: review presentation and get the project on meeting agendas
Community Meetings	◆ All stakeholders ◆ General public	◆ 1st meeting: provide project background, gather input on what works well and areas of improvement ◆ 2nd meeting: present and gather feedback on draft recommendations and Title VI analysis	◆ Circle Way from Art of Hosting ◆ Display boards ◆ Project handouts	◆ Two meetings – one at start of project and one at end	◆ Kimley-Horn: develop content, design materials, create meeting notice, staff meetings, create meeting summaries ◆ City: review materials, staff meetings

TECHNIQUE	TARGET AUDIENCE/ PARTICIPANTS	PURPOSE/INTENDED MESSAGE	TOOLS	FREQUENCY/TIMING	ROLES/ RESPONSIBILITIES
Pop-Up Meetings	◆ All stakeholders ◆ General public	◆ Reach stakeholders unable to attend community meeting or who have not heard about the project ◆ Connect with traditionally underrepresented people	◆ Business cards ◆ User and non-user surveys ◆ Project factsheets	◆ Two pop-up meetings focused on reaching existing riders ◆ Two pop-up meetings focused on reaching non-riders ◆ One additional pop-up meeting at MSU in late August (staffed by city staff)	◆ Kimley-Horn: develop materials, staff pop-up meetings ◆ City: review materials, staff pop-up meetings
Radio & Television Talk Shows	◆ General public	◆ Reach stakeholders unable to attend community meeting or who have not heard about the project	◆ Project information	◆ Periodically	◆ City staff

Evaluation of Efforts

Specific techniques will be evaluated periodically by the project team to help shape future activities. Evaluation of techniques will be based on the following criteria:

- Quantitative
  - How many people attended events? How many people completed the activities or comment forms?
  - How many people opened email messages or viewed web posts?
  - How many likes, shares, retweets, or comments on social media postings?
- Qualitative
  - What kind of feedback was received on the community and pop-up meetings?
  - What kind of feedback was received on the social media and website posts and email messages?
  - Have stakeholders expressed any particular challenges regarding their participation?
  - Did input received affect decision-making? How?

Quantitative and qualitative evaluation measures will be summarized in meeting summaries, which will also include updated information on website and social media activity.