

**GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE, HIGHWAY AND TRANSPORTATION DISTRICT  
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN • JULY 2013**



# 2021 Revision



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# PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

A Strategy for Citizen Involvement

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District

Based in San Francisco, the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District (the District) operates the Golden Gate Bridge, and two public transit systems: Golden Gate Transit buses and Golden Gate Ferry.

Golden Gate Transit and Golden Gate Ferry were established under state legislation to provide public transit services in the U.S. Highway 101 corridor, connecting Sonoma and Marin counties to San Francisco, and specifically to alleviate traffic congestion across the Golden Gate Bridge. The main travel direction is from these counties southbound into San Francisco, and the principal ridership consists of Marin County and Sonoma County residents. San Francisco residents are primarily served by their own transit agency, San Francisco Municipal Transit Agency (Muni) and by the Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART). Golden Gate Transit also operates bus services across the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge into Contra Costa County, providing a regional connection funded by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission.

Because Golden Gate Transit is the only provider of inter-county service in Sonoma, Marin, Contra Costa and San Francisco counties, primarily serving Marin and Sonoma County residents, and is the principal contract provider of local transit in Marin County, the District's Title VI submittals have analyzed its service area in Marin and Sonoma counties only.

Golden Gate Ferry offers the only public ferry service between Marin County and San Francisco.

### **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District is to provide safe and reliable operation, maintenance and enhancement of the Golden Gate Bridge and to provide transportation services, as resources allow, for customers within the U.S. Highway 101 Golden Gate Corridor.

## B. Purpose of the Public Participation Plan

Pursuant to Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Title VI regulatory guidance, federal funding recipients and sub-recipients should seek out and consider the viewpoints of minority, low income and Limited English Proficient (LEP) populations when conducting public outreach and soliciting public involvement. The FTA Circular 4702.1B requires that an agency offer “adequate notice of public participation activities, as well as early and continuous opportunities for public review and comment at key decision points.”

To meet these requirements, the District developed this Public Participation Plan (Plan) as a guide for how it will deepen and sustain its efforts to engage diverse community members throughout its service area. The Plan aims to offer early, continuous and meaningful opportunities for the public to be involved in proposed transportation policy decisions at the District. The Plan outlines our public participation strategy, including the goals and approach, the types of tools and procedures used, the development process used to plan particular public participation projects or initiatives, and the Plan's evolution, including continual evaluation of District outreach efforts and Plan updates. The Plan will work in accordance with the District's *Title VI Review Process for Service and Fare Changes* which is an established policy that dictates that all major service changes and fare policy changes require an equity analysis. In addition, these major changes require the District to hold Public Hearings.

**Public Participation** includes any process that informs the public and/or involves the public in problem solving or decision making and that uses public input to make better decisions.

The District will continually modify its public participation methods based on feedback from low-income, minority and LEP populations, including from both customers and community-based organizations, about the Plan's effectiveness and inclusiveness. The Plan is intended to be a living document and may be updated periodically to reflect community preferences, changing demographics and transit services, as well as respond to new communication and outreach methods.

## II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

### A. Goals

This Plan strives to offer meaningful opportunities for the public, including low income, minority and LEP populations, to be involved in the identification of social, economic, and environmental impacts of proposed transportation decisions at the District so that any adverse impacts can be avoided and/or mitigated. Specific goals include:

- Engage stakeholders early and often;
- Increase participation of low income, minority, and LEP populations and other underserved communities;
- Solicit quality input and participation;
- Improve the outcome of District projects and initiatives by utilizing public participation; and
- Meet all government and regulatory requirements for federal funding.

### B. Approach

#### **Make Participation Accessible**

The District makes every effort to ensure that opportunities to participate are physically, geographically, linguistically and culturally accessible to the target population(s). The District has created a Language Implementation Plan (LIP) that will help ensure that LEP populations have every opportunity to participate.

#### **Make Participation Relevant**

The District frames issues and communicates in such a way that the significance and potential effect of a given project or initiative is understood by all participants.

#### **Build Partnerships**

The District develops and maintains partnerships with communities through building relationships and trust. The District believes that open communication and collaboration are vital to achieving success with such partnerships.

#### **Be Inclusive**

The District proactively reaches out and engages low income, minority and LEP populations from the District's service area, including with community based organizations, so that all groups will have an opportunity to participate. The District values participation from the entire community and strives to give careful and respectful consideration to all input received.

**Be Transparent**

The District believes that information provided must be accessible to all communities, and must be timely and accurate.

**Look for Participant Satisfaction**

People who take the time to participate should feel it is worth the effort to join the discussion and provide feedback. The District determines whether participants feel that their comments are considered.

**Be Responsive**

The District responds and incorporates appropriate public comments and opinions into transportation decisions. The District makes transparent to the public how their comments impact final decision making.

### III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION TOOLS

#### A. Outreach Strategies

To ensure a rich and diverse public participation process, the public must have access to the information necessary to provide educated and meaningful input in the planning and development efforts. To this end, and by using the District's LIP as a guide for ensuring that its outreach meets the needs of LEP populations, the District considers and utilizes the following outreach strategies:

##### Public Meetings, Workshops, and Focus Groups

- Offer customized presentations/speaking engagements to groups and organizations
- Co-host workshops with community groups, business associations, etc.
- Partner with community-based organizations (CBOs) in low-income and minority communities (see Appendix C for a list of CBOs in the District's service area)
- Participate in community fairs and festivals
- Sponsor forums or summits with partner agencies, news media or other community organizations
- Encourage opportunities for public input directly with policy board members
- Hold open houses, workshops and informational seminars
- Offer facilitated discussions
- Hold question-and-answer sessions with planners and policy board members
- Facilitate break-out sessions for smaller group discussions on multiple topics
- Engage in interactive exercises
- Establish focus groups consisting of impacted populations
- Utilize advisory committees
- Vary time of day for workshops (day/evening) to accommodate various lifestyles and desires, including those of LEP, low income, and minority populations.
- Conduct meetings in alternative languages (Spanish, Chinese, etc.)
- Ensure locations are accessible (ADA, public transportation)
- Offer meetings or workshops at a variety of locations, including in non-traditional places (e.g. ethnic grocery stores, community centers, food banks, libraries, English language schools)

##### Visualization Techniques so that Materials are Accessible for Low Literacy or LEP Populations

- Utilize Maps
- Utilize Charts, illustrations, photographs, pictograms
- Utilize Sketches, drawings
- Provide table-top displays and models
- Utilize interactive games, videos, animations on the website
- Provide electronic voting
- Utilize PowerPoint slide shows

**Polls, Surveys and Public Comment Forms**

- Offer telephone polls or surveys
- Offer Internet surveys
- Conduct interviews where riders congregate, such as at transit hubs and ferry terminals
- Print surveys to distribute at meetings, transit hubs, ferry terminals, on-board transit vehicles, etc.
- Utilize the LIP to ensure poll/survey materials are accessible to LEP populations

**Printed Materials**

- Develop simple, clear and concise user-friendly documents, including use of executive summaries
- Utilize postcards
- Distribute flyers throughout the community
- Display posters or signage on board bus and ferry and at transit hubs and terminals
- Display back and side ads on buses
- Utilize newsletters, such as the Golden Gate Gazette
- Distribute Transit Guides
- Display ads in bus shelters
- Provide Notice to Customers
- Utilize sandwich boards at transit hubs and terminals
- Utilize print ads
- Utilize the LIP to ensure printed materials are accessible to LEP populations

**Media Relations**

- Issue news releases
- Conduct briefings for news media including television, print, and radio
- Meet with editorial staff for a variety of news sources
- Utilize opinion pieces/commentaries
- Place speakers on radio/TV talk shows
- Target specific news sources including ethnic media and non-English media
- Provide articles or op-ed pieces for inclusion in community-based publications (newspapers, brochures or newsletters)
- Utilize the LIP to ensure media outreach is accessible to LEP populations

**Online Information**

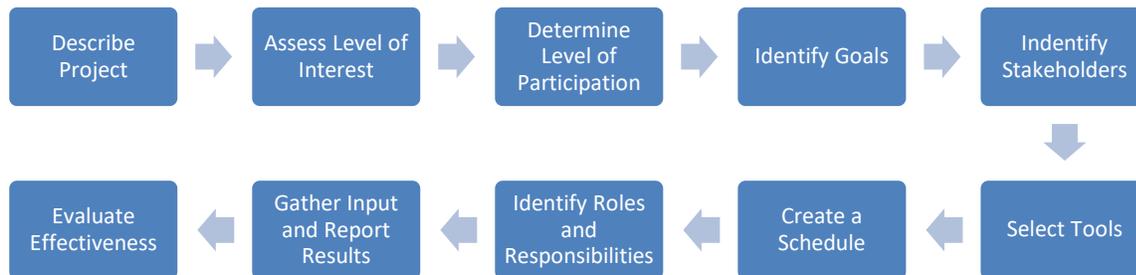
- Continually update the website with translated content as well as videos and sound clips
- Use social media (Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, YouTube)
- Develop electronic copies of open house/workshop materials
- Provide interactive web surveys, comment email boxes
- Send email blasts to customer and community databases
- Conduct digital awareness campaigns
- Utilize the LIP to ensure online information is accessible to LEP populations

**Customer Service Center**

- Ensure that all Customer Service Representatives are trained and aware of specific projects and initiatives so they can inform the public
- Use Language Line for interpretations
- Ensure a bilingual (Spanish-English) Customer Service Representative is employed in the workgroup
- Utilize the LIP to ensure the Customer Service Center continues to be accessible to LEP populations

## IV. Public Participation Development Process

When developing a public participation plan for a particular project or initiative, the following process should be followed:



### **Describe the Project**

The first step in developing a public participation plan for any given proposed project, policy, or initiative is to provide a general description of the project along with some background information.

### **Assess the Level of Public Concern or Interest**

To determine the appropriate level of public involvement, it is important to assess the degree to which the public considers the issue significant. The public will become involved according to its perception of the seriousness of the issue. Types of questions that the District staff should ask itself to gauge the level of public concern that could arise from the proposed project or policy are shown in the worksheet in Appendix A.

### **Determine the Level of Public Participation Needed**

After assessing the level of public interest or concern, the District must decide at what level the public needs and should be involved in the decision-making or planning process. The graph in Appendix B outlines the four levels of public participation: Public Information, Public Input, Public Involvement and Public Collaboration. Each of these levels serves a different purpose with a different outcome. Major changes such as fare increases or reduction in service call for greater levels of participation.

### **Identify Public Participation Goals**

Define the goals for inviting the public to participate in the project. Make sure to refer to the “Promise to the Public” column in Appendix B in order to refine the participation goals. The key component to the Promise to the Public is to keep stakeholders informed. If a project requires input and consultation with the public, the Promise to the Public also requires the District to listen to and acknowledge public concerns, and provide feedback on how the public input influenced decisions.

**Identify Stakeholders**

Stakeholders are those who will be impacted by the project or plan. This could include riders, residents, business owners, community and social agencies and other transit agencies or local jurisdictions. When identifying stakeholders be sure to consider audiences that may not normally be included.

**Select Tools**

Different public participation goals and stakeholders require different tools and approaches. Make sure to select tools that support the desired level of participation, reach the desired stakeholders, and meet the public's needs.

**Create a Schedule**

Any public participation plan should include a detailed timeline. Public outreach and input must be timed at an early stage in the project so as to provide the public adequate opportunity to influence the decision.

**Identify Roles and Responsibilities**

Identify everyone who has a role or responsibility in the planning, program development or decision making processes. Identify an overall public participation manager responsible for tracking progress and completing each activity. For District customer outreach activities, the outreach will typically be led by the Marketing and Communications Department, with assistance from the Planning Department as well as any other relevant department. Also, at this stage, "ultimate decision makers" of the project will be clearly identified.

**Gather and Disseminate Input and Results**

Public participation requires that the public's input be presented to decision makers and then results reported back to the public. This feedback loop is necessary to show the public that their time and effort has been well invested, that their opinions have been understood and accurately communicated to decision makers, and how their input has impacted the project/policy/program.

**Evaluate Effectiveness**

Evaluation should always be a part of the public participation process. Evaluating and reporting on whether or not public participation for the project met the set goals and objectives is important in ensuring that future efforts are successful, and in showing accountability.

## **V. EVOLUTION OF THE PLAN**

### **A. Continual Evaluation and Updating**

The District will monitor and track the effectiveness of its public participation methods. Measurements will be needed to determine if public participation goals are being met. Some measurable performance objectives to consider include identifying the:

- Number of participants attending a participation activity;
- Percent of the participants from a specific geographic area;
- Number and percent of participants providing feedback in languages other than English;
- Comparison of actual participation with the demographics of an area;
- Number and percent of responses received to a survey or questionnaire;
- Number of webpage visits;
- Number and percent of participants signed up to receive web, phone, or mail- based communications as a result of a participation activity; and
- Number and percent of participants expressing satisfaction regarding the process or results of a participation activity.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

The District is committed to a thorough and robust public participation process that employs best practices to encourage effective engagement from the public in decision-making processes, respects and follows federal and state laws, implements the District's Language Implementation Plan, and garners support and trust from the public. Building bridges and trust among people who have historically felt excluded from institutional decision-making is a journey that will take time and commitment from District staff. The District understands the importance of engaging with under-represented populations and that hearing from key stakeholders during the process through public participation will allow for a better and more responsive product/service, which must be balanced with existing District resources. The District believes that planning decisions must be made with the public's advice as these decisions affect all of those who travel, work, or live in its service area. Effective public involvement is a dynamic and ongoing process that is essential to meeting the entire community's transportation needs.

## VII. APPENDICES

### A. Worksheet for Assessing Public Interest and Concern

<b>Assessment Questions</b>	<b>Very Low Level 1</b>	<b>Low Level 2</b>	<b>Moderate Level 3</b>	<b>High Level 4</b>	<b>Very High Level 5</b>
1. What is the anticipated level of conflict, concern controversy, or opportunity on this or related issues?					
2. How significant are the potential impacts to the public?					
3. How much do the major stakeholders care about this issue, project or program?					
4. What degree of involvement does the public appear to desire?					
5. What is the potential for public impact on the potential decision or project?					
6. How significant are the possible benefits of involving the public?					
7. How serious are the potential ramifications of NOT involving the public?					
8. What level of public participation does the Board of Directors desire or expect?					
9. What is the possibility that the media will become interested?					
10. What is the probable level of difficulty in solving the problem or advancing the project?					
<i>Count number of checks in each column</i>	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Multiply number of checks by level number</i>	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Total all 5 columns</i>	0				
<i>Divide by 10 to calculate desired level of Public Participation on the Spectrum</i>	0				

Special thanks to the Portland Development Commission and Albermarle County, VA for sharing this process.

**B. Determine Level of Public Concern or Interest**

			
<b>Inform (1 - 1.9)</b>	<b>Solicit Input / Consult (2 – 2.9)</b>	<b>Involve (3 - 3.9)</b>	<b>Collaborate (4 - 4.9)</b>
One-way communication between GGBHTD and the public to provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	Seek public feedback on a proposal, analysis or alternatives. Requires a response from the public, but limited opportunity for public dialogue.	Work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that issues, aspirations and concerns are consistently understood and considered. Includes elements of public information and outreach, but adds a third dimension of two-way communication.	To collaborate with the public on some or all aspects of the planning or decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.
<b>Promise to the Public</b>			
We will keep stakeholders informed.	We will keep stakeholders informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with stakeholders to ensure that their concerns, aspirations and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to stakeholders for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate their recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.
<b>Example of Tools to use</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Fact sheet</li> <li>✓ Press Release</li> <li>✓ Open House</li> <li>✓ Tour / Site Visit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Public Meeting</li> <li>✓ Focus Group</li> <li>✓ Survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Workshop</li> <li>✓ Citizen advisory committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Board-appointed commission</li> <li>✓ Special task force</li> </ul>
Adapted from the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum			

## C. Title VI Community-based Organizations

Company Name	Address Line 1	City	State	ZIP Code
Canal Alliance	91 Larkspur Street	San Rafael	CA	94901
Canal Ministry of San Rafael	86 Belvedere Street	San Rafael	CA	94901
Canal Welcome Center	141 Alto Street	San Rafael	CA	94901
Latino Council of Marin	650 Las Gallinas Avenue	San Rafael	CA	94903
Latino Educational & Cultural Foundation of Marin	P.O. Box 364	Kentfield	CA	94914
Marin County Grassroots Leadership Network	2915-A Kerner Blvd.	San Rafael	CA	94901
Marin Education Fund	781 Lincoln Avenue, Suite 140	San Rafael	CA	94901-3377
Marin Tenants Union	4136 Redwood Highway, Suite 9	San Rafael	CA	94903
Marin Grassroots	30 N. San Pedro Road, Suite 290	San Rafael	CA	94903
Marin City Community Service District	630 Drake Ave	Marin City	CA	94965
Marin City Health & Wellness Center	630 Drake Ave	Marin City	CA	94965
Marin City Community Development Corporation	441 Drake Avenue	Marin City	CA	94965
Marin City Network	640 Drake Ave	Sausalito	CA	94965
Marguerite Johnson Senior Center	640 Drake Ave	Sausalito	CA	94965
ISOJI & Southern Marin Intern Project	ph: 415 883-1757 alt: 415 383-2073 staff@isoji.net	Marin City	CA	94965
Manzanita Child Development Center	620 Drake Avenue	Marin City	CA	94965
Community Action Marin	29 Mary Street	San Rafael	CA	94901
Bridge the Gap	105 Drake Avenue	Sausalito	CA	94965
County of Marin Public Assistance	120 North Redwood Drive (West Wing)	San Rafael	CA	94903
County of Marin Public Assistance	West Marin 100 6th Street	Pt. Reyes Station	CA	94956
Novato Human Needs Center	1907 Novato Boulevard	Novato	CA	94947

## Appendix A

<b>Company Name</b>	<b>Address Line 1</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>ZIP Code</b>
COTS – Committee on the Shelterless	900 Hopper Street	Petaluma	CA	94952
Old Adobe Developmental Services (OADS)	1301 A Rand Street	Petaluma	CA	94954
Petaluma Community Foundation	159 Kentucky Street, Ste 10	Petaluma	CA	94952
Picklewood Park Community Center	50 Canal Street	San Rafael	CA	94901
The Osher Marin Jewish Community Center	200 N San Pedro Road	San Rafael	CA	94903
Filipino Community of Sonoma County	3361 Fulton Road	Santa Rosa	CA	95439
Jewish Community Center	1301 Farmers Lane	Santa Rosa	CA	95404
Margaret Todd Senior Center	1560 Hill Road	Novato	CA	94947