



MINNESOTA GO

# State Rail Plan



## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN

*April 2022*

For more information visit <https://talk.dot.state.mn.us/state-rail-plan>

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## THE ASK

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) is planning to update the State Rail Plan. This Public Engagement Plan provides a framework for the inclusive and equitable approach MnDOT will use to engage with and seek input from all audiences during the planning process. MnDOT will use this framework to create customized engagement strategies to meet the unique needs of different audiences and groups.

MnDOT wants to hear your thoughts on this framework and about ways to engage with different audiences and groups as it updates the State Rail Plan. You can submit comments on Public Engagement Plan via the State Rail Plan page on “Let’s Talk Transportation”, MnDOT’s online public engagement website: <https://talk.dot.state.mn.us/state-rail-plan>. You can also send comments by email or phone to:

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MnDOT is accepting comments on the Public Engagement Plan through May 26, 2022.

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACTT	Advocacy Council for Tribal Transportation
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
BIPOC	Black, Indigenous, People of Color
FAST Act	Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act of 2015
IAP2	International Association for Public Participation
MnDOT	Minnesota Department of Transportation
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
PAC	Policy Advisory Committee
PMT	Project Management Team
PRIIA	Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008
RDO	Regional Development Organization
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
TAC	Technical Advisory Committee

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## INTRODUCTION

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) is in the process of updating the State Rail Plan for Minnesota. The State Rail Plan is part of MnDOT's Family of Plans that support Minnesota GO, the 50-year vision for the state's transportation system. The highest-level plan is the Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan, which establishes objectives, performance measures, and strategies for achieving the 50-year vision. The State Rail Plan is a mode specific plan that builds on the Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan and provides direction for the role of rail in achieving the overall vision.

MnDOT is required by federal and state laws to prepare and regularly update the State Rail Plan. These laws include the federal Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA) and Minnesota Statute 174.03 Subdivision 1b. Pursuant to these laws, the purpose of the State Rail Plan is to promote the state's involvement in rail policy, planning and development, and to guide the future of both the freight and passenger rail systems, as well as rail services in the state. The federal laws also require MnDOT to submit the State Rail Plan, and any updates, to the Federal Railroad Administration.

Engagement is the key to a collaborative and inclusive process that often results in a plan that is owned by those it touches. The purpose of this Public Engagement Plan is to provide a framework for the inclusive and equitable approach MnDOT will use to collaborate with and seek input from all audiences as it updates the State Rail Plan. MnDOT will use this framework to create customized audience and group specific engagement strategies. This Public Engagement Plan is a living document and engagement strategies may be adjusted or refined to respond to changing needs, views, or priorities encountered during the planning process.

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## GOALS AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Effective public engagement is essential to MnDOT's commitment to offer opportunities for meaningful input and to advance equity in transportation. MnDOT encourages the public to:

- Engage early and often;
- Assist in identifying transportation challenges and solutions; and
- Participate in decision-making processes.

The public engagement process for the State Rail Plan update will seek to meaningfully engage a broad array of public and private stakeholders, the general public, and MnDOT employees. The intent is to provide opportunities to exchange information and ideas, consider different perspectives, and develop a common vision for Minnesota's rail system.

The goals for the State Rail Plan public engagement process are to:

- Create opportunities for public participation throughout the planning process to inform transportation decisions, focusing on meeting people where they are.
- Use creative and culturally appropriate engagement methods to reach more individuals statewide, including traditionally underrepresented communities.
- Offer a variety of platforms to provide input, including online, in-person and hybrid engagement opportunities.
- Guide the development of objectives and strategies for rail transportation in Minnesota.
- Use plain language and graphics, as well as alternate formats and languages, to convey information.
- Comply with federal and state requirements for public engagement activities.

The intended outcome is that all audiences have actively participated in the planning process and helped shape the State Rail Plan. A secondary outcome is that this involvement leads to broad support and ownership of the policy and investment direction set forth in the Plan.

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## **PLANNING APPROACH**

### **PLANNING TEAMS: GUIDING THE PLAN**

Several teams will work in unison to help guide and inform the planning process. Each team has a different membership that reflects its unique purpose and role.

#### **PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM**

The Project Management Team (PMT) will be comprised of MnDOT employees. The PMT is responsible for overseeing and guiding the planning process for the State Rail Plan. The PMT will manage consultant contracts; create advisory committees; and coordinate and facilitate public engagement efforts and interagency communications. On average, the PMT will meet every two weeks for the duration of the planning process.

#### **ADVISORY COMMITTEES**

MnDOT often appoints advisory committees composed of representative stakeholders from target audiences to provide oversight on projects with statewide implications. These committees are tasked with providing guidance to the PMT, and act as a two-way conduit of information to the groups they represent. The main roles of advisory committees are to:

- Review and provide comments on the planning process and deliverables;
- Review and provide input and feedback on recommendations; and
- Assist with the dissemination of information, including public meeting notices, to the general public and stakeholders.

MnDOT will create two advisory committees for the State Rail Plan. The committees are described below. As needed, a committee may create smaller working group to focus on a specific topic or issue. The working group may meet separately to study the subject, look at alternatives, and form a recommendation for the full committee to consider.

#### **Policy Advisory Committee**

The Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) will be comprised of public and private sector industry leaders that represent key stakeholder groups. The purpose of the PAC is to provide high-level guidance and analysis to inform the State Rail Plan. The PAC will help define the long-term vision for Minnesota's rail system. It will also help identify factors the Plan needs to consider, policy issues to address, and opportunities for partnerships and collaboration that are critical for plan implementation. The PAC will also review the Plan's objectives and strategies to ensure they are consistent with implementation priorities. On average, the PAC will meet once a quarter during the planning process.

#### **Technical Advisory Committee**

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will be comprised of public and private sector subject matter technical experts. The purpose of the TAC is to provide technical expertise throughout the planning process to support the development of the State Rail Plan. The TAC will help analyze current data and trends, consider alternatives for how to best address current and future needs, and work out details of the Plan's strategies and action items. The TAC will also make recommendations to the PMT and PAC to inform key decisions. On average, the TAC will meet at least once a month during the planning process.

## PLANNING PHASES

There are multiple phases in the planning process. The following list briefly describes the main phases:

- **Background Research and Synthesis:** This phase focuses on collecting and analyzing/synthesizing information to further our understanding of existing conditions and trends, as well as current and future needs. It also seeks to identify other factors that influence Minnesota’s rail system and assesses progress made since the last plan.
- **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis:** This phase builds on the previous phase and assesses internal and external factors and influences, as well as current and future opportunities and threats. The results of the SWOT analysis will inform the State Rail Plan’s objectives and strategies, and short and long-term action plan.
- **Develop the Draft Plan:** During this phase the draft State Rail Plan is created. The conclusions from the previous stages are documented in the draft Plan and objectives and strategies are defined. An action plan is also developed to guide implementation efforts. At the end of this stage the draft Plan is circulated for public comment.
- **Finalize the Plan:** This is the last phase in plan development. Comments received on the draft State Rail Plan are considered and the Plan is finalized. After the State Rail Plan is finalized, it moves into the implementation phase.

Throughout the planning process there will be ample opportunities for all audiences to participate. The type and level of engagement during each phase will vary. This reflects the goal of each phase and the input needed. The types of engagement opportunities available during each phase, and the techniques used, will be determined by the PMT to best reflect the input being sought. For more detail, see the Public Engagement Timeline section.

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## AUDIENCES

As noted earlier, MnDOT is committed to increasing transparency and collaboration and ensuring everyone has an opportunity to participate in the planning process. To meet this commitment, MnDOT will strive to engage a broad array of internal and external audiences to inform the State Rail Plan update. It will also seek to reach underrepresented populations such as Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), individuals with low income, English language learners, elderly, youth, and persons with various ability levels within any potential group audience.

Not every audience shares the same level of interest in, or commitment to, the planning process. For this reason, it is important to offer opportunities for different levels of involvement. Some audiences and groups may only want to be informed of the Plan. Others need a greater level of involvement due to their role in plan implementation. MnDOT currently uses the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation as a tool to determine the appropriate level of engagement for projects. The IAP2 Spectrum describes five levels of engagement:

- **Inform:** Provide balanced and objective information to help understand the problems, alternatives and/or solutions.
- **Consult:** Obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.
- **Involve:** Work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered.
- **Collaborate:** Partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.
- **Empower:** Place final decision-making in the hands of the public.

Below is a list of key audiences for the State Rail Plan. MnDOT will tailor outreach efforts and techniques to meet the unique needs of each audience. The engagement of all audiences will comply with all Environmental Justice and Civil Rights requirements, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements, as well as additional stakeholder outreach requirements set at the federal and state level.

## **GENERAL PUBLIC**

### ***Level of Engagement: Inform, Consult, Involve***

The general public is *any individual or group not necessarily associated with decision-making power or special interests, but who may have an interest in the outcome of a decision*. As the ultimate beneficiary of the State Rail Plan, the general public is a key audience that needs to be engaged. While the interest of a member of the general public may be less specific than that of a key stakeholder, it is no less important. Those with any level of interest should have the opportunity to learn about the State Rail Plan and provide input. MnDOT will employ a variety of engagement techniques with the goal of reaching a broad audience. These techniques are described in the Engagement Techniques section.

## **TRADITIONALLY UNDERREPRESENTED COMMUNITIES**

### ***Key Target Audience: Underrepresented Communities***

To engage with traditionally underrepresented communities in Minnesota, MnDOT will identify locations where railroads pass through, or have facilities in, traditionally underrepresented communities. As communities are identified, the PMT will develop customized engagement strategies for these communities. The goal will be to provide these communities with an opportunity to learn about the State Rail Plan and provide input. An emphasis will be placed on minimizing the amount of energy that people who identify with these groups will need to expend to participate in the planning process. This will include providing easy access, using plain language, making engagement materials ADA accessible and available in alternate formats and languages, providing interpreters (to assist people with limited English proficiency), and other appropriate services as applicable and necessary. MnDOT will also strive to build relationships with community-based organizations that can help increase engagement with underrepresented communities. Throughout the planning process, particular attention will be paid to monitoring the success of efforts to engage traditionally underrepresented communities, and adjusting engagement strategies as needed, to ensure their voices are being heard.

## **STAKEHOLDERS**

### ***Level of Engagement: Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate***

A stakeholder is *any individual or group that has, or perceives they have, a real and particular stake in the outcome of a decision*. Minnesota has a broad range of public and private sector stakeholders who will play a key role in both informing and implementing the State Rail Plan. In addition to MnDOT, numerous agencies and organizations will play key roles in advancing the strategies and action items in the Plan to achieve the broader objectives for Minnesota's rail system. These include other federal, tribal, state, and local agencies; railroads and other carriers; shippers and manufacturers; facility owners/operators; economic development organizations; the Governor's Council on Freight Rail and the Minnesota Freight Advisory Committee; MPOs and RDOs; Regional Railroad Authorities; and interest-based trade and advocacy groups. Representatives of key stakeholder groups will serve as members of the PAC and TAC.

As the planning process proceeds, and roles for implementing the State Rail Plan are defined, some stakeholders may be identified as transportation partners. Transportation partners are *agencies and organizations that collaborate with MnDOT advance transportation in Minnesota*.

## **TRIBAL OUTREACH**

### *Key Target Audience: Tribal Governments and Transportation Leaders*

As sovereign nations, tribes are a unique stakeholder group with specific rights under federal and state law. MnDOT seeks to foster and facilitate positive government-to-government relations with all federally recognized tribes with lands, and interest in lands, in Minnesota. Pursuant to federal and state laws, and its *Minnesota Tribal Nations* policy, MnDOT and its Tribal Liaison will solicit input from tribes throughout the planning process. MnDOT will also engage with, and provide updates to, Minnesota's Advocacy Council for Tribal Transportation (ACTT). This will include at least one focus group meeting with ACTT.

## **RAILROADS**

### *Key Target Audience: Railroads Operating in Minnesota*

Most of Minnesota's railroads in Minnesota are privately owned. For this reason, MnDOT will seek to engage with all the railroads that operate in Minnesota to identify needs, issues, and opportunities the State Rail Plan may need to address. MnDOT will also seek input on roles and potential partnerships for implementing the Plan.

## **MNDOT**

### *Level of Engagement: Inform, Consult, Involve*

The State Rail Plan is a plan for the entire state. Although most freight railroads are privately owned, as Minnesota's transportation agency, MnDOT plays a critical role in implementing the planning direction. For this reason, it is important that MnDOT employees be engaged in the planning process to establish buy-in and ensure the Plan is implemented.

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## **ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUES**

MnDOT will use a variety of techniques to reach out to and engage with, different audiences and groups throughout the planning process. To reach the widest audience, both in-person, online, and hybrid events and activities are anticipated. The primary engagement techniques are described below. The exact mix of activities used to engage with different audiences and groups will vary based on their specific needs and they type of input needed at different points in the planning process. The Public Engagement Timeline section includes an outline of when different engagement techniques will be used. As noted in the Introduction, MnDOT will use the framework established in this Public Engagement Plan to create customized audience and group specific engagement strategies. MnDOT will provide interpretation and translation services to accommodate persons with various ability levels and to facilitate cross-cultural communications. MnDOT will also actively seek input on when these services are, or may be, needed.

## **ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

### *Engagement Level: Collaborate*

### *Target Audience: Key Stakeholder Groups*

MnDOT has a responsibility and interest to involve certain advisory stakeholder groups in the planning process. As previously described, the PMT will create a PAC and a TAC that will meet throughout the planning process. The stakeholder groups represented on these committees will play both an advisory and implementation role that is critical to the successful implementation of the State Rail Plan. In addition to providing informational updates to these groups, the PMT will also be asking for guidance on the overall direction for the State Rail Plan and key decisions. On average, the TAC will meet at least once a month and the PAC will meet once a quarter during the planning process.

## **STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS**

*Engagement Level: Consult*

*Target Audience: Key Stakeholders*

One-on-one interviews will be conducted with rail-related stakeholders. The interviews will be with high-level industry leaders from across the state as well as representatives of other stakeholder groups with a direct stake in the rail industry. The purpose of the interviews will be to gather information about needs, issues, and opportunities that will inform the State Rail Plan. Another purpose of the interviews is to foster some of collaborative relationships that will be needed to implement the Plan.

## **SURVEYS**

*Engagement Level: Consult*

*Target Audience: All Audiences*

Surveys will be used to gather input and feedback from all audiences throughout the planning process. During the early phases of the planning process, a survey may focus on gathering needed baseline data; identifying issues, needs, and opportunities; and gaining a better understanding of the perceived and potential role of railroads in the overall transportation system in Minnesota. During later phases, surveys may be used to inform objectives and strategies, establish priorities, and gain feedback on the draft Plan. Depending on the input being sought at a particular point, a survey may be focused on a specific group, all stakeholders, or the general public. Email blasts will announce surveys to stakeholders and other interested parties. When input is desired from the general public, the survey will be announced and posted on the State Rail Plan Let's Talk Transportation page. It will also be announced via email and social media.

## **STAKEHOLDER FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS AND FORUMS**

*Engagement Level: Involve*

*Target Audience: Key Stakeholders*

Focus group meetings and/or stakeholder forums may be used to provide an opportunity to discuss key issues and topics with as many key stakeholders as possible during the planning process. These events will be targeted to key stakeholder groups, although meetings will be open to the general public. In addition to reaching a wider set of stakeholders, these types of activities provide an opportunity to facilitate dialogue among stakeholders with different perspectives and gain more in-depth understanding of specific topics and issues. Six to ten events are anticipated. These EVENTS will be announced via email and on the State Rail Plan Let's Talk Transportation page.

## **WORKPLACE-BASED OUTREACH**

*Engagement Level: Involve*

*Target Audience: Employees of Rail-Related Industries*

MnDOT will identify employers of various size from across the state, including railroads and users of the rail system, and work with those employers to schedule engagement sessions for rail-related employees (e.g., shipping departments). Employers will be chosen based on geographic diversity and other factors to reach a wide array of Minnesotans employed within the rail industry and other related industries. The goal of these events is to reach individuals who may not normally participate in the planning process by making it easy and convenient for them to share their thoughts, insights, and ideas.

## **INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATIONS**

*Engagement Level: Inform  
Represented on the PAC or TAC*

*Target Audience: Interested Stakeholders and Groups Not*

The PMT will offer to schedule informational presentations with stakeholder groups. Any interested group will also be able to request a presentation via the State Rail Plan Let's Talk Transportation page, and the PMT will

make a good faith attempt to present whenever possible. The goal of these meetings is to increase overall project awareness and provide key information to interested and affected stakeholders, as well as gain additional input.

## **PUBLIC MEETINGS**

*Engagement Level: Inform, Consult, Involve    Target Audience: All Audiences*

MnDOT will hold three rounds of public meetings during the planning process. These efforts will be geared towards the general public but will also provide an opportunity for stakeholders to provide input. The first round will take place after the initial data is gathered and synthesized, and the SWOT analysis has started. This round will focus on educating the public about the project and soliciting input on rail needs, issues, opportunities, and potential projects. The input received during this outreach effort will inform the overall development of the State Rail Plan. Once the SWOT is completed, MnDOT will host a second round of public meetings. The purpose of this round will be to share and receive feedback on the draft objectives, strategies, and priorities for the State Rail Plan. The last round will focus gaining input on action items and implementation strategies to include in the Plan.

MnDOT will prepare flyers to promote the public meetings. They will also be announced via email, social media, and on the State Rail Plan Let's Talk Transportation page. Additional notifications efforts will be determined as dates, formats and locations of the meetings are confirmed. Display boards will be prepared for in-person meetings to help spur conversations. In-person meetings will prioritize transit accessible locations. Virtual participation options will be available for participation throughout the state. Materials will be accessible and available in alternate formats. Interpreters and other services will be provided upon request.

## **COMMUNITY EVENTS**

*Engagement Level: Inform, Consult                      Target Audience: General Public*

MnDOT will identify community events throughout the state that provide an opportunity for additional engagement sessions. Examples include the National Train Day event hosted by the Saint Paul Union Depot (spring) and the Minnesota State Fair. The events will consist of information sharing and interactive exercises. A particular focus will be given to events that help reach traditionally underrepresented populations. Materials will use plain language and be accessible and available in alternate formats. Interpreters and other services will be provided upon request. Events will be selected based on geographic diversity and other factors to reach a diverse population of Minnesotans. Community events are targeted to take place at key points throughout the planning process. Events will be announced via social media and on the State Rail Plan Let's Talk Transportation page.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD AND HEARING**

*Engagement Level: Involve                                      Target Audience: All Audiences*

A public comment period is expected of all statewide planning documents at MnDOT. MnDOT will schedule a 45-day public comment period upon completion of draft State Rail Plan. A notice of the public comment period will be posted in the State Register prior to its start and will include the date and time of the scheduled public hearing. Notices will also be posted on the State Rail Plan Let's Talk Transportation page and communicated through social media. Electronic versions of the draft Plan and comment options will be available on the State Rail Plan Let's Talk Transportation page. Hard copies of the draft Plan will be available for review at the MnDOT central office, library, and district offices. The public hearing will be held at a transit accessible location in St. Paul. Video conference and virtual participation options will be available for participation throughout the state. Comments will be accepted online, at the hearing, in writing, or via phone. Materials will be accessible and available in alternate formats. Interpreters and other services will be provided upon request.

## **ELECTRONIC AND MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS**

### **STATE RAIL PLAN WEBPAGE**

*Engagement Level: Inform*

*Target Audience: All Audiences*

MnDOT will continue to maintain the existing State Rail Plan webpage: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/planning/railplan/>. During the planning process this webpage will direct people to the State Rail Plan page on “Let’s Talk Transportation” (see below) where specific information regarding the State Rail Plan update and opportunities to participate will be located. The existing State Rail Plan webpage will also include additional information and resources not found on the “Let’s Talk Transportation” page. The PMT will track hits to the existing webpage to evaluate its effectiveness. The webpage will be mobile-friendly and ADA accessible.

### **LET’S TALK TRANSPORTATION ENGAGEMENT SITE**

*Engagement Level: Inform, Consult*

*Target Audience: All Audiences*

During of the planning process MnDOT will maintain a State Rail Plan page on “Let’s Talk Transportation”, MnDOT’s online public engagement website: <https://talk.dot.state.mn.us/state-rail-plan>. This page will serve as a hub for information, resources, and public engagement opportunities. The page will include various engagement tools such as surveys, and areas for questions and public comments, as well as an engagement calendar with opportunities to get involved. There will also be a place to sign up for email blasts and to contact the PMT to request information or an informational presentation. The page will also include a document library with resources and draft documents. The PMT will track views of the page to evaluate its effectiveness. The webpage will be mobile-friendly and ADA accessible.

### **NEWS RELEASES**

*Engagement Level: Inform*

*Target Audience: All Audiences*

News releases will be issued throughout the planning process to announce project milestones and events. The news releases will be distributed statewide. MnDOT Communications and Public Engagement coordinators will publish announcements in local newspapers and media outlets, such as local access television, radio, and community newsletters, including tribal, minority and ethnic publications and outlets. Press materials will be prepared prior to each general public engagement opportunity and they will also communicate key decision points.

### **EMAIL BLASTS**

*Engagement Level: Inform*

*Target Audience: Stakeholders and Other Interested Parties*

Email will be used throughout the planning process to communicate with stakeholders and other interested parties. Email blasts will be sent to provide project updates and to announce engagement opportunities. The State Rail Plan Let’s Talk Transportation page will include a link that will allow anyone to sign up to receive the email blasts. Additionally, near the start of the planning process an email blast will be sent to everyone on MnDOT’s existing rail stakeholder list. The email will notify them of the State Rail Plan update and encourage them sign up for the email blasts. MnDOT will continue to encourage all audiences to sign up for the email blast throughout the planning process. The email blasts will be promoted on the State Rail Plan Let’s Talk Transportation page and through MnDOT communications and engagement activities.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

*Engagement Level: Inform*

*Target Audience: General Public*

Social media will be used to promote engagement activities throughout the planning process. A strategy will be crafted primarily around MnDOT's primary and district Facebook and Twitter profiles, with interaction and occasional posts on MnDOT's general and district Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram accounts. Posts will seek to drive traffic to the State Rail Plan Let's Talk Transportation page for more information and educational materials. In coordination with the Let's Talk Transportation page, social media will announce public engagement opportunities, promote online surveys, and seek to interact with followers to gain input directly through Twitter. Posts will utilize the hashtag #RailMN.

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## **EVALUATION EFFORTS**

The PMT will evaluate the effectiveness of engagement efforts at key points during the planning process. As part of the evaluation effort, MnDOT will collect optional, anonymous demographic data from people who participate in engagement activities. Cumulative results and trends will be used to adjust engagement strategies as needed.

### **EVALUATION CRITERIA**

The PMT will use the following criteria to evaluate engagement efforts:

#### **PROCESS QUESTIONS**

##### **General Public**

- Does the general public feel they have the information they need to stay informed, participate in the planning process, and share input?
- Is the general public satisfied with the amount and types of opportunities they have to provide feedback?
- Does the general public and traditionally underrepresented communities find it easy to participate in the planning process? If so, what do they feel makes it easy to participate? If not, what challenges are they experiencing?
- What types of engagement does the general public find to be most satisfying and useful, and why?
- Moving forward, how does the general public want to be informed and engaged about the State Rail Plan and other engagement activities?

##### **Stakeholders**

- Do stakeholders feel they have the information they need to stay informed, participate in the planning process, and share input?
- Are stakeholders satisfied with the amount and types of opportunities they have to provide feedback?
- Do stakeholders find it easy to participate in the planning process? If so, what do they feel makes it easy to participate? If not, what challenges are they experiencing?
- What types of engagement do stakeholders find most satisfying and useful, and why?
- Moving forward, how do stakeholders want to be informed and engaged about the State Rail Plan and other engagement activities?

##### **PMT**

- Are the Public Engagement Plan and the customized audience and group specific engagement strategies being implemented as planned? If not, what changed? How is the PMT adapting the Plan and the audience and group specific engagement strategies to achieve the goals and objectives of the Plan?

- Do the stakeholders and members of the general public who participated in the planning process represent the demographic characteristics of the target audiences?
  - What was the geographic representation of attendees/responses?
  - What is the relationship of attendees/responses to the rail system? Have different rail interests been represented? What was the percentage of attendees/respondents who shared demographic data when requested?
  - Does the input received equitably represent all parts of Minnesota, including Title VI and Environmental Justice populations?
- Are the customized audience and group specific engagement strategies created under the Public Engagement Plan using creative and culturally appropriate engagement methods to reach more individuals statewide, including traditionally underrepresented communities?
- Do the customized audience and group specific engagement strategies created under the Public Engagement Plan comply with federal and state requirements for public engagement activities?
- What kind of feedback was received from the State Rail Plan Let’s Talk Transportation page, place-based outreach, stakeholder focus group meetings and forums, open houses, and other opportunities? Did this feedback affect key decisions?

## **OUTCOME QUESTIONS**

### **General Public**

- Did the general public feel they were heard by MnDOT throughout the planning process?
- Did the general public feel they influenced key decisions and the direction of the State Rail Plan?
- Is the general public satisfied with the outcomes of the planning process and the final State Rail Plan?

### **Stakeholders**

- Did stakeholders feel they were heard by MnDOT throughout the planning process?
- Did stakeholders feel they influenced key decisions and the direction of the State Rail Plan?
- Are stakeholders satisfied with the outcomes of the planning process and the final State Rail Plan?

### **PMT**

- Did public engagement efforts create opportunities for all audiences to influence key decisions throughout the planning process?
- Did input received through public engagement guide the development of objectives, strategies, and priorities for rail transportation in Minnesota?

## **ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY TRACKING**

MnDOT will use an engagement activity tracker to track engagement efforts. After each activity, the PMT will prepare a summary and add it the tracker. MnDOT will also generate internal reports at key points in the planning process to document the number of people that interact with the Project via:

- In-person activities (stakeholder focus group meetings and forums, public open houses, informal presentations, community events),
- State Rail Plan webpage (how many views & repeat visitors),
- State Rail Plan Let’s Talk Transportation page (how many views & repeat visitors),
- Responses and response rates for online engagement tools (surveys, public comments, questions, etc.),
- Demographic questions,
- Project Updates email sign ups, and
- Social media.

When possible, this will include a breakdown of demographic data and where people are located to ensure racial, socio-economic, cultural, and geographic diversity in engagement. If certain groups or areas of Minnesota are missing or underrepresented, engagement strategies will be adjusted to target those populations.

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE

**TABLE 1. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE**

Planning Phases	Sept 2022	Oct 2022	Nov 2022	Dec 2022	Jan 2023	Feb 2023	Mar 2023	Apr 2023	May 2023	June 2023	July 2023	Aug 2023	Sept 2023	Oct 2023	Nov 2023	Dec 2023	Jan 2024	Feb 2024	Mar 2024	Apr 2024	May 2024	June 2024	
Background Research and Synthesis	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆																
SWOT Analysis					◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇													
Develop Draft Plan								■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■			
Finalize the Plan																				▲	▲	▲	▲
<b>Engagement Planning Activities</b>																							
Create Audience and Group Specific Engagement Strategies	●	●	●																				
Engagement Evaluation						◆	◆				◆	◆											◆
<b>Public Engagement Activities</b>																							
PMT Meetings	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇
PAC Meetings				■			■			■			■			■			■				
TAC Meetings		▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Stakeholder Interviews		●	●	●	●	●																	
Surveys		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆					◆	◆	◆						
Focus Group Meetings and Forums				◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇					◇	◇							
Workplace-Based Outreach				■	■	■	■																
Informational Presentations			▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Public Meetings						●	●			●	●				●	●							
Community Events	◆	◆							◆	◆		◆	◆								◆	◆	
Public Comment Period and Hearing																				◇	◇	◇	
Project Webpage	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Let's Talk Transportation Page	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
News Releases		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Email Blasts		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Social Media	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇

This table provides an outline of the of the public engagement timeline broken down by month. It starts in September 2022 and ends in June 2024. The timeline has three sections. The first section provides an overview of the planning process, with the timelines for the four phases of the planning process. The second part identifies the timeline for public engagement planning activities. The third part shows the anticipated timelines for when different engagement techniques expected to be used. A more detailed schedule will be prepared as the customized audience and group engagement strategies are defined. As public engagement efforts are evaluated throughout the planning process, the public engagement schedule will be reviewed and updated as needed.

### PLANNING PHASES

- Background Research and Synthesis: September 2022 through March 2023.
- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Analysis: January through June 2023.
- Develop Draft Plan: April 2023 through March 2024.

- Finalize the Plan: March through June 2024.

### **ENGAGEMENT PLANNING ACTIVITIES**

- Create Audience and Group Specific Engagement Strategies: September through November 2022.
- Engagement Evaluation: Three key points in the planning process, including February through March 2023, July through August 2023, and June 2024.

### **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES**

- Project Management Team Meetings: On average, every two weeks for the duration of the planning process, from September 2022 through June 2024.
- Policy Advisory Committee Meetings: On average, once a quarterly starting in November 2022 and continuing through February 2024.
- Technical Advisory Committee Meetings: On average once a month starting in October 2022 and continuing through April 2024.
- Stakeholder Interviews: October 2022 through February 2023.
- Surveys (two durations): October 2022 through June 2023 and October through December 2023.
- Focus Group Meetings and Forums (two durations): December 2022 through June 2023 and November through December 2023.
- Workplace-Based Outreach: December 2022 through March 2023.
- Informational Presentations: November 2022 through June 2024.
- Public Meetings (three rounds): February through March 2023, June through July 2023, and November through December 2023.
- Community Events (four durations): September through October 2022, May through June 2023, August through September 2023, and April through May 2024.
- Public Comment Period and Hearing: March through May 2024.
- Project Webpage: Will be maintained for the duration of the planning process from September 2022 through June 2024, and beyond.
- Let's Talk Transportation Page: Will be maintained for the duration of the planning process from September 2022 through June 2024.
- News Releases: Continuous from October 2022 through June 2024.
- Email Blasts: Continuous from October 2022 through June 2024.
- Social Media: Continuous from October 2022 through June 2024.