



## Valley Metro Public Participation Plan 2021

### Introduction

The regional transit public input/outreach process is conducted by Valley Metro for various transit-related activities and actions. Throughout the year, Valley Metro conducts public outreach activities related to capital projects, transit service changes, fare changes, and other transit-related events. This Title VI Public Participation Plan was established to ensure inclusion of the public throughout the Phoenix metropolitan community in accordance with the content and considerations of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Federal regulations state that recipients of federal funding must “promote full and fair participation in public transportation decision-making without regard to race, color or national origin.” Valley Metro uses this Plan to ensure involvement of low-income, minority and limited English proficient (LEP) populations, following guidance from the Title VI Requirements and Guidelines for Federal Transit Administration Recipients Circular<sup>1</sup> (Circular).

Involving the public in Valley Metro practices and decision-making processes provides helpful information to improve the transit system to better meet the needs of the community. Although public participation methods and extent may vary with the type of plan, program and/or service under consideration, as well as the resources available, a concerted effort to involve all affected parties will be conducted in compliance with this Plan along with federal regulations. To include effective strategies for engaging low-income, minority and LEP populations, the Circular suggests that the following may be considered:

- Scheduling meetings at times and locations that are convenient and accessible for minority and LEP communities.
- Employing different meeting sizes and formats.
- Coordinating with community- and faith-based organizations, educational institutions and other organizations to implement public engagement strategies that reach out specifically to members of affected minority and/or LEP communities.
- Considering transit information in publications and through communication channels that serve LEP populations.
- Providing opportunities for public participation through means other than written communication, such as personal interviews or use of audio or video recording devices to capture oral comments.

---

<sup>1</sup> United States Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, Circular 4702.1B.

Valley Metro currently practices all these strategies, in compliance with federal regulations, so that minority, low-income and LEP populations have ready access to information and meaningful opportunities to engage in planning activities and provide input as part of the decision-making process.

## Typical Public Participation Opportunities

Valley Metro provides opportunities to share information or receive public input through a variety of methods for public participation utilized to engage low-income, minority and LEP populations through many outlets.

**Meeting Planning:** For planning efforts, including fare and service changes, public meeting locations are held at a centralized location near the affected route or project area and bilingual staff is available. Public notices and announcements are published in minority-focused publications— some examples include: the *Arizona Informant* (African American community), *Asian American Times* (Asian American community), *La Voz* and *Prensa Arizona* (Hispanic community). Press releases are also sent to these media sources regarding fare changes, service changes and other programs. All printed materials are available in English and Spanish and translated, as requested, in any other languages.

**Rider Satisfaction Survey:** A key participation effort, the Rider Satisfaction Survey, is conducted approximately every two years. This survey is administered on transit routes across the region, reaching transit riders living in minority and/or low-income communities. The survey, administered in English and Spanish, measures rider satisfaction with transit services and captures comments for improvements.

**Valley Metro Customer Service:** Throughout the year, minority, low-income and LEP populations have access to information through the Valley Metro Customer Service. Valley Metro Customer Service is open 5 a.m. - 10 p.m., Monday through Friday; 6 a.m. - 8 p.m. on Saturdays; and 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. on Sundays and designated holidays. Customer Service staff is multilingual.

**Website:** Information including meeting announcements, meeting materials and other program information is available on [valleymetro.org](http://valleymetro.org) in both English and Spanish. If users would like information in another language, Valley Metro features Google Translate on its website. This allows Valley Metro to reach citizens in five languages with information on transportation services, proposed service changes and other programs.

## Public Participation Methods

Valley Metro uses several specific public involvement techniques to ensure that minority, low-income and LEP persons are involved in transit decisions. Using public involvement, media outlets and print or electronic materials, Valley Metro disseminates information regarding planning efforts. These efforts include the activities described below.

A full list of potential outreach methods is found in Appendix A.

## Common Best Practices:

- Public meetings, hearings and open houses are held regularly at community-familiar and centralized locations with public transportation access and at convenient times, in collaboration with city partners. These meetings provide an opportunity to meet with citizens and receive their comments and questions on proposed service changes and other programs. For each program, Valley Metro varies its meeting format to best engage the targeted population.
- Valley Metro has staff available at public meetings, hearings, events and open houses to answer questions and receive comments in both English and Spanish. Valley Metro also uses court reporters to record verbal comments at public hearings.
- Outreach for biannual service changes and other programs are conducted at or near the affected area— for example, along an affected bus route or at an affected transfer location— thus targeting the population that may be most affected by proposed changes to service or routes. Often, these efforts are also executed at transit stops, community centers, civic centers or major transfer locations.
- Coordination with community- and faith-based organizations, educational institutions and other organizations occurs regularly. These coordination efforts assist Valley Metro in executing public engagement strategies that reach out to members of the population that may be affected.
- All public meeting notices for biannual service changes and other programs are translated to Spanish. Notices regarding Valley Metro projects and programs are widely distributed to the public through multiple methods as established by the project team. A full list of potential outreach methods is found in Appendix A.
- Valley Metro publishes advertisements of any proposed service or fare change in minority publications to make this information more easily available to minority populations. Additionally, Valley Metro sends press releases regarding service changes and other programs to Spanish-language media. Depending on the level of impact, a formal media/communications plan can be developed to coordinate overall messaging across multiple stakeholders.
- Valley Metro offers online participation via social media, webinar and email input as an alternative opportunity for comment. Online meetings or hearings are recorded and uploaded to the Valley Metro YouTube channel and/or website.
- Major surveying efforts are conducted in both English and Spanish to ensure that the data collected is representative of the public.
- Valley Metro Customer Service is multilingual.

- All comments are documented in a centralized database. Comment summary information is provided to Valley Metro’s city partners for review and is also presented to the Valley Metro Board of Directors for consideration when acting upon proposed service changes.
- A public hearing is a formal presentation to the public on specific proposal or subject. Public testimony is recorded into the official record. The rules governing a public hearing are more formal than that of a public meeting, where a variety of tools and techniques may be used to gather feedback from the public. A public hearing may take place in-person, via teleconference, or online. Public comment must be recorded and transcribed, either via electronic means or a court reporter.

A public hearing is required during:

- The development of an Environmental Impact statement.
- A Major Service Change, as defined by the Major Service Change & Service Equity Policy.

## **Conclusion**

Valley Metro conducts public outreach throughout the year to involve the public with agency activities and transit planning processes. Using a variety of communication techniques such as facilitating meetings at varied times and locations, using multiple formats, placing print and digital materials across multiple channels and providing opportunities via phone and online to share or collect input, Valley Metro ensures that outreach efforts include opportunities for minority, low-income and LEP populations who may be impacted by the activity or transit planning process are integrated into the decision-making process. Valley Metro will continue to involve all communities to be inclusive of all populations throughout the metropolitan Phoenix area and to also comply with federal regulations. Valley Metro will continue to monitor and update this Inclusive Public Participation Plan as part of the Title VI Program, which is updated triennially.

## Appendix A

Valley Metro reviews public outreach needs with the project/initiative team as part of the initial development of the designated Public Involvement Plan. Major tactics are outlined to develop the overall timeline. Depending upon the scope of the project, program or announcement, public participation methods are customized to ensure that the public is involved in the decision-making process.

A list of commonly used outreach tools, as well as their definition and associated Valley Metro standard of best practice, is listed below.

Outreach Tool	Definition and Best Practices
Public Hearing	A formal meeting with a set agenda during which a presentation is given, and public testimony/feedback is heard and recorded. Can take place in-person, via teleconference, or online. For public hearings, adequate notice to the public is defined as a minimum of 30 days to the hearing date. A hearing is advertised with an appropriate outreach tactic at least four times within 30 days of the meeting date. Public comment must be recorded and transcribed, either via electronic means or via a court reporter.
Public Meeting	A meeting during which material is presented and public comment is heard and recorded. The material may be offered via a presentation, workshop or “open house.” Can take place in-person, via teleconference, or as a webinar online. For public meetings, adequate notice to the public is defined as a minimum of 15-days prior to the meeting date. A meeting is advertised at least twice via an appropriate outreach tactic within 15 days of the meeting date.
Display Ads in Print Media	A paid advertisement in the newspapers or other print media to alert readers about an upcoming event or action.
Website/Online Social Media	Information on projects or initiatives located on the Valley Metro website or Valley Metro social channels (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter)
Stakeholder meetings	Information provided to local, targeted individuals or groups particularly affected by project. The presentation may be formal, a workshop or in “open house” style. Typically, stakeholder meetings are invitation-only and so do not need to be publicly advertised beforehand. Can take place in-person, via teleconference, or as a webinar online.

Mobile Device Alerts	Electronic push notifications to alert customers to important information on projects or service changes via Valley Metro-owned mobile apps (AlertVM, ConstructVM, mobile fare app).
Signs	Signs on buses, bus stop locations, transit centers or other locations frequented by stakeholders. This includes temporary signs, A-frames or kiosk posters.
Rider Alerts	Notifications regarding immediate rider information on impacts to frequency, routing or schedule. Rider Alerts may be web-based, printed on signs and/or submitted as a memo to Customer Service & Operations.
Direct Mailings	Mail sent to an affected group or area to educate, notify, or request input.
Surveys	A list of questions to solicit opinions or preferences by a selected group of individuals. The survey mechanism may be electronic and/or in-person. The survey population may be intercepted or self-selected. For surveys, the feedback collection period is defined as a minimum of 15 days.
Static Display	Table or sign display at a trafficked event or area in an identified area where a targeted stakeholder group may be present. The display may be manned or unmanned and will have specific information on the project/initiative. This may also include a feedback mechanism, such as comment cards.
Door Hanger/Flyer Canvassing	Print notice distributed to local businesses and residents in project/affected area.
E-mail/E-blast	Digital messaging to an established Valley Metro email list. Stakeholders may opt-in or out of this list based on their needs.