

## CHAPTER 5:

# Public Involvement

DVRPC firmly believes that meaningful public participation results in better planning outcomes. Public participation is a process, not a single event. DVRPC provides multiple opportunities for a wide variety of stakeholders, including vulnerable and historically marginalized populations, public officials, and the private sector, to provide comments on and stay informed about transportation planning and programming decisions. By incorporating local information, residents' lived experiences, and subject matter expertise, plans are more implementable, beneficial, and sustainable.

The public comment period for the Draft DVRPC FY2025 TIP for Pennsylvania opened on May 23, 2024, at 5:00 PM (local time), and closed on June 24, 2024, at 5:00 PM (local time). A hybrid (in-person/virtual) meeting was held at the DVRPC offices and a virtual meeting was held at the following web address for the purpose of informing interested parties on how to make public comments on the Draft DVRPC FY2025 TIP:

### ONLINE ONLY MEETING:

Monday, June 10, 2024, at 6:00 PM to 7:30 PM

Registration via: [dvrpc.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_b815VljZReqjdllKJF\\_gEw#/registration](https://dvrpc.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_b815VljZReqjdllKJF_gEw#/registration)  
or by visiting DVRPC's events calendar: [www.dvrpc.org/calendar/](http://www.dvrpc.org/calendar/)

After registering, attendees receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

### HYBRID MEETING:

Tuesday, June 11th, 2024 at 6:00 PM to 7:30 PM

Registration for in-person and online attendees via:

[dvrpc.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_8JQuiSpLQKe5BOjw3DV1pA](https://dvrpc.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_8JQuiSpLQKe5BOjw3DV1pA)  
or by visiting DVRPC's events calendar: [www.dvrpc.org/calendar/](http://www.dvrpc.org/calendar/)

DVRPC Conference room

190 N Independence Mall W

Philadelphia, PA 19139

Directions: [www.dvrpc.org/directions/](http://www.dvrpc.org/directions/)

Dinner was served for in-person attendees. An online option was also available to give the public a chance comment. Interpretation was provided if requested.

All questions were directed to [public\\_affairs@dvrpc.org](mailto:public_affairs@dvrpc.org) or 215.592.1800.

While not required, for the hybrid meeting, those interested in joining the meeting were encouraged to RSVP by contacting 215-238-2929 or [public\\_affairs@dvrpc.org](mailto:public_affairs@dvrpc.org). For the hybrid and online meetings, registration information was available on DVRPC's events calendar at [www.dvrpc.org/calendar/2024/6](http://www.dvrpc.org/calendar/2024/6). While participants needed to register beforehand, they were approved automatically and could register and join the meeting up until the meeting ended. Additionally, people who wanted to participate but did not have internet access or smart phones could call in. Anyone who needed accommodations, such as closed captioning or interpretation for either meeting, were directed to contact DVRPC's Office of Communications & Engagement at [public\\_affairs@dvrpc.org](mailto:public_affairs@dvrpc.org) or 215-238-2929.

DVRPC's website ([www.dvrpc.org](http://www.dvrpc.org)) is a vital tool in public outreach and serves a useful purpose during the TIP update cycle. The entire Draft TIP document was available on the DVRPC website, including the date and location of the hybrid and virtual public meetings and other general information. Individuals could download or access current TIP materials at any time. Public comments could also be submitted three ways. The quickest and most direct way to submit comments was online as part of an enhanced interactive mapping and public comment web-based tool located at [www.dvrpc.org/TIP/Draft](http://www.dvrpc.org/TIP/Draft). Users were able to click on the "Submit a Comment" button to make general and project-specific comments.

In addition, the public could submit comments via email to [tip@dvrpc.org](mailto:tip@dvrpc.org), or through U.S. mail addressed to:

**TIP Comments**  
**Office of Communications and Engagement**  
**Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission**  
**190 N. Independence Mall West, 8th Floor**  
**Philadelphia, PA 19106**

Comments received via mail must have been postmarked by June 24, 2024. If a person needed assistance in providing a written comment, they were directed to contact the DVRPC Office of Communications and Engagement at 215-238-2929 or [public\\_affairs@dvrpc.org](mailto:public_affairs@dvrpc.org). Legal notices explaining the public comment process were published by the following newspapers: the Philadelphia Inquirer and the Philadelphia Tribune. DVRPC frequently employed social media ([Facebook](#), [X](#), and [Instagram](#)) during the public comment period to garner the public's interest and attention. For example, DVRPC highlighted different projects and facts via social media posts. For those without internet access, documents were available at the DVRPC office in the American College of Physicians Building in downtown Philadelphia. The public was asked to call (215) 592-1800 to make this request. Hardcopies of the TIP documents were also available at certain public libraries across the region that are listed in Table 1: "Libraries Displaying the DVRPC FY2025 TIP for Pennsylvania." After the public comment period ended, DVRPC staff gathered responses to each public comment from the appropriate agency. Responses were only provided to comments submitted in writing during the public comment period.

## Public Comment Guidance

In an effort to facilitate the public comment process, DVRPC offered some extended guidance. Listed below are some questions that DVRPC asked the public to consider during the review of the TIP document.

- Are we meeting the needs of the region?
- Is the TIP following the intent of the IIJA/BIL? Such as, are we focusing on projects that address equity, sustainability, resilience, climate change, safety, and asset condition? Are we rebuilding and reinvesting in our railways and public transit infrastructure?
- Does the TIP contain the appropriate mix of projects with regard to (a) the amount of investment in FHWA-funded projects versus the amount in FTA-funded projects, or (b) the types of improvements, such as maintenance and reconstruction of the existing system versus new capacity-adding projects; projects such as pedestrian, bicycle, smart technology, TASA funded projects, CMAQ funded projects, Carbon Reduction funded projects, or operational improvements; or freight improvements?
- Is this region getting its fair share of resources compared to other regions in the state or nation?
- Is the current transportation project development process, including environmental reviews and public input, effective?
- Given financial constraints, is this region investing money in the right types of projects?
- Is the TIP document easy to use? How can DVRPC, PennDOT, PART and SEPTA further improve their documents?

Of course, comments are not limited to these broader issues of concern. DVRPC welcomed opinions on specific projects contained in the TIP, the TIP development process, or any other topic of concern. However, we reminded those intending to recommend new projects that they must first progress through the screening and planning processes described earlier. As a result, requests for new projects were generally referred to the appropriate agency for further investigation through their respective "pre-TIP" study efforts. These study efforts may lead to the project being funded on the TIP in some future year. Additionally, a constructive, information-rich comment that is clearly communicated and supported with facts and local knowledge is

more likely to have an impact on decision making. Below are a few suggestions adapted from “Tips for Submitting Effective Comments” from [Regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov) for crafting effective public comments.

## Tips for Crafting Effective Public Comments

- Read the description and understand the project you are commenting on. Is the project a study, operational improvement, enhancing a parking lot/bus stop, or creating a multiuse trail? What are its intended effects? For example, an operational improvement project, such as signal retiming, may not be able to add another travel lane within its scope, but safety components like signage could be added to many kinds of projects.
- Be concise. Support your claims with sound reasoning, documented evidence, and/or how your community will be impacted. For example, have you observed the impacts of a new development on traffic patterns? Is there a study that supports your comment?
- Try to address trade-offs and opposing views.
- If you disagree with a project, suggest an alternative and include an explanation and/or analysis of how your alternative might meet the same objective or be more effective. A potential alternative is to not proceed with the project.
- Identify any credentials and experience that may distinguish your comment from others. If you are a resident of a community, or have relevant personal or professional experience, please state so.
- There is no minimum or maximum length for a comment to be effective.
- Is the TIP document easy to use? How can DVRPC, PennDOT, PART, and SEPTA further improve their documents?

The public comment process is not a vote. One comment that is well supported with facts and local knowledge can be more influential than a hundred comments that are not. DVRPC and its planning partners want to fund the best projects for the region within financial constraints; when crafting a comment, it is important to explain the reasoning.