

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 will close on June 24, 2024, at 5:00 PM (local time). An in-person meeting will be held at the DVRPC offices and an online open house will be 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: https://dvrpc.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_b815VljZReqjdllKJF_gEw#/registration
or by visiting DVRPC's events calendar: <https://www.dvrpc.org/calendar/>**

After registering, you will 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:

**https://dvrpc.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_8JQuiSpLQKe5B0jw3DV1pA
or by visiting DVRPC's events calendar: <https://www.dvrpc.org/calendar/>**

**DVRPC Conference room
190 N Independence Mall W
Philadelphia, PA 19139**

Directions: <https://www.dvrpc.org/directions/>

Dinner will be served for in-person attendees; an online option will also be available to give public comment. Interpretation can be provided if requested. Please reach out to public_affairs@dvrpc.org or 215.592.1800.

While not required, for the in-person meeting, those interested in joining the meeting are encouraged to RSVP by contacting 215.592.1800 or public_affairs@dvrpc.org. For the online meeting, registration information is available on DVRPC's events calendar at <https://www.dvrpc.org/calendar/2024/6>. While participants will need to register beforehand, they will be approved automatically and can register and join the meeting up until the meeting ends. Additionally, people who want to participate but do not have internet access or smart phones can call in. Anyone who needs accommodations, such as closed captioning or interpretation for either meeting, are directed to contact DVRPC's Office of Communications & Engagement at public_affairs@dvrpc.org or 215.592.1800. DVRPC's website (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 is available on the DVRPC website, including the date and location of the in-person and virtual public meetings and other general information. Individuals can download or access current TIP materials at any time. Public comments can also be submitted three ways: online, by email, or through U.S. mail. The quickest and most direct way to submit comments is online as part of an enhanced interactive mapping and public comment web-based tool located at www.dvrpc.org/TIP/Draft. Users are able to click on the "Submit a Comment" button to make general and project-specific comments.

In addition, the public can submit comments via email to 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 be postmarked by June 24, 2024. If a person needs assistance in providing a written comment, they should contact the DVRPC Office of Communications and Engagement at 215.592.1800 or public_affairs@dvrpc.org. Legal notices explaining the public comment process were published by the following newspapers: the Philadelphia Inquirer, Philadelphia Tribune, and Al Dia. DVRPC frequently employs social media ([Facebook](#), [X](#), and [Instagram](#)) during the public comment period to garner the public's interest and attention. For example, DVRPC will highlight different projects and facts via social media posts. For those without internet access, draft documents are available at the DVRPC office in the American College of Physicians Building in downtown Philadelphia. The public is asked to call (215) 592-1800 to make this request. Hardcopies of the Draft TIP documents are 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 ends, DVRPC staff will gather responses to each public comment from the appropriate agency. Responses are 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 offers some extended guidance. Listed below are some questions that DVRPC asks the public to consider during the review of the Draft TIP document.

- Are we meeting the needs of the region?
- Is the Draft 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 Draft 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 Draft 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 welcomes opinions on specific projects contained in the TIP, the TIP development process, or any other topic of concern. However, we remind 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 are 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 Draft 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. 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.

