

Public Participation Plan

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2025-2030



DISCLAIMER:

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Section 1: Introduction and Background

Transportation is one of the dominant ways that people interact with their built environment. Access to goods and services, housing opportunities, job opportunities, social relationships, and more are all shaped by the transportation network. Engaging the public is a valuable tool in assessing the functionality of our transportation networks and identifying existing transportation gaps or needed improvements. The public's knowledge and perspective must be actively sought out by staff, elected officials, and citizens already active in the planning process. The purpose of the Public Participation Plan (PPP) is to codify the standards for actively engaging the public in the planning process.

Within the borders of Pueblo County, regional transportation planning is performed by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and approved by the Pueblo Area Council of Governments (PACOG). A MPO is a regional planning agency established by federal law to engage in a continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative transportation planning and decision-making process for urbanized areas containing a population of 50,000 or more.

Additionally, the PACOG MPO acts as the region's Transportation Planning Region, which oversees rural transportation planning. The urban and rural planning boundaries are shown in Figure 2.

The Pueblo Area Council of Governments (PACOG) is an intergovernmental organization consisting of the following member entities:

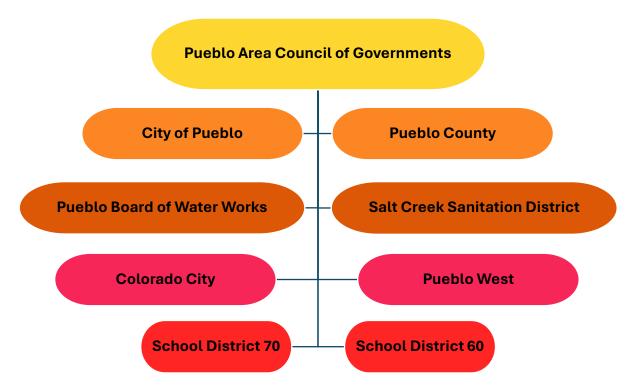


Figure 1: PACOG ORG. CHART

The sixteen voting members of PACOG consist of the seven City Council members, three County Commissioners, and one member each from the Water Board, both School Boards, the two Metropolitan Districts, and Salt Creek Sanitation District. The Co-Executive Directors of PACOG are the City Mayor and County Manager. The Director of the Pueblo County Department of Planning and Development serves as PACOG's Manager. Among other functions, PACOG serves as an urban transportation planning organization. Both the long-term and short-term transportation plans are acted upon by PACOG and prepared on behalf of PACOG by the City's MPO Transportation Planning staff.

What is a COG?

A Council of Governments (COG) is a voluntary association of local and regional governing bodies. The COG has administrative oversight over regional issues that have been divested to it by its member bodies. The Pueblo Area Council of Governments (PACOG) has oversight over transportation, environmental, and water quality issues. PACOG is overseen by a Board of Directors (BOD) made up of representatives from PACOG's constituent bodies.

Section 2: Regulations and Requirements

2.1 Federal Requirements

The transportation planning process carried out by MPOs must encourage and solicit stakeholder input. According to <u>Title 23 CFR 450.316</u>, as amended in the FAST Act of the federal regulations, "each MPO shall provide citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the transportation plan." The transportation planning process must be "pro-active and provide complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and support early and continuing involvement of the public in developing plans."

In April 1995, the US DOT addressed the environmental justice policy objectives by issuing the following regulation: It states that "In determining the site or location of facilities, a recipient or applicant may not make selections with the purpose or effect of excluding persons from, denying them the benefits of, or subjecting them to discrimination under any program to which this regulation applies on the grounds of race, color, or national origin...(49 CFR 21.5 (b)(3))."

Information derived from Census data pertinent to the Pueblo planning region will be used to identify those with affected interests and the underserved including, but not limited to, Hispanic community members, low-income community members, physically challenged community members, people without access to an automobile such as the youth or elderly and those community members who do not speak English. Appropriate efforts to encourage participation in the process can be determined based on the demographics of the affected populations.

2.1.1 Title VI

The Pueblo Area Council of Governments' (PACOG) policy is to assure full compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987, and related statutes and regulations in all programs and activities. Title VI requires that no person in the United States of America shall, on the grounds of race, color, sex, or national origin, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity for which the PACOG receives federal financial assistance. Any person who believes they have been aggrieved by an unlawful discriminatory practice under Title VI has a right to file a formal complaint with the PACOG. Any such complaint must be in writing and filed with the PACOG Title VI Coordinator within one hundred and eighty (180) days following the date of the alleged discriminatory occurrence.

2.1.2 Participation Plan Comment Period

Federal regulations also require this Public Participation Plan (PPP) to be released for a minimum public comment period of 45 calendar days before it is adopted by the PACOG Board. These guidelines and requirements have all been addressed in this document.

2.1.3 Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST ACT)

Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST ACT) lists the following ten factors that must be addressed by the MPO's transportation planning process:

- Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.
- Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
- Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
- Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and freight;
- Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and state and local planned growth and economic development patterns;

- Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;
- Promote efficient system management and operation; and
- Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.
- Improve the resiliency and reliability of the transportation system and reduce or mitigate Stormwater impacts of surface transportation; and
- Enhance travel and tourism.

PACOG intends to use the standards set forth in FAST Act as the primary goals for its LRTP, TIP, and UPWP, expanding on them where necessary to conform to the regulations of other agencies and how to better meet the needs of the residents of the region.

2.2 State Guidelines

According to the Colorado Department of Transportation publication "Guidelines for Public Participation in Statewide Transportation Planning & Programming", the Transportation Planning Regions and Metropolitan Planning Organizations are responsible for ensuring that verbal or written responses are produced in a timely manner to issues, comments and questions raised by the public during public participation activities."

CDOT staff actively encourage the TPRs to communicate with the department throughout the process as well as with each TPRs' respective stakeholders. "Direct citizen input and participation should be solicited early and continuously in both the regional and statewide transportation planning and programming processes. Opportunities for involvement such as public meetings, citizen advisory groups, surveys, focus groups, and other mechanisms should be provided."

In compliance with Colorado HB21-1110, all documents posted online must meet WCAG 2.1 remediation standards and other state accessibility guidelines.

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Section 3: Tiers and Plans

3.1 Regular Plans

The MPO actively maintains five plans, including the PPP, each with a regular update period, which provides multiple opportunities for the public to comment on and engage in the planning process.

Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) A plan that establishes our regional performance goals,

A plan that establishes our regional performance goals, compliance with regional GHG goals and mitigation measures, proposed future corridors, sets project priorities, and houses the regions 10-year Capital Improvement Program. The LRTP has a horizon of 25 years and is refreshed every 5 years.

Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)

A document that shows and tracks grant, federal and state transportation funds and projects within the region. The primary TIP document is refreshed annually and is updated monthly through a living spreadsheet posted publicly on pacognet.

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

A document that budgets the MPO's federal, state, and local funds across work-tasks, materials, and both ongoing and expected projects. The UPWP is refreshed every 2 years but is reported on and updated twice a year.

Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan (UPWP)

A plan that sets the standards for multi-modal infrastructure, identifies future trails, and lays out our city and county-wide Active Transportation network. The BPPMP is not on a regular update schedule

A table showing the public participation requirements for the MPOs' regular plans can be found in **Appendix A.**

3.2 Tiers

The MPO and its' partners often engage in one-off plans which greatly range in scope and complexity from localized intersection plans to large-scale planning efforts which help to shape and guide the whole region. To ensure that public participation is present in every planning project, this document establishes a structured set of tiers to create flexible guidelines for public participation in planning projects.

Tier I: Limited Reach, Impact, or Interest

Tier 1 includes, but is not limited to:

- Relatively small or localized projects with significant impacts
- Items with a wider scale but with relatively few impacts and relatively modest interest
- Studies affecting portions of the urban area
- Geographically focused plans
- Periodic revisions to the Public Participation Plan

Tier 1 items shall contain maps, photos, renderings, or other visualization tools as appropriate to aid in understanding. Tier 1 items are to be as jargon-free and succinct as possible.

Tier 1 minimum requirements are listed below. Additional steps may be taken as appropriate

- 1. Documents shall be available for public review for at least 30 calendar days on the relevant agencies website), and in print at the relevant agencies office.
 - Printed Documents will be made available upon request
- 2. During the public review period, comments shall be allowed to be submitted:
 - Via mail, fax, or other delivery method, and
 - Via email, and/or website forms
- 3. Notice of the item and the public comment opportunity will be provided at the beginning of the public review period to include:
 - Where the document can be reviewed online and, upon request, in print;
 - Instructions for submitting comments;
 - Due date for comments;
 - Contact information for questions; and
 - Notice of the date, time, and location of any public meetings.
 - Public notices will include maps, photos, or other graphics as appropriate
- 4. Public comments received will be:
 - Acknowledged with a written or e-mailed receipt message for comments submitted in writing, via e-mail, or through Internet forms;
 - Responded to as appropriate, which could include a direct communication to the commenter or a response in the revised document;
 - Documented and presented to the MPO's Transportation Advisory Commission (TAC), in summary form or verbatim, before a vote is taken to adopt the plan or document in question; and
 - Included in summary form or verbatim with final documents, if sufficiently significant.
- 5. Public notice will be given via the following outlets:
 - Display ad in at least major newspaper.
 - Relevant agencies website and PACOG website.
 - Press release to media outlets. MPO staff will maintain the list of media contacts
 - At TAC meetings and/or via email to members of stakeholder agencies
- 6. Periodic revisions to the PPP will also include at least one display ad in a newspaper that serves minority communities.

When warranted by the specifics of the project the following additional steps may be used:

- As needed, an agenda item for a public hearing or comment opportunity may be established at the TAC meeting where action is scheduled.
- Advertise in a newspaper that serves minority communities including Spanishspeaking residents

- Advertise in local newspapers serving the Towns of Avondale, Beulah, Colorado City, Boone, and Rye
- Provide additional notice to local government officials including from the towns of Avondale, Beulah, Colorado City, Boone, and Rye.

TIER II: Larger Geographic Reach or Impacts

Projects, studies, and plans with a wide geographic reach and potential significance are classified as Tier 2. Tier 2 includes but is not limited to:

- Adoption of the TIP, Major Amendments to the LRTP, and any air quality documents that may be required.
- Major projects, studies, plans, or amendments impacting much of the urban area or affecting minority or low-income populations significantly or in unusually high proportions.
- The Program of Projects (POP) documents prepared annually by Pueblo Transit.
- Fare changes and major transit service changes

Tier 2 minimum requirements:

All Tier 1 procedures and steps except as modified below

- 1. Additional public notice will be given via the following outlets:
 - Display ad run in a newspaper that serves minority communities
 - Notification shall be available for public at transit hubs and buses
- 2. An electronic notice will be sent to a list of interested parties, including representatives of neighborhood and community organizations, especially in minority and low-income communities, to provide timely information about public comment periods and meetings.
- 3. At least one public meeting should be held during the public review period, to present the document and solicit comments
 - Scheduling and location shall be accessible to the public (this includes a location near public transit, a time when transit is operating, as well as an accessible building and room for individuals with disabilities)
 - Special services shall be available upon five business days' advance notice, when
 practical, and subject to the availability of services and resources. These special
 services include translation for non-English speakers, materials for the visually
 impaired, and services for the deaf and hard of hearing, in accordance with City
 policies. The availability of these services should be mentioned in public notices.
 - The public hearing requirement for the POP may be satisfied at the TAC meeting where POP adoption is scheduled

- An additional 30 day opportunity for public comment will be provided on major amendments or adoption of a new LRTP or TIP if the final LRTP or TIP:
 - Differs
 significantly from
 the version that
 was made
 available for
 public comment
 by the MPO,
 and;
 - ii. Raises new material issues that interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts.

Transit Fare and Major Service Changes

Public Involvement is required prior to implementation of major fixed route transit service changes and any change in the fare structure fore area fixed route services.

The transit operator shall seek public input using Tier 2 guidelines. Comments are to be presented to the Transit Operator's board before a vote is taken to approve the changes.

After reviewing public comments and the analysis of the changes, the Board may authorize staff to implement the changes or may direct other action.

Additional information on this process can be found on the website, <u>Pueblo Transit | Pueblo, CO - Official Website</u>

Tier III: Very Broad and Long Range

Tier 3 is reserved for plans and programs with a wide significance and level of interest for residents and communities. This tier can include:

- Plans that are the first of their kind in the area
- Major and comprehensive updates to the Long-Range Transportation Plan

Visualizations in documents should include photos, graphics, or renderings to enhance understanding.

Tier 3 requirements include:

Requirements listed for Tier 1 and Tier 2

- 1. Use as broad and inclusive an electronic contact list as possible to ensure that as many people as possible receive information. Items that should be sent to this list include:
 - Progress/update newsletters to provide timely notice at project kick-off, at the beginning of public comment periods, and otherwise as appropriate;
 - Surveys elicit comments that might not otherwise be volunteered.
- 2. Spanish language public notices and advertisements should be submitted for posting to the leading Spanish-language newspaper
- 3. Social media and online outreach platform strategies, such as project specific websites, will be used to maximize the opportunity for the public to review and provide comments.
- 4. At least one public meeting shall be held. The meeting should be accessible to individuals with disabilities. Locations should be held in transit-accessible areas except where the geographic scope dictates meetings in areas not served by fixed route transit service.

Section 4: The Public Engagement Process and Performance Evaluation

To get the most out of public engagement, it is important that public participation be well thought out, planned in advance, and have the proper groundwork performed, before the engagement itself ever occurs. Public Engagement, when done well, has the capacity to enhance projects and plans, as well as strengthen the bonds of trust between government and the citizens it serves. If public engagement is mishandled, or performed poorly, then it can not only be unhelpful to both staff and the public, but it can also be outright harmful, leaving staff frustrated and directionless, and citizens confused and feeling like their time has been wasted. To avoid this negative outcome, this section aims to map out a guide for the public engagement process and evaluate the success and effectiveness of a project's public participation.

4.1 Pre-Engagement Process

4.1.1 Establish a Purpose

It is important to establish the "Why" when performing public engagement. Knowing what the project intends to gain from public engagement will shape the strategies used and success metrics examined at the end of the public engagement process.

4.1.2 Identify a public engagement strategy, or strategies

This is the "How" for public engagement. No two strategies serve the same purpose or have the same level of effectiveness. Strategies should be chosen and tailored for individual projects, avoiding a 'one size fits all' approach. Strategies will be a primary determinant in establishing success metrics. For a list of example strategies and recommended metrics, please see **appendix b**.

4.1.3 Determine target audience(s)

In order to maximize the effectiveness of outreach, it is important to tailor public engagement, wherever possible, to individual groups. Different audiences will require unique modes of engagement, methods of public noticing, and accommodations to engage them in the public participation process.

4.1.4 Establish qualitative and quantitative metrics to track over the course of engagement

Metrics should be determined based on sections 4.1.1, 4.1.2, and 4.1.3. Metrics should be measurable and observable.

4.1.5 Identify stakeholders, community partners, and a contact list

Stakeholders, community partners, and an early contact list can be utilized as vital pre-engagement voices through which the public engagement process can be refined and molded to fit the needs of the project and better address the desires of the target community. Update this list as is necessary.

4.1.6 Consistently and regularly reach out to community partners and organizations

During the pre-engagement stage, it is important to build up rapport with the stakeholders identified in 4.1.5. Bringing in community members to help build and guide the public engagement process will bolster a project's ability to attract community support and the attention of its target audiences.

4.1.7 Identify any materials or accommodations needed

Not all people respond the same way to provided materials, and many groups have limitations which may keep them from engaging in effective public participation. It is important to tailor the accommodations provided to the target audience, especially when performing a town-hall style of public engagement. Provided accommodation can range from the characteristics of the physical location, such as accessibility requirements or transit accessibility, to goods and services, such as providing food and beverages. For example, if the target audience is parents of young children, then consider partnering with a school or daycare to have a child play-section of the event so that parents are more easily able to bring their children.

4.1.8 Post public participation information.

Ensure information on public participation opportunities is publicly available and posted both digitally and physically. Materials must have multiple ways to reach their target audience, including posting information in regularly traveled community spaces, or relying on partners to help distribute and inform the public about public participation opportunities.

4.2 Evaluation Process

Upon completion of the public engagement process on a given project, staff should evaluate the process as a whole and strategies used, closely examining the metrics they've set and comparing the outcome of the engagement process to the initial goal. A short evaluative report on the public engagement process should be attached to the final project deliverable, making special note of successes and areas of potential improvement. If the evaluation highlights potentially significant changes to the Public Participation Plan, staff should notify the PACOG MPO. Upon notification, the MPO will review the evaluation and consider amending the PPP.

4.2.1 External Evaluation

To complete the external evaluation, the MPO and its partners may utilize surveys, whether verbal, written in person, or online, to evaluate interactions with the public. The survey may ask the following questions:

- How do you prefer to receive notice of public participation opportunities?
- How do you prefer to be engaged in the public participation process?
- How did you hear about this project?
- In what community do you live?
- In what community do you work?
- How do you usually get to work?

• Demographic data (Optional)

Staff should, whenever possible, follow up with individuals who provide public comment or during the planning process to close the feedback loop and allow the community to know how their comments and recommendations have been addressed.

Staff will also work with the TAC to gather feedback on the effectiveness of strategies implemented following the adoption of the *PPP* and solicit advice on how to better improve engagement processes.

Internal evaluations cannot be considered useful if they are not shared with the public. Staff will share evaluations of the public participation process in the following ways:

- In each plan as an introductory section or appendix;
- By request.

Section 5: How to Get Involved

The MPO provides many opportunities for the public to get involved in the regional transportation planning process. Every public meeting held by an official MPO board, committee, or subcommittee, will be posted on the MPO website: pacog.net. Past minutes and the schedule of meetings are available at the MPO's website. Prior to each meeting, a contact list of interested parties receives reminder notices, meeting agendas, and other material consistent with procedures. To join the interested parties list, please contact MPO staff at the following email address: pueblo-mpo@pueblo.us.

5.1 Board of Directors Meeting

PACOG Board of Directors meetings all provide a period allowing for public comment. Comments should focus on items that the board will take action on at that meeting, or on discussion items appearing on the agenda. Summaries of all verbal comments received at the meeting, and written comments, will be included in meeting minutes along with the name of the commenter. The agenda for upcoming meetings and the minutes of previous meetings are posted on: pacog.net

In certain circumstances, comments may be incorporated into plans, programs, or studies, either in total or in summary.

The PACOG Board of Directors meets once a month, except in November. Meeting information can be found at: pacog.net/pacogadmin

Meetings are held in person at the Pueblo County Department of Emergency Management (101 West 10th Street, Pueblo, CO 81003) first floor conference room. All meetings have a virtual option, with the zoom link attached to the top of meeting agendas.

5.2 Transportation Advisory Commission

The Transportation Advisory Commission (TAC) serves to advise the MPO on the planning process and send forward resolutions and amendments to the PACOG Board. It's made up of two primary bodies:

- Transportation Technical Committee, which is made up of subject matter experts, such as staff, and helps keep the regions planning process **informed**
- Citizens Advisory Committee, which provides citizen-level perspective to keep the planning process inclusive and equitable.

For more information on the TAC and its makeup, more information can be found at: pacog.net/tac

The TAC meets once a month, before the PACOG meeting, having both virtual and in-person options for attendance. The TAC meeting location, agenda, and previous meetings minutes can all be found at: pacog.net.

If someone would like to serve on the TAC as a full member, the Citizens Advisory Committee has one spot open to a citizen at-large. Applications for this position open every three years, or as necessary, and will be publicly noticed. For more information, please read the TAC Bylaws at: pacog.net/tac

Appendix A: MPO Planning Matrix

Plan	Adoption	Public Comment Period (Amendment)	Draft Development	Public Notice	Website	Newsletters & Flyers	Emails	Media Releases	Surveys	Booth Events & Other Pop- Up Events	Public Meetings & Public Open Houses	Presentations to City Council and Board of County Commissioners	Presentation in Regular Committee Meetings and PACOG Meetings	Informational Postings on Buses and transit Facilities
LRTP	Every 5 years during a regularly scheduled PACOG meeting	30 days	 Consult directly interested parties Summarize public comments and how comments were addressed in final draft 	Yes	Yes	Optional	Yes	Optional	Yes	Optional	Yes	Yes	Yes	Optional
TIP	Every 1-2 years during a regularly scheduled PACOG meeting	30 days (15 days)	 Developed by PACOG staff; with input from interested state and local parties, Environmental, and cultural/historic agencies Summarize public comments and how comments were addressed in final draft 	Yes	Yes		Yes						Yes	
UPWP	Every 2 years during a regularly scheduled PACOG meeting	30 days (15 days)	Developed by PACOG staff; with input from interested state and local parties	Yes	Yes		Yes						Yes	
PPP	Adopted as needed during a regularly scheduled PACOG meeting	45 days (30 days)	 Developed by PACOG staff; with input from interested state and local parties Summarize public comments and how the comments were addressed, and include summary in the final draft 	Yes	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	
ВРМР	Adopted as needed during a regularly scheduled PACOG meeting	45 days (30 days)	 Developed by PACOG staff; with input from interested state and local parties Summarize public comments and how the comments were addressed, and include summary in the final draft 	Yes	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	Optional	Yes	Optional

Appendix B: Engagement Strategy Metrics

Strategy	<u>Metrics</u>
Website	 Visits Common searches Number of document downloads Most visited pages
Social Media	 Number of annual site visits Number of new followers Comments received by users Analytics, including Facebook likes and shares, retweets, success of Facebook promotion, blog comments, Instagram likes, etc.
Newsletters	 Number of subscribers Number of new subscribers Number of subscribers opening newsletter Number of link clicks
Outreach Events	 Total number of interactions Major themes and discussion topics Quantity of promotional giveaways Quantity of informational giveaways Use of amenities provided
Partnerships	Annual number of partnered events
Public comment periods	Number of comments receivedSubstance of comments received
Meetings	 Attendance Comments made at and after meetings Staff discussions after meetings
Surveys	 Number of responses filled out in each language Number of requests to forward survey Total number received
Title VI and ADA	 Number of requests for alternate formats Number of participants in meetings Number of requests for translations

RESOLUTION NO. 25-0/8

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN (PPP) FOR THE PUEBLO METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO) AND PUEBLO TRANSPORTATION PLANNING REGION WHICH INCLUDEDS PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCEDURES FOR THE LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (LRTP), TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP), AND UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM (UPWP); AND DIRECTING THE URBAN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING DIVISION TO IMPLEMENT THOSE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES

WHEREAS, the Pueblo Area Council of Governments is responsible for regional transportation planning within the Pueblo urbanized area as well as within Pueblo County boundaries; and

WHEREAS, public input is critical to the transportation planning process including the Long-Range transportation Plan, the Transportation Improvement Program and the Unified Planning Work Program and is required by federal regulations and state guidelines; and

WHEREAS, the Public Participation Plan defines PACOG's public involvement policies, tools and evaluation measures for determining the effectiveness of the program; and

WHEREAS, the Public Participation Plan has been reviewed and unanimously recommended for approval by the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC).

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE PUEBLO AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS THAT:

SECTION 1:

The Pueblo Area Council of Governments hereby approves and adopts the Public Participation Plan

SECTION 2:

The Pueblo Area Council of Governments hereby directs the Urban Transportation Planning Division to implement the Public Participation Plan, as adopted.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 24th day of July , 2025 by the PACOG Board.

APPROVED:

Chairperson, Pueblo Area Council of Governments

ATTEST:

PACOG Recording Secretary