



# PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

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DRAFT



NAUGATUCK VALLEY  
COUNCIL of GOVERNMENTS

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# Information

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(203) 757-0535

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Follow NVCOGCT on all platforms: Instagram, Facebook, X, LinkedIn, and YouTube.

## Title VI Notice

The Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments (NVCOG) is committed to providing non-discriminatory service to ensure that no person is excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of, or subjected to discrimination in the receipt of services on the basis of race, color or national origin as protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ("Title VI"). To request more information about Title VI, submit a written complaint if you believe that you have been subjected to discrimination, or are in need any language assistance you may contact: the Civil Rights Officer by email at [info@nvcogct.gov](mailto:info@nvcogct.gov) or by phone at (203) 757-0535.

**EN** Translations available by request.

**ES** Traducciones disponibles bajo petición.

**IT** Traduzioni disponibili su richiesta.

**PL** Tłumaczenia dostępne na zamówienie.

**PT** Traduções disponíveis mediante solicitação.

**SQ** Përkthime në dispozicion me kërkesë.

**ZH** 可根据要求提供

# NVCOG Board

## Council of Governments

### Executive Committee & Board Members



**Naugatuck**  
Mayor N. Warren  
"Pete" Hess  
*Chair*



**Shelton**  
Mayor  
Mark Laretti  
*Vice Chair*



**Bristol**  
Mayor Jeff Caggiano  
*Treasurer*



**Thomaston**  
Mayor  
Ed Mone  
*Secretary*



**Ansonia**  
Mayor  
David Cassetti



**Middlebury**  
First Selectman  
Edward St. John



**Oxford**  
First Selectman  
George Temple



**Waterbury**  
Mayor  
Paul Pernerewski



**Wolcott**  
Mayor Tom Dunn



**Beacon Falls**  
First Selectman  
Gerard Smith



**Bethlehem**  
First Selectman  
Stephen Sordi



**Cheshire**  
Town Manager  
Sean M. Kimball



**Derby**  
Mayor Joseph  
DiMartino



**Plymouth**  
Mayor  
Joseph Kilduff



**Prospect**  
Mayor  
Robert Chatfield



**Seymour**  
First Selectwoman  
Annmarie Drugonis



**Southbury**  
First Selectman  
Jeffrey Manville



**Watertown**  
Town Manager  
Mark A. Raimo



**Woodbury**  
First Selectwoman  
Barbara Perkinson

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# ACRONYMS

**ADA:** Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

**CEOs:** Chief Elected Officials

**CFR:** Code of Federal Regulations

**CNVMPO:** Central Naugatuck Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization

**EJ:** Environmental Justice

**FHWA:** Federal Highway Administration

**FTA:** Federal Transit Administration

**GBVMPO:** Greater Bridgeport and Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization

**LEP:** Limited English Proficiency

**MAP:** Metropolitan Area Planning as in 'MAP' Forum

**MPO:** Metropolitan Planning Organization

**NVCOG:** Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments

**PAC:** Project Advisory Committee

**PPP:** Public Participation Plan

**TIP:** Transportation Improvement Plan

**TTAC:** Transportation Technical Advisory Committee

**UPWP:** Unified Planning Work Program

**UZA:** Urbanized Area

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

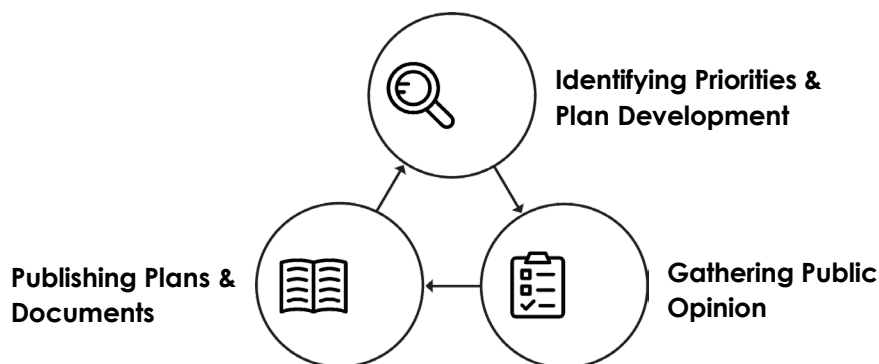
The Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments (NVCOG) prioritizes meaningful public engagement in regional planning and project development. The Public Participation Plan (PPP) outlines strategies to ensure transparency, accessibility, and inclusion throughout the decision-making process.

Key approaches include:

- **Public Hearings:** Formal sessions for major projects to share information and collect feedback.
- **Public Notices:** Advance announcements with details on meetings, translation services, and comment opportunities.
- **Meetings (In-Person, Hybrid, Virtual):** Flexible formats to maximize accessibility and participation.
- **Press Releases:** Targeted outreach to raise awareness of projects and opportunities.
- **Feedback Channels:** Options for submitting comments verbally, in written form, via email, or through comments on social media and online platforms, such as Ecointeractive.

These strategies create opportunities for all voices to be heard and incorporated into plans, aligning with federal, state, and local requirements.

This document will detail the procedures for public participation and engagement, including guidance on outreach to the public and set standards for both NVCOG staff and actively involved members of the community. Public outreach is modeled as a continuous feedback loop, wherein the public is engaged at each step of planning and each public engagement opportunity informs the next step of decision-making. Through this feedback loop, the NVCOG hopes to foster a collaborative planning relationship with residents and workers in the region.



# INTRODUCTION

The Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments (NVCOG) is a regional Council of Governments (COG) comprising nineteen (19) municipalities in west-central Connecticut. The NVCOG is also a host agency for the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Waterbury Urbani Area (UZA) and is a partner in the Greater Bridgeport and Valley MPO. The NVCOG works closely with other federal, state, and local agencies to facilitate cooperation among its member municipalities regarding transportation, environmental, economic, and development policies and issues.

The NVCOG's roles as a COG and MPO host agency come with the responsibility of ensuring the public has meaningful opportunities to participate at various stages in the planning and policy decision-making process. Meaningful public input helps ensure that projects and funds are equitably allocated. The NVCOG is fully committed to engaging residents and stakeholders in all stages of the planning process to learn the public's transportation and development wants and needs.



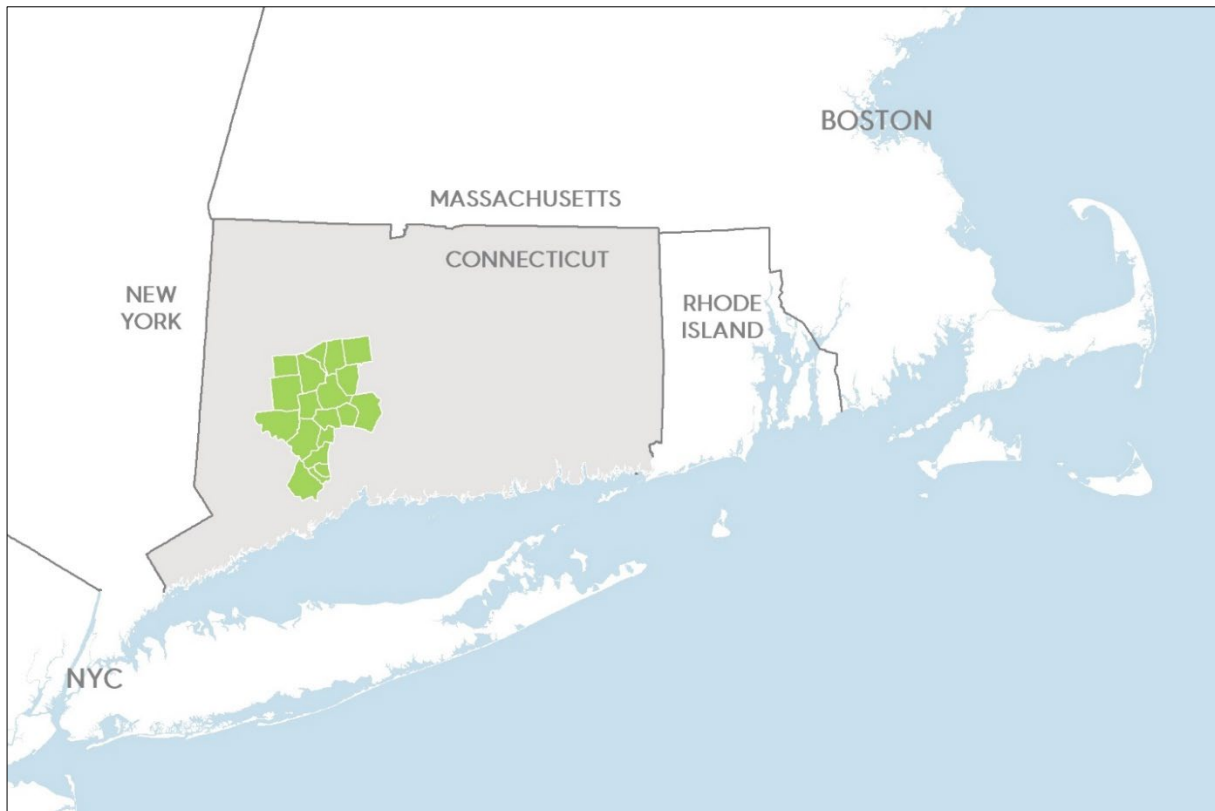
*Aerial image above the Derby-Shelton Bridge, 2023*

# Council of Governments

The NVCOG’s role as a Council of Governments (or Council) is defined in Connecticut General Statutes Chapter 50 § 4-124i through § 4-124u. The NVCOG’s decision-making body is its Council of the Chief Elected Officials (CEOs) of each municipality, or member, in the planning region. Decision-making structures for the Council are defined in the organization bylaws. The Council oversees matters of regional planning and municipal services cooperation, including transportation priorities of neighboring MPO regions.

## Members Municipalities

Ansonia	Derby	Prospect	Waterbury
Beacon Falls	Middlebury	Seymour	Watertown
Bethlehem	Naugatuck	Shelton	Wolcott
Bristol	Oxford	Southbury	Woodbury
Cheshire	Plymouth	Thomaston	



Map 1: Naugatuck Valley Planning Region



## Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)

The NVCOG serves as the host agency of the Central Naugatuck Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (CNVMPO) and cooperates with the Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments as the co-host of the Greater Bridgeport and Valley MPO (GBVMPO). As authorized by 23 CFR 450, MPOs exist for all metropolitan areas with a population of 50,000 or greater and are responsible for long-range transportation planning as well as the programming of federal transportation funds.

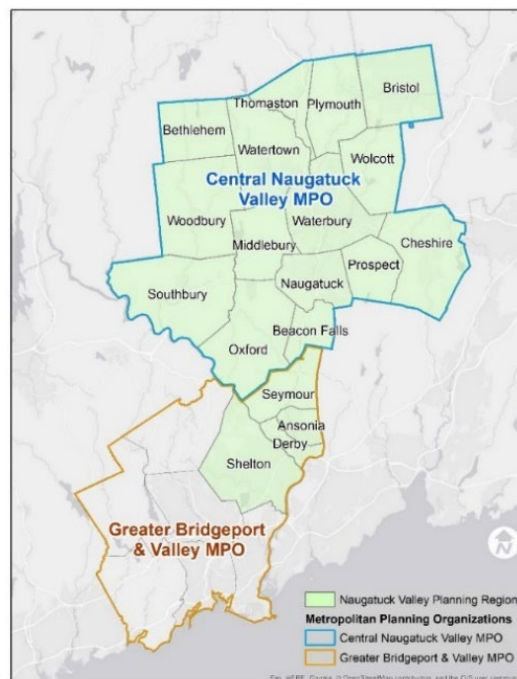
The NVCOG solely hosts the CNVMPO, and as such all CNVMPO activities must conform to this public participation policy. The communities of Ansonia, Derby, Seymour, and Shelton within the NVCOG region belong to the GBVMPO. The NVCOG activities that incorporate these four municipalities must still conform to this public participation policy, but MPO-related activities in these four municipalities must conform to both the [GBVMPO Public Participation Plan](#) and this policy, using the more stringent requirement in the case of conflicts.

### CNVMPO Members

Beacon Falls	Naugatuck	Thomaston
Bethlehem	Oxford	Waterbury
Bristol	Plymouth	Watertown
Cheshire	Prospect	Wolcott
Middlebury	Southbury	Woodbury

### GBVMPO Members

Ansonia
Derby
Seymour
Shelton



Map 2: CNVMPO and GBVMPO

# PURPOSE OF PLAN

The purpose of the NVCOG Public Participation Plan is to establish a transparent, inclusive, and consistent process for engaging the public in regional planning decisions. The plan outlines the tools and techniques the NVCOG uses to disseminate information, collect public input, and foster two-way communication. Through this plan, the NVCOG aims to build trust, improve public understanding of regional planning initiatives, and incorporate diverse perspectives into decision-making. It provides strategies for proactive engagement, particularly with underserved and vulnerable populations, ensuring that their voices are considered in shaping transportation projects, policies, and programs.

Key features of the Public Participation Plan Include:

## 1. **Increased Accessibility:**

Public information meetings, events, and outreach sessions are conveniently located and accessible to all individuals, including those with disabilities and limited mobility. Accommodations such as virtual meetings and translation services will be provided to ensure broader public participation.

## 2. **Inclusive Outreach:**

Staff will prioritize reaching communities that have historically been underrepresented in decision-making processes. NVCOG will collaborate with local organizations, community leaders, and non-profits to conduct targeted outreach through the use of public information meetings, bilingual resources, and virtual events.

## 3. **Expanded Communication Channels:**

The NVCOG recognizes the importance of reaching a broader audience, utilizing various communication channels such as social media, digital and print advertising, public notices, and press releases.

The Plan is guided by federal laws, regulations, and Executive Orders that govern public involvement procedures for MPOs including:

- Highway Code of Federal Regulations (23 CFR 450.316)
- Code of Federal Regulations Title 40
- Code of Federal Regulations Title 49
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Environmental Justice (EJ) Executive Order 12898
- Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Executive Order 13116

# REQUIRED PLANNING PRODUCTS

The NVCOG produces several key planning products used to guide the development, maintenance, and operation of programs, and funding of transportation projects in the region. Public input is crucial to each of these products.

The **Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)** is a federally required, long-range vision updated every four years by the CNVMPO and the GBVMPO. It includes a minimum 20-year fiscally constrained list of transportation projects, which is used in statewide modeling to predict traffic volumes and patterns, as well as to ensure compliance with federal air quality regulations. To learn more, visit <https://nvcogct.gov/mtp>.

The **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)** is a four-year federally mandated plan for funding and implementation of transportation projects, ensuring alignment with state and regional priorities. MPO board approval is required before any federal funds are used. To learn more, visit <https://nvcogct.gov/tip>.

Both the MTP and TIP call for engagement with the public, especially when addressing the needs of underserved communities and incorporating feedback into decision-making processes by providing additional chances for input on major revisions. All comments received are summarized in the final documents.

As both MPOs lie in an air quality non-attainment area for both Particulate Matter 2.5 (2006) and for Ozone (2008), the NVCOG must also include public outreach on the designation of air-quality conformity for transportation plans and TIPs.

The **Regional Plan of Conservation and Development (RPOCD)** serves as a guiding document for the long-term growth and sustainability of the region. As required by Connecticut General Statutes Chapter 127 § 8-35a, the NVCOG is responsible for developing and maintaining this plan, which establishes policies for regional development, land use, transportation, and conservation. Public participation is required throughout the development process to ensure responsiveness to community needs. To learn more, visit <https://nvcogct.gov/nvrpocd>.

Plans and documents published by the NVCOG range in scope, from minor revisions of policy to sweeping master plans that will guide investment and policy for years to come. The NVCOG has developed a tiered process for public engagement to address this range. The following tiers are to be used when designing public engagement processes:

## Major Projects

This tier is made up of broad, far-reaching documents with major impacts on policy and programming over several years. Many of these documents have specific public participation requirements. Because of the importance of this tier, several required products are called out specifically. This tier also includes large highway and transit projects under design or construction overseen by the agency.

## Minor Projects

This tier is made up of minor publications or studies, not required by statute, completed under Tasks 2 & 3 of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP, the program of all MPO activities to be performed by NVCOG staff during the Program's 2-year term), and interval updates to broad policy documents that do not substantially change the policy therein.

## Regular Business

This tier is for regular meetings and announcements and minor plan or policy updates. This tier may also be an avenue for communicating pertinent local, regional, or national news of awards or grant opportunities.

# Requirements and Actions

## Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)

Public Hearings	Informational Meetings	Public Notice	Comment Period
2	As needed	Legal Notice, Calendar, Mailing List, Copies to Municipalities, Press Release, Social Media, Web Page	45 days

## Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Public Hearings	Informational Meetings	Public Notice	Comment Period
1	As needed	Legal Notice, Calendar, Mailing List, Copies to Municipalities, Press Release, Social Media, Web Page	45 days

## Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Public Hearings	Informational Meetings	Public Notice	Comment Period
1	As needed	Calendar, Mailing List, Press Release, Social Media	30 days

## Regional Plan of Conservation & Development (RPOCD)

Public Hearings	Informational Meetings	Public Notice	Comment Period
2	As needed	Legal Notice, Calendar, Mailing List, Copies to Municipalities, Press Release, Social Media, Web Page	65 days

## Other Major Projects

Public Hearings	Informational Meetings	Public Notice	Comment Period
1	As needed	Legal Notice, Calendar, Mailing List, Press Release, Social Media, Web Page	45 days

## Minor Projects

Public Hearings	Informational Meetings	Public Notice	Comment Period
0	1+	Legal Notice, Calendar, Newsletter Item, Social Media	30 days if applicable

## Regular Business

Public Hearings	Informational Meetings	Public Notice	Comment Period
0	0+	Calendar, Newsletter Item, Social Media	30 days if applicable

# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

The NVCOG is committed to meaningful and frequent public engagement in regional planning processes. Below are strategies to foster public involvement.

## Public Hearings

Public hearings are required for major projects and adhere to the following standards:

- Held at accessible locations and convenient times.
- Public notice of meetings, at least two weeks in advance:
  - Legal notices in widely circulated newspapers.
  - Mailing lists, targeted emails, and NVCOG's website.
- Include contact person, phone number, and email information.
- Notice of interpretation, translation and signing services available by request.
- Meetings are video recorded, with minutes and comments archived (including names and agencies, if relevant).

Hearings include information on:

- Project purpose, need, and alignment with regional planning goals.
- Design features and alternatives.
- Social, economic, environmental, and other impacts.
- Relocation assistance programs and the right-of-way acquisition processes, if necessary.
- Procedures for verbal and written comments from the public.

Major projects must comply with additional public hearing regulations from funding authorities such as FHWA or FTA.

## Public Notices

Public notices are official announcements required by federal regulation to inform the public about meetings, plans, and opportunities for public involvement.

- Notices are posted 2 weeks in advance on the NVCOG website and shared with relevant stakeholders.
- Each notice includes a language assistance statement, informing the public how to request translation services at least five days before a public information meeting.

## Public Information Meetings

Public information meetings are held throughout the year to present information, solicit feedback, and address questions and comments.

- Scheduled at accessible locations and convenient times to maximize participation, with special consideration for disadvantaged populations.
- Meeting details are posted at least 2 weeks in advance on the NVCOG website.
- Formats are flexible, tailored to the project and/or audience.

Early and recurring public information meetings during the planning process help identify potential impacts on vulnerable populations, the environment, and other groups, enabling necessary adjustments to plans.

## Virtual Meetings

On April 28, 2022, Governor Ned Lamont signed Public Act No. 22-3, which permanently established the requirements for wholly or partially virtual public information meetings in Connecticut. The NVCOG conducts virtual meetings using Zoom, a video conferencing technology. Access to meeting details, including direct links, meeting IDs, passcodes, and dial-in instructions are posted on the NVCOG website, social media, flyers, press releases, and targeted emails.

## Hybrid Meetings

Hybrid meetings combine in-person and online participation, offering flexibility for individuals who face barriers to attending in person. For full details, view Appendix A.

## Public Comments during Public Information Meetings

The NVCOG encourages public participation in all meetings, whether in-person, virtual or hybrid. Staff document and review all comments received during public information meetings and consider them for inclusion in final plans, policies, or documents. Participants can also provide feedback before or after meetings.

### Written Comments

- The public may submit written comments to the voting members by the close of business on the day before each meeting.
  - Email [info@nvcogct.gov](mailto:info@nvcogct.gov)
  - Mail:  
Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments  
49 Leavenworth Street, 3rd Floor  
Waterbury, CT 06702

### Verbal Comments

- Verbal comments are shared during the designated public comment time.
- Include a name, address, and optional professional affiliation when speaking.

## During Virtual Meetings

- Participants can use the “hand-raising” feature or chat function to indicate their intent to speak.
- Comments shared during virtual meetings will be recorded and addressed by staff.

## Project-Specific Comments

Comments on any project may be submitted at any time, via email: [info@nvcogct.gov](mailto:info@nvcogct.gov).

## Press Releases

Press releases are public relations tools aimed at broader communication, informing the public and media about major projects, grant awards, or public involvement opportunities. Press releases are not mandatory but are strategic tools to enhance public awareness and engagement. Press releases are distributed to media outlets at least 2 weeks in advance and sent to local and regional newspapers, radio stations, television networks, online media outlets, member municipalities, and other relevant stakeholders. Translations of press releases are available for Limited-English Proficiency (LEP) communities and determined on a per project basis.

## Email Lists

The NVCOG oversees a general email list using MailChimp, an internet-based emailing service. Members of the public can subscribe to receive regular email updates at [bit.ly/NVCOG-Subscribe](https://bit.ly/NVCOG-Subscribe) and unsubscribe at any time. All email campaigns include links to subscribe or unsubscribe in the footer.

The Agency Newsletter is published quarterly and highlights upcoming public information meetings, key events, and recently published plans or documents. NVCOG staff actively monitor participation levels (e.g., subscription counts, email engagement metrics) and create topic-specific lists for targeted mailings to enhance outreach efforts as needed.

## Website

The NVCOG website ([www.nvcogct.gov](http://www.nvcogct.gov)) serves as the primary repository for all policy and planning products, including an archive of past publications and materials. The homepage features an organization calendar of events and a news section. The organization calendar is regularly updated to include all publicly accessible meetings, including those of the NVCOG Board, MPOs, TTAC, and any project advisory committees. Updates to the calendar align with the NVCOG’s public notice guidelines for all public information meetings. The news section highlights draft and final publications, special events, achievements, and other relevant updates.

In addition, transportation planning projects, studies, and plans have dedicated project pages, which are frequently updated to reflect the latest developments. These project pages allow the



public to track progress, access relevant materials, and stay informed about ongoing public participation opportunities. View current transportation projects at <https://nvcogct.gov/current-projects-tp>. Completed projects are archived on the website, ensuring access to information and resources for reference.

## Social Media

Social media platforms are key tools to promote transparency, foster public engagement, and encourage participation from diverse audiences. The NVCOG uses platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, and YouTube. Social media enables the NVCOG to announce public information meetings, workshops, and public comment periods, while also providing opportunities for input through surveys and interactive content. Public interaction is encouraged through responses to comments and questions, and feedback gathered on these platforms informs the planning process.

The NVCOG's YouTube Channel plays a key role in live-streaming public information meetings and events, enabling real-time participation for those unable to attend in person. Recordings of meetings are also made available for continued access.

The NVCOG reserves the right to delete comments which threaten the safety of individuals or groups, are personal attacks, disclose personal information, or are otherwise inappropriate. Regular evaluation of engagement metrics on platforms helps refine social media strategies to effectively reach and engage the region.

## Visualizations

The NVCOG employs various visualization techniques to enhance public understanding and engagement in the transportation planning process. These tools help facilitate collaborative feedback, allowing participants to engage directly with planners and proposed plans.

NVCOG utilizes tools such as:

- **ArcGIS Online** to create interactive applications, web-based surveys, inventories, and maps.
- **NVCOG EcoInteractive** website to provide the public with access to the TIP and the Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LOTICIP), view project information, status updates, and provide public comments.
- **Flyers** to convey essential project information in a concise, accessible format.
- **Printed and digital poster boards** to visually illustrate concepts and facilitate interactive charrette activities.

# BOARDS & COMMITTEES

The NVCOG holds public information meetings for its boards and committees, creating regular opportunities for public participation and providing insight into the NVCOG's planning process. These meetings are open to the public and encourage participation from all, including but not limited to residents, planners, engineers, municipal staff, business leaders, state and federal representatives and media representatives.

## NVCOG Board and CNVMPO Meetings

### Meeting Details

- **Frequency:** Monthly.
- **Locations:**
  - **In-Person:** NVCOG Conference Room, 49 Leavenworth Street, 3rd Floor, Waterbury, CT.
    - ADA accessible, with an elevator available.
    - Seating provided for public attendees to address the board during designated comment periods.
  - **Hybrid/Virtual:**
    - Public speakers must submit a comment form by 4:30 PM the day before the meeting.
    - Instructions to join the meeting are shared upon form submission.

### Access to Agendas and Minutes

- **Agendas:**
  - Posted at least 7 days before each meeting on NVCOG's website calendar.
  - Include agenda topics, public comment form, and meeting access details.
- **Minutes and Recordings:**
  - Available within 7 days on the NVCOG website and YouTube channel.
  - Hybrid meeting livestreams are hosted at [youtube.com/@nvcogct/streams](https://youtube.com/@nvcogct/streams).
  - Post-meeting, access information is voided to maintain security.

### How to Submit Comments

- **Written Comments:**
  - Submit via email ([info@nvcogct.gov](mailto:info@nvcogct.gov)) or mail to:  
Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments  
49 Leavenworth Street, 3rd Floor, Waterbury, CT 06702.
    - **Deadline:** At least 2 hours before the meeting.
      - Include:

- Name
  - Address
  - (Optional) Professional affiliation
- Written comments will be shared publicly and presented during the meeting.
- **Verbal Comments:**
  - Complete a [public comment form](#) (available in the agenda).
    - Deadline: By 4:30 PM the day before the meeting.
    - Comments will be heard during the designated public comment portion of the meeting.

### Key Requirements

- Comments must include the commenter’s name, address, and optional professional affiliation.
- Comments are limited to 2 minutes unless the Chairman grants an extension.

### Guidelines

- Review Procedures and Guidelines for Public Participation in Meetings in Appendix A before submitting the form.

### Actions by the NVCOG Board

During meetings, the NVCOG Board may take the following formal actions:

- **Adopt:** Formally accept the goals of a document or policy.
- **Endorse:** Acknowledge the facts and analysis provided by NVCOG staff without indicating approval or disapproval.

## Transportation Technical Advisory Committee

The Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC) consists of representatives from member municipalities with expertise in transportation projects, appointed by municipal chief elected officials. The committee includes public works officials, city/town engineers, public safety officers and the municipality’s legal traffic authority (LTA). The committee reviews and recommends adoption of federally required plans, including the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), and Air Quality Determination.

TTAC meetings are held bi-monthly and are open to the public. Each meeting provides an opportunity for public comment both in-person and virtually during a designated time.

- Meeting schedules, agendas, and materials are published in advance on the NVCOG calendar.

- Meeting minutes and recordings are published within seven days and can be accessed via the NVCOG calendar and YouTube Channel.

For more details, visit [nvcogct.gov/ttac](https://nvcogct.gov/ttac).

## Project Advisory Committees

A Project Advisory Committee (PAC) serves as a key advisory group providing input, oversight, and guidance throughout the implementation of activities and plans. The committee typically consists of a diverse range of stakeholders who bring valuable perspectives to ensure the project's outcomes are equitable, well-informed, and aligned with community needs.

PAC typically includes representatives from local government agencies, advocacy groups, community organizations, residents directly impacted by the project, business leaders, and subject-matter experts. The committee meets regularly during the project's timeline, often at key milestones, to provide timely input and ensure alignment with the project goals.

At any given time, the NVCOG may host several PACs for various ongoing projects. For those interested in participating, opportunities for engagement will be posted on the NVCOG website, visit <https://nvcogct.gov/>. Specific updates and resources can be found on the website project page associated with each PAC.

## Metropolitan Area Planning (MAP) Forum

The NVCOG is a member MPO of the Metropolitan Area Planning (MAP) Forum, which is a consortium of 10 MPOs and COGs in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Pennsylvania. MAP Forum members have entered into an agreement to better coordinate and collaborate on transportation planning activities in the multi-state metropolitan area. Public information meetings of the MAP Forum and its working groups (currently freight and resiliency, as well as participation in the MMN) are open and accessible to the public. These meetings are hosted on a rotating basis by the member agencies of the MAP Forum for both in-person participation as well as virtual access. Information about these meetings is posted on the NVCOG website two weeks prior to the meeting date and distributed to relevant contact lists.

# EQUITY IN PLANNING

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits exclusion from participation in, denial of the benefits of, and discrimination under federally assisted programs on the grounds of race, color, or national origin. The NVCOG is committed to ensuring that all programs and projects comply with Title VI, regardless of federal or state funding sources.

## Limited English Proficiency and Language Access Program

The NVCOG strives to provide meaningful access to planning activities for populations with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Translations, interpretation, and signing services are provided upon request at no cost. Meeting agendas for the Board and Committee meetings include a notice that translation services are available with five days' notice.

The NVCOG website provides a web-based translation tool, allowing users to translate the website content into multiple languages. Requests for translation services can be made through any communication channel (phone, email, social media, etc.), and will be documented and evaluated to identify future language assistance needs. Translations of public notices and press releases are available for LEP communities upon request.

For language assistance, contact Desira Blanchard, Communications and Community Engagement Coordinator with the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments, at [info@nvcogct.gov](mailto:info@nvcogct.gov) or at 203-757-0535.

All future major projects should be translated into Spanish. The NVCOG shall translate draft plans during a public comment period upon request.

If demand for translation services is consistent, the NVCOG will explore additional solutions to ensure needs are met. Staff will also continuously monitor and update its LEP Plan, including:

- Annual review of the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) data.
- Tracking translation requests via the website and public information meetings.
- Ongoing review of Google Translate usage on the NVCOG website.

For more details, please refer to the LEP Plan which is outlined in the Title VI Plan.

## Americans with Disabilities

The NVCOG is committed to ensuring that all residents, regardless of age or ability, have access to public involvement opportunities. Meetings are held at ADA-accessible locations served by public transit, and virtual meetings are offered to reduce barriers related to transportation access or mobility.

The NVCOG website includes the AccessiBe Website Accessibility Widget, which supports users with disabilities by offering features such as text-to-speech, screen reader compatibility, and customizable display options (e.g. text resizing, color contrast adjustments). Regular monthly accessibility audits are provided by AccessiBe and shared with relevant NVCOG staff to ensure compliance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1).

The NVCOG will continue to evaluate the accessibility of all public-facing materials both in-person and online, to ensure compliance and improve access as needed.

## How to File Complaints

The NVCOG is responsible for addressing complaints from the public regarding regional policies, planning decisions, ongoing projects, and other related topics. It is essential to track and respond to complaints in a timely and systemic manner. Certain types of complaints, such as those related to potential discrimination on the basis of national origin, including the inability to speak or understand English, must be handled in accordance with specific legal requirements outlined by statute.

To ensure compliance and that all complaints are properly addressed, the following procedures should be followed:

1. **Complaint Documentation:** All complaints received by NVCOG staff must be documented, including the date and time of receipt, and recorded in a designated spreadsheet on NVCOG's internal servers.
2. **Complaint Referral:** Complaints should be promptly forwarded to the appropriate staff member, including the designated Civil Rights Officer, to ensure proper handling.
3. **Response Timeline:** The NVCOG will respond to all complaints within 10 business days.

If a complaint concerns planning activities outside the NVCOG jurisdiction, the complainant should be informed of a more applicable outlet for the complaint. When appropriate, NVCOG staff should also forward complaints to other regional and local agencies. For specific processes related to filing complaints, please see the relevant program policies on the NVCOG website (<https://nvcoact.gov/civil-rights/>).

The NVCOG shall document the complaint resolution process and make the outcomes of complaints available to the public.

## Reaching Out to Communities

Engaging stakeholders is a critical component of the NVCOG's transportation planning process, ensuring compliance with federal regulations under 23 CFR 450.316. Stakeholders are involved in key stages, including the development of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), and Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

The NVCOG actively collaborates with a diverse array of stakeholders, including but not limited to:

- Members of the public
- Elected Officials
- Local, state and federal government agencies
- Private transportation providers
- Public transit operators
- Non-motorized transportation advocates
- Business owners
- Property owners
- Advocacy groups
- Freight stakeholders
- Environmental organizations
- Community Organizations
- Health and human services
- Educational institutions
- Traditionally underserved populations, such as low-income and minority communities, seniors, individuals with disabilities, LEP individuals

NVCOG staff maintain and update an excel list of stakeholders as necessary to ensure that outreach occurs at key locations that are easily accessible to underserved populations.

## Pop-Up Events with Partner Organizations

Pop-up events take place during regularly scheduled or special meetings of partner organizations, which broadens outreach, leverages established networks, and minimizes scheduling conflicts for participants. This approach fosters trust, increases engagement, and allows discussions to occur in familiar settings. Pop-up events may contain NVCOG-related materials and interactive activities such as surveys or informational flyers.

## Underserved Communities

The NVCOG has found that working with local partner organizations that support low-income populations and advocate for minority communities is an effective way to engage these groups. By building strong relationships with established partners, staff can share project information with target audiences. The NVCOG has also identified the locations of older adults (65+) within the region and takes steps to ensure that public meetings and documents are accessible. Outreach efforts include hosting public information meetings and distributing informational materials at convenient locations such as community centers and municipal offices.

# PUBLISHING PLANS & DOCUMENTS

Before the final publication of a program or plan, the NVCOG opens a public comment period to give stakeholders a chance to provide feedback. This ensures that everyone, including those who are unable to attend public information meetings, can participate in the planning process.

Public comment periods are announced through:

- Publishing legal notices in relevant newspapers
- Posting news items on the NVCOG website
- Sharing updates on NVCOG's social media platforms
- Sending targeted email campaigns to specific groups and the NVCOG mailing list

Public notices will include information about scheduled public hearings/meetings, staff contact details, and instructions for accessing draft documents.

The NVCOG provides draft documents:

- On the NVCOG website
- By request via mail
- In-person at the NVCOG office
- At municipal city or town halls for major projects

## Public Records Policy

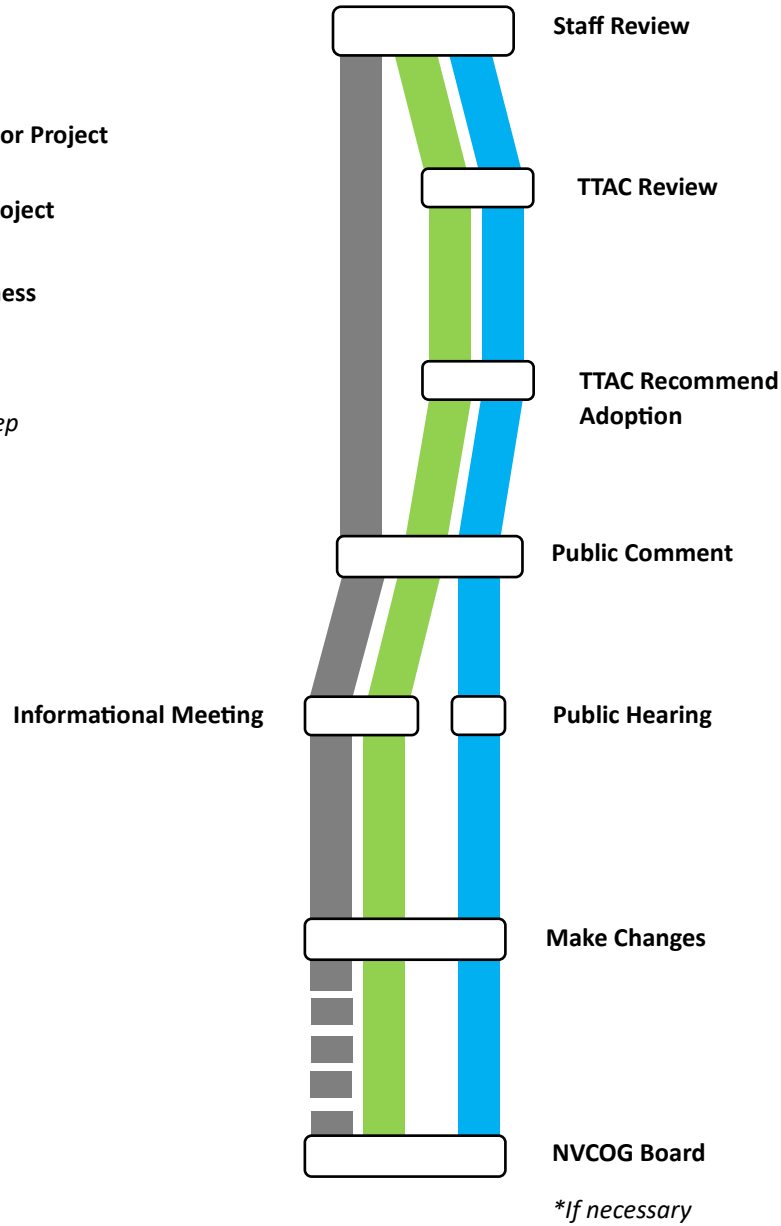
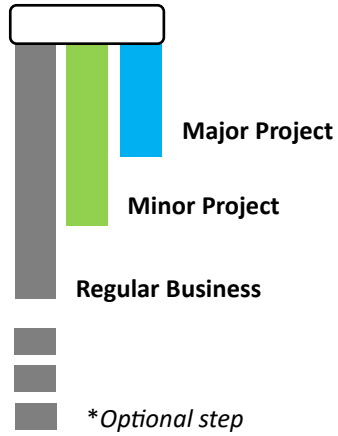
The NVCOG complies with all applicable federal and state "Freedom of Information Laws." Physical and electronic copies of all governing bylaws, policies, agreements, agendas, minutes, referrals, resolutions, grant applications, contracts, budgets, audit reports, and other relevant documents shall be made available to the public by request or are available for review at the NVCOG office during regular business hours. Many documents are also accessible on the NVCOG website. The NVCOG maintains internal audits and financial records, which are available to the CTDOT Office of Contract Compliance or other appropriate parties upon request.



# Standard Publication Procedure

The following flowchart shows the proper flow of final document publications for all NVCOG documents.

## Legend



# POLICY REVISIONS & MONITORING

Revisions to this plan should follow the procedure for minor projects, except that the public comment period shall be forty-five (45) days. Because this document governs all other public participation requirements it is helpful to give additional time to the public and to staff to provide and incorporate meaningful comments.

Minor technical edits to this policy (e.g., changes in software) do not require a public engagement process.



*NVCOG Board and CNVMPO Meeting, June 2024*

# Appendix

## The following documents are appended:

- Procedures and Guidelines for Public Participation in Meetings.



# Procedures and Guidelines for Public Participation in Meetings

The Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments (NVCOG) values the input it receives from members of the public during meetings and offers a variety of methods for participation, both in-person and virtually. The Council has taken steps necessary to ensure that the NVCOG will satisfy the conditions set forth in Executive Order 7b, and subsequently Public Act 22-3 for conducting NVCOG and Central Naugatuck Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (CNVMPO) meetings in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act's (FOIA's) requirement that these meetings be open to the public.

**OVERVIEW:** On April 28, 2022, Governor Ned Lamont signed Public Act No. 22-3, which permanently establishes the requirements for wholly or partially virtual public meetings in Connecticut. These requirements were originally established as a temporary solution during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, but due to the convenience, effectiveness, and popularity of virtual meetings, they are now in effect indefinitely. This document will cover procedures for public participation during NVCOG meetings hosted in various formats. These guidelines adhere to all meetings conducted by NVCOG.

Henceforth, the following terms will refer to certain types of meeting situations:

IN-PERSON	VIRTUAL	HYBRID
<p>"In-person" meetings refer to the quorum of the voting members physically gathering in the NVCOG Conference Room or another meeting location.</p>	<p>"Virtual" or "remote" meetings refer to all the voting members participating via conference call, video conferencing technology or other technology.</p>	<p>Hybrid" meetings are when one or more voting members, but less than a quorum, are physically gathered in person while other voting members are attending the meeting virtually. Public information meetings are hybrid - while members of the public are encouraged to attend in-person a virtual component is made available for those facing barriers to do so.</p>

All meetings welcome public participation including meetings held with virtual components pursuant to Public Act 22-3. **NVCOG staff will post all meeting agendas on the NVCOG website along with how the meeting will be conducted.** This information is conveniently located on the "calendar" page of the website. **Only NVCOG hybrid and virtual meetings will be recorded while being streamed live via YouTube.** The hyperlink to view the live stream of a meeting will be made available on the NVCOG website calendar before the meeting starts. Public information meeting notices and flyers will contain information on how to join virtual meetings.

Members of the public have the same opportunities to participate virtually as they would have if the meeting were held in-person following the steps below. NVCOG can provide members of the public with a physical location and the equipment needed to attend a virtual meeting in real-time, if requested no less than 24 hours before the scheduled meeting.



For in-person meetings held in the NVCOG Conference Room, seating is available for members of the public who wish to verbally address the board, or committee and commission members, at the start of the meetings. We ask members of the public to adhere to any health or participation policies posted at the time.

**Members of the public interested in speaking during a virtual or hybrid Board and/or MPO meeting should complete the “public participation form” by the close of business on the day prior to the meeting.** The form is made available on the NVCOG website at the same time as the meeting agenda. Written comments, directed at agenda items, may be submitted using the contact information listed on the agenda.

**The following procedures are for public comment during regular NVCOG meetings:**

### **IN-PERSON VERBAL COMMENTS:**

Commenters must state their full name, address, and if they desire, their professional affiliation before speaking. If they do not, they cannot be allowed to continue.

### **VIRTUAL/HYBRID VERBAL COMMENTS:**

To submit a verbal comment, the commenter will need to fill out a form that will be available on the NVCOG website calendar with the posting of the meeting agenda. Instructions to call into the virtual meeting will be provided once the form is submitted.

- The form will ask commenters for their full name, address, and if they desire, their professional affiliation, all the information required to provide public comment, along with their phone number to identify each person in the virtual meeting.
- Comments on agenda items will be heard during the first designated portion of the meeting.
- Commenters must state their full name, address, and if they desire, their professional affiliation before speaking. If they do not, they cannot be allowed to continue.
- Commenters are limited to 2 minutes each, waivable at the discretion of the Chairman.
- Please be respectful of others.

### **WRITTEN COMMENTS:**

The public may submit written comments to the voting members by the close of business on the day before each meeting.

- All public comments will be presented at the beginning of each meeting. All commenters must include their name and address and if they desire, their professional affiliation.
- All written public comments will be made public.
- Written comments can be sent to the email address provided on the meeting agenda posted on the NVCOG website calendar, or mailed to:

Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments  
49 Leavenworth Street, 3rd Floor  
Waterbury, CT 06702



## COMMENTING DURING PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETINGS (PIMS):

During in-person PIMs or other forms of public forums, during which there is a question-and-answer session or public input session, members of the public will speak one at a time. During virtual meetings, members of the public will utilize the “hand raising” function or equivalent to signal their interest in commenting, or the chat function to submit a comment. In both meeting formats staff will receive and record verbal comments delivered in front of those in attendance. Since public information meetings are typically project specific, written comments related to the project can also be submitted to the [contactus@nvcogct.gov](mailto:contactus@nvcogct.gov) email address.

### POSTING OF THE MEETING RECORD:

After the virtual and hybrid meetings have concluded, the meeting access information will be void. All meeting minutes will be posted to the NVCOG website within seven days, including a link to YouTube for a video of the recorded meeting. All is in accordance with state and federal information access laws and regulations.