



NEW YORK STATE ASSOCIATION OF MPOs PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WORKING GROUP

April 22, 2024

Virtual

1:30 PM – 3:00 PM

MEETING NOTES

Participating

- BMTS – Brian Cohen
- BMTS – Leigh McCullen
- CRTIC – Stephen Maples
- DCTC - Emily Dozier
- DCTC – Tara Grogan
- DCTC - Mark Debald
- GBNRTC – Angelica Gonzalez
- GBNRTC - Amy Weymouth
- GTC – Lori Maher
- NYMTC - Stephanie Brooks
- NYMTC – Rossana Weitekamp
- Planning4Places – Kathy Ember

1. Introductions

Lori Maher summarized the agenda for today’s meeting. Meeting notes were approved for the February 29, 2024, meeting with no changes.

2. Plain Language: Make it Clear Examples

- Lori Maher shared an example and the group provided thoughts on how to rephrase to make the language clearer. Lori suggested following the Center for Plain Language on Facebook.

3. Eclipse Discussion

- Lori Maher discussed the challenges faced during the recent Eclipse, noting the impact of weather forecasts on travel and planning. There was also a shift in plans for some visitors due to forecasted weather. It was a little disappointing that there was lower turnout than expected, however there was success with all the partners sharing information and partnerships created, especially with the Red Cross and emergency services.
- Lori asked a series of questions; this poll of the group and other feedback will be used to prepare a report about the eclipse’s effects across the state.
- Poll Question #1: How did the transportation system work in your MPO region? (Think multimodal.)
 - I was out of town, but from what I heard the Thruway was pretty backed up on Monday.
 - No impact in the BMTS region that I am aware of.
 - No change. Everything operated normally.

- No crazy impacts in the DCTC area that I know of, but I was in Saratoga at the time.
- Heavy delays on the Thruway (I-87) in the hours after totality, busy rail traffic, though not disruptive.
- Fine. No problems.
- In NYC the transportation system wasn't heavily affected, although people did stop and look up (moved cars over, etc.) Not crazy traffic delays
- Poll Question #2: What happened that surprised you?
 - n/a
 - It was cloudy :(but that wasn't surprising!
 - Number of people who left the area to see the eclipse.
 - Driving back from Saratoga to Poughkeepsie the day after the eclipse, we encountered very little or no traffic.
 - That the delays were so manageable.
 - It was a lot more cloudy than we expected.
 - Street lights went on!
- Poll Question #3: Anything else interesting to note about your Eclipse experience?
 - Not that many people went to Oswego- but the SUNY had a great event (despite a lot of clouds).
 - Went out to Rochester and did experience some slow downs, but no stop and go traffic.
 - It didn't get dark even though we had 90% totality.
 - Our trails had a massive increase in counts.
 - It was really amazing, even though we only had 90%, could still see the effects. The glasses really helped. NYC Public Libraries were a great resource for eclipse glasses.
- Brian Cohen reported that they saw increases in their trail counts from 3-5 PM.
- The group shared experiences – the NYC libraries had a curriculum and offered free glasses. In Rochester, hotels were booked and that there was a safe travel experience.
- Stephen Maples and Emily Dozier both mention the heavy traffic and their locations during the event. Stephen Maples also shared his trip to Rochester to witness the eclipse from the public market, while Angelica Gonzalez talked about her experience in Buffalo.
- The team also discussed the positive impact of the eclipse on transportation planning, particularly in Rochester.

4. Other Topics

- Training
 - Kathy Ember shared that the Executive Committee would like more detail about the goals of the Facilitation Training. They also were wondering if media training should be included in the in-person training. The group discussed what to send along to the Executive Committee.
 - The group discussed that for media involvement the spokesperson is typically the MPO Director or the public education officer.
 - Rossana Weitekamp talked about her experience doing media training and offered to provide some training.
 - Emily Dozier discussed Dutchess County communications – staff have discussed how to tailor press releases to get sound bites and about social media content.

- Tara Grogan discussed DCTC's NOAA training on facilitation. Emily Dozier agreed that the in-person practice was the most helpful.
- The group discussed that it would be helpful to include strategies for engaging everyone in the training (based on different personality types). Practicing/role playing is also desired. The goals for the training are how to structure meetings for different purposes, how to answer questions, pre-planning activities, context of meetings, politics. This would be a one-day training open to not just Public Engagement Working Group members.
- The media training could be a separate effort.
- Public Engagement Working Group Working Program
 - Kathy Ember shared the final 2024-2025 Work Program by email. The Work Program will be posted on the NYSAMPO website. The Work Program took effect on April 1st.
- Other Topics
 - Lori Maher asked if anyone had any SS4A updates.
 - Emily Dozier asked about best practices for tracking engagement and the different ways of measuring engagement – such as attendance and surveys. She noted that the MPOs Public Participation Plans have some information on how tracking is done. She suggested the Working Group has a Google Doc to share information. This item is suggested to be included on the agenda for the next meeting.
 - Emily Dozier had a recent call with discussions about engaging youth in transportation – the key takeaway was that the library director was a great resource. They are very tuned in to their needs for programming and disadvantaged groups and unhoused people. In the context of transportation, it is really important to hear about their overall needs. For rural areas, library directors and teen directors are good resources.

5. High Five/Share a Tip

- Lori Maher asked for High Fives or Share a Tip.
- Tara Grogan shared that she received NYMTC's newsletter Connecting Communities report, and she thought it is a great document.
- Lori Maher shared they hired a new person for TIP management, Chris Snyder and they are excited to have him join GTC.
- Emily Dozier shared that DCTC had a couple of pop-ups for trail feasibility study and it was covered in the press. She can share more at the June meeting.

6. Next Steps

- The next meeting will be held on June 17th on Zoom.
- Lori Maher encouraged the Working Group to share ideas with the group.