

CHAPTER 5:

Public Involvement

DVRPC firmly believes in public participation and reaches out to as many people as possible in an equitable and timely manner. Public participation is a way to ascertain the interests of a wide variety of residents, the private sector, special-interest groups, older adults, educators and parents, public officials, the mentally and physically disabled, and economically disadvantaged populations. While today's residents may be more sophisticated, and modern standards are more inclusive, the need for public involvement is inherent to sound decision-making.

Every resident is responsible for becoming involved in regional issues and informing the decision-making process; therefore, DVRPC strives to provide as many opportunities as possible for residents to be informed and aware of the decisions that will affect the future of this region.

The public comment period for the Draft DVRPC FY2023 TIP for Pennsylvania opened on May 27, 2022 at 5:00 PM (local time), and extends through June 28, 2022 at 5:00 PM (local time). 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 FY2023 TIP:

Thursday, June 16, 2022

7:00 PM to 8:00 PM

Registration: https://dvrpc.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_tTahy33TTBmlocE1_hLIYQ

Call-in information: 646-558-8656; Webinar ID: 829 3847 2423; Password: BwKp5Lnj

While participants need to register beforehand, they are approved automatically and can register and join the meetings up until the meetings end. Additionally, people who would like to participate but do not have internet access or smart phones can call in. Anyone who needs accommodations, such as closed captioning or interpretation, can contact DVRPC's Office of Communications & Engagement at public_affairs@dvrpc.org or 215-238-2929.

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 was available on the DVRPC website, including the date and location of how to access the virtual public meetings and other general information. Individuals can download or access current TIP materials at any time. Public comments could also be submitted four ways.

The best 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 on the Draft DVPRC FY2023 TIP for Pennsylvania" button to make general and project-specific comments. DVRPC staff will then gather responses from the appropriate agencies. Responses are not provided unless comments are submitted in writing during the public comment period.

In addition, the public is able to submit comments via e-mail to tip@dvrpc.org, by fax (215-592-9125), 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 28, 2022. If you need assistance in providing a written comment, please contact the DVRPC Office of Communications and Engagement at 215-238-2929 or public_affairs@dvrpc.org. DVRPC frequently employs social media ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), 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. Please 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 Draft DVRPC FY2023 TIP for Pennsylvania.

Public Comment Guidance

In an effort to facilitate the public comment process, DVRPC offers some extended guidance. Listed below are issues that DVRPC asks the public to consider during the review of the Draft TIP document.

- Given the projects in the TIP, are we heading in the right direction? Are we meeting the needs of the region? Are we following the intent of the IJJA?
- For example, does the TIP contain the appropriate mix of projects with regard to (a) the amount of investment in highway projects versus the amount in transit projects; or (b) the types of improvements, such as maintenance and reconstruction of the existing system versus new capacity-adding projects, or non-traditional projects (such as pedestrian, bicycle, smart technology, TASA, and CMAQ projects) versus the traditional highway and transit projects?
- 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, are we spending money on the right types of projects?
- Is the TIP document easy to use? How could it be improved?

Of course, comments are not limited to these broader issues of concern. DVRPC, as always, 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 for the TIP that in order to earn a place on the TIP, projects 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 securing a place on the TIP in a future update. 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 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 multi-use trail? What are its intended effects? For example, an operational improvement project, such as signal re-timing, 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.

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

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