

Chapter 3: Public Engagement

A Robust and Inclusive Process

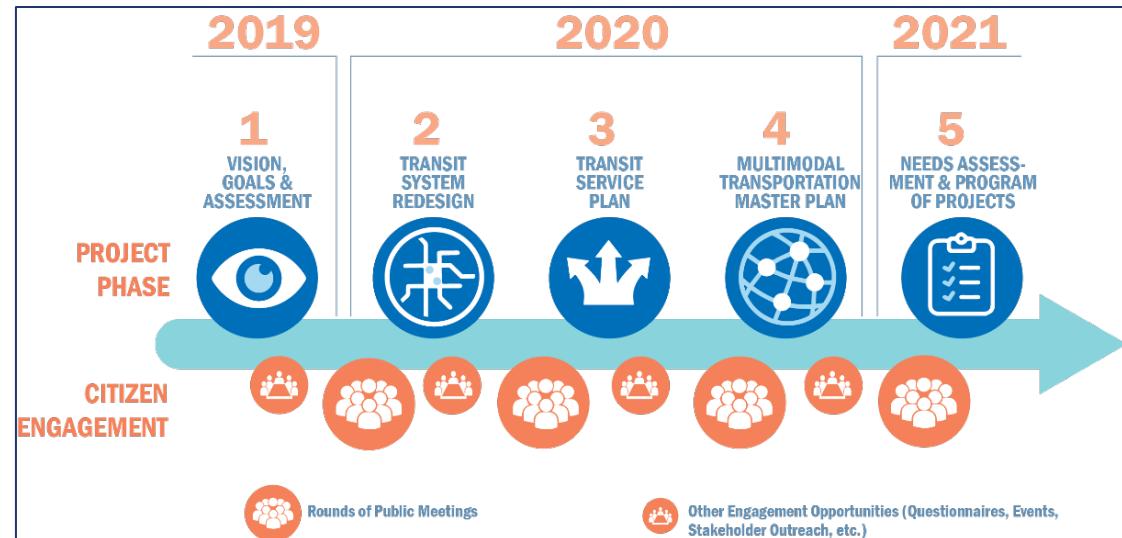
The Multimodal Norfolk transportation master plan was crafted through a robust and inclusive community engagement process throughout all stages of plan development.

Community engagement activities included public meetings, surveys, online mapping activities, town hall meetings, presentations at local civic league and task force meetings, paper and electronic flyer distribution, media blasts, engagement with faith-based communities, and other activities.

Multimodal Advisory Committee

A key step in the community engagement process was the creation of the Multimodal Advisory Committee – representatives of over 30 various stakeholder groups including economic development organizations, transportation agencies, community advocacy groups, educational and military institutions, neighborhood civic leagues, and public health partners.

The Multimodal Advisory Committee met at key milestones throughout the Multimodal Norfolk process to provide critical feedback on concepts and recommendations. The committee was also responsible for disseminating information to and relaying feedback from their colleagues, constituencies, and contacts, to ensure that the process to develop the master plan was as inclusive and far-reaching as possible.



The process to develop the Multimodal Norfolk transportation master plan involved community stakeholders, interested residents, and a variety of other organizations.



In February and early March 2020, stakeholders and interested members of the public attended meetings, identified safety issues and travel patterns, and provided general feedback on the goals and objectives.

Multimodal Norfolk Multimodal Advisory Committee Representatives

Children's Hospital of the Kings Daughters

City of Norfolk Bicycling and Pedestrian Trails Commission

City of Norfolk Planning Commission

Coalition for Smarter Growth

Downtown Norfolk Council

Eastern Virginia Medical School

Elizabeth River Trail Foundation

Greater Norfolk Corp

Hampton Roads Economic Development Alliance

Hampton Roads Military and Federal Facilities Alliance

Hampton Roads Transit

HRT Paratransit Advisory Committee

HRT Transit Riders Advisory Committee

Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization

Hampton Roads Workforce Council

League of Women Voters

NAACP

Naval Station Norfolk

Navy Region Mid-Atlantic

Norfolk Airport Authority

Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority

Norfolk State University

Old Dominion University

Reinvent Hampton Roads

Sentara

Sierra Club

Southern Environmental Law Center

STOP, Inc.

Tidewater Community College

Urban League

VDOT Hampton Roads District

Virginia Conservation Network

Virginia Port Authority

Virginia Wesleyan University

Public Meetings

Four rounds of multiple public meetings were held throughout the Multimodal Norfolk process in concert with the major project milestones as shown in the process chart on the previous page.

The first round consisted of five in-person public meetings throughout the city held in late February and early March 2020. The second and third rounds were held through online public meetings due to gathering restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Online and in-person public meetings are being held in the final round.

Thirteen public meetings were held throughout the four rounds. Additionally, two Superward 7 virtual Town Hall meetings were held in May and June 2021 to target engagement from these communities. The Multimodal Norfolk process benefited greatly from the many citizens and engaged stakeholders from all walks of life and city neighborhoods that provided input, feedback, and critical review of draft plan elements. The wealth of input received ensures that the Plan is built on a solid foundation that reflects public will, input, and support.

Surveys

Three rounds of public surveys accompanied the first three rounds of public meetings. The surveys supplemented the input received in public meetings and ensured that there was a forum for written input (both online and paper surveys) that could be systematically collected, organized and analyzed to ensure equitable representation of input. Various surveys asked



Multimodal Advisory Committee members considered the draft goals and objectives.



Public meetings were held at various locations and online to solicit input and feedback from residents.



Stakeholders participated in workshops during the transit system redesign.



Residents and stakeholders discussed multimodal needs at an in-person public meeting.

specific questions and solicited general feedback on the transit system redesign and the multimodal transportation master plan.

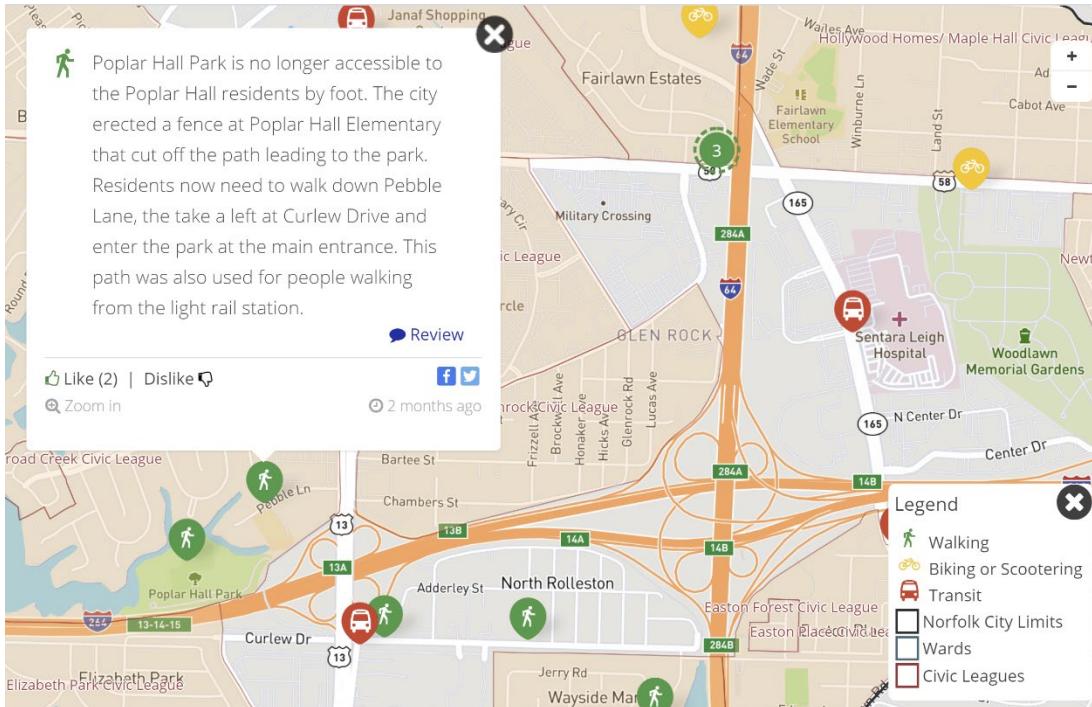
In the first round of surveys, 262 people responded to the transit choices survey. The second round of surveys produced 1,086 responses to the transit concepts survey and 164 responses on the draft multimodal system maps. In the third round of surveys, 1,958 people responded to the survey on the draft recommended transit network.

Other Outreach Activities

Due to limitations on in-person public meetings during the pandemic, a special effort was made to creatively engage citizens in new and safe ways that would increase the reach of public input. Paper surveys were made available at the Downtown Norfolk Transit Center. Citizen volunteers distributed surveys on buses, at transit stops, and in neighborhoods to ensure good coverage, especially among traditionally underrepresented and minority communities.

Nearly 3,000 paper surveys were distributed and returned to supplement the in-person meeting engagement and online surveys that provided a very wide representation of Norfolk citizen input that was used to build this plan.

Throughout the planning process, the www.MultimodalNorfolk.com website provided current information on the development of the plan. An interactive online map was available on the website from January through June 2021. Residents and other members of the public used



Residents and other members of the public identified multimodal transportation needs on an interactive online map available from January through June 2021. Over 800 comments were provided.



Notices about public meetings were displayed on electronic bulletin boards at libraries and recreation centers. Two virtual Town Hall meetings for Superward 7 residents were held to target input from these communities.

this online map as well as email and voicemail messages to submit over 800 comments on multimodal transportation needs.

The Multimodal Norfolk team presented information about the plan at various civic league and task force meetings throughout the city. Paper and online flyers were distributed to solicit input through the interactive map, email, and voicemail at a variety of locations including local restaurants, convenience stores, libraries, senior and public housing communities, and community centers.

Notices about the plan, public and town hall meetings, and how to give input were circulated through traditional media and social media outlets, posted on electronic bulletin boards at libraries and recreation centers, and distributed to faith-based and other community leaders, who shared the information with their constituents and contacts. The Multimodal Norfolk team created a video that was shared at the February 6, 2021 Neighborhood Leadership virtual breakfast meeting.



Residents and others participated in virtual public meetings and town hall meetings to give input, voice concerns, and ask questions throughout the development of the plan.

General Input Themes

General themes that recurred throughout the public and stakeholder engagement process are shown in the graphic to the right. These themes were crucial in guiding the development of the Multimodal Transportation Master Plan. In addition, it is important to note that in each round of public and stakeholder engagement, the majority of respondents expressed support for the multimodal master plan and the transit redesign.

Each phase of the development of the multimodal master plan and the transit redesign built upon the feedback received in prior phases, and the plan was molded and modified by the input as the process went on.

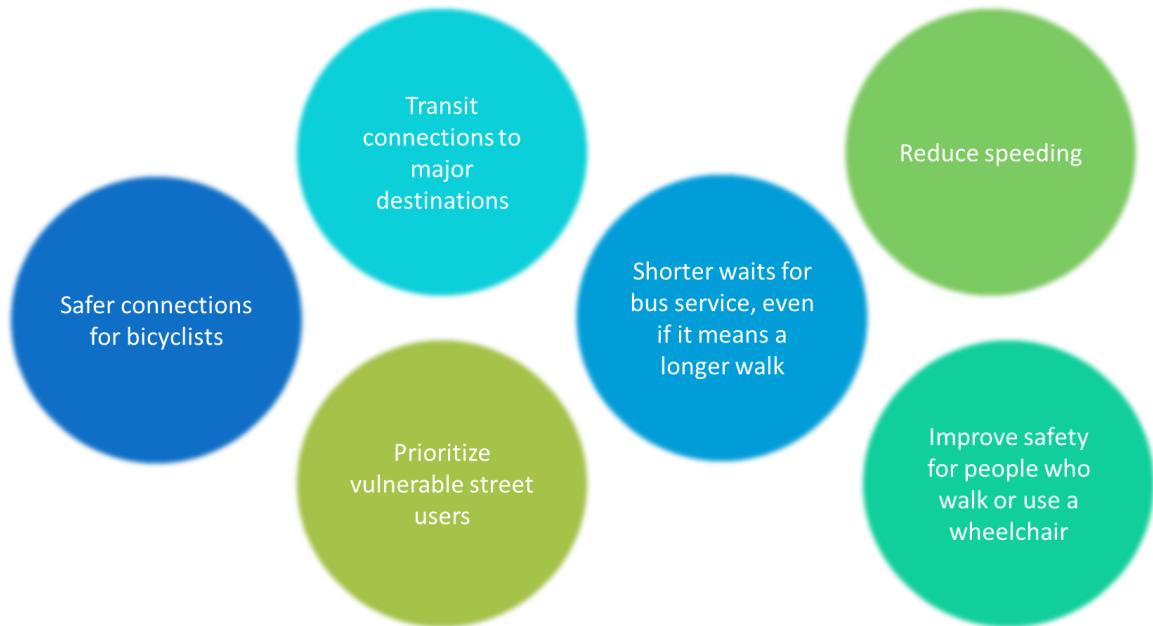
More specific feedback and responses are incorporated in subsequent chapters of this plan.

Public and Stakeholder Input from Each Round

Figure 3-1 on the next page shows an overview of the four rounds of public and stakeholder engagement.

Round 1: Vision and Values

The first round of public and stakeholder engagement, held in February and March 2020, focused on establishing a guiding vision and defining the goals and objectives for the Multimodal Norfolk process. It also



Themes from the public and stakeholder engagement process resonated throughout the development of the Multimodal Norfolk transportation master plan.

introduced conceptual transit tradeoffs and asked for input on general transit preferences.

This round consisted of one stakeholder meeting and five in-person public meetings.

Participants gave input on the draft vision, goals, and objectives. Generally, the feedback affirmed the need for this study and to focus on safety and connectivity for people who walk, use mobility devices, ride bicycles and scooters, and take public transit. Participants expressed interest in the concept of micro-transit, which was

explored in the transit system redesign process, and noted the alignment of the purpose of this plan with goals to reduce carbon emissions and decrease usage of single-occupancy vehicles. Participants noted the goals of this effort are in line with promoting healthy lifestyles through active transportation modes, and indicated wait times and travel times for public transit are too long. Addressing safety and providing more connections were recurring themes throughout public feedback in this round.

Participants were also asked to participate in a mapping activity to indicate where they travel from and to on a regular basis, and what modes they take or would like to take in the future. In this mapping activity, participants also noted location-specific safety and other concerns, which were incorporated into the multimodal system plan maps explained in Chapter 4 and the multimodal needs assessment described in Chapter 12.

Finally, participants in this first round were introduced to four tradeoffs related to the transit service:

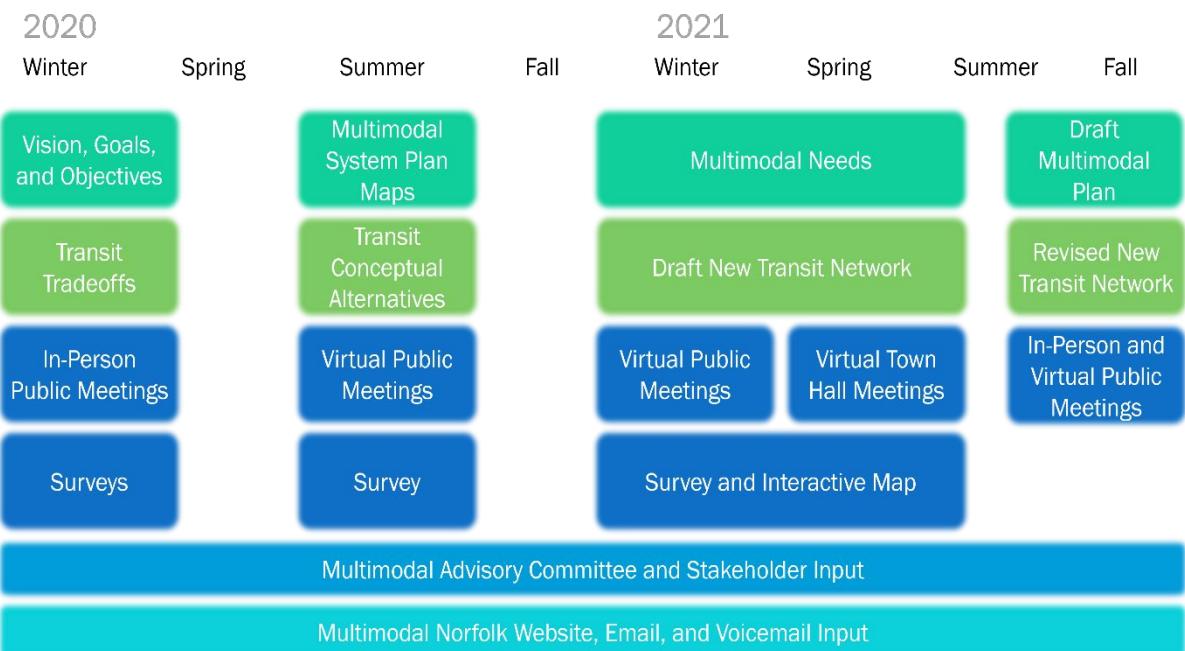
- Walking vs. waiting
- Peak vs. all-day service
- Ridership vs. coverage
- Stop spacing (closer vs. wider)

Participants indicated their preferences on each of the four tradeoffs using sticky dots on a spectrum.

The transit tradeoffs survey asked questions about these same tradeoffs. The majority of respondents indicated they:

- preferred to walk further in order to have a shorter wait for their bus,
- preferred the high frequency scenario over the high coverage one
- preferred providing a useful level of transit service all day, every day over serving higher demand at peak hours.

FIGURE 3-1: FOUR ROUNDS OF PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT



The public and stakeholder process to develop the Multimodal Norfolk Transportation Master Plan and redesign Norfolk's bus system consisted of four rounds of public and stakeholder input.

More information on the survey results is provided in Chapter 11: Transit System Redesign.

Round 2: Multimodal System Plan Maps and Transit Conceptual Alternatives

The second round of public and stakeholder engagement occurred in Summer 2020, and consisted of two online stakeholder meetings, two online public meetings, and two surveys that were available online as

well as distributed on HRT buses and available in the Downtown Norfolk Transit Center.

In this round, stakeholders and the public were presented with the draft multimodal system plan and asked to give feedback on the draft maps. Feedback on the draft maps was generally supportive of the overall concept. Responses to the multimodal system plan maps indicated overwhelming agreement with most of the maps. Participants provided suggestions for

revising the maps, including adding new multimodal centers and adding bicycle/scooter modal emphasis to specific streets. Participants also reiterated safety concerns, especially for pedestrians and bicyclists, both in general and at specific locations. These comments were incorporated into the revised set of maps, which were shared at the third round of public engagement.

Participants were also shown two different conceptual transit network alternatives of how the bus network in Norfolk could be redesigned – one designed to maximize ridership and another designed to maximize coverage. Survey respondents in this round were largely African-American/Black, mostly transit riders, largely of working age, mostly low-income, and almost entirely from Norfolk.

Nearly two-thirds of the transit concepts survey respondents preferred the Ridership Concept, and about one-quarter preferred the Coverage Concept, with the remaining respondents indicating they were halfway in between or did not answer the question. The transit system redesign team used this feedback to design a draft new transit network.

Round 3: Multimodal Needs and Draft New Transit Network

The third round of engagement occurred from Winter 2020 to Summer 2021. It focused on the draft new transit network,

and included a stakeholder meeting, two online public meetings, a survey available online and distributed on HRT buses, two virtual town hall meetings for residents of Superward 7, and an online interactive map.

Stakeholders and the public were presented with the draft new transit network including statistics on the benefits of the new network.

Survey responses in this round reached nearly 2,000, who were primarily regular bus riders, identify as African-American/Black, have an annual household income below \$25,000, and were between 35 and 64 years old.

More than 75 percent of respondents were either positive or neutral about the proposed new transit network, while fewer than 20 percent disagreed that the new network would be better for Norfolk overall.

Many respondents noted they like the draft new network, especially the higher frequency service on key routes and the new one-seat rides on many routes. A regular theme among commentors on the survey was a request for more frequent service on all routes in the city, which would require more funding for more service.

The most commonly cited concerns were the longer walks required to reach some neighborhoods or destinations, a desire for higher frequency on Route 20, and concern



Public citizens listen to a presentation in the Pretlow library.



Public meeting attendees place sticky dots on a map to show places where they live, work, and go to frequently.

about the walking distance to Norfolk General Hospital from Route 2. The feedback from the meetings and surveys was used to refine the new network.

Stakeholders and the public were asked to identify multimodal transportation needs through the interactive online map. Needs

were identified for walking, bicycling, scootering, transit, and auto modes. Chapter 12: Needs Assessment and Chapter 13: Program of Projects provide more details on the needs identified in this round of public engagement.

Also in this round of engagement, participants were shown the revised multimodal system plan maps and given the opportunity to provide final comments and suggestions. Comments received included additional questions on the modal emphasis maps and questions regarding specific facilities.

The project team shared an update on the status of the draft multimodal plan, which would be shared in the fourth round of engagement.

The project team presented updates to various stakeholder groups, including neighborhood leadership civic leagues and task forces, business associations, and commissions including the Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails Commission and the Norfolk Commission for Persons with Disabilities.

Round 4: Draft Multimodal Transportation Master Plan and Revised New Transit Network

The final round of stakeholder and public meetings was held in October 2021 to premiere the draft Multimodal Norfolk Transportation Master Plan and showcase

the resulting variety of improvement projects that resulted from this 2-year process.

Two in-person public meetings and two virtual public meetings were held to share the results of this process and what can be expected in the future.

The Multimodal Norfolk team prepared a “toolkit” for community leaders and influencers to share information about Multimodal Norfolk and the public meetings. These community leaders shared the information with their constituents and followers on various social media outlets, news media stations, and on civic league websites and email distribution lists.



Community leaders and influencers promoted the final round of public meetings on Facebook, Twitter, and other media platforms.

The Multimodal Norfolk team organized a street team to disseminate literature promoting the public meetings. The street team distributed 2,000 flyers at over 150

locations over 4 days along Church Street, E. Little Creek Rd, Lamberts Point, Norview, Ocean View, Park Place, Southern Shopping Center, Wards Corner, and others. The street team handed out and posted flyers at community centers, housing complexes, medical facilities, restaurants, retail establishments, and faith-based organizations.



A street team handed out over 2,000 flyers in the fourth and final round of public engagement in October 2021 to advertise the public meetings.

At the public meetings, the Multimodal Norfolk team shared the draft Program of Projects map and list and described the process the City will undertake to determine which projects to seek funding for and how.

Participants provided additional comments on the Program of Projects and were generally supportive of the plan and the engagement process.



The street team handed out and posted flyers at a variety of establishments in targeted areas.

This final round of engagement also included a virtual meeting with the Multimodal Advisory Committee and outreach to Norfolk's Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails Commission.

Chapter Summary

The Multimodal Norfolk Transportation Master Plan is built on a foundation of robust community and stakeholder engagement throughout the 2-year process to develop the plan.

Residents and other members of the public had a variety of input opportunities, including in-person and virtual meetings, surveys, interactive maps, and email and voicemail messages. Thousands of flyers were distributed throughout the city. Traditional media and social media posts informed the public of what was happening. Throughout the process, the Multimodal Advisory Committee provided input representing a variety of stakeholder interests.

The City of Norfolk will continue to engage its citizens, businesses, community leaders, and other public as this plan moves from development into implementation.