

3 STAKEHOLDER/PUBLIC OUTREACH

3.1 OVERVIEW

Public and stakeholder outreach spanned from October 2019 to August 2020 and was an integral part of the development of the 2045 MTP. The efforts described in this section were undertaken to gain insights into transportation needs from the perspective of both local agencies and residents. Public outreach efforts were specifically intended to enhance the understanding of the regional planning process, to solicit input on regional needs and priorities, and to ensure that the MTP responds to the needs of existing and future residents and visitors alike.



3.2 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

3.2.1 Technical Committee

The FMPO convenes staff from member agencies through the Technical Committee to provide recurring input on regional transportation priorities and identify regionally significant projects. In addition to the jurisdictions in the region (i.e. Aztec, Bloomfield, Farmington, Kirtland, and San Juan County), Technical Committee members include staff from Red Apple Transit and NMDOT. The Technical Committee served as the Steering Committee for the update to the MTP. The Project Team provided monthly updates and members of the Technical Committee also provided input throughout the planning process and reviewed drafts of the MTP. Members of the Project Team also met regularly with staff from member agencies to consider local projects and priorities. *The Technical Committee is scheduled to consider recommending the MTP for approval in September 2020.*

3.2.2 Policy Committee

The Policy Committee is comprised of elected officials (or appointees) from FMPO member agencies – as well as representatives from NMDOT – and serves as the governing body for the FMPO. The Policy Committee meets bi-monthly and all meetings are open to the public. The Policy Committee is responsible for approving the MTP. FMPO staff provided regular updates to the Policy Committee, with substantive presentations provided at various points in the plan development process. *The Policy Committee is scheduled to consider the MTP for approval in September 2020.*

3.3 PUBLIC OUTREACH

The MTP process applied various in-person and online techniques to solicit input on regional transportation needs and priorities. This combined approach allowed for broader participation than traditional public outreach which relies exclusively on in-person meetings. This range of techniques also proved critical as restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic went into effect mid-way through the MTP development process. Subsequent outreach efforts took place entirely through online tools.

3.3.1 Project Website

A dedicated project website was maintained throughout the development of the MTP with information related to the general purpose and contents of the MTP, the transportation planning process, and public participation opportunities, including the MTP survey and meeting dates and times. Materials presented at public events and FMPO Technical Committee meetings were posted on the project website, along with a draft version of the MTP for review during the 30-day public comment period.

Figure 3-1: 2045 MTP Project Website Homepage



3.3.2 Online Survey

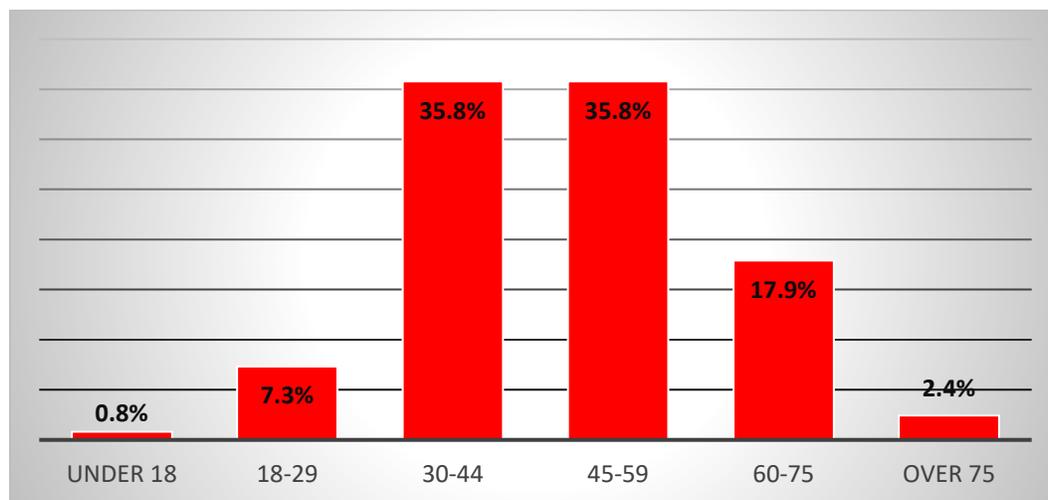
An online survey was available between October 2019 to February 2020, with hard copies distributed during tabling events. A total of 124 people completed the survey. Respondents were asked questions specific to their travel behaviors, user needs, challenges with the transportation system, and priorities for spending future transportation dollars. An overview of findings is provided below.

Demographics

The majority of survey respondents were adults ranging from 30-59 years old (71.5%), female (62.6%), White or Caucasian (74.6%), and did not identify as Hispanic or Latino/a (82.1%). Additionally, over half of respondents reported that they live in Farmington (51.2%), which is

slightly higher than the city’s share of the FMPO area population.⁴ As a result, the input received does not provide a complete representation of transportation behaviors and preferences across the FMPO region. Nevertheless, findings still help inform general challenges and future priorities for the transportation system to better address user needs.

Figure 3-2: Age of Respondents



Commuting Patterns

A majority of respondents reported that they drive alone when traveling from home to school or work each day (84.2%), some carpool (5.8%) and walk (1.7%), and none of the respondents bike, take the bus, or use ride share (see Table 3-1). These numbers are generally consistent with the commuting mode shares reported in the American Community Survey.

Table 3-1: Means of Transportation to Work/School⁵

Means of Transportation	Survey Results	City of Farmington*	San Juan County*	New Mexico*
Drive Alone	84.2%	82.7%	83.1%	80.2%
Carpool	5.8%	12.3%	10.9%	10.0%
Walk	1.7%	1.3%	1.8%	2.1%
Bike	0.0%	0.4%	0.2%	0.7%
Public Transit	0.0%	0.2%	0.3%	1.2%
Other/Work from home	8.3%	3.2%	3.6%	5.6%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Survey results and the American Community Survey from the US Census Bureau indicate commute times for residents of the FMPO region – and the City of Farmington in particular – are well below commute times observed at the county and state levels. Only a small amount of respondents to the MTP survey had commute times over 30 minutes (7.8% versus 31.3% at the

⁴ Of the remaining participants, most live in Aztec (19.5%), and a small amount live in unincorporated San Juan County (8.9%), other locations (8.1%), Kirtland (7.3%), and Bloomfield (4.9%).

⁵ American Community Survey (2014-2018 estimates)

county level and 27.1% at the state level). The typical daily commute time to school or work reported by survey respondents is less than 20 minutes, with the majority reporting within the 10 to 20-minute range (40.5%), as illustrated below. Such modest commute times indicate residents generally live close to job sites, and there is potential to shift trips to alternative modes of transportation, such as public transit or quality bikeways.

Table 3-2: Time Spent During Daily Commute to School or Work

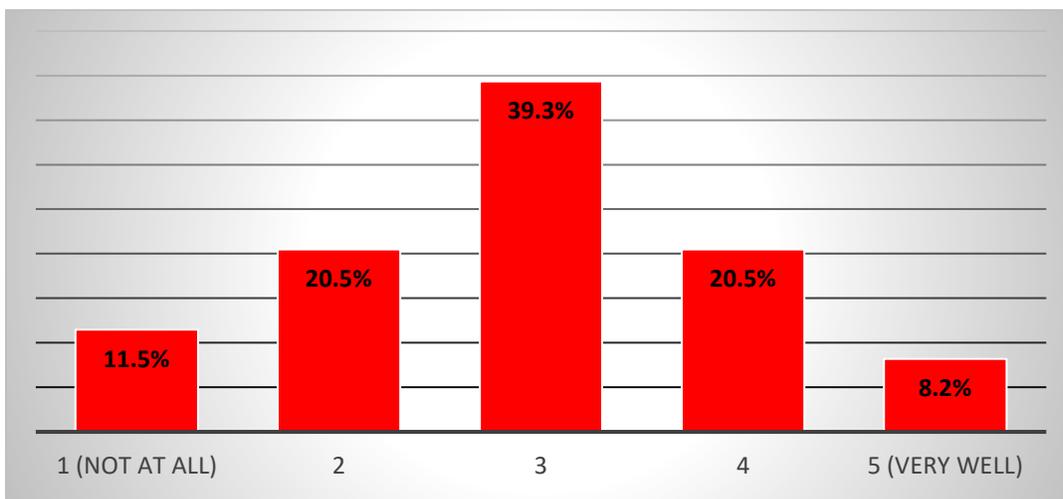
Commute Time	Survey Results	City of Farmington*	San Juan County*	New Mexico ⁶
0-10 minutes	31.9%	22.1%	16.3%	16.7%
10-20 minutes	40.5%	43.7%	33.6%	35.4%
20-30 minutes	19.8%	16.1%	18.9%	20.8%
Over 30 minutes	7.8%	18.3%	31.3%	27.1%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Priorities and Challenges

The MTP survey showed that the overall transportation system is somewhat meeting traveler needs, with a combined 28.7% indicating the transportation system meets traveler needs well or very well and a combined 32% indicating the system does not meet traveler needs. A plurality of respondents (39.3%) indicated they are neutral about how the current transportation system meets their needs (response of 3 on a scale from 1 to 5).

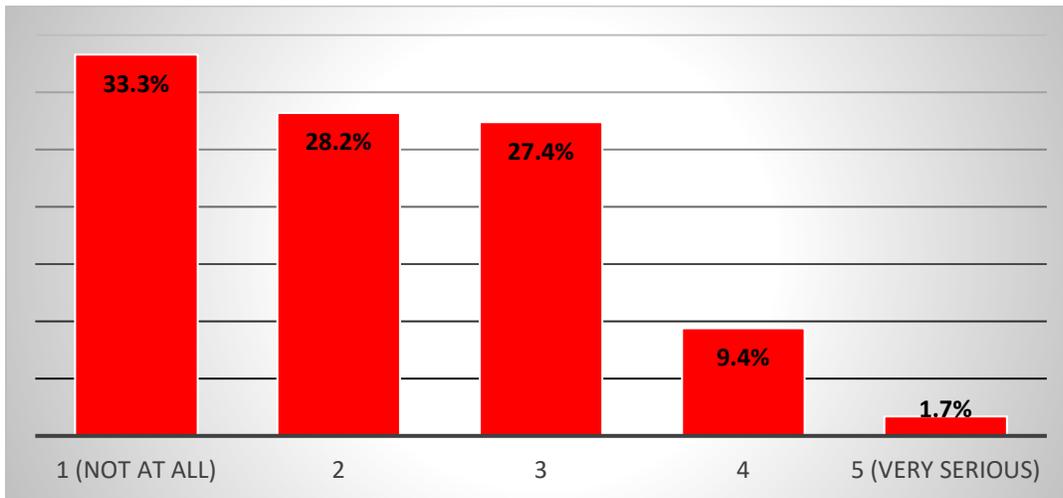
Importantly, when asked how serious a problem traffic congestion is on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very serious), respondents generally stated that it is not a serious problem. This set of responses indicates that issues with the transportation system may not specifically be related to roadway conditions but the availability of other modes of transportation.

Figure 3-3: How Well Current Transportation System Meets Traveler Needs



⁶ American Community Survey (2014-2018 estimates)

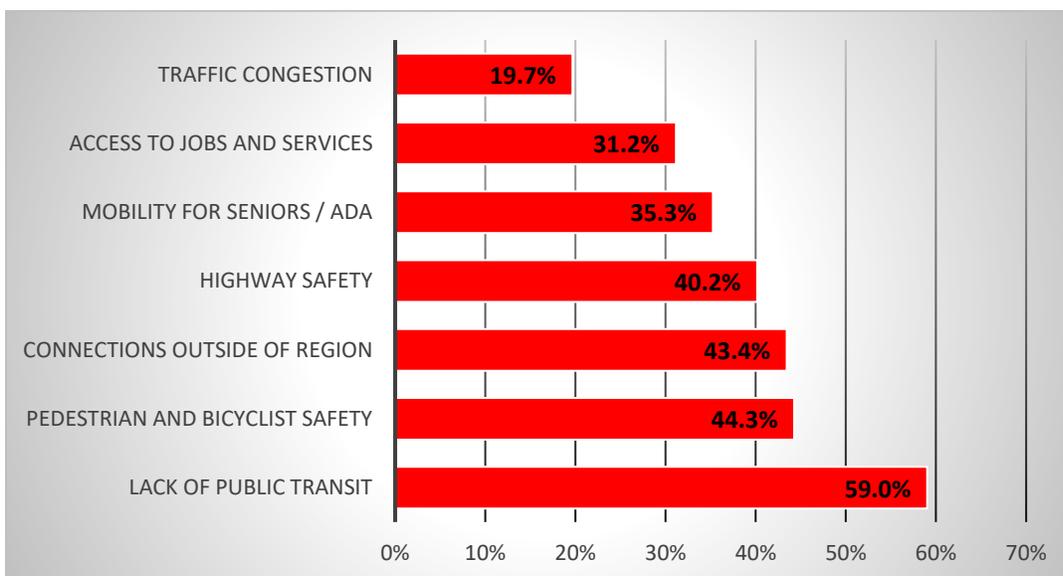
Figure 3-4: Seriousness of Traffic Congestion During Daily Commute



The lack of convenient public transit options was the most frequently reported challenge facing the FMPO transportation system today (respondents could choose up to three responses and public transit was identified by 59.0% of individuals). Other frequently cited challenges include pedestrian and bicyclist safety, connection to destinations outside of northwest New Mexico, and highway safety (see Figure 3-5).

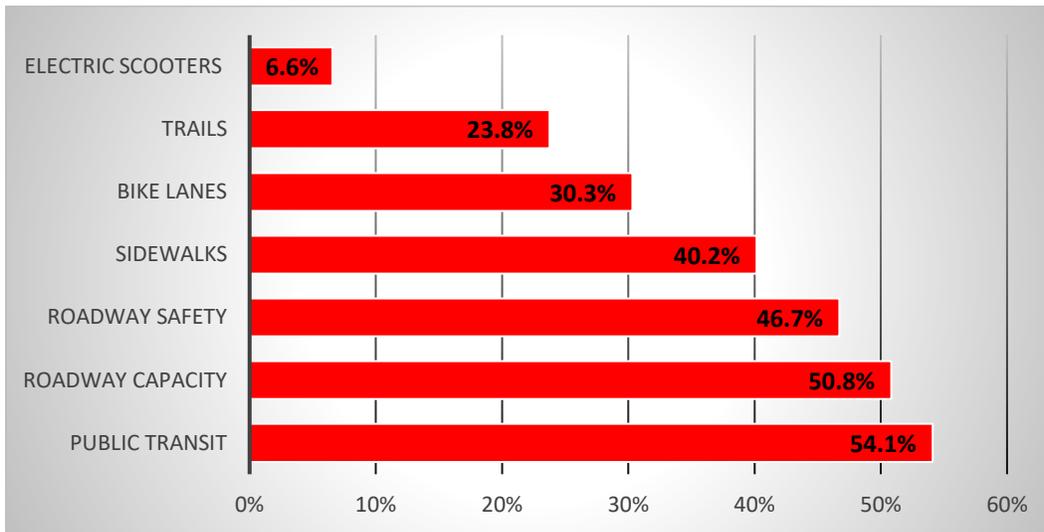
Similarly, respondents identified public transit (54.1%) as the top mode that should be invested in (see Figure 3-6). Other frequent responses included roadway capacity (50.8%) and roadway safety, despite that traffic congestion is not viewed as a serious issue. The responses may indicate an assumption that new or improved roadways will include infrastructure for all modes.

Figure 3-5: Top Challenges Facing the FMPO Transportation System Today*



*Does not add up to 100%, respondents could select up to three choices

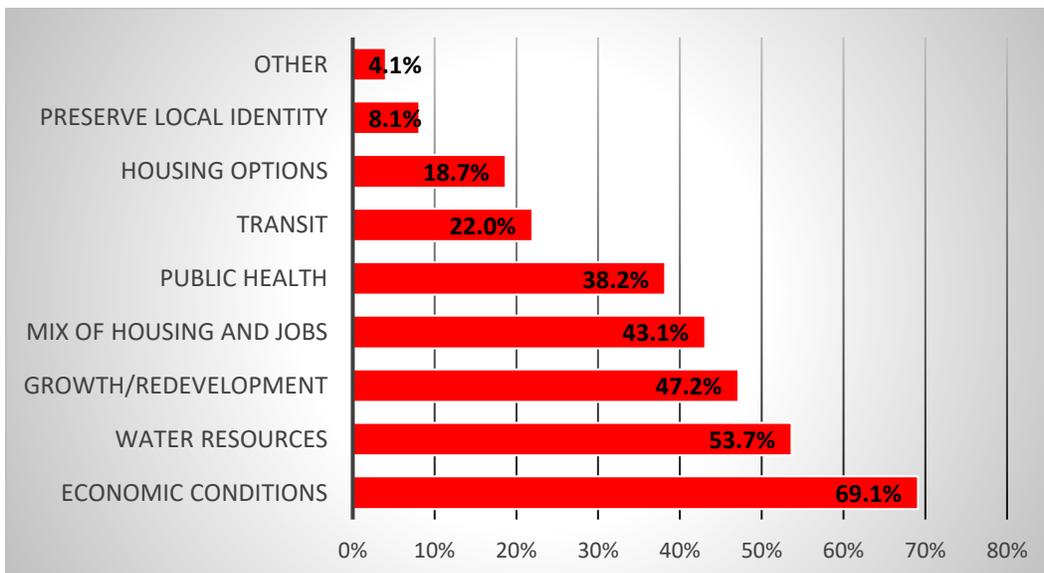
Figure 3-6: Top Modes to Invest In*



**Does not add up to 100%, respondents could select up to three choices*

Respondents were also given the opportunity to weigh in on regional challenges beyond transportation needs. The issue of greatest concern to FMPO area residents is pursuing a more resilient economy (69.1%). Other frequently reported issues include conserving and protecting water resources (53.7%) and redeveloping abandoned and vacant property while also promoting growth in key areas (47.2%).

Figure 3-7: Greatest Overall Regional Challenges*



**Does not add up to 100%, respondents could select up to three choices*

What Did We Hear from the Public?

The top issues when using **public transit** are:

- Schedule does not meet my needs (40.5%)
- It takes too much time (33.1%)
- It does not go where I want to go (32.2%)

Top **measures to encourage more transit users** include:

- More convenient stops and service (58.0%)
- More frequent service (48.7%)
- Better connections between routes (48.7%)

Top **issues for walking** include:

- Distance to destinations being too far (52.6%)
- Poor sidewalk conditions (50.8%)
- Not feeling safe from traffic (49.2%)

Top **issues for biking** include:

- Not feeling safe from traffic (54.9%)
- Poor conditions of bicycle routes, bike lanes, and/or paths (42.6%)

Top **issues for motorists** include:

- Poor driver behavior (74.8%)
- Poor road conditions (62.6%)
- Traffic congestion (43.9%)

Top **safety concerns** specific to driver behavior include:

- Distracted/inattentive drivers (74.0%)
- Impaired/drunk driving (60.2%)
- Aggressive driving/speeding (56.9%)

Note: Respondents could select up to three choices for each of these issue areas.

3.3.3 Tabling Events

To further engage with the communities of Farmington, Kirtland, Bloomfield, and Aztec, a two-day regional outreach effort was conducted to collect input on the MTP 2045 update. These efforts focused on regional transportation needs and invited residents to complete a survey and identify locations in need of improvements.

To make participation and public involvement as accessible as possible, a series of five tabling events were held on October 17th and 18th, 2019, across all communities within the FMPO region. Additional outreach efforts took place on January 30, 2020 at the community meeting for the City of Farmington's Comprehensive Plan Update. Event details were featured in the Farmington Daily Times, which published various news stories on the MTP and outreach events. Event details were also shared by member agencies through their websites and social media accounts.

Tabling Event Locations

- Aztec Public Library
- Kirtland Youth Association Building
- Downtown Farmington Makers Market
- Bloomfield Multi-Cultural Center
- Animal River Trail near Berg Park
- Farmington Civic Center



Tabling events were intended to generate awareness of the MTP, solicit input on regional needs, and encourage participation in the MTP survey. Educational materials and resources were available at each event to explain the role of the MPO, the purpose and contents of an MTP, and share additional opportunities for people to participate. Approximately 65 people across the two days engaged in the tabling events. Major themes that emerged from tabling events include:

- Safety concerns related to heavy trucks
- Improvements to the public transportation routes, times, and infrastructure, including enhanced bus shelters and technology such as online or phone applications that provide real-time information.
- Recreation trails to promote physical activity and public health, access to nature, and general transportation needs

3.3.4 Virtual Outreach

Following the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, outreach methods were shifted to accommodate virtual outreach as an alternative approach to the traditional in-person meetings to align with public health restrictions. A total of four open house public meetings were held in June 2020 and August 2020 during different times of the day to engage with the public in a virtual setting. Members of the public were also encouraged to submit comments via the project website.

The meetings in June featured findings from the existing conditions analysis and survey, as well as draft recommendations. The meetings in August were held to share the draft plan and solicit comments prior to finalizing the plan. Noteworthy comments from the virtual public meetings included support for investments in public transit, trails and other infrastructure for non-motorized travel, as well as a request that the FMPO consider transportation equity, food access, and regional connections between tribal lands and the greater Farmington area.

3.3.5 Additional Outreach and Promotion

Other outreach was conducted through a contact list of stakeholders, including meeting attendees, individuals who submitted questions on the project website, and members of the public who participated in the previous MTP. The contact list was used to help distribute flyers and other marketing materials for upcoming meetings and to share project updates. The outreach activities were supported by newspaper advertisements and promoted on FMPO and member agency websites and social media accounts to increase public awareness and engagement surrounding this effort.

3.4 KEY TAKEAWAYS

While the majority of FMPO area residents rely on private vehicles for most of their transportation needs, survey respondents and other individuals who participated in MTP meetings and outreach efforts demonstrated a recognition that the overall transportation system could be improved to better meet the needs of all travelers. Primary concerns include investing in the reliability of public transit for everyone – including people with disabilities, youth, older adults, and individuals who do not own motor vehicles – and ensuring connections from surrounding communities to destinations in the City of Farmington.

The feedback supports a general set of priorities related to safety, maintaining the existing roadway system in good working order, and expanding opportunities across the region for walking and biking. Many residents spoke approvingly of the investments in trails and attributed the high quality of life in the region in part to the presence of recreational opportunities. The feedback also reflects the need to reinvigorate the local economy; investments would also help support regional economic development through quality of life amenities and recreational tourism. Other priorities, such as improved connections outside the region, will require ongoing and concerted planning efforts that transcend the typical regional planning process.