

rideCATbus.org



HOOD RIVER COUNTY TRANSPORTATION DISTRICT

2022 – 2023 Transit Master Plan UPDATE

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN

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INTRODUCTION



In June 2017, Hood River County Transportation District (HRCTD), operating as Columbia Area Transit (CAT), the primary transit provider in Hood River County, completed its Transit Master Plan (TMP). Since that time, CAT has accomplished many of the outlined goals and strategies for transit services.

With Hood River County’s growing population, increasing recreation and tourism draw, expanding local and regional employment choices, emerging transportation options, and new potential for public and private partnerships, [the time is ripe to engage the community to shape future transit services.](#)

This plan outlines the public engagement process (PEP) for the HCRTD Transit Master Plan. It describes the strategies, actions, and communication tools for CAT staff and partners to achieve broad, inclusive, and thoughtful participation.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The HRCTD Transit Master Plan update is a timely community-wide opportunity to review, reflect, and provide refreshed direction for transit in Hood River County. With funding provided by the Federal Transit Administration (Section 5304), the Oregon Department of Transportation’s Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund, and local funds, CAT will lead an integrated planning approach. This ensures that transit investments are dynamically supportive of the broader economic, environmental, and mobility goals by:

1. Identifying where limited resources can be invested to meet and enhance local, regional, and state equity, mobility, economic, and environmental goals.
2. Building and strengthening mutuality in partnerships between CAT, other Columbia Gorge transit and transportation options providers, the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), and Hood River County’s public and private agencies, community organizations, and local and regional businesses.

Using a realistic and time-bound implementation approach, the TMP will outline near-term investments with an eye to long-term and joint investment strategies for greater access within Hood River County, nearby Gorge communities, and the Portland metro area. Therefore, it is essential to identify short-term achievable outcomes to continue to fulfill CAT’s mission, honor public input, build confidence in the agency, yet understand that the longer-term ones require more time and patience.

The overall planning approach for the TMP process contains six core operating principles:

- **PUT THE PASSENGER FIRST**

Defining the community needs and matching them with the best-suited opportunities to enhance access, reliability, frequency, safety, and simplicity, resulting in ride comfort and quality.

- **MAKE PARTICIPATION EASY AND MEANINGFUL**

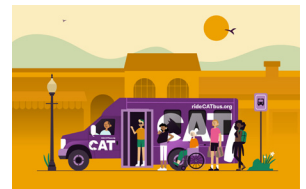
Providing accessible, unique, and tailored strategies to engage community members — with a focus on those historically marginalized in past planning efforts — with creative ways to help CAT define the public transit issues and concerns that matter most.

- **ENGAGE PARTNERSHIPS WITH RECIPROCITY**

Engaging current and potential partners to help shape the future of transit services to help them achieve their goals in the Gorge including cities, counties, Ports, Business Associations, Chambers, Gorge Tourism Alliance, neighborhood groups, and other regional players like ODOT, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD), TriMet and Portland Metro.

- **INTEGRATE REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**

Identifying critical regional coordination and integration opportunities, with a focus on significantly enhancing the linkages between current bike and pedestrian initiatives (e.g., Historic Columbia River Trail, Towns to Trails Program, Hood River Bridges, communities, and regional transfer



**Everyone’s got
a place to be.
We’re creating
a better way to
get there.**

CAT is the simple, affordable way to access all ends of the Columbia River Gorge and beyond.

With constantly expanding services, we believe in supporting the commuters, the grocery getters, the adventurers, families, youth, and everyone in between.

Project Overview (cont'd)

centers). The update will also address regional coordination and integration strategies between HRCTD and other local providers.

- **IDENTIFY SHORT-TERM IMPROVEMENTS THAT REFLECT LONG-TERM VISION**

Modifying the transit network in Hood River County must also logically integrate with the longer-term vision and strategies.

- **FOCUS ON IMPLEMENTATION**

Creating a plan that provides a clear direction and concrete actionable steps to implement goals.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL PLANNING CONTEXT

The TMP process will consider linkages to local and regional planning efforts, including the Gorge Regional Transit Strategy, Vision Round the Mountain, Gorge Access Strategy, The Link Transit Development Plan, the City of Hood River Transportation System Plan update, the Wasco/Hood River Coordinated Transportation Plans and the Columbia Gorge Health Councils priorities.

TMP ADOPTION PROCESS

Adoption of the TMP is the CAT Board's authority. A formal public hearing and comment period will occur before any CAT Board adoption consideration and final decision-making.

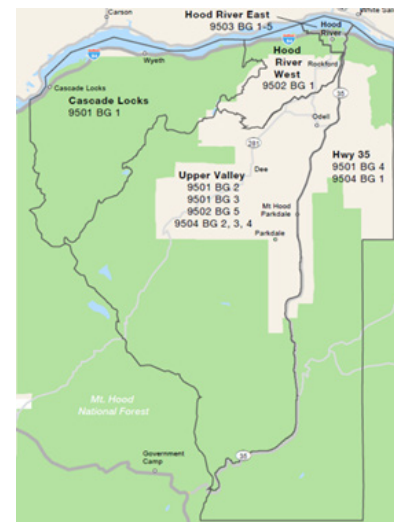
TMP GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE

The service area for CAT encompasses Hood River County, Oregon's second-smallest county by area yet height-wise ranges from 51 feet above sea level at Cascade Locks to 11,235 feet at the summit of Mount Hood, the highest point in Oregon.

Additional polarities beyond altitude exist with community pockets of significant poverty and minority populations juxtaposed with some of the highest housing prices in Oregon. In part, this dichotomy comes from Hood River County's location and growing vibrant tourism and recreation-based economy. In addition, strong agricultural and forest-based industries require migrant farmworkers and entry-level jobs, many of whom are transit-dependent.

With over 36 % of Hood River County residents identifying as Spanish speakers, materials and outreach strategies need to be presented in ways that respect and honor cultural differences.

These factors — projected population growth and about 61% of Hood River County's residents residing in the unincorporated area — are central to understanding the needs and building a system that fosters a local and regionally connected transit network for the Hood River County and throughout the Gorge. For more demographic information, see the CAT TMP Existing Conditions report [insert link].

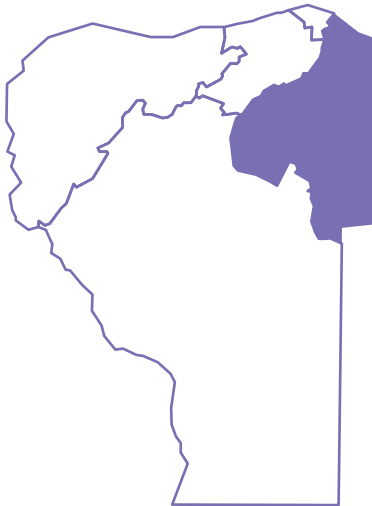


TMP FOCUS AREAS AND REGIONAL CORRIDORS

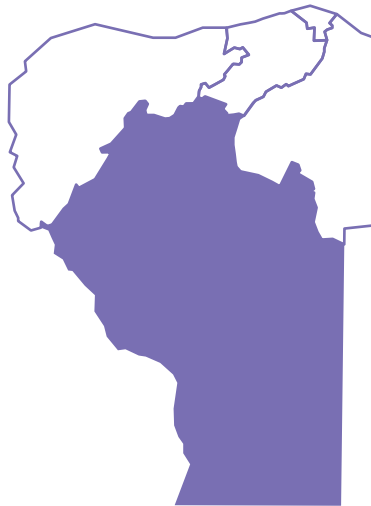
Based on an assessment of the CAT system, identification of local services areas, regional corridors, and available demographic information will assist with tailored public involvement messaging, community partnerships, and targeted outreach methods.

The five local focus areas and two associated regional corridors are:

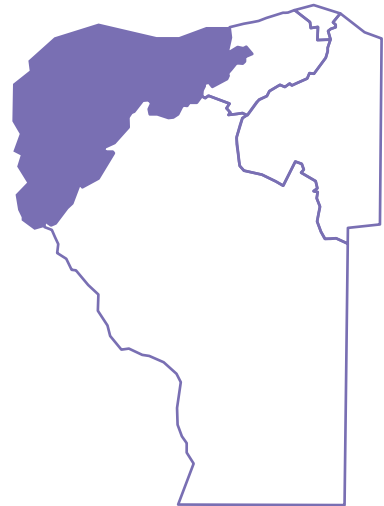
**1. ODELL &
LOWER HWY 35**



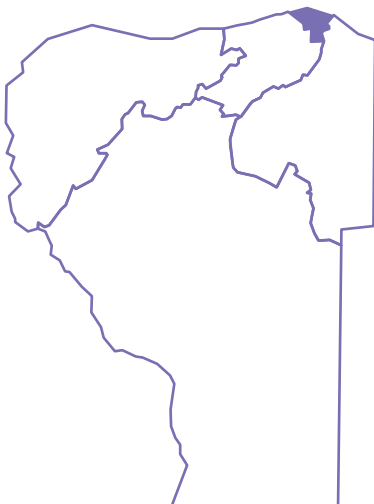
**2. UPPER VALLEY &
UPPER HWY 35**



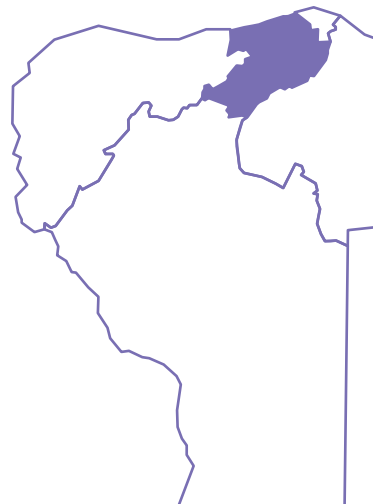
**3. CASCADE LOCKS
(WYETH IN LIEU, CASCADES
LOCKS IN LIEU SITES)**



4. CITY OF HOOD RIVER EAST



**5. CITY OF HOOD RIVER WEST
(INCLUDING UNINCORPORATED AREAS)**



Project Overview (cont'd)



Regional Corridor

I-84: PORTLAND — MULTNOMAH FALLS — DALLES — HOOD RIVER — CASCADE LOCKS

Columbia Gorge Express Stops



WEST

Portland

Multnomah Falls

Cascade Locks

Hood River

The Dalles

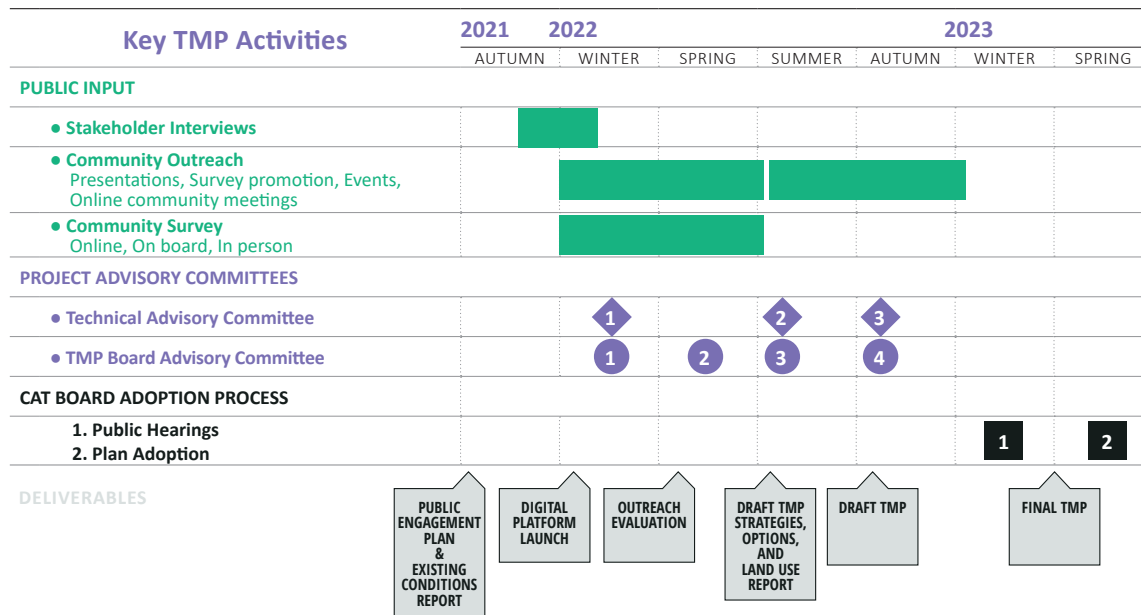
EAST

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT OVERVIEW

THE GOAL OF THE HRCTD TRANSIT MASTER PLAN'S PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IS TO:

Provide Hood River County stakeholders meaningful and easily accessible input opportunities throughout the TMP process with an intentional focus on broader involvement by historically marginalized communities, including but not limited to low-income individuals, youth, people with disabilities, seniors, immigrants, and Limited English Proficiency individuals.

The following public engagement schedule provides an overview of the primary outreach methods, the timing, and the relationship to key project milestones.



Between winter 2022 and autumn 2023, CAT staff will use seven primary activities to engage HRCTD stakeholders.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

The interviews' purpose is to affirm the approach, explore additional opportunities (e.g., events, available communication conduits, etc.) for outreach leveraging, identify new stakeholders, and learn the most appropriate and effective ways to reach historically underrepresented community voices. Interview results serve as the basis for the local outreach plans and the specifics for each.¹ Proposed initial list includes:

- City of Hood River Planning Department
- The Next Door
- Hood River County Planning Department
- Columbia Gorge Native American Collaborative
- Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission
- Cascade Locks City Administrator
- City of Hood River
- Mid-Columbia Housing Authority
- Columbia Gorge Commission
- U.S. Forest Service
- Hood River County School District
- Columbia Gorge Community College
- Port of Hood River
- Port of Cascade Locks
- Bridges to Health / Columbia Gorge Health CouncilHood

¹ See Appendix B for example interview

LOCAL COMMUNITY OUTREACH PLANS

The TMP's Local Community Outreach Plans will mirror the five focus areas and outline opportunities for events, ways to leverage outreach, and the key stakeholder groups, organizations, businesses, including parent-teacher organizations, retirement communities, other neighborhood-based agencies, etc. Highlighted will be ways to reach the general public with targeted strategies to those historically marginalized, including but not limited to, Native American communities, low-income individuals, youth, individuals with disabilities, seniors, and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) individuals. For each of the five focus areas and regional corridor, staff will use, tailor, and adjust where needed for improved outcomes the following outreach strategies.

PRESENTATIONS

Staff will request time on agendas at critical points throughout the process, including project launch, survey release, and draft plan including, but not limited to:

- Gorge Native American Collaboration
- Mid-Columbia Economic Development District
- Hood River City Council
- Hood River Chamber of Commerce / Visit Hood River
- Hood River Business Districts (Downtown Hood River, The Heights, West Cascade, Waterfront)
- Columbia Gorge Health Council

CAT SURVEY

As the primary key community input tool, CAT will conduct a survey of existing and potential riders using an online platform with an interactive map, on-board and intercept methods, and via supported partnerships with key Hood River County stakeholder agencies and community organizations potentially such as:

- The Next Door
- Bridges to Health/Columbia Gorge Health Council
- Hood River County School District
- One Community Health

In addition, CAT staff will conduct intercept surveys on CAT routes to gather targeted local and regional rider input and provide hard copy bilingual surveys in community locations as determined by the area's Local Community Outreach Plan.

Staff will analyze survey responses mid-way through the survey period to verify broad representation from all Hood River County populations, particularly to historically underrepresented voices.



EVENTS/DISPLAY OUTREACH

Reaching people where they are is a proven successful strategy to capture broad and diverse community input. At two key points in the process (survey period and the proposed draft TMP Strategies, Options, and Land-use Strategies), CAT staff will conduct interactive display outreach to engage Hood River County residents and visitors to:

- Ask the community to help identify key transportation issues within their community.
- Identify the knowledge around transit in communities and barriers to use.
- Explore potential transit and transportation options to address barriers.
- Create an opportunity for people to provide their vision for actions & strategies.

As a standard of outreach practice, bi-lingual materials and Spanish-speaking staff will be available.²

Example locations include:

- Juanitia's Market, Inc.—In the Heights
- Rosauers Supermarket—Hood River
- Mercado Guadalajara—Hood River
- Safeway—Hood River
- Mid Valley Market—Odell
- McIsaac's Store—Parkdale
- Wyeast Vista, Indian Creek Village—Hood River³

ONLINE COMMUNITY MEETINGS

CAT staff will host two online bilingual live community meetings with recorded presentations for dissemination and later viewing. The first meeting will be in Spring 2022 to boost survey response and later to review the draft TMP Strategies, Options, and Land-use Strategies.

CAT TMP COMMITTEES

The TMP process benefits from two key advisory committees with meetings timed to provide technical and community expertise on project process, deliverables, and draft and final TMP.

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC)

Comprised of CAT staff, regional jurisdictions, state and federal agencies, and quasi-public entities, the CAT Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will serve as the plan's core technical advisors on project deliverables. Providing timely review and input toward the development of the draft and final HRCTD Transit Master Plan, the TAC will meet up to three times to review and discuss the following items:

- **Meeting #1** Project Overview, TAC Role, and Responsibilities, PEP Review, Existing Conditions
- **Meeting #2** Draft TMP Strategies, Options, and Land Use
- **Meeting #3** Draft TMP Plan

² In-person outreach subject to Hood River Health Department direction.

³ CAT staff will seek to coordinate with Mid Columbia Housing Authority for additional outreach assistance.

Public Involvement Overview (cont'd)

TAC membership includes:

- City of Hood River
- Hood River County Community Development
- City of Cascade Locks
- Mid-Columbia Housing Authority
- U.S. Forest Service
- Mt. Hood Meadows
- Mid-Columbia Economic Development District
- ODOT
- Port of Hood River
- Port of Cascade Locks
- Gorge Commission
- Oregon State Parks
- Multnomah County Transportation Development

CAT COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC)

Appointed by the CAT Board, a group of community members with CAT Board representation will serve as advisors to TMP staff and CAT Board with the tasks of:

- Guiding the development of the TMP
- Assisting with public outreach
- Monitoring scope of the public input
- Reviewing draft deliverables and input from the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and other CAT committees' input

At the end of the planning process, the CAC will make a formal TMP adoption recommendation for consideration by the CAT Board.

The CAC composition includes confirmed representation from:

- HRCTD Board
- Business
- Seniors
- Persons with Disabilities
- Paratransit
- Employment Programs
- Emergency Management Services
- Real Estate
- Youth



THE CAT-CAC WILL MEET UP TO FOUR TIMES TO REVIEW AND COMMENT ON:

- **Meeting #1** Project Overview, TAC Role and Responsibilities, PEP Review, Existing Conditions
- **Meeting #2** Public Outreach Evaluation
- **Meeting #3** Draft TMP Strategies, Options, and Land Use
- **Meeting #4** Draft TMP Plan

ADDITIONAL CAT COMMITTEES

Utilizing existing CAT committees' community voices, staff will provide TMP updates and consult on key project deliverables with:

- Special Transportation Fund (STF)/Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) Committee
- Pending CAT Equity Committee
- CAT Operations Committee

AUDIENCES

The below table summarizes the CAT TMP stakeholder categories and example organizations to reach them.

STAKEHOLDER CATEGORY	EXAMPLES
CAT Riders	Commuters, Seniors, People with Disabilities, Youth
Government agencies, elected officials, and public institutions	Hood River County, City of Hood River, City Cascade Locks, Parkdale, Odell, Dee, Mid-Columbia Economic Development District, US Forest Service, Hood River County Community Development, Hood River Library, Tri-Met, Washington Department of Transportation
Tribal Nations	Gorge Native American Collaborative
Tourism	Timberline, Mt. Hood Ski Bowl, Gorge Tourism Alliance Oregon Hikers, Travel Portland, Travel Oregon, Friends of the Columbia Gorge
Media	Columbia Gorge News, Radio Tierra, CAT Rider Newsletters, Healthy Gorge Initiative Blog
Employers	Port of Hood River, Port of Cascade Locks, Insitu, Cardinal Glass Industries, Inc.
Businesses Organizations	Hood River County Chamber of Commerce/Visit Hood River, Columbia Gorge Fruit Growers, Farmers Irrigation District
Education	Hood River County School District, Oregon State University Extension Office, Columbia Gorge Community College
Residents	Homeowner associations
Community Organizations/ Groups	The Next Door, Engage the Gorge, One Community Health
Title VI & Environmental Justice	Gorge Native American Collaborative, Mid-Columbia Health Equity Advocates, Oregon Human Development Corporation
Health Care Organizations, Agencies, Groups, Providers	Hood River County Health Department, Gorge Community Health Council, Mid-Columbia Medical Center, Providence Hood River Memorial Hospital, Bridges to Health/Columbia Gorge Health Council
Housing Organizations, Agencies, Groups, Providers	Mid-Columbia Housing Authority, Columbia Gorge Housing Authority, Columbia Cascade Housing Corporation

COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Website (ridecatbus.org/tmp)

The TMP will use the Bang the Table platform, a centralized community engagement tool for TMP input for capturing, analyzing, and reporting on Hood River County-wide engagement through a single platform. In addition, the site will house the primary TMP public involvement and information tools, including online surveys, interactive mapping, project resources, e-updates, and informational project videos.

Bilingual Project Fact Sheet

The project fact sheet provides a TMP overview, project schedule, and where to find additional information for county-wide and regional distribution.

Newsletter Articles

Using the TMP communication conduits developed through stakeholder interviews, existing channels, CAC-CAT, and TAC relationships, periodic newsletter articles will coincide with project e-updates for broad distribution.

Bi-lingual Display Boards/Posters

Invitingly bright, engaging with accessible and easily understandable information about the importance of the TMP for community input will be strategically placed throughout Hood River County to attract attention and participation in its development.

Social Media

Using CAT's social media outlets and those of the TMP planning partners, identified outlets through stakeholder interviews, CAT will provide messages for dissemination throughout the process at key points to highlight input opportunities.

Bilingual Rack Cards

All routes will have rack cards with a condensed version of the project fact sheet to capture CAT's current riders. Later in the process, updated rack cards will highlight the draft TMP strategies and the CAT adoption process input opportunities.

Media Outreach

Using existing Hood River media outlet channels, CAT staff will send news releases to highlight the TMP launch, promote survey availability, draft TMP and public input opportunities before CAT Board review and adoption discussions.



APPENDIX A

EXCERPTED FROM HOOD RIVER TRANSPORTATION DISTRICT

2017-2020 Civil Rights Program Title VI and Limited English Proficiency Plan (<https://www.ride-catbus.org/civil-rights/>)

Public Participation Plan

The District's public involvement strategy offers continuous opportunities for the public to participate in proposed transportation decisions. Such as service design changes, new services, fare changes, and changes of service policy. The primary mechanism for the public to participate is to attend the monthly District board meetings which are advertised in the local paper. These are open, public meetings held at a local business that is wheelchair accessible. The District meets the goals outlined in the Public Transit State Management Plan for public involvement.

Early and continuing public involvement opportunities throughout planning and programming process, and in the identification of social, economic, and environmental impacts of proposed transportation decisions.

The District seeks out and considers the viewpoints of minority, low-income and LEP populations in the course of conducting public outreach and involvement activities. A full copy of HRCTD's outreach plan for individuals with limited English proficiency can be found in below. Key elements of the plan include:

- Spanish speaking translators available upon request.
- Route and Schedule brochures available in both English and Spanish.
- Transit surveys conducted by HRCTD available in Spanish.
- Public meetings with translators available upon request.
- The District provides private sector providers with a reasonable opportunity to comment on plans, programs, and to be included in coordinated plans.

APPENDIX B



Hood River County Transportation District (HRCTD) Transit Master Plan Update Preliminary Stakeholder Interviews

Purpose:

To ensure the update to the HRCTD Transit Master Plan's public involvement strategies and methods reach intended audiences, the PI team will review the draft public engagement plan (PEP) approach with up to 15 key stakeholders in the region and targeted focus areas. The interview process will affirm the approach, explore additional opportunities (e.g., events, available communication conduits, etc.) for outreach leveraging, identify new stakeholders, and learn most appropriate and effective ways to reach historically underrepresented community voices.

Questions:

Thank you for taking the time to discuss the HRCTD Transit Master Plan. During our brief interview, we will review our proposed public engagement approach, ask for your suggestions on any additional community stakeholders to reach and the best ways to do so, learn the community communication channels you use, and discuss potential outreach partnering.

1. From your perspective, how currently aware are your [constituents, customers, clients, guests] aware of CAT services?
 - a. Why do you think that is?
2. Are there other current or upcoming large community meetings, events, and/or planning processes that you know of that we might collaborate and/or coordinate with for greater mutual outreach?
3. Do you have examples of past public processes that were successful in your community? Please describe.
4. What particular communication methods work best in your community and for whom (e.g., community newsletters, posters in coffee shops, Rotary meetings, etc.)?
5. From your perspective, what groups of individuals/communities are difficult to reach or involve in public processes in your community and why?
 - a. What have you done that's been successful or not?
6. What do you think will be the most challenging aspect for the TMP's public involvement in your community? (e.g. – high rate of non-computer households)
 - a. What suggestions do you have to address it?
7. The project is relying on community partnerships to reach the broadest number of people for input on effective and community-based transit strategies and additional transportation options strategies (bike share, ride share, vanpool, etc.) that best meet their needs.
 - a. Would you be willing to partner and assist with TMP outreach using your communication / media networks?
 - b. What other entities/orgs./groups/agencies do you think might be good partners for TMP outreach?
8. Other comments/considerations?
9. May I include you on the project's interested parties list (IPL) for future updates?
 - a. Whom else from [entity] should we be sure to include?
10. Are there any other key planning processes coming up for you?
11. Do you have any questions for me?