

# Local Consultation Survey Summary

In order to comply with federal rules in 23 CFR 450, the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) has completed a survey of local elected officials in Oregon. This regulation is intended to ensure communication between state and local officials relating to statewide transportation planning and the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The regulation provides a role for local elected officials and recognizes that there may be a real or perceived gap in equity between the way MPOs work with ODOT and the ways in which local officials work with the state transportation agency in planning and programming processes.

While the regulations focus on determining success in consultation with non-MPO areas, ODOT chose to send the survey to all Oregon cities, counties, and Metro, since their leadership is elected. ODOT conducted the survey by regular mail in March and April of 2005. The purpose of this survey was to determine the perceived effectiveness of ODOT in consulting with local officials and to be able to compare responses from MPO and non-MPO areas, ODOT regions, and ACT areas.

In this survey summary, "MPO respondent" means a response from a locality that ODOT has determined is within an MPO area. "Non-MPO area respondent" means a response from a locality that ODOT has determined is not within an MPO area. The respondent's region has also been determined by ODOT.

## **Basic numbers**

Number of surveys sent out: 278

Number of responses: 97

## **Responses included:**

- 18 from counties
- 78 from cities
- 78 from non-MPO areas
- 19 from MPO areas
- 16 from cities in MPO areas
- 2 counties in MPO areas

Responses were returned from jurisdictions in most areas of the state, with jurisdictions in each ODOT region returning between about a quarter and a third of all possible responses.

## **Number of responses per region:**

<b>Region</b>	<b># Responses</b>	<b># Possible</b>
Region 1	18	47
Region 2	33	91
Region 3	13	39
Region 4	13	40
Region 5	20	61
<b>Total</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>278</b>

## **Assumptions:**

For most questions, possible responses ranged from Very Effective to Not Effective. These assumptions explain how those responses were categorized.

1. An answer of at least "somewhat involved" is involved.
2. An answer of at least "somewhat effective" is effective.
3. In the few cases where someone marked two categories of response, the lower was kept.

### **Are ODOT consultation procedures effective?**

- 85% of all those who said they were involved in statewide transportation planning or STIP development (91 total) said ODOT's consultation procedures are effective overall (question 7).
- 86% of non-MPO area respondents who said they were involved in statewide transportation planning or STIP development (74 total) said ODOT's consultation procedures are effective overall.

Also:

- 65% of all respondents involved in transportation planning (89 total) felt that their involvement in transportation planning decisions is effective (question 9).
- 64% of non-MPO area respondents who were involved in transportation planning (72 total) felt that their involvement in transportation planning decisions is effective (question 9).
- 76% of those involved in STIP development (71 total) felt that their involvement in STIP decisions is effective (question 10).
- 77% of non-MPO area respondents who were involved in STIP development (57 total) felt that their involvement in STIP decisions is effective (question 10).

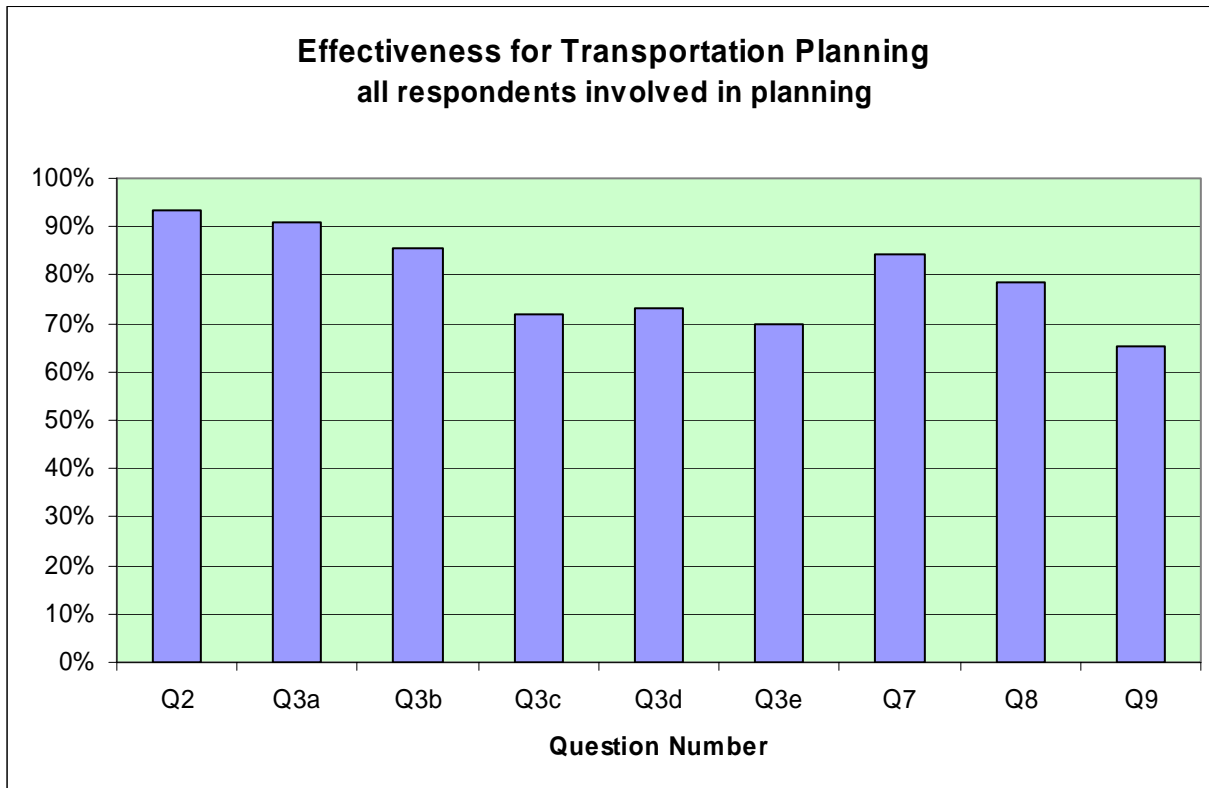
The following charts show the percentage of "effective" answers for the materials and methods questions for transportation planning and STIP development and the summary level questions numbered 7-10. First are all respondents who indicated they were involved in transportation planning or STIP development in their respective charts and following on the next two pages are respondents who are involved in planning or STIP development from Non-MPO and MPO areas for comparison.

Overall, ODOT has received a high percentage of "effective" responses. The non-MPO area answers mirror the overall answers, likely because they are the majority of the sample. The lowest percent effective are for ODOT staff at City/County Board meetings (questions 3c and 6c) and city/county participation through other intergovernmental groups (questions 3e and 6e). Many respondents indicated in comments added that ODOT does not come or come often enough to make presentations to board meetings, which could account for the low score on that measure.

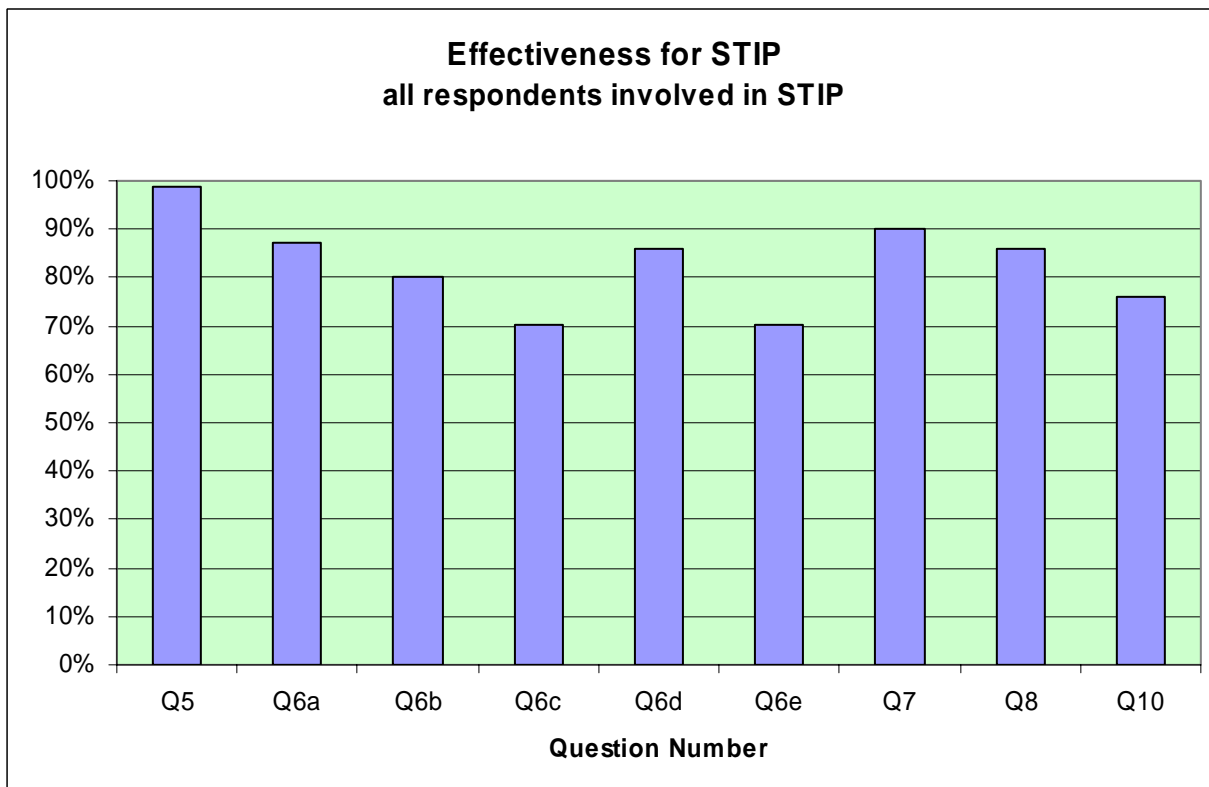
Many respondents also indicated not being familiar with other relevant intergovernmental groups (such as Economic Revitalization Teams, Regional Partnerships, and MPO boards) contributing to the lower score on that measure. The exception is the higher rate of effective answers to this question from MPO areas where there may be more intergovernmental structures existing in which to participate. Fewer MPO area respondents ranked participation through the ACT (question 3d) as effective, especially with regard to transportation planning. This may be partially explained because two of Oregon's large MPO areas are not represented by ACTs including Portland Metro, which has a number of possible respondents within its MPO area. However, the number of MPO respondents indicating ACT participation is effective goes up considerably in the STIP development question (question 6d). There are four Oregon MPOs in ACT areas, two are new with the last census and their members are likely familiar with working individually through the ACTs for STIP development, and two others are established participants in their local ACT process for developing the STIP.

A further noticeable difference is that MPO area respondents indicated that communication and coordination with neighboring jurisdictions is effective. This is supported by comments volunteered that seem to indicate that many MPO area respondents feel that their MPO process for participating is quite effective. Although, several comments indicated that a small or non-MPO jurisdiction next door to a large or MPO jurisdiction may be more likely to feel that they have less voice or impact in the process.

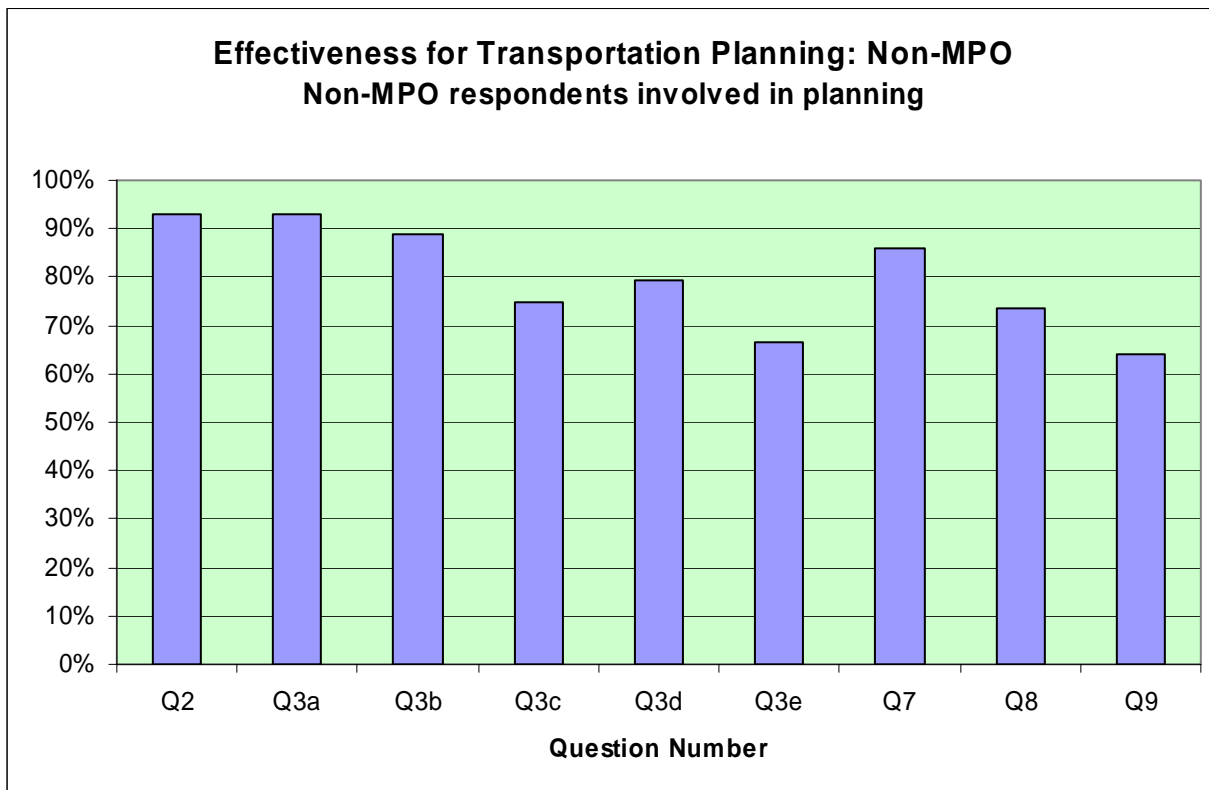
**Chart 1.** Percentage of “effective” answers from all respondents involved in transportation planning.



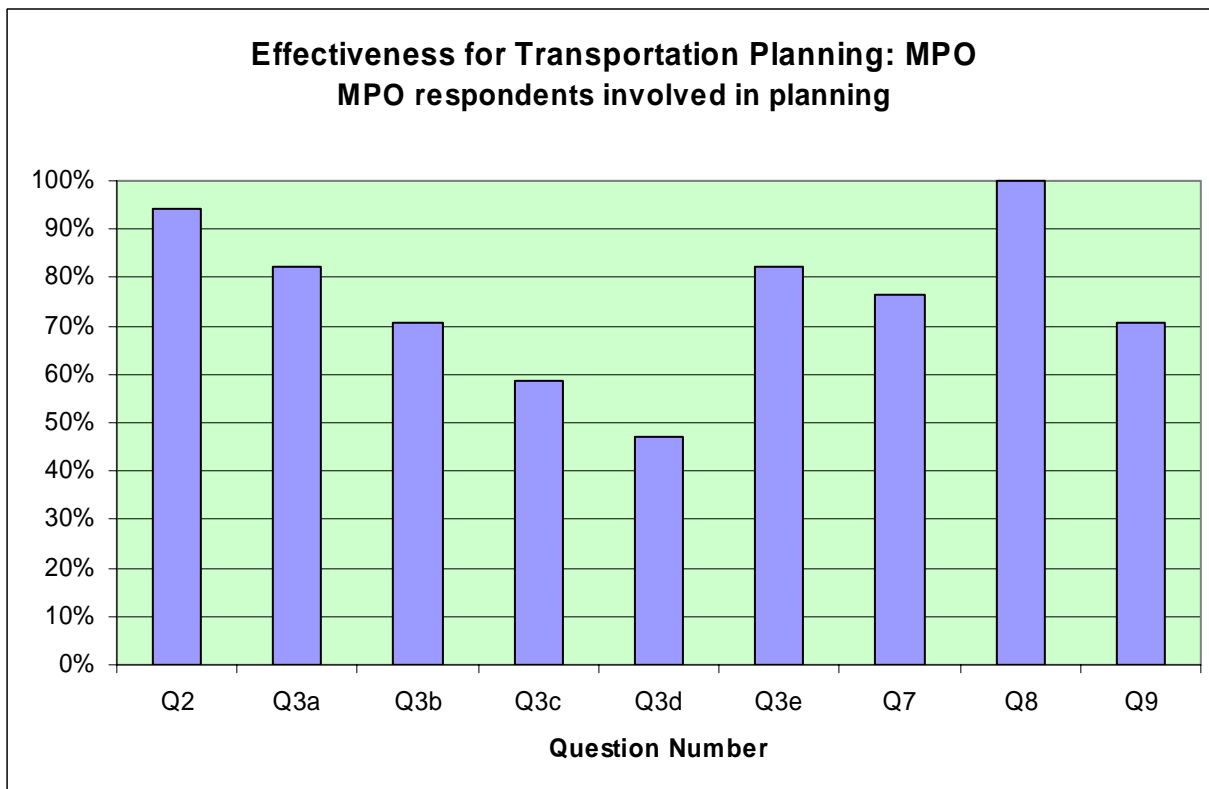
**Chart 2.** Percentage of “effective” answers from all respondents involved in STIP development.



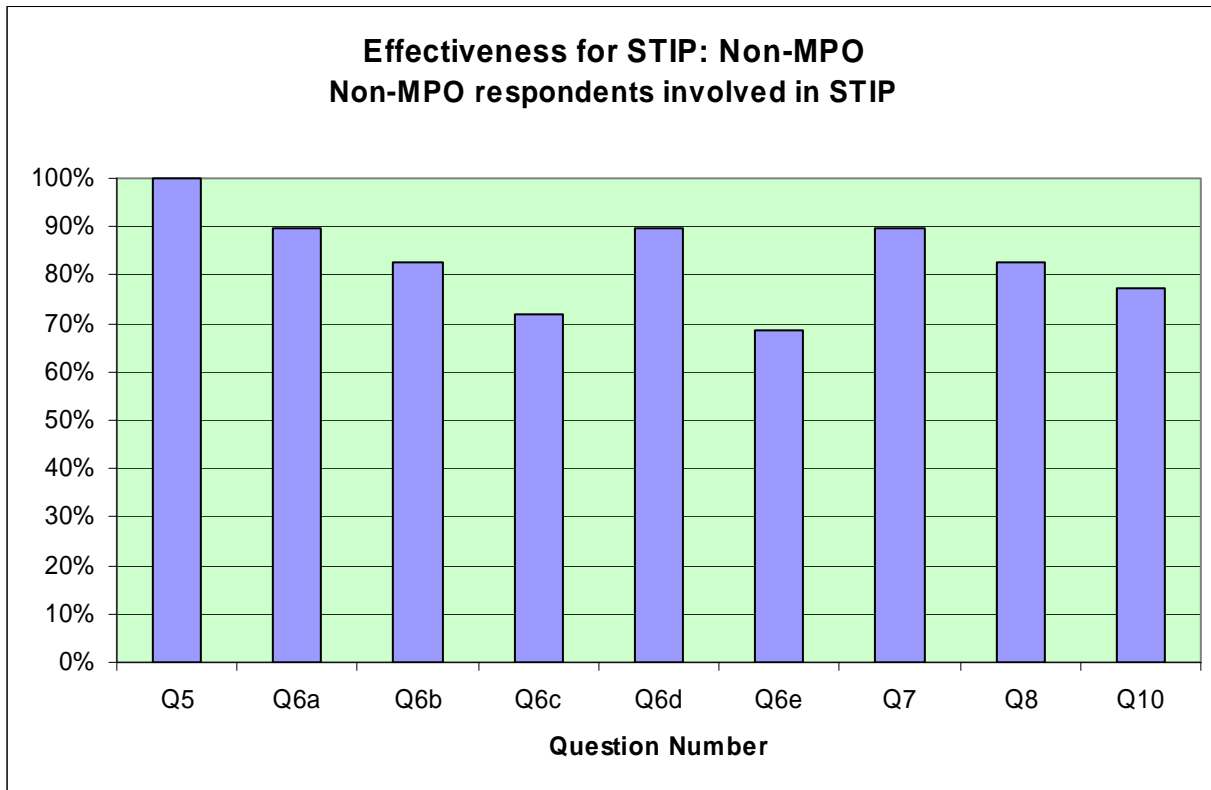
**Chart 3.** Percentage of “effective” answers from Non-MPO area respondents involved in transportation planning.



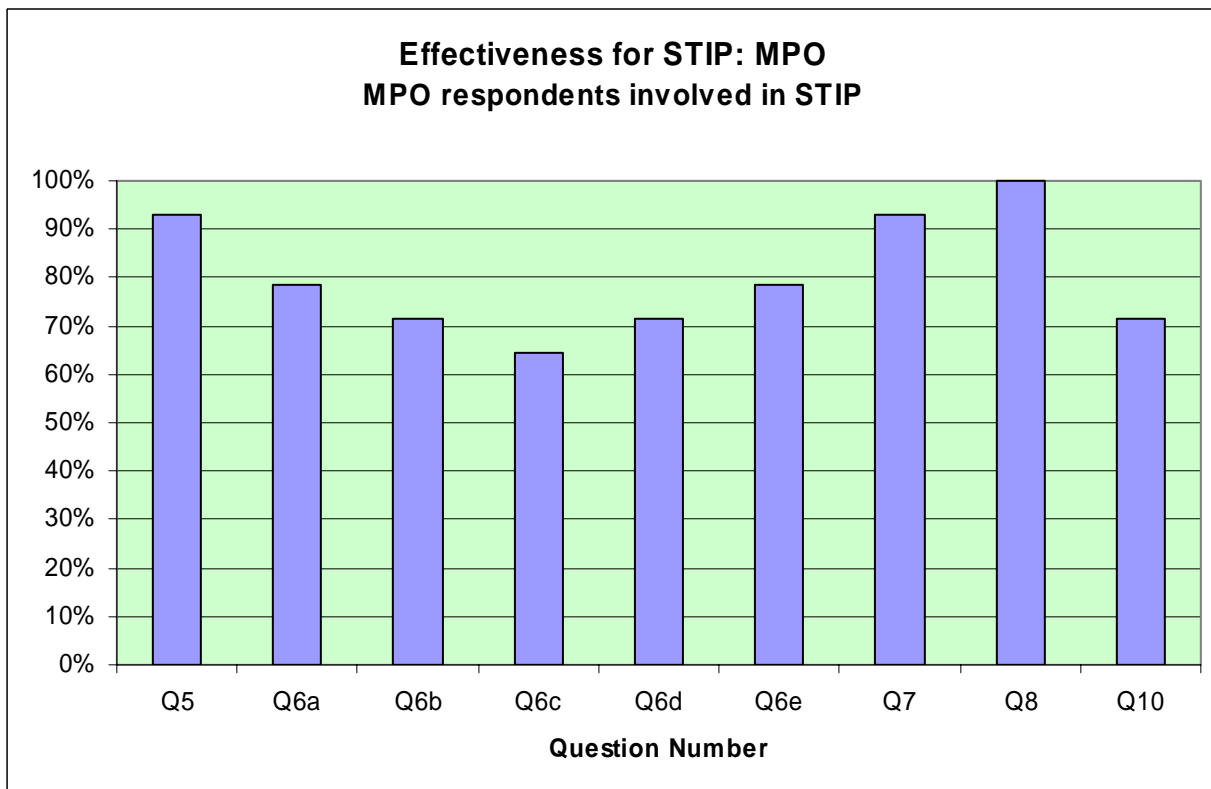
**Chart 4.** Percentage of “effective” answers from MPO area respondents involved in transportation planning.



**Chart 5.** Percentage of “effective” answers from Non-MPO area respondents who are involved in STIP development.



**Chart 6.** Percentage of “effective” answers from MPO area respondents who are involved in STIP development.



**Information by Region**

ODOT is organized in five regions. Each of the ODOT regions has adapted the process of STIP development, and transportation planning to a lesser extent, to meet the unique needs and history in the area while respecting OTC policy and department procedures. These tables show the level of effectiveness indicated for the summary level questions by the respondent’s region.

Overall consultation effectiveness (question 7, all responses included whether involved or not)

Region	Very Effective	Effective	Somewhat Effective	Total Effective	Not Effective	No Response	Total
1	11.11%	27.78%	44.44%	<b>83.33%</b>	11.11%	5.56%	<b>100.00%</b>
2	24.24%	24.24%	36.36%	<b>84.85%</b>	12.12%	3.03%	<b>100.00%</b>
3	15.38%	46.15%	15.38%	<b>76.92%</b>	15.38%	7.69%	<b>100.00%</b>
4	23.08%	23.08%	15.38%	<b>61.54%</b>	15.38%	23.08%	<b>100.00%</b>
5	45.00%	30.00%	15.00%	<b>90.00%</b>	10.00%	0.00%	<b>100.00%</b>
<b>Average</b>	23.76%	30.25%	25.32%	<b>79.33%</b>	12.80%	7.87%	<b>100.00%</b>

Effectiveness of communication and coordination with neighbor ACTs and MPOs (question 8, all responses included whether involved or not)

Region	Very Effective	Effective	Somewhat Effective	Total Effective	Not Effective	No Response	Total
1	5.56%	38.89%	50.00%	<b>94.44%</b>	0.00%	5.56%	<b>100.00%</b>
2	6.06%	30.30%	33.33%	<b>69.70%</b>	21.21%	9.09%	<b>100.00%</b>
3	7.69%	46.15%	15.38%	<b>69.23%</b>	15.38%	15.38%	<b>100.00%</b>
4	7.69%	38.46%	15.38%	<b>61.54%</b>	15.38%	23.08%	<b>100.00%</b>
5	15.00%	35.00%	30.00%	<b>80.00%</b>	0.00%	20.00%	<b>100.00%</b>
<b>Average</b>	8.40%	37.76%	28.82%	<b>74.98%</b>	10.40%	14.62%	<b>100.00%</b>

Effectiveness of involvement in planning decisions (question 9, for those involved in transportation planning)

Region	Very Effective	Effective	Somewhat Effective	Total Effective	Not Effective	No Response	Total
1	0.00%	13.33%	73.33%	<b>86.67%</b>	13.33%	0.00%	<b>100.00%</b>
2	0.00%	12.50%	37.50%	<b>50.00%</b>	31.25%	18.75%	<b>100.00%</b>
3	0.00%	23.08%	38.46%	<b>61.54%</b>	23.08%	15.38%	<b>100.00%</b>
4	0.00%	40.00%	20.00%	<b>60.00%</b>	30.00%	10.00%	<b>100.00%</b>
5	5.26%	47.37%	26.32%	<b>78.95%</b>	15.79%	5.26%	<b>100.00%</b>
<b>Average</b>	1.05%	27.26%	39.12%	<b>67.43%</b>	22.69%	9.88%	<b>100.00%</b>

Effectiveness of involvement in STIP decisions (question 10, for those involved in STIP development)

Region	Very Effective	Effective	Somewhat Effective	Total Effective	Not Effective	No Response	Total
1	0.00%	21.43%	50.00%	<b>71.43%</b>	28.57%	0.00%	<b>100.00%</b>
2	10.00%	20.00%	40.00%	<b>70.00%</b>	20.00%	10.00%	<b>100.00%</b>
3	0.00%	11.11%	77.78%	<b>88.89%</b>	11.11%	0.00%	<b>100.00%</b>
4	11.11%	33.33%	44.44%	<b>88.89%</b>	0.00%	11.11%	<b>100.00%</b>
5	10.53%	36.84%	26.32%	<b>73.68%</b>	26.32%	0.00%	<b>100.00%</b>
<b>Average</b>	6.33%	24.54%	47.71%	<b>78.58%</b>	17.20%	4.22%	<b>100.00%</b>

**ACTs**

ODOT uses its Area Commissions on Transportation (ACTs) to communicate and consult with local jurisdictions and stakeholders who are represented on the ACT per ODOT policy. ACTs also have a key role in prioritizing modernization projects for the STIP. The following tables show the level of effectiveness indicated for the four summary level questions by respondents who reported their jurisdiction being part of an ACT area.

Here, ACT means the respondent themselves identified their locality as being within or partially within an ACT represented area. No ACT means the respondent did not identify themselves as being within or partially within an ACT area. If a respondent is known to ODOT to be within an ACT area, but did not identify themselves as such, then these would be then included in the No ACT rows. The purpose of this is to compare responses from those who know they are ACT-represented and those who do not.

Overall consultation effectiveness (question 7, all responses included whether involved or not)

<b>ACT Area</b>	Very Effective	Effective	Somewhat Effective	<b>Total Effective</b>	Not Effective	No Response	<b>Total</b>
<b>ACT</b>	24.53%	32.08%	28.30%	<b>84.91%</b>	11.32%	3.77%	<b>100.00%</b>
<b>No ACT</b>	25.00%	25.00%	27.27%	<b>77.27%</b>	13.64%	9.09%	<b>100.00%</b>

Effectiveness of communication and coordination with neighbor ACTs and MPOs (question 8, all responses included whether involved or not)

<b>ACT Area</b>	Very Effective	Effective	Somewhat Effective	<b>Total Effective</b>	Not Effective	No Response	<b>Total</b>
<b>ACT</b>	11.32%	37.74%	30.19%	<b>79.25%</b>	11.32%	9.43%	<b>100.00%</b>
<b>No ACT</b>	4.55%	34.09%	31.82%	<b>70.45%</b>	11.36%	18.18%	<b>100.00%</b>

Effectiveness of involvement in planning decisions (question 9, for those involved in transportation planning)

<b>ACT Area</b>	Very Effective	Effective	Somewhat Effective	<b>Total Effective</b>	Not Effective	No Response	<b>Total</b>
<b>ACT</b>	1.92%	30.77%	30.77%	<b>63.46%</b>	25.00%	11.54%	<b>100.00%</b>
<b>No ACT</b>	0.00%	16.22%	51.35%	<b>67.57%</b>	21.62%	10.81%	<b>100.00%</b>

Effectiveness of involvement in STIP decisions (question 10, for those involved in STIP development)

<b>ACT Area</b>	Very Effective	Effective	Somewhat Effective	<b>Total Effective</b>	Not Effective	No Response	<b>Total</b>
<b>ACT</b>	8.33%	22.92%	41.67%	<b>72.92%</b>	20.83%	6.25%	<b>100.00%</b>
<b>No ACT</b>	4.35%	30.43%	47.83%	<b>82.61%</b>	17.39%	0.00%	<b>100.00%</b>

The comments volunteered seem to indicate that if the respondent was highly involved in their area ACT, they felt more informed and that their participation was more effective. The first two tables above support this, with more respondents in ACT areas indicating that consultation overall and coordination with neighbors is effective. The second two tables do not support the comments, as they do not indicate that more respondents in ACT areas feel their involvement with decisions for Transportation Planning and STIP, respectively, is effective.

Possibly complicating the second two tables above is that not all respondents that are located in an ACT area answered that they were in such an area. In fact, there were multiple surveys returned from ACT covered areas that had question marks or something similar to “unknown” written in on the ACT questions. For example:

- 229 surveys were sent to jurisdictions at least partially within ACTs.
- 77 responses were returned from within ACT areas.
- 26 responses were returned from within ACT areas and respondents *did not* mark that they were at least partially within ACT areas on question 15. These were from all over the state.

This indicates that ODOT has work to do in ACT areas to make sure jurisdictions understand the process of their representation to ODOT through the ACTs. The comments also leave the impression that where all jurisdictions in the area are direct voting members of the ACT, the ACT process is viewed as more effective. In at least one of ODOT’s regions, Region 2, the ACT memberships are not set up this way because of the number of jurisdictions to be represented. Since there are many jurisdictions and respondents from Region 2, it is possible that this is another of the factors that contributed to the results in the last two tables.

### **Other themes from comments provided**

There were many opportunities in the survey for respondents to provide unstructured additions to their responses. Further themes that arose from these were generally shared by MPO and Non-MPO area respondents. They included:

- Requests for more opportunities for direct communication between localities and ODOT management.
- Requests for ODOT to be more flexible and responsive to local characteristics
- Lack of clarity regarding how ODOT makes decisions and how the agency’s internal offices interact.
- Recognition of the diminishing quantity of money dedicated to modernization projects, especially as debt repayment begins on the Oregon Transportation Investment Act bonds.
- Calls for ODOT to be more aware of other mode and local needs such as bike/pedestrian, transit, and traffic control from both MPO and Non-MPO areas.
- Mixed response about the informational materials that ODOT provides. Some indicated too much was provided and some not enough.
- Several requests for ODOT to do a better job of making sure communications are non-technical and understood by the intended audience.

### **Agency responses**

ODOT is currently undergoing a process to document how its STIP project list is developed. The planned products will do much to explain STIP programs and rules and ODOT decision structures to stakeholders and the public. Products will include a STIP Users’ Guide for participants and a brochure designed for the public; both will be available on ODOT’s website.

Regions also have the opportunity to learn from each other through this documentation process. Most regions have developed local area procedures that work very well for some aspects of STIP development. When the products are available, regions will have the opportunity to see these described and can choose to employ examples described. For example, some regions are careful to present a fuller picture of the region STIP program to their ACTs than just the modernization program project selection which directly involves the ACTs. This way, participants can see how their area fits into the larger region picture and while available modernization money may be focused on a given project,



preservation and safety projects may be better distributed. This helps participants understand that their areas are being invested in, even if it is not a major modernization project.

ODOT has enacted its ACT policy to ensure that their procedures are public and inclusive. As ACT charters are renewed, they are coming into compliance with the new policy, which may help more people understand the ACT process and how to communicate their areas needs to ODOT and the Oregon Transportation Commission. In addition, ODOT has recently decentralized many of its technical staff. This may help ODOT to be more responsive to local characteristics in the future.

In addition, ODOT is currently updating the Oregon Transportation Plan. A new goal planned will directly address coordination, communication, and cooperation with partners including local governments for transportation planning and development.

While all these initiatives will go a long way towards addressing some of the concerns shown in the survey responses, the information also points to further improvements the agency can consider in the future such as:

- Encouraging more staff presentations to local jurisdictions or providing more kinds of roundtables for participants
- Providing regional news updates including STIP status and more
- Providing STIP information earlier and opportunity to catch-up for new participants
- Working to ensure that information provided minimizes technical language and comes with an executive summary for quick review
- Reaching out to jurisdictions and helping them understand the ACT process or encouraging the ACTs to send updates to their member jurisdictions

### **Conclusions**

In general, ODOT is considered effective with regard to its procedures for communicating and consulting with both MPO and non-MPO area jurisdictions. The tables and charts included here point to where ODOT can continue improving such as by working to raise the number of respondents who would answer very effective or effective as opposed to somewhat effective in a future survey, or learning from MPOs' processes for communicating and coordinating with their member jurisdictions.

ODOT's use of the ACTs in a regional process for some aspects of STIP development and transportation planning has advantages for helping local governments to feel involved, as can be seen in the results of this survey. Current initiatives will help address existing concerns and the agency can consider other procedures to further improve the effectiveness of its local consultation practices in the future.