



MPO Communications Plan

2015-2016

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INTRODUCTION

The Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization seeks to elevate the community conversation about how Greater Des Moines achieves its vision of being a collaborative, vibrant, and dynamic region of lasting value, equity, and diversity as outlined in The Tomorrow Plan and in subsequent plans, especially Mobilizing Tomorrow.

The mission statements from The Tomorrow Plan and Mobilizing Tomorrow both read:

Ever mindful of future generations, our mission is to cooperate across political boundaries to achieve social, economic, and environmental resilience for Greater Des Moines.

With this as the MPO ethos, the 2016 Communications Plan sets forth the following goals, strategies and activities.

GOALS

The overarching goal of the Communications Plan is to foster the community's view of the Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization as being the forward-thinking convener of local, state and federal government agencies, as well as non-profits, civic organizations, and business partners, to advance the collective interests of Greater Des Moines. The MPO is regularly sought out as regional facilitators of projects, discussions, and joint ventures benefitting the region in the areas of transportation, sustainable development, data and analysis, and environmental justice.

The MPO and its staff are viewed as being and having:

Smart, possessing acumen in regional planning for transportation, sustainable development, mapping, and data and analysis;

Visionary, thinking strategically and long-term about how best to improve Greater Des Moines, as embodied in The Tomorrow Plan and Mobilizing Tomorrow;

Collaborative, recognizing the interconnectedness of the region's governments, businesses and individuals and seeing the larger systems in order to encourage strategic choices about the future; and

Integrity, acting as careful and conscientious custodians of a wealth of information and using it to help improve the lives of all residents of Greater Des Moines.

STRATEGIES

Four strategies are identified to support the goals of the Communications Plan.

Offer expert planning service: Further establish the credibility of the organization and the expertise of its planners;

Support data-driven decision-making: Develop and publish work products of value for Greater Des Moines, including regional plans, maps, data, feasibility studies, reports and best practices, in support of the community making wise investments of time, energy and resources;

Lead public discourse: Contribute to the public discourse in traditional and emerging media in the role of subject-matter experts sharing timely and relevant information; and

Engage with community: Actively participate in ongoing dialogue for improving Greater Des Moines by being present and engaged with community partners.

ACTIVITIES

Several activities have been identified to carry out the strategic direction and meet the goals of the Communications Plan.

Stronger Online Presence: Centralize and strengthen the MPO's online presence. Reduce multiple websites and social media sites to a strategic few. Be intentional and strategic in how each is used. Develop social media and websites policies.

Media Relations: Actively foster good working relationships with state and metro press. Bolster relations with communications staff at key partner organizations such as at the Greater Des Moines Partnership and the Greater Des Moines Convention and Visitors Bureau, and offer the MPO as an expert resource on the region to local, state and national media. Position the MPO as a rich source of information on region-wide infrastructure and planning initiatives. Regularly issue press releases. Develop a media policy.

Publicize Research: Continually publicize MPO staff research through traditional and social media, focusing on meaningful local content and demonstrating the MPO's knowledge base and analysis capabilities.

Events and Sponsorships: Strategically hold and sponsor events to reach key audiences. Use these events to reinforce messaging from other activities.

Stakeholder Presentations: Regularly make presentations as MPO staff to key audiences, with emphasis on MPO committees, subcommittees and roundtables; member governments; and community partners.

Staff Development: Be intentional and strategic about the selection of staff development opportunities. Favor those that burnish the already credible and positive reputations of MPO staff in the community. Examples include: board & committee participation, media training, and speaker training.

AUDIENCE: MPO Committees

Who's included?

- Policy, Executive and Technical committee members
- Subcommittees & Roundtables

What does success look like?

- They tout MPO, The Tomorrow Plan and Mobilizing Tomorrow as improving the region.
- They seek MPO staff as expert resources.
- They use MPO as forum to collaborate across political boundaries for regional benefit.
- They take ownership in the MPO, have pride in it, and want to talk about it.

What obstacles stand in the way of success?

- MPO viewed only as agency for funding transportation projects
- MPO staff viewed as young and perceived as lacking real-world experience
- MPO is not integrated into member governments' planning processes
- Negative perception of regionalism

Key messages:

- You are critical ambassadors of regionalism. Talk about the good work being done through The Tomorrow Plan and Mobilizing Tomorrow, champion their ongoing implementation in your communities, and help make connections with partners that further the plans' implementation.
- Think regionally. Our success as a region competing nationally and internationally will depend on our ability to work together collaboratively toward the regional goals established in The Tomorrow Plan and Mobilizing Tomorrow.
- We are seeing results. The work being done to fulfill the common vision establish in The Tomorrow Plan and Mobilizing Tomorrow is already benefitting the region.
- Let us help. Leverage the MPO's expertise in planning to help your individual communities.

Available avenues:

- Best Practices Series
- Monthly Reports
- Post-meeting emails
- Quarterly e-newsletters
- Website resources
- MPO services
- Social media

AUDIENCE: Member Governments

Who's included?

- Elected officials and staff member governments
 - Mayors
 - Council Members
 - City Managers

What does success look like?

- They tout MPO, The Tomorrow Plan and Mobilizing Tomorrow as improving the region.
- They view MPO staff as expert resources.
- They use MPO as forum to collaborate across political boundaries for regional benefit.
- They take ownership in the MPO, have pride in it, and want to talk about it.

What obstacles stand in the way of success?

- Lack of awareness or understanding of what MPO does or how it can help
- MPO viewed as agency for funding transportation projects
- MPO staff viewed as young and perceived as lacking real-world experience
- MPO is not integrated into member governments' planning processes
- Negative perception of regionalism
- View of MPO as being too urban focused.
- They 'don't want to be told what to do.'

Key messages

- The MPO exists to serve all members governments; leverage the MPO's expertise in planning to help your individual communities.
- Think regionally: Our success as a region competing nationally and internationally depends on our collaboration on goals established in The Tomorrow Plan and Mobilizing Tomorrow.
- We are seeing results. The work being done to fulfill the common vision established in The Tomorrow Plan and Mobilizing Tomorrow is already yielding positive benefits for the region.
- The expert MPO staff is here to help with the implementation of The Tomorrow Plan and Mobilizing Tomorrow. Please use us in your communities to assist in the ongoing implementation of these regional plans.

Available avenues

- MPO presentations to governing bodies
- Post-meeting emails
- Website resources, including MPO services
- Social media, especially LinkedIn
- Annual Report
- Annual presentation to councils

AUDIENCE: Community Partners & Business Leaders

Who's included?

- Other regional groups, especially:
 - Greater Des Moines Partnership
 - Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines
 - The Tomorrow Plan Partners

What does success look like?

- They look to The Tomorrow Plan as a regional guide for improving Greater Des Moines
- They align their interests with The Tomorrow Plan – and ask their partners to do same

What obstacles stand in the way of success?

- Lack of awareness or understanding of the MPO, The Tomorrow Plan and Mobilizing Tomorrow.
- Negative perception of regionalism
- Misconceptions about what MPO is

Key messages

- Think regionally: Our success as a region competing nationally and internationally depends on our collaboration on the goals established in The Tomorrow Plan and Mobilizing Tomorrow.
- We are seeing results. The work being done to fulfill the common vision established in The Tomorrow Plan and Mobilizing Tomorrow is already yielding positive benefits for the region.
- The expert MPO staff is here to help with the implementation of The Tomorrow Plan. Please use us in your organizations, committees, funding programs, to assist in the ongoing implementation of The Tomorrow Plan and Mobilizing Tomorrow.

Available avenues

- Speaker Series
- Website, including “MPO services”
- Event sponsorships
- Quarterly e-newsletter
- Social media

AUDIENCE: Media

Who's included?

- Local, state and national media outlets reporting on Greater Des Moines
 - Des Moines Business Record
 - Des Moines Register
 - DSM Magazine
 - Iowa Public Radio
 - TV stations including KCCI, WHO, WOI

What does success look like?

- They utilize MPO staff as expert sources on regional planning, watershed, trails and transportation matters
- They use MPO data, maps and reports as regional context for more localized stories
- They measure success of the region against vision outlined in The Tomorrow Plan

What obstacles stand in the way of success?

- Lack of awareness or understanding of the MPO, The Tomorrow Plan and Mobilizing Tomorrow.
- Limited frame of reference for measuring local projects against regional goals.
- Limited time for reporting.

Key messages

- The role of regions is increasingly important in this economy. As Bruce Katz of the Brookings Institute has articulated, regional economies have led the national economic recovery. Regions are the ones innovating, creating jobs, and solving big problems that states and feds aren't. They are increasingly acting internationally.
- The success of Greater Des Moines depends on the ability and willingness of metro-area governments and community partners to work together collaboratively toward the more sustainable future envisioned in The Tomorrow Plan and Mobilizing Tomorrow.
- The MPO is a rich source of information about the region and a leader in thinking about what the region needs to be in order to have the best future possible.

Available avenues

- Speaker Series
- Website, including "MPO services"
- Social media
- Event sponsorships
- E-newsletter (Constant Contact)
- Press releases
- Op-Eds

AUDIENCE: Development Community

Who's included?

- Developers in the region, whether local or national
- Economic Development Officials
- Chambers of Commerce
- Neighborhood Associations
- Design Review Boards
- Planning and Zoning Commissions

What does success look like?

- They look to the MPO, The Tomorrow Plan and Mobilizing Tomorrow as a regional guide for growth.
- They use MPO resources, as well as The Tomorrow Plan and Mobilizing Tomorrow, to inform development decisions.

What obstacles stand in the way of success?

- Lack of awareness or understanding of the MPO, The Tomorrow Plan and Mobilizing Tomorrow.
- They 'don't want to be told what to do.'
- Lack of credibility.
- Telling them what they don't want to hear.

Key messages

- The MPO is available to the development community as a valuable and accessible public resource for data, analysis, research, planning, maps, and the long-range vision for the region.
- Be an active participant and vocal leader in the development of a more sustainable region as outlined in The Tomorrow Plan and Mobilizing Tomorrow.
- It's not only the right thing to do; it's a profitable way of doing business.
- There is demand for sustainable development patterns.
- The regional economy becomes more resilient if we work toward collective vision.

Available avenues

- Earned media, especially Business Record, DSM Magazine and Des Moines Register
- Speaker Series
- Website
- Social media
- AbsoluteDSM
- Event sponsorships
- Absolute DSM website
- The Tomorrow Plan reviews of site plans

AUDIENCE: Public

Who's included?

- Residents of Greater Des Moines region

What does success look like?

- They view the MPO, The Tomorrow Plan and Mobilizing Tomorrow as looking out for the long-term regional interests of all residents of Greater Des Moines.
- They feel engaged in discussions about how the region grows and develops.

What obstacles stand in the way of success?

- Lack of awareness or understanding of the MPO, The Tomorrow Plan and Mobilizing Tomorrow.
- Negative perception of regionalism.
- Misconceptions about what the MPO is and does.
- They 'don't want to be told what to do.'
- The MPO does not have directly elected board.
- Seen as bureaucrats.

Key messages

- We are a stronger and more resilient region when we work collaboratively.
- Get more involved – your voice can help shape future of region.
- Arm yourself with the best information possible.
- Take action to fulfill regional vision – and let us know if we can help.

Available avenues

- Website
- Social media, especially Facebook and Twitter
- Speaker Series
- Earned media, especially radio, TV and newspapers
- Quarterly newsletter

THE TOMORROW PLAN

GOAL: Further the implementation of The Tomorrow Plan through celebration, reinforcement, education and facilitation.

COMPONENTS: The plan aims to feed a virtuous cycle of recognizing the people and organizations behind the successful implementation of The Tomorrow Plan strategies while encouraging and motivating them and others to carry the work forward and further implement the strategies. As such, the two main components of the 2015 Communications Plan are celebrating Year 1 successes and lifting up Year 2 major initiatives. These components include:

- The Tomorrow Plan Year 2 Premiere
 - Release The Tomorrow Plan TODAY: 2015 Edition to Community

- Stakeholder presentations
 - City Councils
 - Community Partners

- Media relations campaign
 - Editorial board meeting with *The Des Moines Register*
 - Meeting with Des Moines Business Record editors
 - Insert Toward Tomorrow Report to Community in Business Record
 - 2015 Speaker Series press release

- The Tomorrow Plan 2015 Speakers Series

WATER TRAILS

GOAL: Engage the public, community partners, businesses, local governments and other stakeholders in a meaningful and constructive conversation about the future of waterways in Greater Des Moines, such that the MPO has ample material to develop a water trails master plan and a broad base of regional support to champion its eventual implementation.

COMPONENTS: The plan is designed such that the public, media, governments and other stakeholders begin to imagine – and are excited by – the potential that the creeks and rivers have for advancing many interests, including environmental conservation, water quality, recreational opportunities and economic development.

- Initial public engagement
 - Online video
 - Online ‘game’
 - Public activities
 - LAUNCH: Art event with public art by Mary Mattingly

- Media relations campaign
 - Press releases
 - Website updates
 - Ongoing social media campaign with #DSMwatertrails
 - Individual meetings (and paddle outings) with influential media
 - Publish video on Business Record website
 - Speakers as part of The Tomorrow Plan 2015 Speaker Series

COMPLETE STREETS

GOAL: Empower member governments to adopt and implement complete streets policies.

COMPONENTS: The plan seeks to provide member governments with policy language and tools for communicating the importance of complete streets with their audiences; to bring positive publicity to adopters and implementers; and raising regional awareness via media and social media of the many benefits of complete streets.

- Policy Language
 - Draft policy for adoption by individual member governments

- Tools for communicating importance of complete streets
 - Presentations to MPO committees
 - Presentations to member governments
 - Materials available on website
 - MPO presentations available for member governments to use

- Media relations
 - Pitch success stories on behalf of member governments with successful adoptions or implementations
 - Mayors' Challenge
 - Speakers with The Tomorrow Plan 2015 Speaker Series
 - Press releases
 - Social media

WEBSITE

GOAL: Retool the website at www.dmampo.org to be an easily accessible repository of relevant, localized and actionable content about the sustainable development of Greater Des Moines for MPO committees, member governments, community partners, business leaders, developers, media and the public.

COMPONENTS: The plan seeks to bring into focus the website's primary purpose as an information repository by cutting away the clutter, reorganizing the website's structure for ease of navigation, building out the content, and establishing a website policy and guidelines to ensure the ongoing and consistent maintenance of the website. Additionally, separate websites need to be eliminated or redirected to dmampo.org, or linked to dmampo.org in effort to keep dmampo.org as the primary hub of MPO's online content.

- Declutter
 - Remove all content not directly related to the MPO
- Reorganize
 - Restructure the menu and pages to maximize ease of access to content
- Build out content
 - Identify, develop and capture relevant content and add to website
 - Examples:
 - Presentations
 - Videos
 - MPO Services
 - MPO Initiatives
- Redirect or link from other sites
 - www.thetomorrowplan.com
 - cirtpa.org
 - www.smarttripsdsm.com
- Develop website policy and user guidelines

BRAND REFRESH

GOAL: The goal of refreshing the MPO's branding is to more clearly establish the MPO as the lead agency in the development and implementation of The Tomorrow Plan and Mobilizing Tomorrow in the eyes of MPO committees, member governments, community partners, developers, media and the public.

COMPONENTS: The brand refresh is designed to address a good problem that the MPO created with a separate branding scheme for the highly visible The Tomorrow Plan. The result is that The Tomorrow Plan branding is more widely recognized than the MPO branding; not everyone who knows about The Tomorrow Plan knows that the MPO led its development and is championing its implementation. The brand refresh aims to merge the identities of both branding schemes while maintaining their independent integrity.

- Merge branding scheme
 - Maintain existing MPO logo
 - Maintain existing Tomorrow Plan logo and branding scheme
 - Adjust MPO blue slightly to complement the color palette of The Tomorrow Plan branding scheme
 -
- Develop and deploy communication tools
 - Examples:
 - Presentations
 - Reports
 - Plans
 - Letterhead
 - Social media banners
 - Press releases



Ever mindful of future generations,

we collaborate across
political boundaries

to achieve social, economic, and
environmental resilience for

Greater Des Moines

A white silhouette of a city skyline is positioned at the bottom of the page, above the list of member communities.

Altoona • Ankeny • Bondurant • Carlisle • Clive • Dallas County • Des Moines • DART
Grimes • Johnston • Mitchellville • Norwalk • Pleasant Hill • Polk City • Polk County
Urbandale • Warren County • Waukee • West Des Moines • Windsor Heights

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