



ST. CLAIR COUNTY, MICHIGAN

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN



DRAFT

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WELCOME TO ST. CLAIR COUNTY

Located at the base of the thumb area of the lower peninsula of Michigan, St. Clair County is the easternmost of Michigan's 83 counties. It's known as the Blue Water Area because its eastern and southern boundaries are formed by the waters of Lake Huron, the St. Clair River, and Lake St. Clair. The St. Clair River forms a natural boundary separating Michigan from Ontario, Canada. The river flows along the southern part of the City of Port Huron until it reaches the twin Blue Water Bridges under which is the mouth of Lake Huron. It is also one of the heaviest traveled rivers in the world and is part of the world's longest shipping canal, the 2,347 mile St. Lawrence Seaway.

Greatly influenced by Lake Huron, St. Clair County offers a temperate climate which has cold winters, hot summers, and moderate springs and falls. There is 140 miles of shoreline in the county. Within the county are a wide-range of land types and uses, from rural agriculture to urban development to expansive and beautiful coastline; there is even an international border. Wetlands are scattered throughout the County, covering approximately 62 square miles, or 8.6% of the County's land area, but are most prevalent along the eastern and southern coastline and along inland rivers. Local governments are comprised of eight cities, including Port Huron which is the county seat, twenty three townships and two villages, Capac and Emmett. Each municipality maintains its own master plan and zoning ordinance. The various jurisdictions within the county along with many other organizations have proven themselves to be willing to cooperate with one another for the overall benefit of the region.

St. Clair County is a major international trade gateway between the United States and Canada for the movement of people and goods via the Blue Water Bridge. St. Clair County's stunning waterways as well as its diverse annual events makes it a tourist destination all year long. Residents and visitors alike are attracted to its vast water resources, its stunning scenic landscapes, beautifully maintained parks, miles of trails, neighborly communities, and its mix of traditional downtowns, and its unique rural character.

The total area of the county is approximately 836.63 square miles, of which 724.37 square miles is land and 112.26 square miles is water. An agricultural/village pattern of land use exists in the western portion of the County, supporting a rural lifestyle that residents would like to preserve. The predominant land use is, agricultural which covers almost 47% of the land area. This is followed by a substantial amount of single-family residential land at 38.6%, then park, recreation, and open space is the next largest use with only 4.9%. This part of St. Clair County offers diversity, a change of view and a change of pace from populated commercial communities that have proliferated along the county's eastern and southern waterfront.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

Document Purpose

The Public Participation Plan outlines the tools and techniques available to SCCMPC staff to gather information from St. Clair County citizens and stakeholders regarding transportation, land use, and economic development in the county. One key area that SCCMPC will continue to strive towards is listening to the public throughout all stages of public engagement.

St. Clair County Public Involvement Techniques

County planners have identified four categories of public involvement techniques:

- Inform
- Consult
- Deliberate
- Co-Create

This document explores each technique in detail in later sections. There are convenient ways to stay connected with the plans and projects that MPC/SCCOTS staff are working on. Below are some of the most common ways that people stay connected with St Clair County MPC.

- Attending MPC/SCCOTS meetings
- Learning more at our website
- Calling the MPC at (810) 989-6950
- Following the MPC on Twitter

SCCMPC provides many opportunities to discuss your ideas and encourages all individuals to make comments and suggestions at any time. For certain projects or products, SCCMPC staff will solicit public comment, such as changes to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), and the St. Clair County Master Plan. There are several other planning efforts that we perform in office, which require public input. However, the public should feel welcome to share comments with the SCCMPC staff throughout the year. SCCMPC staff appreciates all public feedback, and will respond directly, track the comment, or pass the comment on to the appropriate agency.

Table 1: Public Participation Plan Process
Adoption of Plan by St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission
Document Released
Comment Period
Document Revisions
Committee Recommendation
Committee Approval
SEMCOG Approval *For a Transportation Document*
MDOT Approval *For a Transportation Document*
Federal Approval *For a Transportation Document*
Complete

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT TOOLBOX

INFORM

TOOLS:

Fact Sheets, Social Media, Website, Newsletter

PURPOSE:

Provide information to the public, Education

SCCOTS/MPC RESPONSIBILITY:

Provide the public with information so they can understand the issues

CONSULT

TOOLS:

Public Comment, Public Meetings, Questionnaires, Surveys

PURPOSE:

Obtain feedback on decisions

SCCOTS/MPC RESPONSIBILITY:

Provide information to the public, welcome input, ask for feedback, and indicate how the input affected the outcome

DELIBERATE

TOOLS:

Workshops, Advisory Committees

PURPOSE:

High-level participation in idea generation

SCCOTS/MPC RESPONSIBILITY:

Engage public in two-way conversations, factor in public's thoughts and comments into discussions

CO-CREATE

TOOLS:

Panels, Networks, and Alliances

PURPOSE:

Shared ownership

SCCOTS/MPC RESPONSIBILITY:

Relevant input incorporated into decisions to the maximum extent possible

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT TOOLBOX: *INFORM*

Purpose:

To facilitate increased knowledge of the issues and the decisions concerning them.

SCCMPC Responsibility:

To provide the public with the information required to understand the issue.

Overview for the Target Audience:

SCCMPC efforts to inform are the most passive form of public engagement. This strategy involves targeted dissemination of information to the public. Goals may range from notification of meetings and activities, to providing materials to broaden the public's knowledge around a planning issue.

Examples of activities where informing is the most appropriate form of public involvement include:

- Informational brochures
- Upcoming meeting notices
- Open houses
- Bringing initial attention to an issue

Future Strategies Moving Forward:

SCCMPC should consider broadening the audience when using INFORM as a strategy. This means improving distribution lists for announcements, as well as evaluating better tools for targeting those not already engaged in the planning process. Social media offers paid tools to broaden the reach of posts, targeting local interested users of those networks.

Sample Tools and Strategies to Inform:

- Media outreach
- Blog posts
- Legal notices
- Library distributions
- Press releases
- Posters/flyers
- Paid newspaper advertisements
- Fact sheets
- Paid social media advertisements
- Newsletters
- Radio
- Calendar of events
- Featured stories
- Social media posts

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT TOOLBOX: CONSULT

Purpose:

To seek advice and/or information from people with specific expertise, such as obtaining feedback on analysis and alternatives.

SCCMPC Responsibility:

To provide the public with clear and coherent information regarding an issue, welcome the public's thoughts on the topic, and indicate how their input affected the outcome.

Overview for the Target Audience:

SCCMPC efforts to CONSULT are focused on obtaining comments and information back from the public on a particular set of issues. Goals may range from speaking with a staff member at a public meeting, responding back to a solicited survey or posting to social media.

Past Uses of Consulting the Public:

In the past, SCCMPC has used the CONSULT strategy to solicit comments for specific projects or programs. Onsite surveys, social media posts, website content, and direct emails provide updates regarding comment periods and upcoming projects.

Future Strategies Moving Forward:

SCCMPC should improve the way citizens can provide feedback. Guided tours and simulation exercises are tools that would provide for an open feedback loop between the public and St. Clair County.

Sample Tools and Strategies to Consult:

- Online discussions
- Hosted discussions
- Focus groups
- Long-range plan comment period
- Transportation Improvement Program comment period
- Questionnaires
- Public meetings
- Twitter posts
- Town hall meetings
- Online idea forums
- Public comment opportunities
- Crowdsourcing
- Virtual town hall

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT TOOLBOX: DELIBERATE

Purpose:

Stakeholders will be more involved in more in-depth issues and solutions development.

SCCMPC Responsibility:

SCCMPC will engage the public in two-way conversations to make certain that the public's thoughts, voices, and concerns are factored into proposed solutions/decisions.

Overview for the Target Audience:

SCCMPC efforts to DELIBERATE are focused on seeking out meaningful interactions by going to the public to gain ideas and insights into the issues. Goals may range from meeting people at coffee shops, talking to people at bus stops, or creating specialized committees.

Past Uses of Consulting the Public:

In the past, SCCMPC has used the DELIBERATE strategy to solicit comments for specific projects or programs. Social media pages, website updates, and emails provide information regarding public comment periods and upcoming projects.

Future Strategies Moving Forward:

SCCMPC should consider enlisting stakeholders in the development of ideas for projects and/or programs. This means improving the conversation with citizens early in the development phases of projects and/or programs that could assist in the decisions and solutions proposed. Two types of tools that could be used are project briefings and community fairs. The benefit to project briefings would be to engage specific targeted audiences that would provide a direct line of communication between agency staff and the targeted group. The benefit to community fairs would be to talk with a diverse group of individuals (age, race, and gender) all in one location.

Sample Tools and Strategies to Deliberate:

- Workshops
- Deliberative polling
- Advisory committees
- 'Pop-up' engagement opportunities in busy locations or at events
- Festivals
- Community-based organizations

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT TOOLBOX: CO-CREATE

Purpose:

Shared ownership between the organization and the stakeholders as the community is involved in each aspect (and the outcomes) of the decision.

SCCMPC Responsibility:

SCCMPC will rely on relevant stakeholders input in combination with organizational expertise to incorporate recommendations into decision to the maximum extent possible.

Overview for the Target Audience:

SCCMPC efforts to CO-CREATE are focused on sharing ownership of the creation of ideas and policies with informed stakeholders. Goals may range from having targeted interactions with key officials and community groups to creating citizen advisory committees.

Past Uses of Consulting the Public:

SCCMPC utilized the CO-CREATE tool on past projects such as the development of the Blueways of St. Clair and the Blue Water Trail Towns Master Plan.

Future Strategies Moving Forward:

SCCMPC should consider greater utilization of co-creation strategies. This means fully incorporating citizens into the decision and solution creating process for programs and projects. Two potential co-creation tools for SCCMPC to implement are Citizen Advisory Committees (CAC's) and charrettes. Citizens on CACs are able to convey advice and concerns on planning issues to the governing body they are part of. Representatives on CACs also distribute information from local officials to neighborhood and district residents. Charrettes provide citizens the opportunity to work with staff and local officials to develop a collaborative vision. It provides a forum for ideas and offers the unique advantage of immediate feedback to project designers. More importantly, it allows everyone who participates to be co-author of the plan or product.

Sample Tools and Strategies to Co-Create

- Consensus building
- Participatory decision-making
- Panels
- Formal partnerships
- Informal coalitions
- Citizen advisory committees
- Charettes
- Steering committees

ENGAGING RURAL COMMUNITIES

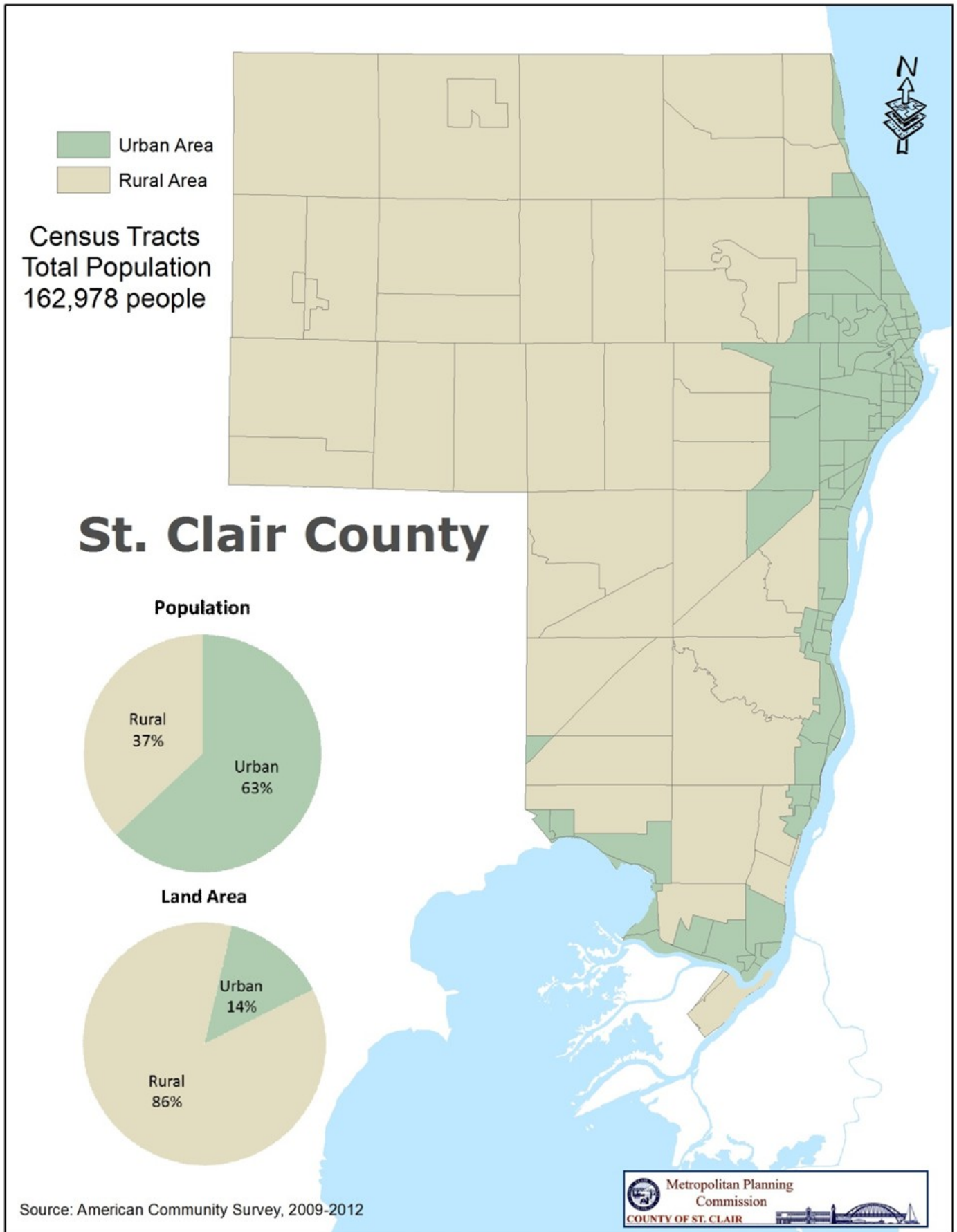
In the mid 2000's, there was excitement around the possibility of countywide wireless Internet service. That effort has since stalled due to high costs. However, such a service could help bring high speed Internet to rural communities, where costs for traditional service can prohibit access.

SCCMPC engagement efforts focus on the ability of users to have regular access to the Internet, such as smart phones and Internet connections in a home. What was learned from meeting attendees and survey results is that there are many people that do not have regular access to the Internet. SCCMPC realizes that sole reliance upon Internet engagement strategies are not effective for all areas of the planning area and therefore have made changes to engagement efforts.

While it may not be easy to reach all people in the area, SCCMPC is making a more concerted effort to dedicate specific attention to this area of the County. There were many ideas that were suggested to be incorporated for rural outreach and those strategies are highlighted in the sample toolbox.

Sample Tools and Strategies for Rural Community Engagement:

- Town hall meeting
- Pop up events
- Personal invitations from respected leaders to community meeting
- Talk to local businesses
- Use newspapers
- Schools and Libraries for meeting locations
- Informal Coalitions
- Discussions at community civic clubs



ST. CLAIR COUNTY AND SEMCOG

St. Clair County works with the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG), the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to establish the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the Region.

SEMCOG fulfills the Metropolitan Planning Organization requirements for the region, including air quality conformity analysis and demographic projections. St. Clair County assists in demographic projection development by reviewing projection data with St. Clair County communities and providing updated local data to SEMCOG.

St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning provides planning services to St. Clair County. SEMCOG and the St. Clair County Transportation Study (SCCOTS) provide planning services to the rest of the region, including Detroit. The Long-Range Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, and Unified Planning Work Program must all be approved by SEMCOG for St. Clair County.

A Brief History With SCCOTS and SEMCOG:

In 1974, SCCOTS reorganized as an inter-municipal committee under Act 200 of the Michigan Public Acts of 1957. All voting member units and agencies of government approved common resolutions of support to accomplish the reorganization. Three Memorandums of Understanding including a Pass-Through of Funds Agreement exist between SCCOTS and the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG). As a result, the St. Clair County Transportation Study functions as an independent sub-study within SEMCOG's Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

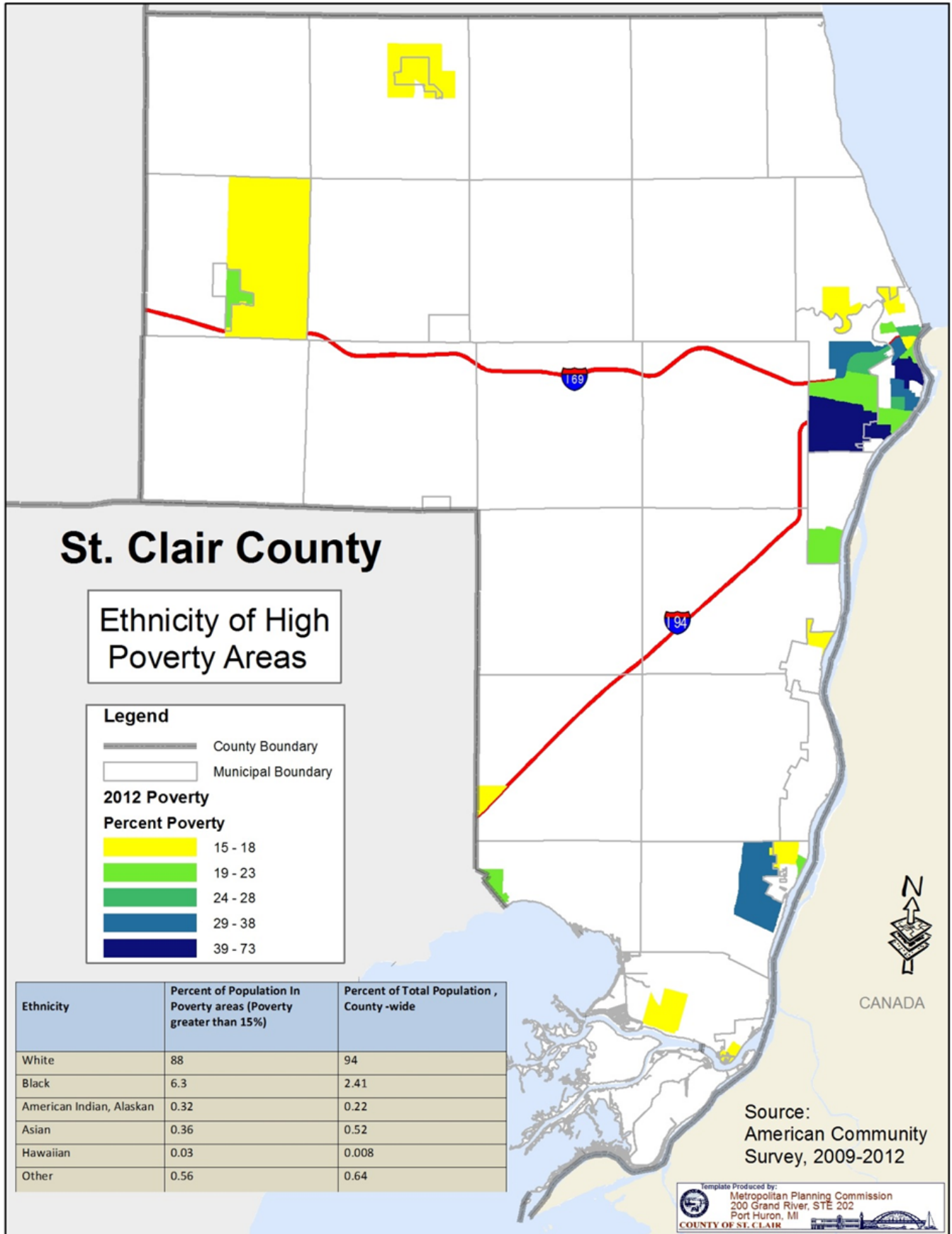
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

In 1994, President Bill Clinton signed Executive Order 12898 directing every Federal agency to identify and address the effects of all programs, policies, and activities on "minority populations and low-income populations." The U. S. Department of Transportation's Environmental Justice initiatives accomplish this goal by involving the potentially affected public in developing projects that serve Environmental Justice (EJ) populations without sacrificing safety or mobility of the community.

St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission is responsible for completing an EJ analysis on all plans and programs for the St. Clair County. EJ analysis identifies protected populations and requires that the impacts of transportation improvements be documented and evaluated to ensure that all populations are impacted fairly. These protected populations include people from low income and minority populations. While it may not be easy to reach all people in the area, SCCMPC is making a more concerted effort to dedicate specific attention to the populations identified, and will engage in active listening when we engage with all members of the public. The following map indicates where the EJ population locations within St. Clair County, and where close analysis will continue to be monitored as projects are proposed.

Title VI

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires that no population is discriminated against on the grounds of race, religion or nationality. To comply with Title VI, SCCMPC developed a Limited English Proficiency (LEP) plan, which identified significant populations of Chinese, Korean and Spanish speaking populations throughout St. Clair County. There are Title VI Complaint forms and SCCMPC Responsibilities documents.



This plan outlines the process that a person would take to have items translated for them. Since SCCMPC is not the MPO and SEMCOG is the responsible MPO for the region, SCCMPC follows SEMCOG’s Title VI Plan which can be found at <http://www.semco.org/TitleVI.aspx>.

Native Americans

St Clair County does not contain a Native American Reservation and is no longer home to significant populations of Native Americans. With increased focus on Native American consideration in the transportation planning process, SCCMPC will consult with Michigan Tribal leadership to review the Long Range Transportation Plan and other applicable SCCMPC products.

EVALUATION STRATEGY

The St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission is committed to monitoring the efforts that the agency undertakes when it engages with the public. The goal of this project is to begin the discussion of establishing benchmarks that will guide public involvement techniques by SCCMPC staff.

The idea to measure the effectiveness of the public outreach strategies is to collect data to demonstrate our effectiveness at engaging member of the public in the planning process.

Next Steps:

- Identify measures to quantify success rates
- Outline strategies to improve the involvement process
- Evaluate the techniques discussed in the plan

The reason for these specific questions are to address the environmental justice and rural outreach efforts pursued by SCCMPC staff.

1. What is your gender identity? Female Male Self-Defined

2. How do you describe your race/ethnicity?
 - African American/Black
 - Native American/American Indian
 - Caucasian/White
 - Latino/Hispanic
 - Asian/Asian American
 - Two or more races/ethnicities

3. Zip Code

4. Community Name

5. Email Address (if you want to be added to email list)

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