



# INVOLVEMENT PLAN

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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South Jersey  
Transportation  
Planning Organization

[www.sjtpo.org](http://www.sjtpo.org)

782 South Brewster Road, Unit B6 • Vineland, New Jersey 08361  
P: 856-794-1941 • F: 856-794-2549

LEONARD DESIDERIO, CHAIRMAN • JENNIFER MARANDINO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**ENGLISH**

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**URDU / اردو**

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**PUNJABI / ਪੰਜਾਬੀ**

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## CONTENTS

1. Introduction.....	4
2. Purpose of the Public Involvement Plan .....	4
3. Serving the Public: SJTPO’s Responsibilities.....	4
4. Opportunities to Engage with the SJTPO .....	6
5. Addressing Civil Rights in Our Outreach Process .....	9
6. Having Your Say: Policies and Procedures for Public Comments.....	12
7. Evaluating Our Effectiveness.....	14

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization (SJTPO) is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the southern New Jersey region, serving Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland, and Salem Counties. SJTPO serves as a technical resource, provides access to federal funding, and works to provide a regional approach to address transportation planning and engineering issues.

## SJTPO Structure

The governing body of the SJTPO is the Policy Board. It consists of eleven voting members; including county and municipal officials and representatives from the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT), New Jersey Transit, and the South Jersey Transportation Authority (SJTA). The Policy Board is informed by recommendations of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The TAC is a thirteen-member committee comprised of staff of planning and engineering experts in the region.

# 2. PURPOSE OF THE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

SJTPO actively seeks to provide a transparent process to ensure that plans and programs include the public to the greatest, reasonable degree. SJTPO offers reasonable access to information to all segments of the region's population, timely public notice of meetings and comment periods, full access to key decisions, and support for early and continued involvement in the development of major plans and programs. The Public Involvement Plan documents the process SJTPO follows in accomplishing its public involvement objectives, which meet and exceed federal guidance.

# 3. SERVING THE PUBLIC: SJTPO'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Financial support to sustain and advance South Jersey's transportation system comes, in large part, from federal transportation dollars, which the public contributes to through federal fuel taxes. Public involvement in the planning process is necessary to ensure the needs and concerns of all residents are addressed.

SJTPO public involvement process complies with federal requirements and goals, as highlighted below.

- Provide adequate and timely notice of public participation activities, public review, and comment on key decisions.

- Seek out and consider the needs of the people who are traditionally underserved by the existing transportation system, including low-income and minority households.
- Hold public meetings at convenient times and locations that are accessible to all people.
- Use visualization techniques to further explain the planning process.
- Provide timely and reasonable access to information about transportation planning.
- Provide information in electronic formats for accessibility and sustainability purposes.
- Demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input through a two-way communicative process.
- Provide a minimum public comment period of 45 calendar days for the draft PIP.
- Provide additional opportunity for public comment, of at least 10 days, if the final draft PIP differs substantially from the version made available to the public for comment.
- Comply with federal laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act, Title VI of Civil Rights Act of 1964, and various Executive Orders.
- Coordinate with the state and local transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes.
- Periodically review the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the PIP.

## Federal Laws for Public Involvement

To conduct public involvement outreach, a core function of an MPO, SJTPO complies with federal regulations and programs. These regulations and programs, listed below, help shape the involvement process and make its implementation more successful.

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990
- Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991
- Transportation Equity Act of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21) of 1998
- Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) of 2005
- Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (MAP-21) of 2012
- Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) of 2015
- Code of Federal Regulations, Title 23, §450
- Code of Federal Regulations. Title 23, §771.111
- Executive Order 12898, "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations"

- Executive Order 13166, “Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency”

## 4. OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE WITH THE SJTPO

There are a variety of strategies SJTPO utilizes to enhance public involvement. The strategies used help disseminate information in digital and print form with the intent of making information accessible.

### Where to Find Information

Listed below are the ways the public can be involved and influence transportation decisions.

#### SJTPO Website ([www.sjtpo.org](http://www.sjtpo.org))

The SJTPO website can be translated into a multitude of languages. Information on the website includes an overview of the transportation planning process, a document library, and other technical information. Opportunities for public involvement can be found on the Public Comment ([www.sjtpo.org/Public-Comment](http://www.sjtpo.org/Public-Comment)) webpage.

#### E-list (Electronic Mailing List)

Members of the public and interested organizations can join SJTPO’s e-list to receive information related to upcoming meetings, public comment periods, project news and developments, and to receive issues of the *On the Go* newsletter. To subscribe, individuals can locate the “Join Our Mailing List” at the bottom of every webpage on the SJTPO website.

#### Social Media

SJTPO maintains social media platforms as an additional method to reach the public and highlight key activities and initiatives. Any comment SJTPO receives via social media that adheres to the SJTPO “[Social Media Policy](#)” will be treated equal to any other comment.



Facebook [www.facebook.com/SJTPO](http://www.facebook.com/SJTPO)



Twitter [www/twitter.com/SJTPO](http://www/twitter.com/SJTPO)



YouTube [www.youtube.com/channel/UCzdoMUOQ4-umcnlWB5lCxGQ](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzdoMUOQ4-umcnlWB5lCxGQ)



LinkedIn [www.linkedin.com/company/SJTPO](http://www.linkedin.com/company/SJTPO)

#### *On the Go*, the Official Newsletter of SJTPO ([www.sjtpo.org/OnTheGo](http://www.sjtpo.org/OnTheGo))

*On the Go* is an electronic publication. Distribution of the newsletter is through SJTPO’s e-list. To receive the newsletter, locate the “Join Our Mailing List” at the bottom of each webpage on the SJTPO website. Archived and current issues are made available on the News webpage and can be translated by Google Translation.

## Newspapers

SJTPO utilizes local newspapers (The Press of Atlantic City, The Daily Journal, and South Jersey Times) to publicize meetings, events, and projects and programs. Special meetings are publicized twelve (12) days prior to each meeting date, as needed.

## How to View or Request Documents and Records

SJTPO makes all draft and final approved plans, programs, and studies available on its website, at the SJTPO office, and [State Depository Libraries](#) in the region. State Depository Libraries make major government agency documents available for viewing at no cost.

If necessary, noncolor copies may be requested. Fees may apply. Interested parties can make a request via an [online form](#), or by calling (856) 794-1941.

County	State Depository Library
<b>Atlantic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Atlantic County Library – Reference Department</li> <li>Richard Stockton University Library – Government Document Library</li> </ul>
<b>Cape May</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cape May County Library – Reference Department</li> </ul>
<b>Cumberland</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cumberland County Library – Reference Department</li> </ul>
<b>Salem</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Salem Free Public Library* – Reference Department</li> <li>Salem Community County College Library – Reference Department</li> </ul>

\* This library is not a State Depository Library.

## Attend Public Meetings

Meetings are meant to provide information and a formal setting for comments to be received. SJTPO works to hold meetings at centralized locations, when held in-person rather than virtual, and at convenient times. Other accommodations, such as language interpreters, may be provided.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, SJTPO has adopted the GoToMeeting and GoToWebinar platforms to hold virtual meetings. Staff anticipates the use of these virtual platforms to some degree in all future meetings.

In January of each year, a schedule of Policy Board meetings for the year ahead is placed in local newspapers. Meeting dates are also posted to SJTPO's website. As the year progresses and meetings approach, reminders are posted on SJTPO's website, social media, and sent to e-list subscribers.

### **Policy Board Meetings ([www.sjtpo.org/Board](http://www.sjtpo.org/Board))**

Policy Board meetings are open to the public. Members of the public are given the opportunity to comment on agenda items at the start of the meeting. Each commenter is allotted three minutes to speak. Information for Policy Board meetings is publicized through the e-list, social media, SJTPO's website, and paid public notices in local newspapers. Agendas are distributed at least twelve (12) days prior to each meeting through the above channels. Agendas and meeting minutes are available on the Policy Board webpage.

### **Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meetings ([www.sjtpo.org/TAC](http://www.sjtpo.org/TAC))**

TAC meetings are open to the public. Members of the public are given the opportunity to comment on agenda items at the start of the meeting. Each commenter is allotted three minutes to speak. Agendas are available on the SJTPO website at least twelve (12) days prior to each meeting. Meeting notices, agenda packets, and minutes are available on the TAC webpage.

### **Public Workshops**

SJTPO hosts workshop-style meetings open to the public on an as-needed basis. These workshops allow attendees to learn and comment on transit, roadways, bicycle and pedestrian access, freight, or other transportation matters in a greater capacity using presentations, displays, posters, and other informational materials. All comments are recorded and a written summary, analysis, and report on all significant comments received is prepared and used accordingly.

## **Other Ways to be Involved**

The following are additional ways in which the public can engage with SJTPO and participate in the transportation planning process.

### **Request a Safety Program ([www.sjtpo.org/Education](http://www.sjtpo.org/Education))**

SJTPO offers a robust series of no-cost, safety education programs. Run by SJTPO Traffic Safety Specialists, these programs are designed with a target audience in mind and in conjunction with other organizations. Each program is intended to educate roadway users of the many dangers they could encounter on roadways and to impart easy to remember methods to improve safety.

### **Attend Meetings of County Transportation Boards or Committees**

Public involvement at the local, county, and subregional levels is also crucial, as most roadways are owned by these entities. SJTPO suggests the public attend meetings and events hosted by county transportation committees or municipal planning boards.



## 5. ADDRESSING CIVIL RIGHTS IN OUR OUTREACH PROCESS

SJTPO is committed to making a special effort to seek out and consider the needs of groups traditionally not well-served by the existing transportation system. These include, but are not limited to the elderly population, minority populations, Limited English Proficient (LEP) populations, zero vehicle households, and low-income households. SJTPO has formal plans pertaining to Title VI, Limited English Proficiency (LEP), and Environmental Justice (EJ). The plans outline the appropriate outreach tools and methods necessary to ensure participation from the groups previously mentioned.

### Title VI ([www.sjtpo.org/TitleVI](http://www.sjtpo.org/TitleVI))

[Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#) and [Executive Order 12898](#) protects individuals from discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in programs or activities. SJTPO is required to maintain a Title VI Plan, available on the Title VI webpage. The webpage provides background on Title VI, SJTPO's policy statement, complaint procedure and form, and USDOT Assurances.

### Limited English Proficiency (LEP) ([www.sjtpo.org/LEP](http://www.sjtpo.org/LEP))

[Executive Order 13166](#), "Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency," relates to public engagement of LEP individuals. An LEP person is one who does not speak English as his/her/they primary language and who has a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. SJTPO's LEP Plan outlines the responsibilities of SJTPO regarding LEP persons and establishes a process for providing assistance to LEP persons for SJTPO programs, activities, and services.

Translation options are available on the SJTPO website. To select a language other than English, locate the dropdown menu at the top of each webpage.

### Environmental Justice (EJ) ([www.sjtpo.org/EJ](http://www.sjtpo.org/EJ))

Environmental Justice (EJ) is "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies." Fair treatment means that no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local, and tribal programs, and policies. SJTPO's EJ Plan evaluates TIP projects for overlap into EJ areas and broadly discusses other planning products.

## Strategies to Serve Under-Represented Populations

The Title VI, LEP, and EJ Plans detail the strategies to incorporate under-represented populations in SJTPO's transportation planning process. The strategies to include are as follows:

### Identification of Under-Represented Populations using Census Data

To identify Title VI, LEP, and EJ populations, SJTPO uses data gathered at the regional, county, municipal, and Census Block Group level. The information collected helps SJTPO and subregional partners target outreach needs to under-represented groups.

### Engagement of Under-Represented Populations using Targeted Strategies

SJTPO is committed to reducing barriers to public engagement for under-represented groups. Listed below are the under-represented groups and engagement methods SJTPO uses or plans to use.

#### *Children and Teens*

SJTPO's Traffic Safety Specialists offer safety education programs to elementary, middle school, and high school students. The programs are fun, accessible, designed for the appropriate age group, and bring awareness to the many risks relative to children and teens on area roadways and to teach them simple ways to improve safety. SJTPO would like to expand upon these traffic safety education programs by incorporating content related to planning efforts.

#### *Young Adults*

Young adults are often under-represented in planning efforts due to inexperience, school-life balance, and limited opportunities. Engagement opportunities should be social, brief, and held in locations young adults frequent.

The SJTPO region is home to Stockton University, located in Atlantic County, which offers a Sustainability Program. SJTPO aims to establish a relationship with professors and students of the program. Additionally, though outside of SJTPO's region, Rowan University in Gloucester County, offers degrees in Planning and Engineering. Rowan University is largely a commuter-based school with individuals traveling from the SJTPO region to work and attend the university.

#### *Older Adults*

Older adults are often involved in community efforts but may be under-represented in planning efforts for a multitude of reasons, such as mobility challenges, transportation conflicts, among other reasons. If in-person events are to be held, scheduling the events during daylight hours and in convenient, ADA-accessible venues is most appropriate.

### ***Immigrants and Individuals with Limited-English Proficiency***

Approximately 9.3 percent of the population in the SJTPO region reports speaking English “less than very well.” Outreach to these individuals should be approachable, highly visual, and conducted in their native language.

SJTPO is committed to ensuring events and publications are accessible and available to all individuals in the region. When notices for public meetings and events are distributed, SJTPO includes information on how to request accommodations. SJTPO requires a seven (7) day advance notice to make arrangements to the greatest, feasible degree. SJTPO’s website has the ability to be translated in multiple languages.

### ***Racial and Ethnic Groups***

Racial and ethnic minorities include people who do not racially identify as white and who face limited opportunities to engage in civic affairs. Racial and ethnic minorities in the SJTPO region are diverse and communicate and engage in varying styles and levels. Outreach to minority groups should be community focused, be coordinated with local groups and organizations, and take into consideration family needs.

### ***Low-Income Residents***

Many low-income people within the SJTPO region balance multiple jobs and face insecurities related to shelter, food, and transportation. Information related to planning efforts is likely to be received through word-of-mouth, community organizations, and social media. Effective outreach to low-income people should be convenient and held during varying hours of the day to take into consideration work and public transit schedules. Conducting outreach in partnership with Family Success Centers, Community Centers, and other familiar local organizations is advised.

A generally accepted best practice is to provide modest incentives to attract low-income residents at in-person public meetings. These incentives may include food, small stipends, and childcare.

### ***Individuals with Disabilities***

Individuals with disabilities may experience any number of cognitive or physical disabilities, making the range of possible needs broad. Outreach to individuals with disabilities should be compliant with ADA requirements. SJTPO’s website offers an “Accessibility Widget,” designed to consider the needs of individuals with special needs.

### ***Translation of Vital Documents***

SJTPO provides Spanish translations of the organization’s “vital documents,” which are documents that help residents and stakeholders understand SJTPO’s purpose and importance in the four-county region, namely:

- **Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Executive Summary:** [www.sjtpo.org/RTP](http://www.sjtpo.org/RTP)

- **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Executive Summary:** [www.sjtpo.org/TIP](http://www.sjtpo.org/TIP)
- **Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Executive Summary:** [www.sjtpo.org/UPWP](http://www.sjtpo.org/UPWP)
- **Public Involvement Plan (PIP) Executive Summary:** [www.sjtpo.org/PIP](http://www.sjtpo.org/PIP)
- **Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan:** [www.sjtpo.org/LEP](http://www.sjtpo.org/LEP)
- **The Public Engagement Guide to Transportation Planning in South Jersey:** [www.sjtpo.org/EngagementGuide](http://www.sjtpo.org/EngagementGuide)
- **Title VI Materials:** [www.sjtpo.org/TitleVI](http://www.sjtpo.org/TitleVI)

In SJTPO's region, there are five (5) languages or language groups that are spoken by at least 1,000 LEP persons each. One of these is "Other Indic Languages," which SJTPO understands may include Bengali, Hindi, Nepali, Urdu, and Punjabi, bringing the total number of potential languages to nine (9). While SJTPO will continue to focus its proactive translation efforts on the Spanish-speaking community, as the primary LEP population, it will also aim to use ACS data and input from member governments and community organizations to predict contact with LEP persons for area-specific projects, studies, and programs.

## Limiting Obstacles of Involvement

The following are efforts the SJTPO has established to remove obstacles to involvement.

- Convenient Meeting Times
- Transit-Accessible Meetings
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Provisions
- Online Engagement Opportunities
- Pop-up/Partnering Events

## 6. HAVING YOUR SAY: POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS

The SJTPO encourages public comments and provides the public with a multitude of ways to voice opinions and share ideas with SJTPO.

### Public Comment Periods

A opportunity for the public to share opinions and ideas is during a public review period. A comment period of **at least 30 days** will be held to review drafts of the following core documents:

- **Regional Transportation Plan (RTP),** [www.sjtpo.org/RTP](http://www.sjtpo.org/RTP): a long-term transportation plan that identifies a high-level vision and outlines transportation projects for at least the next 20 years, and is the result of extensive outreach, collaboration, and consensus. The RTP is updated every four (4) years.

- **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**, [www.sjtpo.org/TIP](http://www.sjtpo.org/TIP): an agreed upon list of projects, for which state and federal funds are expected to be spent. The TIP is updated every two (2) years.
- **Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)**, [www.sjtpo.org/UPWP](http://www.sjtpo.org/UPWP): details all anticipated transportation planning activities to be performed by the SJTPO staff, subregions, and member agencies during the fiscal year. The UPWP is updated every year.
- **Access for All Transit Plan**, [www.sjtpo.org/AccessForAll](http://www.sjtpo.org/AccessForAll): updated every five (5) years, the Access for All Transit Plan identifies the unmet transportation needs and recommends methods to increase service quality and reduce the cost of providing services to the transportation disadvantaged population in the region.
- **Congestion Management Process (CMP)**, [www.sjtpo.org/CMP](http://www.sjtpo.org/CMP): a federally required process documented in a methodology report that guides how to safely and effectively manage and operate South Jersey's transportation network.
- **Title VI Plan**, [www.sjtpo.org/TitleVI](http://www.sjtpo.org/TitleVI): a federally required document, updated as needed, that documents how SJTPO will meet its requirements under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
- **Limited English Proficiency Plan (LEP)**, [www.sjtpo.org/LEP](http://www.sjtpo.org/LEP): a federally required document, updated as needed, that identifies the LEP populations in the region and how SJTPO will work to accommodate their needs in SJTPO's process.
- **Public Involvement Plan (PIP)**, [www.sjtpo.org/PIP](http://www.sjtpo.org/PIP): a federally required document, updated as needed, that articulates the rules SJTPO will follow and the processes by which the public can engage in the MPO transportation planning process. A comment period of **at least 45 days** is held for the PIP.

If public comments cause any of the core documents to greatly differ (i.e., addition or removal of section or updates to federal regulations) from the versions previously made available to the public, an additional comment period of **at least 10 days** will be held prior to Policy Board approval.

#### **Additional Information About the TIP ([www.sjtpo.org/TIP](http://www.sjtpo.org/TIP))**

The TIP may require revisions after it has been approved. There are three types of revisions:

- **Major Amendments:** any action affecting air quality conformity or would require a new regional conformity determination requires a 30-day comment period and approval from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).
- **Minor Amendments:** any action not affecting air quality conformity and does not require a new regional conformity determination. Does not require a comment period but does require approval by the FHWA and the FTA.
- **Modifications:** any smaller revisions, which do not require public comment.

## How to Submit Comments

The SJTPO prefers comments in written form to accurately respond to all comments. If assistance is needed to submit a written comment, please contact the SJTPO office at (856) 794-1941 or [Info@sjtpo.org](mailto:Info@sjtpo.org).

Please send all written comments using any of the following methods:

- **Fax:** (856) 794-2549
- **Email:** [PIP@sjtpo.org](mailto:PIP@sjtpo.org)
- **Mail:** The South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization  
782 South Brewster Road, Unit B6, Vineland, NJ 08361
- **Online form:** General comments are welcomed through the “Contact Us with Your General Comments” form found on the Public Comment webpage ([www.sjtpo.org/Public-Comment](http://www.sjtpo.org/Public-Comment)) under the Get Involved tab
- **Social media:** Facebook ([www.facebook.com/SJTPO](http://www.facebook.com/SJTPO)) and Twitter ([www.twitter.com/SJTPO](http://www.twitter.com/SJTPO))

The public can also comment in person at Policy Board and/or Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings, and any other public meeting.

All comments must be received by the close of the comment period to be explicitly addressed and included in the final plan.

## How Your Comments will be Used

SJTPO considers all public comments. SJTPO is responsible for coordinating a response to comments in a timely manner. A written summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of all significant comments received during the public comment periods will be provided as part of the final document. All final documents are posted on the SJTPO website.

## 7.EVALUATING OUR EFFECTIVENESS

A variety of tools will be used to measure the quantity and quality of interactions SJTPO has with the public. The evaluation results will be used to modify the practices, as appropriate. The following tools will be used by staff to evaluate the effectiveness of public involvement:

### Questionnaires, Polls, and/or Surveys

Questionnaires, polls, and/or surveys may be used to provide feedback on a variety of topics. Materials will be developed to evaluate the effectiveness of the public involvement goals.

## Assessment of Outreach Tools

SJTPO staff has numerous performance measures that can be used when assessing the organization's outreach process and its effectiveness. SJTPO will monitor the following on a quarterly basis:

Tool	Sample Evaluation Measure
<b>Website</b>	Number of users; number of new users; number of sessions; number of pageviews; average session duration
<b>Social media (per account)</b>	Number of followers; change in followers, number of posts; number of impressions; number of mentions; number of clicks
<b>E-list</b>	Number of subscribers; change in subscribers; number of emails sent; number of bounces; percent of emails opened; percent of emails clicked
<b>Public meetings and events</b>	Number of meetings and events; number of individuals notified; number of attendees; location of meetings and events
<b>News "On the Go" articles</b>	Number of articles posted; when posted; topics posted
<b>Questionnaires, polls, and/or surveys</b>	Number of questionnaires, polls, and/or surveys sent; percent completed
<b>Press releases</b>	Number of press releases distributed and published

## Staff Debriefings

In addition to quarterly evaluation, SJTPO staff will meet on an ongoing basis to review outreach and engagement efforts. During these meetings, staff will determine if improvements and/or the development of new strategies are needed to enhance the public outreach process.