



**Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments  
Social Media Policy**

The Communications Department of the Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments manages social media communication for the agency. The role of social media is to: share TMACOG news; share regulatory and grant news; share TMACOG member news; and share transportation, water quality, and infrastructure news that is of interest to our members. In these communications, we want to encourage interaction of members with TMACOG and facilitate communication between members.

**Guidelines for TMACOG Members and Others Commenting on TMACOG Social Media**

The Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments' social media channels provide an opportunity for members to share and discuss information about relevant programs and activities. Comments/opinions expressed by users of social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, TMACOG Blog) are theirs alone. All public comments are reviewed & screened in accordance with the below policy. We encourage members of the public to submit their questions, comments, and concerns, but please note that all TMACOG social media channels are moderated online discussion sites, not a public forum.

We welcome public discussion of relevant issues; user comments will not be edited, but inappropriate comments, as defined below, will be deleted. Users must stay on topic and post under their own names.

- We do not allow graphic, obscene, explicit, racial or otherwise discriminatory comments or submissions, nor do we allow comments that are abusive, hateful or intended to defame anyone or any organization.
- We do not allow solicitations or advertisements. This includes promotion or endorsement of any financial, commercial or non-governmental agency. Similarly, we do not allow attempts to defame or defraud any financial, commercial or nongovernmental agency.
- We do not allow comments that suggest or encourage illegal activity.
- TMACOG social media channels are not open to comments promoting or opposing any person campaigning for election to a political office or promoting or opposing any ballot proposition.
- All TMACOG social media authors and public commentators shall be clearly identified. Anonymous blog postings are not allowed. Personal responsibility for comments is assumed, (username & any information provided).
- We review all comments and reserve the right to discard messages containing inappropriate content.
- Appearance of external links does not constitute any official endorsement on behalf of Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments.

Comments will not be edited by TMACOG or its staff. However, only comments that comply with this use policy will be approved for posting. The use of vulgar, offensive, defamatory (personal attacks), threatening or harassing language is prohibited, and comments or user accounts therein are subject to removal.

Public comments on TMACOG - generated content should be limited to comments related to the posted topic. TMACOG social media channels are not the proper place to express opinions or beliefs not directly related to subjects/areas in which TMACOG conducts its business. If comments left on our social media postings are constructive, we view those posts as an opportunity to discuss, clear up misunderstandings, or otherwise work through whatever issues the person is having.

We encourage comments on content shared via our social media channels, as all viewpoints are welcome, but citizen participation must be constructive. We reserve the right to make editorial decisions regarding submitted comments, including but not limited to removal of comments.

The content of each TMACOG social media channel is owned by and the sole responsibility of the Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments (producer and user of the channel).

Documents and articles submitted to a TMACOG social media channel or blog shall be moderated by an authorized and trained staff member (namely, the TMACOG Communications department).

### **Public Records/Public Comment Concerns**

Communications made through email and messaging systems within social media channels will in no way constitute a legal or official notice or comment to TMACOG (or any official or employee of TMACOG) for any purpose. For example, a post, comment, Tweet, or Facebook message which asks TMACOG to provide public records will not be considered a public records request until it is sent through the proper channels.

Social media is not the venue for comments on agency plans & work programs. Comments that are to be entered into the public record shall be submitted through traditional means, or the formal planning process.

Inquiries specific to a TMACOG project or program should be submitted directly to the appropriate manager or planner.

### **Guidance to Staff**

The TMACOG Communications team relies on the staff for information about your councils, committees, and the communities you come in contact with. We want to share and disseminate information in line with TMACOG goals and missions, and which add value to membership in TMACOG. We want to provide value to members by:

- Amplifying their invitations (request for volunteers for Clean Your Streams Day)
- Sharing their accomplishments (government of Fremont builds a new water plant, a non-governmental member receives trade group recognition)
- Spreading news that can be of value to other members (a grant opportunity, research availability, a request for information that another member might be able to provide)

We also want to share news that demonstrates the value of membership in TMACOG including

- Examples of resource sharing (building a common water treatment infrastructure, township and county consolidating services)
- Examples of or successful projects based on TMACOG-managed programs (a safe routes to school grant, a green infrastructure project)
- Examples of collaboration and partnership (a park including a bike path in its plans, multi-county agreement on log removal, 208 Plan agreements)

Things that receive less priority are:

- Profit-making events (i.e., a paid seminar where the profit goes to a non-member)
- Simple self-promotion (for example, business announcements of new hires or announcements of business accomplishments outside of the TMACOG region. These might be interesting but are not of immediate value to our members.)

### **Legal Notice**

Posting on social media does not satisfy need for legal notice but can amplify the legal notice. For example, announcement of TIP public meetings must be published in the newspaper of record (and an affidavit secured) but repeating and sharing that information on social media will be encouraged.

*As social media is a fast-evolving means of public interface, this policy statement is subject to amendment or modification at any time to ensure its continued use is consistent with its intended purpose as a limited forum. Questions or concerns regarding the Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments presence in various social media channels should be directed to TMACOG's public information staff at 419.241.9155 ext. 106 or [public.info@tmacog.org](mailto:public.info@tmacog.org)*