

THIS MEMO IS EXPIRED

November 3, 2000

MEMORANDUM NO. 29-00

TO: DISTRICT CONSTRUCTION ENGINEERS
FROM: Greg Xanders, State Construction Engineer
COPIES: Charles Goodman, Archie Montgomery
SUBJECT: COMMUNITY AWARENESS GUIDELINES

The Construction Office has developed a Guideline for Community Awareness. These guidelines are based on Community Awareness Plans from District 4 and 7. To these was added a synthesis of various other processes that were initiated in the Department to make the process of taking a project from concept to concrete more seamless. All of these schemes depend on a team approach. Because Community Awareness depends on a team approach, the details of the actual operations must be worked out in each district.

If your district does not have a district procedure for community awareness, please attempt to get a task team appointed to create one. If your district has a Community Awareness Plan, but it does not involve any activities until design is almost complete, please attempt to have it revised so that Community Awareness begins as early as scope development.

If you have any questions, please contact John Shriner at sc 994-4149.

GX/js
Attachment

Guideline for Community Awareness Process

This guideline is for the use of the District Construction Offices. Some, if not all districts have internal procedures for Community Awareness activities. These plans are not uniform from district to district. This guideline is meant to supplement and complement district procedures.

1. **Definition:** Community Awareness is a term used to describe both the minimization of negative impacts to the community and traveling public of a construction project and the Department activities that take place to keep the community informed.
2. **Team Approach:** Several districts have already developed quality control plans that require a multi-disciplinary team approach to plans development. In addition to this various offices in the Central Office are recommending a team approach to solve specific deficiencies in our project development process. Community Awareness is one of those things for which a team is being recommended. It will be interesting to see how each district handles all of these recommendations to form teams. Instead of several teams, the District probably will identify some, but not all, of the projects that require a team to guide it along its way. There will be a core team that will continue during the duration of the project with additional people providing expertise as required.

The importance of this team approach is that it allows the district construction offices to have input to the project beginning with the definition of what the project will be until the project is let.

3. **Involvement in Project Development:**

Scope Development and Definition: Several districts, as part of their District Quality Control Plans, have required the participation of the District Construction Office in establishing the scope of each project. Subsequent reviews have indicated that an incomplete scope at the very start as one of the Department's major problems. Projects with scopes that evolve as the project develops will contribute to extra cost, rework, and poor quality control on the plans. Worse, in terms of community involvement, they can create conditions that will be difficult to overcome during the construction process. The District Construction Office needs to take advantage of every opportunity offered to it to be on a team or otherwise prevent problems on our construction projects - beginning with scope development.

Define level of Community Awareness needed: The Department has developed a "Commitment Compliance Tracking System" to record commitments made during project development. The District Construction Offices need to take advantage of this new system. At scope development, a level of public concern should be associated with the project from level 1, the least, to level 4, the most. The level definition is provided below to assist in this designation. The designation of a particular level of concern does not, however, designate or restrict required actions. This designation should be entered into the Commitment Compliance

Tracking System.

Level 1: Project is not controversial, causes negligible access impacts and traffic disruption. Examples are work outside the roadway, simple rural resurfacing, some signal work, pavement markings, bridge or other maintenance.

Level 2: Project has general public acceptance, little impact on access and reasonable degree of traffic disruption. Examples are urban resurfacing, bridge repairs, and median revisions (not access control) that require lane closures.

Level 3: Project is controversial, will significantly impact traffic flow or will adversely affect access to properties (temporarily or permanently). Examples are parking removal, median opening closures, traffic signal removal, roadway widening, major reconstruction, and projects with detours.

Level 4: Project involves interstate work including maintenance work, road widening, temporary ramp closures, construction of new interchanges, and major reconstruction. Also included in Level 4 are all projects that require total closure, either temporary or permanent, of roadways, bridges, or railroad crossings.

Designate Time Critical Project: For numerous reasons, including minimizing community impact, there are projects that the districts desire to be performed in a period of time much less than that which would be normally established for a project duration. For this desire to be realistically attained the district should designate the project as “Time Critical” as early as practicable. This should also be recorded on the Commitment Compliance Tracking System. This should be a signal to the designer to give short project duration a priority consideration when designing the project. This should also be a signal for utility relocations to be started early and for utility relocation agreements to contain expedited times.

4. Design Phase

Plans Reviews:

Access management driveways and median openings: Decisions on access management and median openings are made very early in the design process. These decisions cause some of the more contentious issues during construction, but there probably is not anything the construction personnel can do about them.

The Phase I Plans Review is the most important phase review for minimizing community impacts. Major decisions are made at this stage that cannot be ameliorated during construction. Decisions that effect MOT, access, and drainage are made and cannot be undone in future phases.

This phase review package should contain a Conceptual Maintenance of Traffic Plan. This plan should

be reviewed to assure minimum impact on abutting property owners. Any condition that would make it difficult to provide simple and direct access to property on both sides of the road should be avoided. The reviewer should make sure that the designer has attempted to strike some happy medium between a small number of MOT phases, of long length and duration, and a higher number of MOT phases of short length and duration. A smaller number is conducive to a shorter overall project duration. MOT phases of short duration cause less inconvenience to abutting businesses.

Another aspect of the plans that merits careful review is any change in vertical alignment. On an urban reconstruction or widening the designer should maintain the existing alignment to the extent possible. Changes in vertical alignment make it very difficult to maintain access on the main roadway and even on side streets. Lowering the alignment can also cause unforeseen utility relocations if there is not sufficient cover for mainline utilities and service connects after the grade is lowered. Access to property on side streets will also be affected when grades are changed on the main roadway.

The combination of MOT and vertical alignment will also impact drainage during the construction process. The reviewer should make sure that the designer does not set up a situation where water will pond on the project or where a heavy rain will cause delays. Additional guidance on plans phase reviews is in the Construction Project Administration Manual Chapter 1, Section 2, Constructability/Biddability Reviews.

Specifications:

The District Construction Office can recommend that special provisions, that help minimize community impact, be included in the specification package for the project. Examples of this are restricted working hours, night work, contractor suspended operations on specific days, day certain starting and day certain project completion, restricted work length (train spec), and alternative contracting methods.

Project Duration:

The District Construction Office establishes the project duration. They have the option of shortening this project duration if it will minimize the community impact of the project. Additional guidance for establishing project duration is included in the Construction Project Administration Manual Chapter 1, Section 3, Establishing Construction Contract Durations.

Alternative Contracting:

The Department has developed a battery of innovative contracting schemes to minimize community impact. Examples are Incentive/Disincentive and no excuse bonuses. These schemes also require that special provisions are included in the specification package. Additional guidance is contained the Alternative Contracting User's Guide.

5. Construction Phase Best Practices

The Project Engineer/ Project Manager must develop a Community Awareness Plan as early as practicable. If a Consultant CEI will be involved, community awareness activities must be included in the scope of services. The extent, of which, is dependent on the Level of Concern. On Level of Concern 3 or 4 projects, the Project Engineer/Manager should consult with the District PIO or Community Awareness Coordinator when developing the plan or RFP and scope.

Listed below are the minimal elements for a Community Awareness Plan:

Date of the plan and each revision

Name of the person initiating the plan

A brief, but detailed, description of the project and summary of traffic impact.

Description of the community and properties affected by the project.

Discussion of any removal any off street parking (if any) and how it will affect adjacent properties and businesses.

Special features/amenities that will be included in the project, including , but not limited to, landscaping by whom and who will maintain it.

A list of known community concerns and a strategy for addressing them. (Where appropriate)

A list of all PD&E and Right of Way commitments made to the public and how they will be addressed. (Where appropriate)

An additional topic should to added to the pre-construction conference agenda. On projects where there are known community concerns, these should be addressed. The contractor should be requested to assist the Department to minimize public complaints by keeping access to business well maintained and to keep the stock piling of materials in front of businesses to a minimum. The contractor should also be requested to remove trash as soon as possible.(All projects)

1 month prior to construction start: “Dear Neighbor” flyer with construction dates and specific project impact to traffic information. This flyer should contain the name of the contractor, contractor’s superintendent, and FDOT Project Engineer, with field office locations and the appropriate telephone numbers. The preferred method for distributing this flyer is for the Project Engineer to hand deliver door to door. (All projects)

1 week prior to construction: News release of project start date, pertinent project information and specific traffic information. This is usually done working through the District PIO and the District Community Awareness Coordinator. (All projects)

Throughout construction: The project Engineer should keep the District Public Information Office(PIO) and the Public Information CEI, if there is one, informed of all issues affecting the public. Weekly news releases with specific traffic impact should be issued by the PIO and Public Information CEI. (All Projects)

Other elements that may be considered:

2 to 4 weeks prior to construction start: Pre-construction public information meeting/open house for all interested persons to review plans, construction schedule, and traffic impacts, particularly dates of total closure. Conducting additional meetings during the project as milestones are reached should also be considered. Meetings can be open house style, held at field office locations or locations close to the project. Project staff may also make presentations at local community or homeowner association meetings. (Level of Concern 3 and 4)

A newsletter may be used to keep those interested informed about the current project status and specific issues. (Level of Concern 3 and 4)

An internet site to supplement other forms of notification and to provide another means for input of questions and concerns. (Level of Concern 3 and 4)

Information kiosks can be used to provide information to the general public on projects of community wide interest. (Level of Concern 4)

Supplemental meetings with Home Owner Associations, the Chamber of Commerce, or other interested groups can be held upon request. (Level of Concern 3 and 4)

6. Listen and Be Responsive:

On the construction project it is important the every DOT/CEI employee be willing to listen to problems and complaints from property owners and the traveling public. When possible try to do something about the problem the people are complaining about. When it is not possible to do something, such as median closings, limited driveways and loss of parking, be sympathetic and try to explain the reasons for these changes.

All communications with abutting businesses and residents should be recorded. When possible, all concerns should be responded to in writing.

Acknowledgements: This guideline was drafted using, to a large degree, the content of the Community Awareness guidelines from Districts 4 and 7.