Public Involvement Handbook

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101 Guiding Principles

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT/the Department) follows four guiding principles for community engagement. Using these guiding principles for your project can help ensure effective outcomes and adherence to the Department's policy on community engagement. The Public Involvement Handbook provides guidance, tools, and resources on how to apply these principles to your project and includes examples that illustrate best practices in the implementation of these principles.

Community engagement is two-way communication aimed at incorporating the views, concerns, and issues of the public into the decision-making process.

Guiding Principles for Community Engagement

Guiding Principle	Description
Process	Community engagement should be continuous through all phases of a project, allowing the public to hear and be heard through the project life cycle. Community engagement should be thought of as on-going communication that provides information to and receives information from the public during planning, project development, design, construction, and maintenance.
Defining Stakeholders	Public involvement should include all decision makers, those who will be affected and those with an interest in the project, such as community leaders, property owners and tenants, business owners, user groups, and the general public.
Outreach Tools and Techniques	Use the most appropriate technique for each audience. Knowing the community helps determine the most appropriate outreach techniques and establish the measure to evaluate those techniques.
Documentation	A project record shows that public comments have been heard and ensures that commitments will be carried into the next phase of the project. Documentation shows that a process was used to evaluate alternatives and determine solutions.

102 Federal Requirements

Federal acts, laws, and regulations affect how FDOT plans and conducts community engagement activities. The objectives identified by federal regulations that FDOT promotes for its community engagement programs and activities:

- Early and continuous opportunities for public input
- Consideration of public needs and preferences
- Informed decisions through collaborative efforts
- Mutual understanding and trust between the Department and its partners

The following are the most relevant federal laws and regulations to FDOT's projects and programs. For specific public involvement requirements related to Project Development and Environment (PD&E) studies, see Part 1, Chapter 11 of the PD&E Manual.

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)

42 USC § 12131-12134

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, codified at 42 United States Code (USC) § 12131-12134, prohibits the exclusion of persons with disabilities from participation in services, programs, or activities of a public entity. This is the basis for the Department's standard nondiscrimination policy and language statement regarding accommodating persons with disabilities such as hearing or visual impairment.

42 USC, § 12181-12189

Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act, codified at 42 USC § 12181-12189, requires public accommodations to provide equivalent access to individuals with disabilities. This is important for community engagement activities as the locations of public meetings, workshops, and public hearings must be accessible.

United States Code (USC) contains the laws of the United States adopted by Congress.

The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) contains the rules developed by the executive departments and agencies of the federal government to implement the laws contained in the USC.

When hosting a public hearing or meeting, it is important to ensure that the facility, including the parking, bathrooms, and meeting space, is accessible for all.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

42 USC § 2000d-2000d-1

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, codified at 42 USC § 2000d-2000d-1, states, “No person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.”

FDOT’s Nondiscrimination Policy and Language

FDOT’s nondiscrimination policy and language demonstrates the Department's intention to comply with the Civil Rights Act. Consistent with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the nondiscrimination language shown must be included in all materials sent to the public including meeting notifications and advertisements.

- Public participation is solicited without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability, or family status.
- Persons who require special accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act or persons who require translation services (free of charge) should contact _______ at _______ at least seven days prior to the meeting.

Age Discrimination Act of 1975

42 USC § 6101-6107

The Age Discrimination Act of 1975, codified at 42 USC § 6101-6107, prohibits federally assisted programs from discrimination based on age.

Federal Laws and Regulations Relating to Highways

Title 23 USC – Highways

23 USC § 109(h)

Section 109(h) requires the consideration of possible adverse effects on the human and natural environment as part of the project development process.

23 USC § 128

Section 128 requires public hearings and consideration of economic and social effects, environmental impacts, and consistency with the goals and objectives of urban planning by the community as part of planning projects for Federally-aided highways.

23 USC § 135

Section 135 requires participation by interested parties in the development of statewide and nonmetropolitan transportation planning.

Title 23 CFR - Highways

23 CFR 450.210

Part 450, Section 210 states, “the state shall develop and use a documented public involvement process that provides opportunities for public review and comment at key decision points." This is the basis for the Department's public involvement program.

23 CFR 771.111

Part 771, Section 111 requires public hearings and consideration of environmental impacts for projects involving federal funds or a federal action. Fulfilling the requirements of this law are typically addressed through the PD&E process. By following Part 1, Chapter 11 of the PD&E Manual, it ensures compliance with this federal law.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969

42 USC § 4321-4370

The NEPA Act of 1969, codified at 42 USC § 4321-4370, requires federal agencies to consider human, natural, and physical impacts as part of their planning and decision-making processes, and established requirements for environmental impact reviews. The process outlined in the PD&E Manual is FDOT's procedure for complying with NEPA.

Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act of 1970

The Uniform Relocation Act establishes the requirements for how agencies acquire property that results in the displacement of people. FDOT's right-of-way staff ensure compliance with the Uniform Relocation Act.

49 CFR 24

49 CFR 24 establishes the requirements for fair, equitable, and consistent treatment of owners of real property to be acquired and persons displaced by federal or federally-assisted projects.

49 CFR 24.5 requires that notices provided to property owners or occupants be written in plain language or provided in an alternate manner for persons unable to read or understand a written notice.

103 State Requirements

The State of Florida's requirements for public involvement are found in the Florida Statutes (FS). The following are the most frequently referenced statutes and requirements. For specific public involvement requirements related to Project Development and Environment (PD&E) studies, see Part 1, Chapter 11 of the PD&E Manual.

Section 760.01, FS, Florida Civil Rights Act of 1992

The Florida Civil Rights Act of 1992 secures freedom from discrimination because of race, color, religion, sex, pregnancy, national origin, age, handicap, or marital status for all individuals.

FDOT's nondiscrimination policy and language demonstrates the Department's intention to comply with the Civil Rights Act. The nondiscrimination language shown must be included in all materials sent to the public including meeting notifications and advertisements.

- *Public participation is solicited without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability, or family status.*
- *Persons who require special accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act or persons who require translation services (free of charge) should contact _______ at _______ at least seven days prior to the meeting.*

Section 120.525, FS, Administrative Procedures Act

- Any public hearing, workshop, or meeting must be advertised in the Florida Administrative Register (FAR) and on the Department's Public Meeting Notices website at least seven days in advance regardless of project phase.
- The advertisement must include the general subject matter to be considered.
- An agenda (containing the items to be considered in order of presentation) must be prepared seven days before the public hearing, workshop, or meeting and be published on the agency's website.

Section 286.011, FS, Public Business (Government in the Sunshine)

Florida's Government in the Sunshine Law, commonly referred to as the Sunshine Law, provides a right of access to governmental proceedings at both the state and local levels.

- Any meeting involving two or more members of the same board (elected, advisory, or committee members) must be advertised and open to the public.
- Minutes of any such meeting must be available for public inspection.

- Public meetings must not be held at a facility or location that discriminates based on sex, age, race, creed, color, origin, or economic status or that otherwise restricts public access.
- Establishes penalties for violation of these provisions and exceptions for specific situations.

Section 335.199, FS, State Highway System Access Modification

- Public meetings are required for access management changes.
- Applies to projects that will divide a state highway, erect median barriers modifying currently available vehicle turning movements, or have the effect of closing or modifying an existing access.
- The Department shall notify all affected property owners, municipalities, and counties at least 180 days before the design of the project is finalized.
- If the proposed changes were presented as part of the public hearing held during the Project Development and Environment (PD&E), then no further action is required.
- At least one public meeting must be held in the jurisdiction where the project is located before completing the design phase.

Section 339.155, FS, Transportation Finance and Planning

- The Department must develop a statewide transportation plan, the Florida Transportation Plan (FTP).
- Procedures for public participation in transportation planning include:
    - Provide an opportunity for the public and affected and/or interested parties to comment on the FTP.
    - Require one or more public hearings to be held during the development of major transportation improvements, such as capacity improvements, new interchanges, and new roadway or limited access facilities.
    - Require notification of all affected property owners 20 days prior to design public hearings. Notices must be published twice, the first notice being at least 15 days before the public hearing. Affected property owners are those whose property lies within 300 feet on either side of the centerline and those who the Department determines will be substantially affected environmentally, economically, socially, or safety wise.

Executive Order 07-01, Section 2 – Plain Language Initiative

This initiative ensures that announcements, publications, and other documents provided by state agencies contain “clear and concise” information. Specific requirements include:

- Use of common language instead of technical jargon,
- Providing only the pertinent information in an organized manner,
- Use of short sentences and active voice, and
- Layout and design that are user friendly.

Section 1012.465, FS, Jessica Lunsford Act

This law requires background screenings for certain individuals entering school grounds when children are present. As a result of this, FDOT adopted the approach that public K-12 educational facilities should not be used for public hearings and meetings. There is a provision for exceptions.

- Public school facilities for grades K-12 should not be used for public meetings.
- Public schools may be used when no students are present, as confirmed by an appropriate school principal and approved by the Assistant Secretary of Engineering and Operations.
- Alternate facilities that may be used include colleges, universities, and private schools.

Section 339.135, FS, Work Program

- District offices must hold a public hearing in at least one urbanized area in the district and make a presentation at a meeting of each metropolitan planning organization in the district prior to submitting the District Work Program.
- The Florida Transportation Commission must conduct a statewide public hearing on the Tentative Work Program and advertise the time, place, and purpose of the public hearing in the FAR at least seven days prior to the public hearing.

Section 335.02, FS, Authority to Designate Transportation Facilities and Rights-of-Way and Establish Lanes

- Prior to reassigning transportation facilities into the State Highway System, a public hearing must be conducted in each affected county, with reasonable notice at least 14 days prior to the event.
- Notice must be published in a newspaper in each county in addition to any other notice required by law.

104 Department Resources

Community Engagement Policy (000-525-050-j)

This is the Department's policy for community engagement.

Project, Development and Environment (PD&E) Manual

The PD&E Manual is the Department's procedure for complying with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and associated federal and state laws and regulations.

Public Involvement (Part 1, Chapter 11 of the PD&E Manual)

Part 1, Chapter 11 provides guidance on public involvement activities regardless of project phase.

FDOT Design Manual (FDM)

The FDM, Chapter 104, provides procedures and guidance for the preparation of contract plans for roadways and structures.

Project Management (PM) Guide

The PM Guide is the Department's resource to help project managers develop and deliver projects. Section 245 discusses public involvement for project managers, including the components of a Community Awareness Plan (CAP) that will carry forward during the construction phase.

MPO Program Management Handbook

The MPO Program Management Handbook, found on this website, discusses federal and state public involvement requirements for metropolitan planning organizations in Florida.

105 Outreach During Project Phases

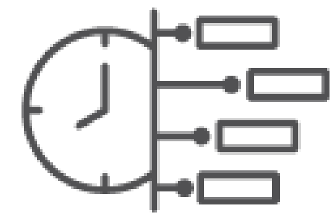
The typical phases of taking a transportation project from idea to reality include planning, Project Development and Environment (PD&E), design, construction, and operations and maintenance. Projects follow this path, but can start in the planning, PD&E, or design phase. Sometimes a project starts with a local government or regional agency, then transitions to the Department during the PD&E or design phase. Some projects begin in the design phase without preliminary studies, like a resurfacing project.

Outreach is essential throughout the entire project life cycle to ensure early and continuous opportunities for public input. This allows for consideration of public needs and preferences through the project phases and supports informed decisions through collaborative efforts. It also helps build mutual understanding and trust between the Department and its partners.

It is the Florida Department of Transportation's policy to use every possible opportunity to engage with and involve the public when planning, designing, constructing, and maintaining transportation facilities and services to meet the State's transportation needs.

Understanding outreach during the project phases helps the Department to:

- Identify community engagement requirements for each project phase
- Recognize past outreach efforts and the outcomes
- Identify engagement opportunities for future project phases
- Know when partners and the public can become involved



In the **planning phase**, a study is conducted to define a corridor or system need and develop an action plan for implementation. Public engagement in planning involves two-way communication to learn about community values and preferences. During this phase, public input is gathered to learn about the local vision, goals, objectives, priorities, and recommendations.

In the **PD&E phase**, the Department conducts a study for a specific roadway or corridor to define the project alternatives and evaluate the social, cultural, physical, and natural environmental impacts. Public engagement in PD&E includes gathering input on the proposed alternatives and potential impacts to assist with making a final recommendation. During this phase, information shared with the public may include the project need and supporting data, alternative concepts, impacts including right-of-way and property impacts, and any access management changes.

In the **design phase**, the Department completes detailed design plans that are used to construct the project. Public engagement in design includes sharing project information and gathering input on the design concept. During this phase, information shared with the public may include the design concept, proposed maintenance of traffic, construction schedule, right-of-way impacts, access management changes, and landscaping features. Access management changes require a public meeting and notification to the public during the design phase.

Remember that not all projects start in the planning or PD&E phase. For these projects, the design phase may be the first time that the public is hearing about the project or has an opportunity to provide input.

Public engagement during **construction** is about communicating lane closures, detours, and the construction duration. The Department may also share information about maintenance of traffic, construction sequencing, median changes, and other temporary impacts.

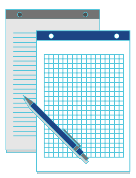
Maintenance is an ongoing activity that occurs throughout the state highway system. During the operations and maintenance phase, the public may be notified of traffic impacts. General maintenance activities or repairs may require temporary lane closures or detours. Variable message boards, social media, and press releases can be used to notify those traveling in the area.

The types of outreach and who is typically engaged during each project phase are summarized in the table below. *Section 500 Outreach Methods* describes how to conduct the different types of outreach mentioned below.

106 Outreach During Planning

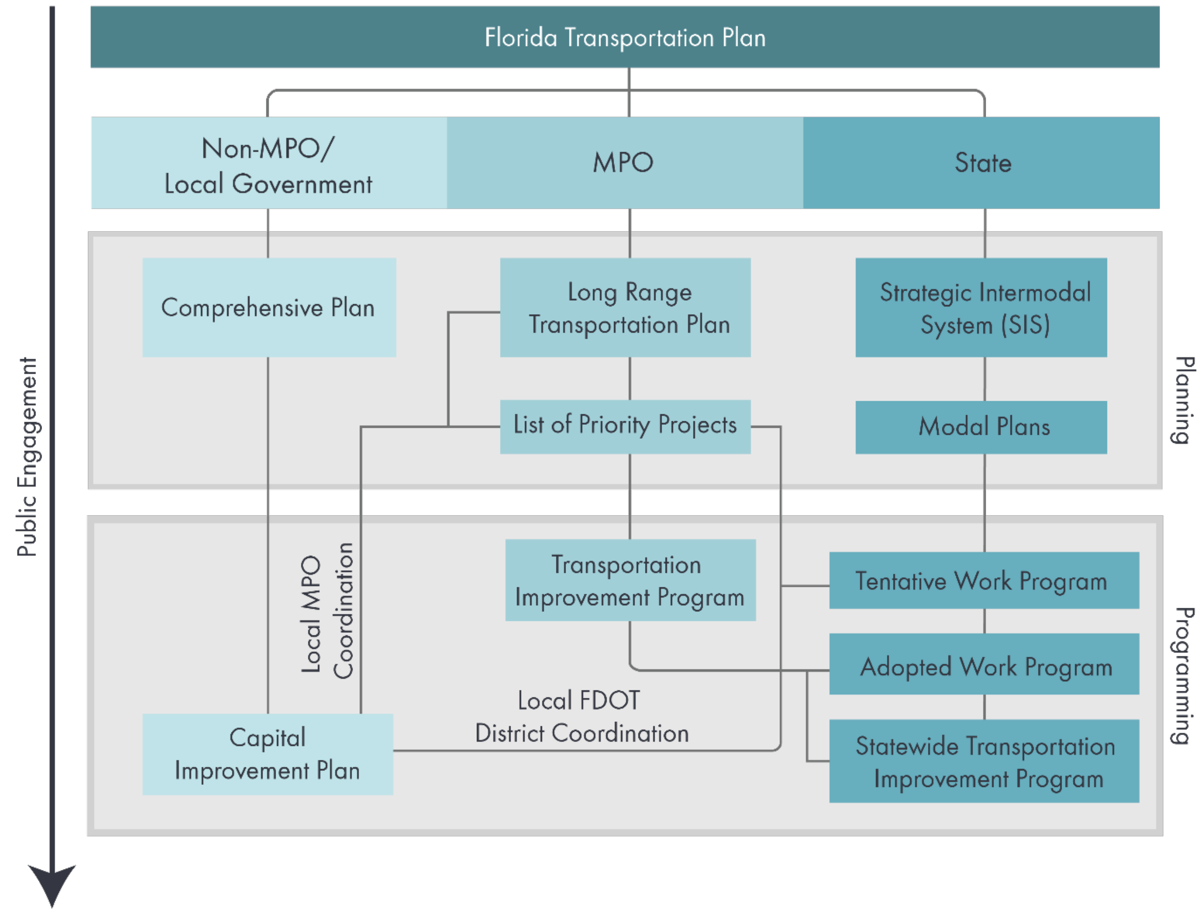
Transportation planning helps the Department make decisions about how to prioritize funding, implement transportation policy, and design projects. Planning also helps develop policy and projects that achieve outcomes consistent with statewide, regional, and local visions. Community engagement during planning brings diverse viewpoints and values to the surface early in the decision-making process and consists of activities and actions that both inform and involve the public so they can help influence decisions that affect their lives. Certain federal and state requirements require public input and stakeholder coordination during transportation planning.

Statewide Policy Plans



Policy planning is the first step in the statewide transportation decision-making process and can involve a wide range of planning, policy, and research-related activities. The Office of Policy Planning (OPP) oversees a variety of these activities to advance Florida's statewide transportation system. These activities include the developing the Florida Transportation Plan (FTP) and the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) Strategic Plan and collecting information and data about trends and conditions that may influence future transportation efforts.

Statewide policy plans developed by the Department set overarching vision, policy, goals, priorities, and strategies to plan and implement transportation programs and projects throughout Florida. The following describes how the Department may engage partners and the public to develop these plans and the notification requirements in law.



Florida Transportation Plan

The state transportation plan, known as the Florida Transportation Plan (FTP), establishes a policy framework for spending federal and state transportation funds in Florida. It is a policy-driven document and not project-specific. Every five years FDOT updates this plan to meet the future mobility needs of Florida's residents, visitors, and businesses. FDOT works with partners and the public to develop the plan, including a steering committee, subcommittees, and regional and local groups. The community engagement activities used to develop the FTP include:

Requirements for public involvement during the development of the FTP are found in 23 CFR 450.208, 23 CFR 450.210, and Section 339.155 F.S.

- Regular meetings of a steering committee and subcommittees
- Statewide events
- Regional workshops
- Briefings at regularly scheduled meetings of transportation
- partners
- Social media outreach
- Brochures, fact sheets, infographics, and videos
- An interactive website to gather public comments and suggestions
- Informal advisory groups
- A Public comment period on the draft plan

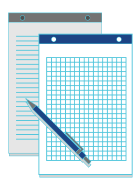
These activities are documented in a Partner and Public Involvement Plan, which can be found on the FTP website.

Strategic Intermodal System Plan

The SIS is the state's highest priority for transportation capacity investments and a primary focus for implementing the Florida Transportation Plan (FTP), the state's long-range transportation vision and policy plan. The SIS Policy Plan identifies objectives and approaches to address changing trends and position the SIS for future opportunities. The plan defines policies to guide planning and investment decisions for the next five years. Florida Statutes require FDOT to develop and regularly update a SIS Plan with input from transportation partners and the public.

Requirements for public involvement during the development of the SIS Plan are found in Section 339.64 F.S.

Systemwide Plans

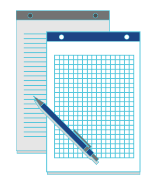


Transportation issues represent a significant component of planning at all levels, including the state, regional, and county level. Systemwide planning is a way to approach and study a transportation problem or issue in advance of any funding decisions, helping to link visions to financially realistic plans for multimodal transportation systems. It also provides strategic direction for investment decisions when examining transportation improvements and usually involves many different local and regional units of government. Systems planning can be applied to a variety of different geographies and a variety of different transportation modes.

Modal Plans

The Office of Modal Development facilitates and promotes the safe and efficient movement of people and goods by rail, sea, air, aerospace, and road. This is carried out through five divisions: Aviation, Public Transit, Spaceports, Freight and Rail, and Seaports. Some divisions develop a modal plan, such as the Aviation System Plan or Florida Freight and Mobility Plan. Community engagement activities and stakeholder coordination are part of the planning process.

Statewide Programming



FDOT Five Year Work Program

In the development of the FDOT Five-Year Work Program, the MPO provides its priority list of projects, which feeds the creation of the FDOT Work Program (fifth year). In addition, projects come from non-MPO areas to create the FDOT Five-Year Work Program.

Each District is required to hold a public hearing regarding the Five-Year Work Program in at least one urbanized area within its jurisdiction. Non-MPO counties are also invited to these public hearings. The District must also provide a virtual component to the public hearing. The statewide Work Program Public Hearing website links to District Work Program information, a comment form, and an interactive GIS map.

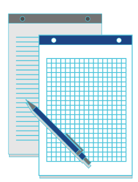
Requirements for the Work Program are found in Section 339.135 F.S. and Section 339.175 F.S.

These public hearings provide an opportunity for the public to be involved in the transportation decision-making process, and are typically attended by local government officials, transportation professionals, and persons with land development interests in the area.

In addition to the public hearing, each District office makes a presentation at a meeting of each MPO in the district to determine if changes (additions, deletions, or revisions) are necessary to projects contained within the District Work Program. This provides an opportunity for the District to update attendees about other District projects and activities.

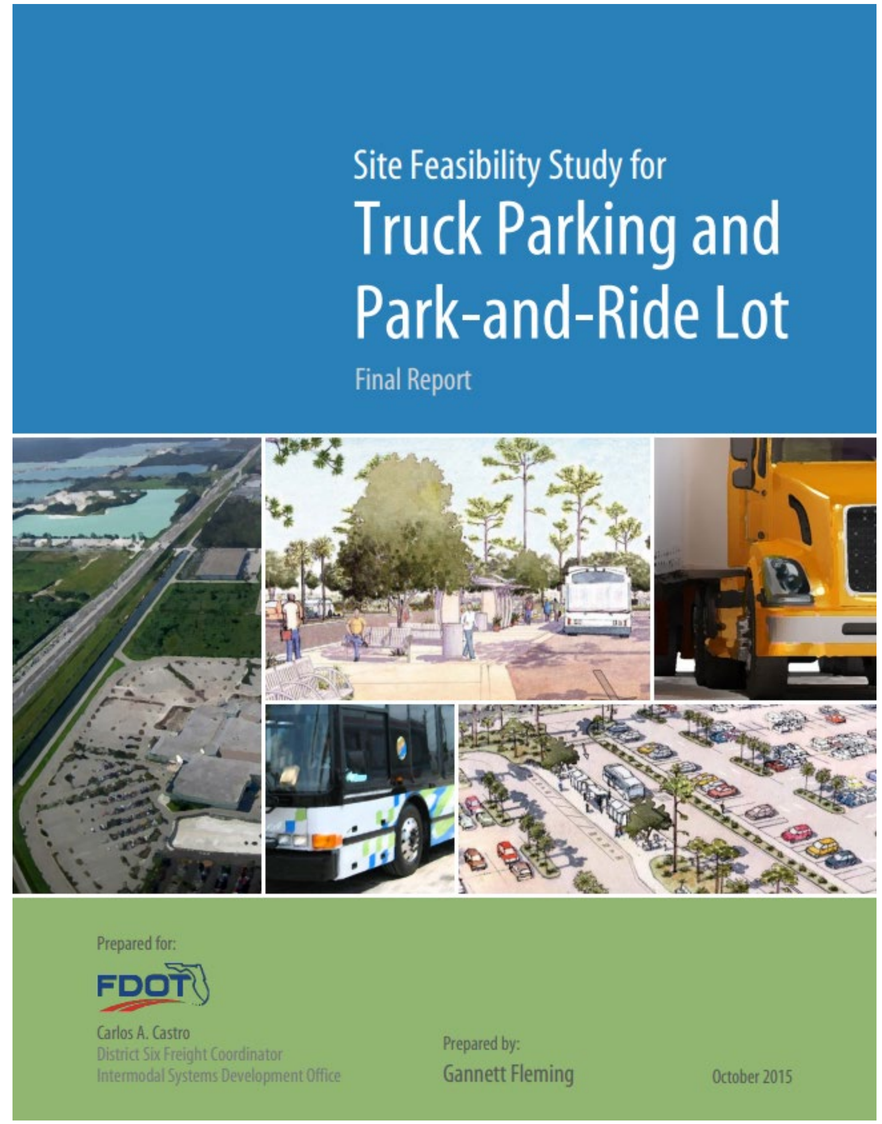
The Florida Transportation Commission conducts an annual public hearing on the preliminary Tentative Work Program. FDOT submits the final Tentative Work Program to the Governor and Legislature for approval.

Feasibility and Corridor Plans



Feasibility Studies

The FDOT, MPO, or a local government may conduct a feasibility study to evaluate aspects of a transportation project and understand the constructability of a project concept. This allows for early identification of project complexities that could be minimized, avoided, or mitigated throughout the project development process. A feasibility study helps determine if a project development and environment (PD&E) study needs to be conducted and to what level of detail. During a feasibility study, community engagement should be included and documented (through public workshops, small group meetings, etc.). This helps determine the type of community engagement activities that may be needed in future phases of the project. Results of a feasibility study may feed back into the LRTP Cost Feasible Plan in order to be programmed.



Corridor Plans

While systemwide plans focus on an entire city, county, region, or state, corridor plans are more narrowly focused on either a specific facility, such as a roadway, or the transportation needs for a defined area, such as a corridor, street, or neighborhood. This is typically the step between a systemwide plan and the more detailed evaluation done during the PD&E phase. The focus is to identify the transportation needs and potential solutions. The solutions are further developed through an appropriate mechanism, such as a PD&E study, or completed in the design phase.

Corridor planning has two different meanings. In one sense it is the planning of new corridors to provide for the future mobility needs of a region or community. Alternatively, it is the identification of improvements to existing corridors for them to continue to serve as vital elements of a community's transportation system. Corridors may be identified for further study from plans created during systemwide planning. Examples of corridor planning include comprehensive/master plans for a street or corridor, congestion management plans, and needs plans.

For corridor-specific studies and plans, small-scale meetings, and informal public meetings at the beginning (to identify stakeholders) and end (to share findings) of the study may be the most effective. Similarly, the creation of technical and citizen advisory groups can help ensure that a broader range of individuals is included and a variety of issues are covered. If technical and citizens advisory groups are already in place, the formation of specific stakeholder and citizen forums can help ensure an explicit need or concern is covered. Examples include forums or groups focused on economic development, land use, environment, or other special interests that may have surfaced at the beginning of the study.

Throughout corridor planning, extensive effort should be made to reach out to as many groups as possible to receive comments directly from the people who will benefit from and be impacted by the transportation project or system in the future. These opportunities offer the public and interested stakeholders a chance to learn about the planning process, possible outcomes, and project milestones, as well as provide an opportunity to form relationships and show members of the public the importance of their participation.

It can be challenging to engage the public in planning-level studies that are either not scheduled for implementation within a short time frame (five to 10 years) or that are system-level plans that do not directly impact a specific area and therefore do not directly affect them. It can be more effective to utilize community engagement activities that are easy for people to access, such as information available in locations where people already are. Engagement and involvement activities that encourage in-person dialogue and that are held outside formally scheduled public meetings and online activities can offer quality interactions and foster long-lasting relationships between citizens and practitioners.

107 Outreach During PD&E

Public involvement activities are most extensive during the Project Development and Environment (PD&E) phase. This phase is critical because it links the planning process with the actual project location, design, and eventual construction and operation. During the PD&E phase, FDOT works closely with federal agencies, state, local, and tribal governments, public and private organizations, and the public to understand the potential impacts of the project. This process requires a delicate balance between many important factors, including mobility needs, economic prosperity, health and environmental protection, community and neighborhood preservation, and quality of life for present and future generations.

For federally funded projects, FDOT, on behalf of either the FHWA or Federal Transit Administration (FTA), addresses and assesses compliance with more than 40 laws related to safety and the environment. These laws cover social, economic, and environmental concerns ranging from cohesion with the community to the impact on threatened and endangered species. FDOT procedure to comply with all requirements is outlined in the Part 1, Chapter 11 of the PD&E Manual.

During the PD&E phase, public involvement activities are completed to solicit comments about the proposed project. Depending on the Class of Action for the project, different public involvement activities are undertaken to meet federal and state requirements.

Not all projects require a PD&E study. For the ones that do, the project team often holds several public meetings, including kickoff meetings, information meetings and workshops, and public hearings. Other community engagement techniques include newsletters, brochures, and websites. Not every Class of Action requires a formal public hearing, but it should be noted that public hearings have specific legal requirements for how they are advertised and conducted. Refer to *Section 603 Notification Requirements*.

During the PD&E phase, the public involvement effort uses a variety of information to more clearly identify and delineate a project's stakeholders and affected communities. The scope of public involvement differs with each PD&E study and is adapted to the complexity of the project, as well as local area conditions. Input from the public helps engineering and environmental decisions and ensures an open and transparent decision-making process.

Requirements for public involvement during the PD&E phase are found in the PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 11.

108 Outreach During Design

When the design phase begins, it is important to keep in mind that not all projects have gone through a PD&E study. Projects such as resurfacing, sidewalks, and other enhancements generally do not go through the PD&E process and may be the first time that the public hears about the project. If the project had a PD&E phase, the design team should meet with the PD&E team to collect useful information such as mailing lists, issues that arose during public meetings or with local officials, and commitments made.

Community engagement activities during the design phase typically begin with the preparation of a Community Awareness Plan (CAP) and may involve activities such as public information meetings or design public hearings. Right of way acquisition may overlap with the design phase. FDOT's staff typically deals with property owners and businesses on a one-on-one basis.

When a project moves into the design phase, any information and potential solutions developed and analyzed during prior phases should be carried forward into this phase, including recommendations and commitments.

Design Concept Changes

When substantial changes to the design concept occur after the completion of the PD&E phase (if applicable), a public hearing may be required. Changes are considered to be substantial if (1) the changes cause social, economic, or environmental impacts that are substantively different from those previously determined, or (2) there is significant controversy regarding a specific issue that needs to be resolved. Any substantial design change should be coordinated Office of Environment Management (OEM) to determine the appropriate level of community engagement. In addition, a public information meeting is recommended if enough time has passed for there to be considerable changes in adjacent property ownership.

Requirements for public involvement during the design phase are found in the FDOT Design Manual, Chapter 104.

Access Management Changes

In accordance with Section 339.155 F.S., if an existing median access within a project is proposed for revision, a public meeting is required. This applies to all types of projects, including reconstruction, resurfacing, standalone safety projects, and design-build. This does not apply to permit applications. If a public hearing or meeting was conducted during the PD&E phase and included the currently proposed median changes, it is not necessary to conduct another public meeting. However, if during the design phase the Access Management Plan or median opening/closures are different from what was proposed in the PD&E phase, another public meeting is required.

Alternative Project Delivery

The alternative delivery approach combines design and construction into one phase such as design-build projects. A CAP outlines specific roles and responsibilities and should be prepared with sufficient flexibility to adapt to the dynamic nature of the project.

109 Outreach During Construction

During construction, community engagement takes on more of a public information role, informing people about lane closures, median changes, business access impacts, work hours and work zones, detours, and grand openings.

The public's ability to influence the overall construction phase is limited but the Department is responsible for engaging with the public to provide up-to-date information and solicit concerns in order to minimize the disruption to businesses and residents during the construction phase.

Requirements for public involvement during the construction phase are found in the FDOT Design Manual, Chapter 104.

Construction open houses, which can either be formal meetings held in enclosed spaces or informal activities conducted within the project corridor.

All Department-hosted engagement events held during the construction phase must be noticed in the Florida Administrative Register (FAR) and on the Department's website, pursuant to Section 120.525, F.S.

In addition to traditional public information meetings, some projects may benefit from other methods such as one-on-one meetings, updates on a project website, and social media. Variable message signs (VMS) are routinely used to communicate lane closures and changes in access.

110 Outreach During Maintenance

Like construction, community engagement during operations and maintenance is typically focused on informing people about lane closures, work zones, detours, and temporary access impacts, if any.

Examples of operations activities include improvements to traffic signals, pavement marking, and signage. Example maintenance activities are roadside mowing/landscaping, pavement repairs, and drainage system upkeep. Community engagement during operations and maintenance activities may be limited to the use of variable message signs (VMS) and the PIO's weekly traffic report. However, there may be times when public meetings or one-on-one meetings are necessary to address the concerns of adjacent property owners, neighborhoods, or businesses.

201 Community Engagement Plans

A comprehensive plan is crucial to the success of any community engagement effort regardless of the project or phase. Guidelines and requirements for the development of a community engagement plan varies by project phase. In the Project Development and Environment (PD&E) phase, a Public Involvement Plan (PIP) is required in accordance with Part 1, Chapter 11 of the PD&E manual. In the design and construction phases, a Community Awareness Plan (CAP) is developed in accordance with Chapter 104 of the FDOT Design Manual (FDM). There are no specific requirements in the Planning phase; however, a Communication Plan can be developed. Additional information related to the types of plans is provided below.

Communication Plan

A Communication Plan may be developed to provide the public engagement strategy during the Planning phase (work prior to the PD&E phase). This plan outlines the methods and timelines for engaging with the public, local agencies, and stakeholders. A PIP outline (found in Part 1, Chapter 11 of the PD&E Manual) may be used to develop a Communications Plan outline, but specific needs should be determined in coordination with the project team and the District.

Public Involvement Plan (PIP)

A PIP is required for PD&E projects. The plan is prepared at the beginning of the PD&E phase before the kick-off of any public engagement. The PIP defines affected communities and potential stakeholders, as well as details of the outreach methods and required notification time frames to involve and gain their input. It may include any other public involvement strategies used to support a NEPA decision for an FDOT Federal Project.

Any changes to the approach outlined in the PIP, along with the reasoning behind those changes, should be documented within the public involvement summary for the project (for PD&E, this will be in the Summary of Public Involvement, or SPI). The requirements and specific details can be found in the PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 11. The PD&E Manual is accessible on the FDOT website.

Community Awareness Plans (CAP)

The CAP is developed for the design and construction phases of a project and identifies and documents appropriate outreach activities based on the type of project and potential community concerns.

Specific details and requirements for CAPs can be found in Chapter 104 of FDOT Design Manual (FDM). The information provided in FDM 104 includes a suggested CAP outline and a list of typical public involvement activities based on the project type. The community engagement team should also be aware of any District-specific CAP requirements.

301 Identifying the Public

To achieve inclusive community engagement, the plan/project outreach strategy must consider the full range of individuals and organizations who would have an interest in or could be affected by the transportation action. Taking steps to engage with these stakeholders will bring diverse knowledge, opinions, and concerns to light for developing recommendations that are most suitable for the purpose and context.

The Department's community engagement activities must be accessible to any person regardless of race, color, national origin, physical ability, and income status. Effectively engaging with different population groups may call for different approaches or techniques. Understanding who lives, works, studies, shops, and plays in a plan/project area is fundamental to tailoring outreach to their needs and preferences as well as complying with federal and state nondiscrimination laws and directives.

Steps to identifying the public include:

- Identifying representatives of stakeholder organizations for inclusion in the plan/project contacts list
- Identifying property interests, including property owners and tenants, located within a minimum of 300 feet of the centerline of any project alternative for inclusion in the project contacts list
- Performing a focused demographic analysis to identify populations, communities, and organizations whose involvement will be necessary to achieve inclusive community engagement

302 Building a Contact List

Throughout the life of a plan or project, there will be occasions when the Department needs to communicate with the public, including direct mailings about public meetings. A comprehensive contact list is essential to timely and efficient distribution of Department communications.

Content and Organization

The first consideration for building a contact list is to determine what types of information to collect for the list. The table below provides an example of typical information included in a contact list. For communications that must be distributed to certain contacts via physical mail, a complete mailing address will be needed. For all other contacts, including elected and appointed officials from stakeholder agencies, department communications may be distributed using email addresses.

To organize and store contact information, use a spreadsheet or contact management tool that is easy to update and can automate envelope addressing or email distribution.

Example Contact Information Fields

Information Type	Information Fields	
Contact	First name	Email address
	Last name	Telephone number
	Affiliation/title	Mobile Telephone number
Mailing Addresses	Owner address	Parcel address
	City	City
	State	State
	Zip code	Zip code
Miscellaneous	Updates request	Meeting attendance

Collecting Contact Information

The extent of a contact list can vary by the phase or complexity of the transportation action under consideration, including the level of community interest. Generally, a contact list will start off with a defined set of property owners and tenants and certain stakeholder groups. The contact list will grow over time as other affected/interested persons and groups are identified, typically through public outreach and involvement activities.

For projects that had a prior phase, a contact list may have been created that could be built upon for the current list. Be sure to verify that the information is accurate. Update as necessary to account for changes in property ownership and stakeholder group representatives (e.g., new elected officials).

Property Owners and Tenants

Property owners and tenants with potential to be directly affected by a transportation action must receive certain Department notifications by physical mail (e.g., public hearing notices). The geographic starting point for identifying these property owners/tenants consists of properties located, in whole or in part, within the 300-foot radius from the centerline of any project alternative. If it is evident that owners/tenants of properties located beyond the 300-foot radius could be directly affected by the action, these property interests must also be included in the contact list to ensure receipt of required notifications by physical mail. Reference: Chapter 339.155, FS.

Ownership information for properties within the project area is available from the county property appraiser's office located in all Florida counties. Address information includes a physical address for the property and a mailing address for the property owner. When the property address and the owner's mailing address differ, this is an indication that the property may be occupied by a tenant. When this occurs, notifications should be sent to the owner's mailing address and the property's physical address to ensure that both of these stakeholders receive notification.

Stakeholder Groups

A contact list also includes representatives of stakeholder groups that could be affected by or otherwise have an interest in the outcomes of a transportation plan or project. These stakeholders typically include members of elected and appointed governing boards, government agencies and advisory bodies, community organizations, and industry groups. The table accompanying this section of the guide provides a listing of stakeholder groups that may apply to your contact list.

Contact List Maintenance

A contact list is a dynamic document that should be regularly updated to reflect the best available data at a given point in time. Accurate contact information is critical for mailings. An aged contact list can result in more returned mail and, as a consequence, uninformed stakeholders.

Additionally, the contact list should be updated to include people who have requested to be added to the list, such as through a website form, comment card, or public meeting registration/sign-in sheet. Be sure to promptly update the contact list with these new additions so everyone expecting updates receives the information in a timely manner.

303 Demographic Analysis

Demographic analysis is an essential part of accurately identifying the public for community engagement conducted by the Department. Demographic analysis involves gathering and reviewing data about the characteristics of a population in a defined area. The findings of a demographic analysis help us better understand the communities we seek to involve in project planning and decision-making processes so that engagement activities can be tailored to be most effective and inclusive. During the PD&E phase, the demographic analysis is typically conducted by the Sociocultural Effects (SCE) professional, not the public involvement team. Public involvement professionals should coordinate with SCE professionals to assist with this data. The table below describes ways that demographic analysis supports community engagement for Department plans and projects.

Demographic Analysis Uses in Community Engagement

Approach	Uses
Inclusive Engagement	Gain insights on affected communities in an analysis area
Title VI	Determine the presence of affected population groups addressed in federal and state nondiscrimination laws and directives
Targeted Outreach	Determine the presence of population groups that may be harder to reach through traditional community engagement
Tailored Engagement	Recognize who is missing from community engagement activities and readjust approaches to include them in future activities

Data Collection

When planning for community engagement, demographic data for the analysis is collected from three general sources:

- Desktop data – US Census Bureau data tables and maps for Census Block Groups in the analysis area
- Field review – First-hand observation of the human environment in the analysis area
- Community outreach – Information from knowledgeable locals (context experts) about the population in the analysis area

These sources can offer quantitative and qualitative data to provide the most accurate depiction of population groups and communities that could be affected by a transportation action.

Data Tools

There are several user-friendly, demographic data tools that can facilitate a plan- or project-level demographic analysis. Such tools include:

- Area of Interest Tool, FDOT Environmental Screening Tool (also see Sociocultural Data Report section of this guide)
- Environmental Screening Tool (EST), FDOT Efficient Transportation Decision Making Process (a user account is required)
- Data.census.gov, U.S. Census Bureau data and digital content platform

Data Analysis

Step 1: Define the Analysis Area

The *analysis area* encompasses the geographic area where communities and community resources have potential to be affected by the plan or project under consideration. An appropriately sized analysis area helps ensure that all affected groups are accounted for and accommodated in community engagement activities. In the planning phase, when the type and severity of such effects are less well understood, the analysis area may need to be larger (e.g., the one-half-mile area surrounding a project). In contrast, the analysis area for a design phase project might only encompass the area within 300 feet of the project right of way, especially when potential effects have been ruled out through impact assessment and public input from an earlier phase. In any phase, it is important that the analysis area be sized to include all potentially affected populations.

Learn more about creating an analysis area with a GIS buffer or Census Block Groups in the Sociocultural Data Report section of this guide.

Step 2: Review Desktop Data

The primary data source for demographic analysis is the U.S. Census Bureau, which creates the Decennial Census Program every ten years and the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS provides data estimates (with margins of error), while the decennial census are 100% counts. ACS estimates are currently reported in one-year and five-year data sets. Although the five-year data set is less current than the one-year data set, it is based on more data points (lower margin of error). For this reason, the five-year data set is the preferred data set for a plan- or project-level demographic analysis. However, circumstances in the analysis area, such as recent population growth, may warrant use of one-year data set.

Learn more about the using US Census Bureau data for demographic analysis on the FDOT SCE Evaluation Process webpage.

Step 3: Conduct a Field Review

While desktop data from the US Census Bureau is an excellent resource for demographic analysis, the data may not present a complete picture of communities in the analysis area. Consider that seasonal residents and visitors are not included in the Census data. Visiting the project area allows a first-hand account of the analysis area to bring context to the desktop data. For example, signs on businesses and churches in a non-English language are a good indication that a non-English language is spoken to a significant degree by local residents, workers, or visitors. It is important that such groups be accounted for when planning for community engagement.

Step 4: Interview Context Experts

Another way to expand on the desktop data is to speak with people who are familiar with communities in the analysis area. Local agency planners, school principals, social service agencies, civic groups, and church leaders are reliable sources of information about their clients/ constituencies and communities and organizations in their service area. As you speak with community members, offer to add them to the project contacts list.

Step 5: Document Findings for Community Engagement

After analyzing the desktop data (e.g., Sociocultural Data Report), field review notes, and context expert interview notes, compile your findings in a simple report or memorandum to accompany the community engagement plan. Point out significant details that would provide guidance for reaching and engaging population groups in the analysis area. Tailored engagement techniques may be necessary to ensure inclusion of all groups.

304 Sociocultural Data Report

The Sociocultural Data Report (SDR) was created by the Department to support demographic analysis for community engagement and sociocultural effects evaluation. The SDR provides demographic data from the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) and decennial censuses along with land use and community facilities data from other sources. The data sets used to generate SDRs are updated when new data is published, typically on an annual basis.

The SDR reports population data over three decades (1990 to the latest ACS) to show demographic trends for the selected geography. Trend data is provided for total population and households, race and ethnicity, age, income, disability, educational attainment, language (English proficiency), and housing. Current data is provided for geographic mobility of households, computers and internet availability, household languages, existing land uses, and community facilities.

SDRs are automatically generated and stored on the FDOT Environmental Screening Tool (EST) user site and public site for these geographies:

- User-defined areas – Areas defined by a local government or project team in conjunction with a planning effort (e.g., community plans)
- Census places – A census geography that includes incorporated places and unincorporated Census Designated Places
- Counties
- Project alternatives – The 500-foot buffer area surrounding project alternatives

An SDR can also be generated for a customized area by using the Area of Interest (AOI) Editor on the EST Map Viewer (EST user site only).

The EST offers two versions of the SDR for project alternatives and areas of interest. One version is based on the total data from Census block groups contained within and intersecting the selected area (*intersecting method*). The second version pulls from the same block groups but any intersecting block groups are clipped to the selected area and the data is estimated via equal area allocation (*clipping method*). When referring to ACS data, which are estimates, the clipping method produces estimates of estimates. For the intersecting method, the population reported may far exceed the population of interest (e.g., affected population) but the data has a lower margin of error. Comparing both SDR versions and using judgment is advised to help ensure that all populations of interest are accounted for in community engagement planning.

It is also important to note that the SDR data is aggregated for the area selected, which can obscure the presence of small concentrations of distinct population groups.

An overview of the SDR, including considerations for its use is provided in a companion document linked in this section of the guide. Additional SDR guidance is available here.

Use the Sociocultural Data Report (SDR) to get an initial understanding of the population groups present in a plan or project area.

Sociocultural Data Report (Clipping)

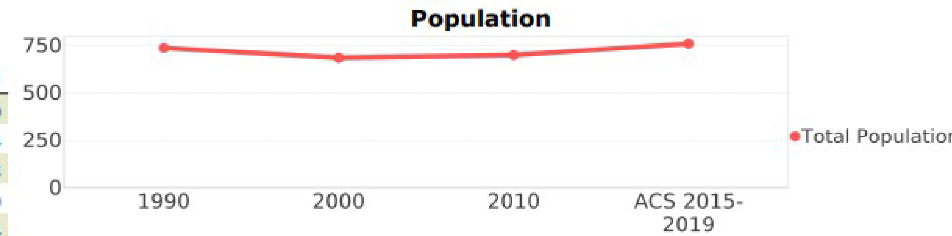
Philippe Parkway - North Segment
Area: 0.198 square miles
Jurisdiction-Cities: Safety Harbor
Jurisdiction-Counties: Pinellas

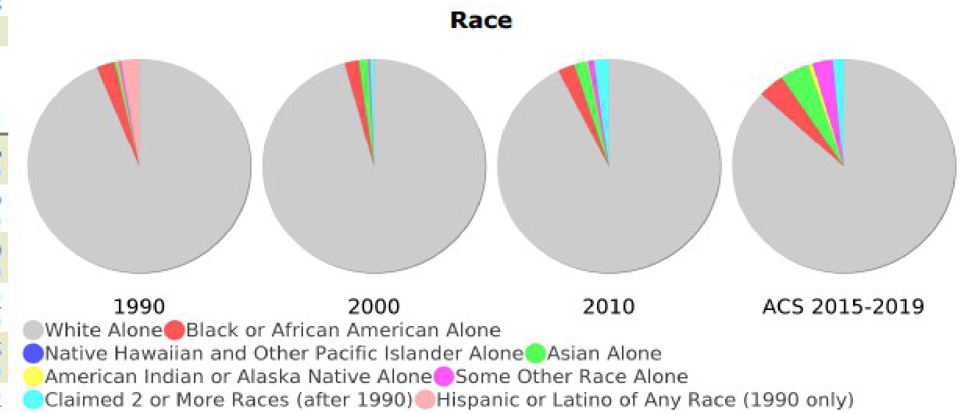
General Population Trends

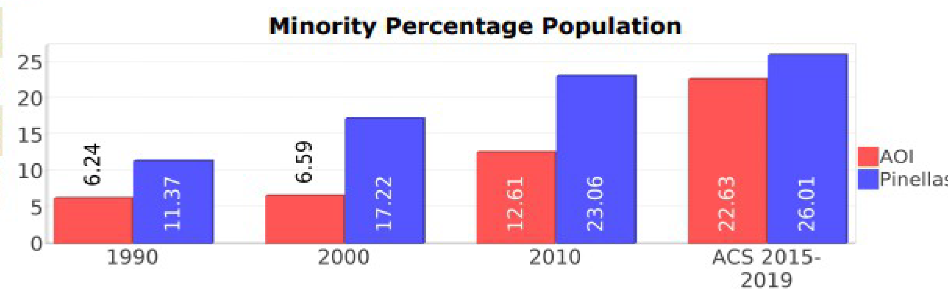
Description	1990	2000	2010[1]	ACS 2015-2019
Total Population	737	683	698	760
Total Households	322	317	324	314
Average Persons per Acre	5.05	5.24	5.80	6.23
Average Persons per Household	2.57	2.35	2.25	2.50
Average Persons per Family	2.94	2.84	3.00	3.04
Males	358	312	326	348
Females	379	370	372	411

Race and Ethnicity Trends

Description	1990	2000	2010[1]	ACS 2015-2019
White Alone	707 (95.93%)	650 (95.17%)	643 (92.12%)	656 (86.32%)
Black or African American Alone	20 (2.71%)	14 (2.05%)	17 (2.44%)	29 (3.82%)
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Alone	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Asian Alone	3 (0.41%)	9 (1.32%)	13 (1.86%)	32 (4.21%)
American Indian or Alaska Native Alone	1 (0.14%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (0.14%)	5 (0.66%)
Some Other Race Alone	3 (0.41%)	2 (0.29%)	6 (0.86%)	22 (2.89%)
Claimed 2 or More Races	NA (NA)	4 (0.59%)	15 (2.15%)	12 (1.58%)
Hispanic or Latino of Any Race	20 (2.71%)	16 (2.34%)	43 (6.16%)	98 (12.89%)
Not Hispanic or Latino	717 (97.29%)	667 (97.66%)	655 (93.84%)	662 (87.11%)
Minority	46 (6.24%)	45 (6.59%)	88 (12.61%)	172 (22.63%)







401 One-on-One Meetings

Meetings with individuals can be very important to the success of a plan or project. They can help the project manager develop a rapport with the individual, understand what their issues or goals may be, and come to a mutual understanding about the plan or project. Building relationships can also provide a connection to the community and can provide the person with a level of trust, comfort, and inclusion.

In addition, these meetings can help the project team learn about other individuals and groups within the project area and thus expand the communication network. One-on-one meetings can help build relationships, understand issues and concerns, and identify community leaders. These meetings can include local government officials, local government staff, business owners, residents, leaders of community groups, etc.

One-on-one meetings can take place over the telephone or in person. They do not have to be advertised.

BE SURE TO:

Speak clearly

Introduce yourself clearly

Explain why you want to meet with them

Ask open-ended (not yes or no) questions, such as:

What transportation problems do you have in your community?

What do you think would be a good transportation solution in your neighborhood?

Can you tell me about some of the organizations you work with?

Can you tell me about other people we should be talking with?

Are there things you'd like us to know about your community?

Explain the project phase and the status of the plan or project.

Tell the person about any upcoming meetings or opportunities to provide input.

Be sure to thank the person for their time and make sure they are on your mailing list.

402 Small Group Meetings

A small group meeting is a great strategy for addressing concerns outside of a public hearing or meeting if those concerns are shared by a small subset of the community or covers a small area of the overall project. A small group meeting can have a variety of different participants and purposes. It might include a subset of the people who are affected by or interested in a project, such as a group of business owners, employees who commute to work within the project area, a homeowners association board, representatives of a demographic group, environmental advocates, or people who might not have yet been involved.

The purpose can include introducing the project, answering questions, soliciting feedback, or more. These meetings are generally informal and don't require public notice, unless the group includes two or more elected officials from the same board or commission to comply with the Sunshine Law. Careful notes will help you document the conversations and provide a record of the meeting for future reference.

For small group meetings held during the PD&E phase, please see Part 1, Chapter 11 of the PD&E Manual for additional notice requirements.

403 Public Meetings and Workshops

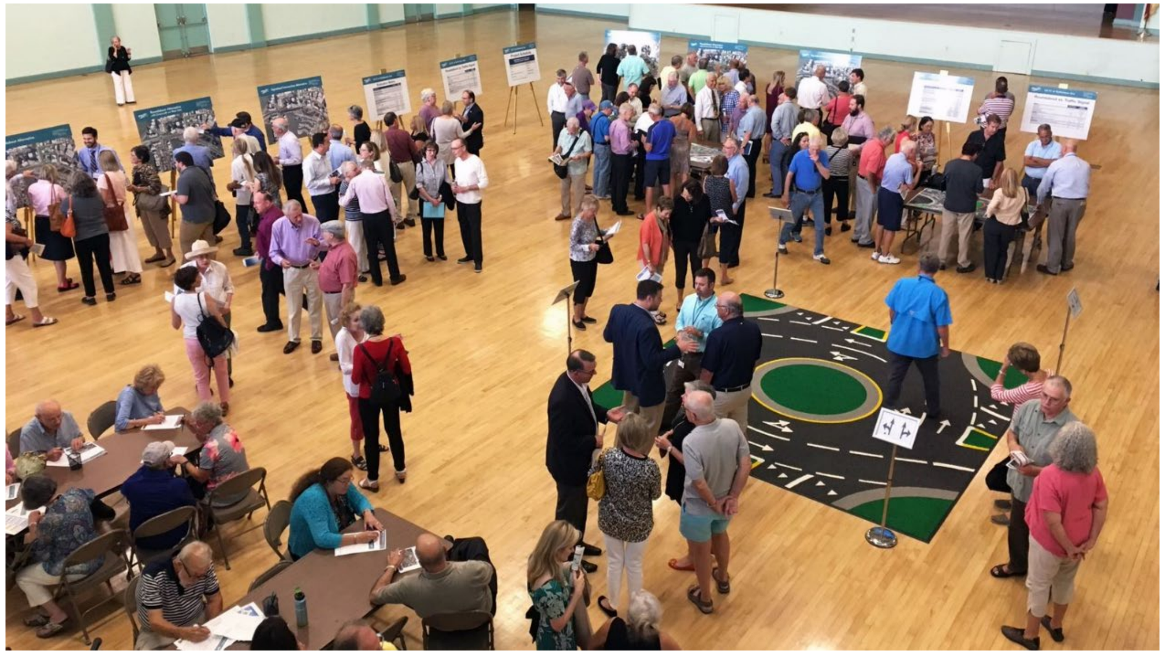
The term "public meeting" encompasses a wide variety of meeting formats and is used to distinguish less prescriptive forms of outreach from public hearings. The overall goal of any public meeting is to share information, initiate or continue a dialogue about the project, and start building consensus regarding the most appropriate solution(s).

Public meetings must be hybrid and are advertised and open to the public. Public meetings can take the form of public information meetings, open houses, workshops, and charrettes. In these meetings, the public views the materials at their own pace and can have informal conversations with the project team. There is no set agenda and typically no live presentation. Keep in mind that all public meetings must include an interactive virtual component in addition to the in-person meeting.

For public meetings held in the PD&E phase, please see Part 1, Chapter 11 of the PD&E Manual for additional guidance.

Reference Section 500 on how to prepare for a Public Meeting. Further guidance about hybrid and virtual meetings and public hearings are available below:

- Addressing Accessibility Challenges for Virtual Meetings



404 Public Hearings

A public hearing is different from a public meeting in several ways. Public hearings include a formal public comment period. Public hearings also require a public hearing transcript, which becomes a formal part of the public record.

Public hearings are required for all federal and state-funded major transportation improvements prior to a decision on a proposed action. A major transportation improvement is defined in state law as a project that increases capacity, builds new facilities, or provides new access to limited-access facilities (Section 339.155, FS). The same law also identifies specific time frames associated with advertising and notifying elected officials and the public.

During PD&E, all Environmental Assessments (EAs) require either a public hearing or an opportunity for a public hearing. Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) require public hearings. For other environmental documents, such as Type 2 Categorical Exclusions (CE) and State Environmental Impact Reports (SEIR), a public hearing is only required if the project meets the definition of a major transportation improvement.

All public hearings are required to be conducted in a hybrid format, incorporating both an in-person component and an interactive, virtual component. These do not have to be held at the same time.

Components of a Public Hearing

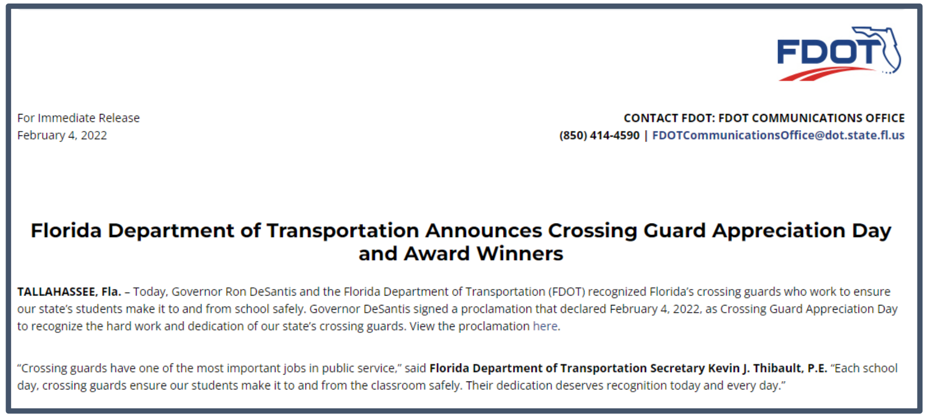
The following are the elements that are generally included in a public hearing.

- A presentation that is given either live or using a voiced-over presentation or video at a time specified in the public hearing notifications
- Project handouts
- Speaker registration cards
- One or more microphones for attendees to address the public hearing officer directly with comments and questions following the presentation
- Court reporter(s) or method of recording to prepare a verbatim transcript. Court reporter(s) are required for PD&E public hearings.
- Written comment forms for those not wishing to make a verbal statement

FOR PUBLIC HEARING REQUIREMENTS DURING THE PD&E PHASE, REFER TO PART 1, CHAPTER 11 OF THE PD&E MANUAL.

405 Working with the Media

Project managers and staff must work closely with the District or Central Office Communications staff to develop media strategies appropriate to the project and to disseminate project information. The Communications Office approves and disseminates all press materials. Achieving positive media exposure requires a certain degree of knowledge and expertise in tailoring messages that are factual and meet the media's standards for newsworthiness. It is important to formulate a clear, uniform message for the media from the onset of the project to reduce the chance that misinformation will be spread. The media is more likely to pick up a story if it is simple to report, easy to understand, contains personal experiences, and is linked to a current or enduring theme, such as safety, creating jobs, preserving the environment, or moving people and goods. Personal experiences from members of the public or local government officials can be effective for explaining, in general terms, the need for the project and the benefits the project may bring to the community.



For Immediate Release
February 4, 2022

CONTACT FDOT: FDOT COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
(850) 414-4590 | FDOTCommunicationsOffice@dot.state.fl.us

Florida Department of Transportation Announces Crossing Guard Appreciation Day and Award Winners

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Today, Governor Ron DeSantis and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) recognized Florida's crossing guards who work to ensure our state's students make it to and from school safely. Governor DeSantis signed a proclamation that declared February 4, 2022, as Crossing Guard Appreciation Day to recognize the hard work and dedication of our state's crossing guards. View the proclamation here.

"Crossing guards have one of the most important jobs in public service," said **Florida Department of Transportation Secretary Kevin J. Thibault, P.E.** "Each school day, crossing guards ensure our students make it to and from the classroom safely. Their dedication deserves recognition today and every day."

Press Releases

All draft materials provided to the Communications Office should be carefully proofread, double checking that the dates, times, locations, and contact person(s) are correct. In general, press releases should address the five "**W's**":

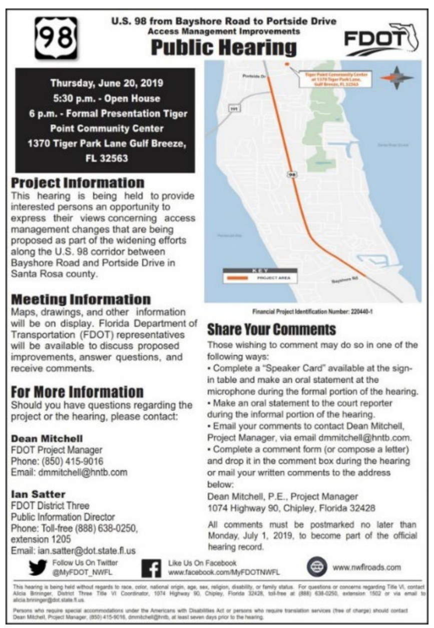
- **Who:** Identify the agency sponsoring the project and provide a contact name and phone number.
- **What:** Describe what is currently happening either with the project or at the public event.
- **When:** Indicate the timeline of the subject announced. If the press release is announcing a public meeting or workshop, be sure to include start and end times.
- **Where:** Identify the location of the community engagement activity, including the full street address with city, state, and zip code.
- **Why**: Explain why the community engagement activity or project milestone is taking place.

Press release templates are maintained by each District, in coordination with Central Office (CO) Communications Office. Formatting tips for a press release include using an easy-to-read font, leaving at least one and a half spaces between each line of text, providing a concise headline that captures the essence of the release, including the date of the release, and including the required nondiscrimination language. It is important to include a sentence or two describing the project, its background, and its purpose or goal. If the project is being conducted in coordination with other agencies, these agencies should be recognized in the press release.

Media Outlets

Media outlets should be selected for their ability to reach all affected communities and people and groups who may have an interest in the project. Understanding the community characteristics and needs in the affected area is essential to inclusive public outreach.

All media sources have different deadlines. Knowing these deadlines may influence the decision to include a particular source in the overall strategy. It is important to respect media deadlines to maintain a positive relationship. There may be preferences for how the information is received (e.g., email or a website form). Print/digital quality standards may be applicable. The following are examples of different media sources that can be utilized for transportation projects.



U.S. 98 from Bayshore Road to Portside Drive
Access Management Improvements
Public Hearing

Thursday, June 20, 2019
5:30 p.m. - Open House
6 p.m. - Formal Presentation Tiger Point Community Center
1370 Tiger Park Lane Gulf Breeze, FL 32563

Project Information
This hearing is being held to provide interested persons an opportunity to express their views concerning access management changes that are being proposed as part of the widening efforts along the U.S. 98 corridor between Bayshore Road and Portside Drive in Santa Rosa county.

Meeting Information
Maps, drawings, and other information will be on display. Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) representatives will be available to discuss proposed improvements, answer questions, and receive comments.

For More Information
Should you have questions regarding the project or the hearing, please contact:

Dean Mitchell
FDOT Project Manager
Phone: (850) 415-9016
Email: dmmitchell@hntb.com

Ian Satter
FDOT District Three
Public Information Director
Phone: Toll-free (888) 638-0250, extension 1205
Email: ian.satter@dot.state.fl.us

Financial Project Identification Number: 220440-1

Share Your Comments
Those wishing to comment may do so in one of the following ways:
• Complete a "Speaker Card" available at the sign-in table and make an oral statement at the microphone during the formal portion of the hearing.
• Make an oral statement to the court reporter during the informal portion of the hearing.
• Email your comments to contact Dean Mitchell, Project Manager, via email dmmitchell@hntb.com.
• Complete a comment form (or compose a letter) and drop it in the comment box during the hearing or mail your written comments to the address below:
Dean Mitchell, P.E., Project Manager
1074 Highway 90, Chipley, Florida 32428

All comments must be postmarked no later than Monday, July 1, 2019, to become part of the official hearing record.

Follow Us On Twitter @MyFDOT_NWFL
Like Us On Facebook www.facebook.com/MyFDOTNWFL
www.nwflroads.com

This hearing is being held without regards to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability, or family status. For questions or concerns regarding Title VI, contact Alicia Brininger, District Three Title VI Coordinator, 1074 Highway 90, Chipley, Florida 32428, toll-free at (888) 638-0250, extension 1502 or via email to alicia.brininger@dot.state.fl.us.

Persons who require special accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act or persons who require translation services (free of charge) should contact Dean Mitchell, Project Manager, (850) 415-9016, dmmitchell@hntb, at least seven days prior to the hearing.

Print Media

Print media outlets include general circulation newspapers, community-specific newspapers, organizational newsletters or bulletins, community-based magazines, and school-based publications. While advertising in a general circulation newspaper may be a reliable resource for delivering project news and updates, additional options can broaden the potential audience. It is important to consider using print media provided in non-English languages or oriented to specific communities, homeowner association newsletters, special interest publications, business organization newsletters, and school-based publications such as student newspapers at local universities.

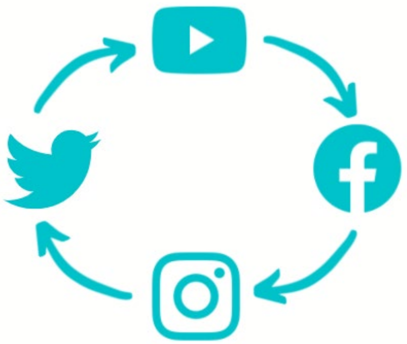
Radio and Television

Even with the advent of streaming services, radio and television remain powerful media sources that capture a local audience. News channels may conduct newsworthy interviews which could be an effective way to distribute project information. Additionally, public service announcements (PSAs) are often used as a formal method of announcing meetings, workshops, and milestones. Local television channels, which cost significantly less than paid network advertising, are particularly useful for reaching and relating to a local audience. Local cable channels offer news clips and interviews that can specifically cater to a project. Local TV and radio stations often have community calendars announcing local events such as public meetings.

406 Effective Use of Social Media

FDOT uses Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube through the Central and District Communications offices. These platforms are useful for promoting safety campaigns, public meetings, design, and construction updates, calls for comments, traffic situations, and more. In addition, the Customer Service Portal, available at the Contact Us link at www.fdot.gov provides a way for the public to create an account and ask questions, submit requests, and access self-help resources via a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs). The Communications staff are the only individuals authorized to create and maintain social media accounts for the department.

When drafting text for Social Media use, remember to include a link when appropriate and use hashtags judiciously. Photographs and other images help attract readers to the message.



407 Innovative Outreach

Other Types of Engagement

Opportunities for two-way communication are most frequently provided through public meetings. Some additional ways of engaging the public in discussion about a project or providing outreach for a community engagement activity are identified below.

Non-Traditional Methods

To maximize community engagement, it can be helpful to take project information to public events or find public places to disseminate information. The following are just a few examples of non-traditional ways in which the public can find out project information.

- **Shopping malls and other retail centers** are places where the team can reach out to a large number of people from diverse backgrounds.
- **Community fairs and sports events** offer opportunities for public information events to increase exposure of a project or plan. Booths can be set up or flyers can be handed out at these events.
- **Community focal points**, such as public libraries, parks, and community centers, are locations where teams can market project information.
- **Transportation hubs**, especially for transit projects, provide a particularly appropriate locale where the team can be stationed at major transfer centers or heavily used stops to distribute information about the project or upcoming community engagement activities.
- **Drive-thru project displays** can be a good way to distribute information to the motoring public.
- **Games** can be used in public meetings to motivate people to interact and to encourage collaboration. These are often used by MPOs and other planning groups to increase participation, to illustrate transportation funding processes, and to identify and prioritize community issues.
- **Real-time polling** is an audience response system that allows a meeting facilitator to ask a series of questions and provide real-time results of the responses on presentation slides that everyone can see

Surveys and Polls

Conducting periodic surveys and polls throughout the life of the project can help keep the public engaged and establish a baseline of public perceptions of a particular project. Surveys can collect both qualitative and quantitative information about public opinion concerning the project, and can be conducted via phone, online, text messaging, smartphone applications (apps) and at in-person meetings. User-friendly tools such as Poll Everywhere, and SurveyMonkey®, or others can be customized to fit the input sought. Non-monetary incentives, such as transit passes or event tickets, can motivate people to complete a public opinion survey.

Surveys can also be handed out in person and collected for analysis. Hardcopy surveys require significant staff time for printing, dissemination, collection, data entry, and analysis, whereas an online survey platform like those listed above automatically tally and cross tabulate responses and generate reports. Meetings provide an ideal opportunity to survey attendees on a variety of topics.

Printed Materials and Maps

Printed materials, including display maps, can be posted on a website, uploaded to an online meeting platform for virtual meetings, and distributed/displayed at face-to-face meetings, to inform the public about the project and stimulate dialogue and feedback. Participants can indicate their preferences (or dislike) for specific solutions by putting marks or stickers on printed materials. Display maps are useful for engaging participants in the identification of existing community features and potential issues. Positioning a Where do you live? Where do you work? map with colored dots by the meeting sign-in-table is a good way to get participants interacting at the meeting and also learn something about the attendees.

Print media also includes any project-generated materials, such as fact sheets, newsletters, business cards or palm cards, brochures, and flyers. After obtaining necessary permission, these materials can be:

- Delivered to a project mailing list
- Posted at local gathering spots such as grocery stores, government offices, libraries, parks, community centers, or places of worship
- Distributed to transit riders by community engagement teams at transit stops or on transit vehicles
- Delivered to residences using door hangers
- Sent to property managers of rental communities and major employers for distribution
- Sent home with school children

Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Every Day Counts Initiative

In 2009, the FHWA launched the "Every Day Counts" program to help state departments of transportation, metropolitan planning organizations, and local public agencies advance practice-ready innovations into everyday use. In 2019-2020, the program showcased Virtual Public Involvement as one of the featured innovations: FHWA's Virtual Public Involvement (VPI) Page.

The following virtual community engagement tools are located on FHWA's website.

- **Mobile applications** allow users to get information or submit their own text and images. An app can serve as a digital clearinghouse for project planning and development, community engagement opportunities, and contact information.
- **Project visualization** techniques include photo simulations, three-dimensional images, videos, aerial footage, and augmented reality, providing a mockup of what a proposed project would look like.
- **Do-it-yourself videos** shot with tablets, smartphones, and digital cameras are an affordable and accessible way to reach stakeholders with content about plans, projects, and events.
- **Digital crowdsourcing tools** gather suggestions and provide a forum for others to weigh in on ideas. They enable stakeholders to engage in the early stages of a project in a quick, easy way.
- **Mapping tools** communicate information in a visual format. Their interactive capabilities allow users to search, click, and query their way across a project site, neighborhood, or region to gather details not easily accessible in other formats.
- **All-in-one tools** combine crowdsourcing features, mapping, visualization, file sharing, and survey instruments, offering a one-stop-shop for information on a topic.
- **Digital tools** to enhance in-person events include live polling via mobile devices, collecting and sharing ideas with tablets, and using social media to stream public meetings in real time.

Geo Tools

Geo tools offer project teams the ability to use location-based strategies to deliver tailored content to stakeholders within a defined geographic area. Technologies such as GPS, Wi-Fi, and cellular data enable these tools to pinpoint specific locations. By isolating geographic areas relevant to projects, geo tools can help reach impacted stakeholders who might not typically be engaged by traditional outreach methods.

Geofencing

Geofencing uses a predetermined virtual boundary to send notifications or advertisements to mobile devices within that geographic area. By disseminating materials within a geographic perimeter, geofencing enables planning agencies to coordinate outreach based on stakeholders' proximity to the proposed project. Project teams can use geofencing to send out content such as live updates, event reminders, and surveys to relevant stakeholders. In addition to notifications, geofencing can be implemented to run targeted advertisements on a range of mobile apps. These advertisements will be visible on devices within the geographic boundary.

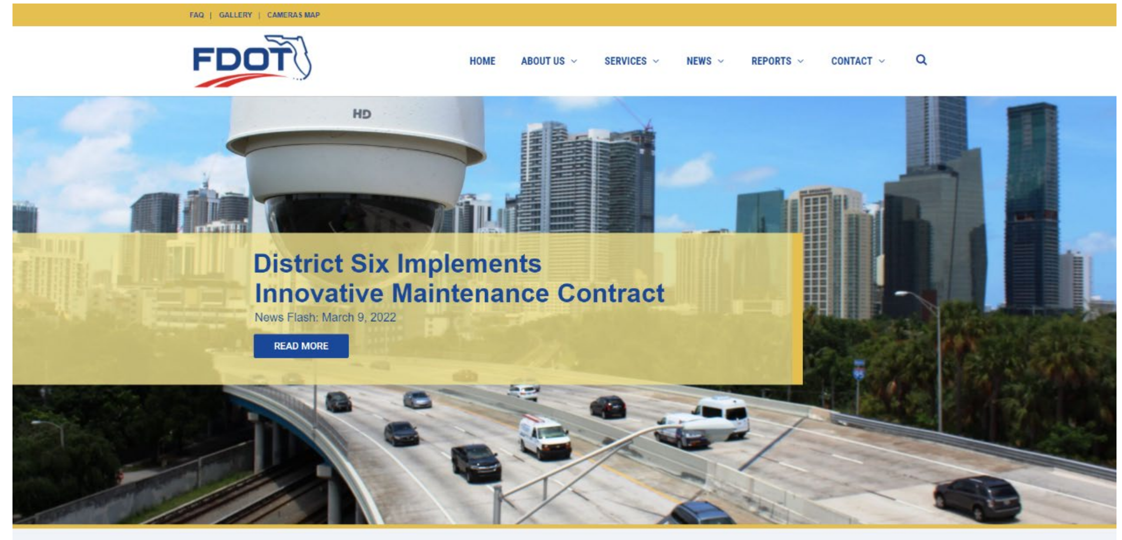
As a public outreach tool, geofencing is a powerful method for reaching relevant stakeholders. Since content is delivered to all internet-enabled devices within a geographic area, geofencing can engage those who live, work, or commute within the area, providing a more holistic approach to community engagement. By tailoring notifications to locations of interest, geofencing enhances personalized engagement and increases participant involvement. Notifications can alert stakeholders of pre-construction activities, such as public engagement events and opinion surveys, or may be used to alert stakeholders of time sensitive project updates, such as road closures or work zones. By providing live updates within a localized area, geofencing can quickly inform relevant stakeholders about pertinent project information.

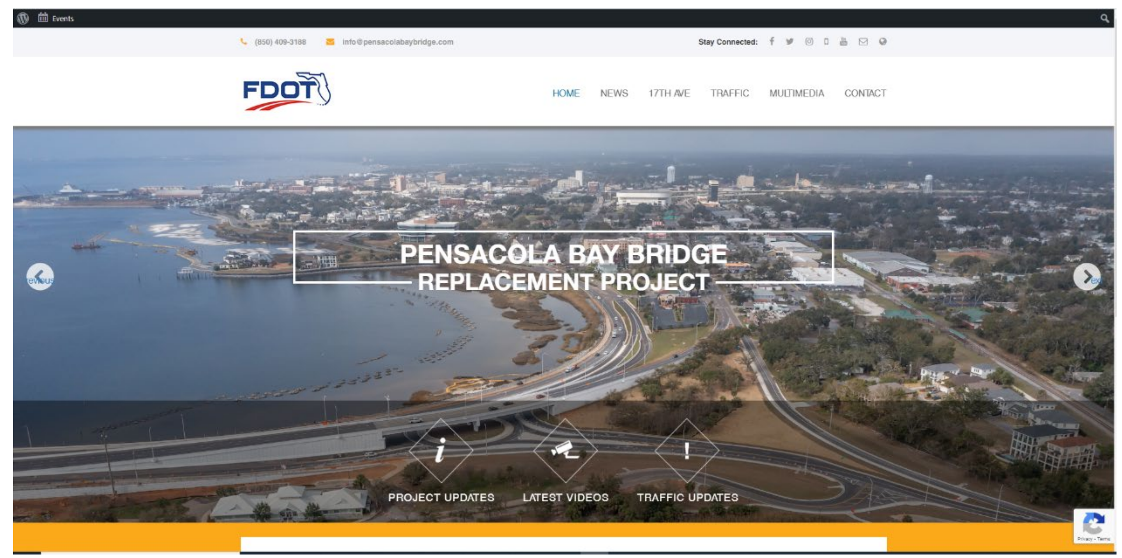
FDOT's Geofencing for Community Engagement provides more information on how geofencing can support public outreach efforts.

408 Websites

Websites are an effective method of communication that can provide a central, consistent source of updates on the project. Websites are also useful for keeping track of public interest in the project through website tracking analysis tools. Web surveys and polls can be conducted through the project website at critical milestones to efficiently gauge public opinion during the decision-making process. Websites can provide ways to sign up for an email list, submit a comment, or request a presentation. Depending on the complexity of the project, a project website may not be required. For projects that do not have a website, posting information about the project and public meetings on websites of partner agencies or affected municipalities can be an effective means of notification. FDOT requires the use of the Department's template for project websites.

More information about these requirements can be found at http://www.fdot.gov/it/consultantsites.shtm.





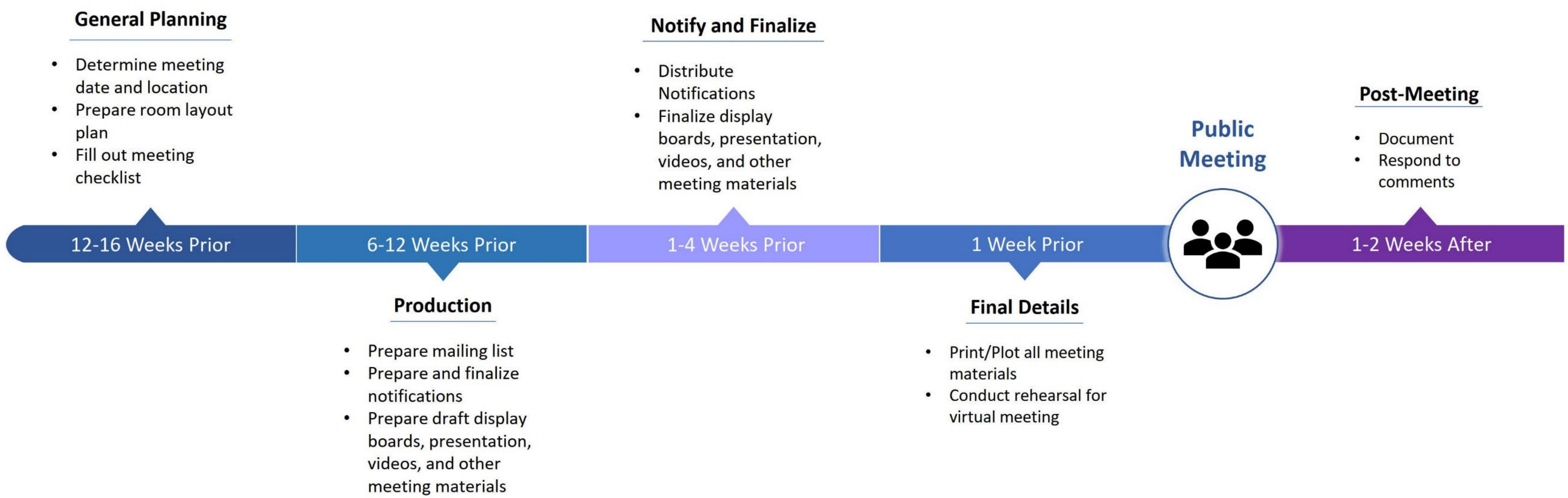
501 Planning and Preparation

Public meetings can take the form of a public information meeting, open house, workshop, or charrette. They are advertised and open to the public and held to share information and receive feedback. All public meetings must be hybrid with the ability for anyone to participate in person or virtually. For the in-person meeting, the typical format allows the public to view display materials at their own pace and have informal conversations with the project team. The virtual component of the meeting should include a presentation or review of meeting materials. Planning and preparation follows a multi-step process as noted below.

Meeting Checklist

Use a meeting checklist to ensure all meeting details are considered. A sample checklist is provided through this link and can be used to organize the activities related to planning for a public meeting and ensuring notifications are completed and distributed within the required time frames. See the Resources on the Public Engagement Resource Guide page for additional guidance.

FOR MEETINGS HELD DURING THE PD&E PHASE, SEE PART 1, CHAPTER 11 OF THE PD&E MANUAL



502 Selecting a Meeting Time and Location

Meeting Time

Most FDOT-sponsored public meetings are held on Tuesday or Thursday in the late afternoon/early evening starting at 5:00 p.m. and lasting for 1 ½ to 2 hours. Typically, Mondays and Fridays are avoided as some people may be taking an extended weekend, and Wednesday nights may be avoided due to religious services. Consider the age of the anticipated audience, transportation availability, location access, distance, etc., when determining the time of the meeting. For example, if the project study area includes a large population of retirees, it may be beneficial to hold the public meeting during the morning or afternoon. Similarly, if the community or audience includes individuals with regular working hours (such as 8 AM to 5 PM), holding meetings at night or on weekends may better fit their schedules, especially if they have school-aged children. In contrast, if the project affects a facility that relies on shift workers, such as a hospital or industrial factory, it may be more appropriate to hold the meetings at times that accommodate these schedules. In this case, meetings should be longer and extend across the break of two shifts.

Meeting Location

It is important, but not always easy, to find a meeting venue that is in the project area, easy to reach (on a public transit route, if possible), complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), complies with the Department's policy on the Jessica Lunsford Act (avoid public K-12 schools), has sufficient parking, and is appropriate to the meeting purpose and format.

Public venues are preferred over privately-owned facilities. If the nearest public facility is not reasonable due to either insufficient space or is located too far from the project area, then a privately-owned facility can be used. Document the site selection process in the project file.

FOR MEETINGS HELD DURING THE PD&E PHASE, SEE PART 1, CHAPTER 11 OF THE PD&E MANUAL.

Before selecting a facility, estimate the size required based on the expected number of attendees and the number and size of display boards. Prepare a room layout plan that shows the arrangement of the sign-in tables, display materials, tables, chairs, and space for attendees to confirm that the facility can accommodate your needs. It is important to visit the facility, take pictures and measurements and check the audio/visual equipment. Ask to meet the person who will be on duty at the facility during the meeting. Consider the following when selecting a meeting location:

- If needed, does the facility provide a sound system?
- Will the facility allow early access to set up? Likewise, is there a closing time that restricts breakdown time?
- Are there enough tables and chairs available?
- Is there plenty of parking and is handicapped parking available?
- Are the restrooms handicap accessible?
- Is the parking lot well-lit for a night meeting?
- Can people walk easily from transit?
- Are there local sign regulations that require permits for way-finding signs?

Also make sure all of the following are considered before final approval of a location.

ADA Compliance: All public meetings must be held at a site that provides reasonable accommodation and access to disabled persons wishing to attend and participate. When notified at least seven days in advance, the Department must reasonably accommodate a person's disability to provide an equal opportunity for participation. While the Department cannot provide transportation for disabled persons, every effort should be made to accommodate special needs, such as wheelchair access and seating, materials for visual impairment (through the use of large print materials, for example), or referral to a transportation service that may suit their needs.

Jessica Lunsford Act: Public school facilities for grades K-12 should not be used for public meetings. School facilities may be used, however, if there are no other feasible options in the area, and with approval from the Department's Assistant Secretary of Engineering and Operations. Alternate educational facilities to consider include colleges, universities, and private schools.

503 Notification Requirements

There are a variety of methods for notifying the interested and affected community about an upcoming public meeting or workshop. Information regarding the meeting should be clearly conveyed in all notifications and must contain, at a minimum, the following:

- Purpose of the meeting
- Description of the project
- Date, time, and location of the public meeting (include meeting location map)
- Instructions on how to participate virtually.
- Nondiscrimination statement
- Information about ADA requests
- Notice of standard statement regarding FDOT assumption of FHWA NEPA responsibilities (Federal PD&E projects only)

The following nondiscrimination and ADA standard statements must be included for all notification methods:

- *Public participation is solicited without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability, or family status.*
- *Persons who require special accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act or persons who require translation services (free of charge) should contact __________ at _________ at least seven days prior to the meeting.*

FOR MEETINGS HELD DURING THE PD&E PHASE, SEE PART 1, CHAPTER 11 OF THE PD&E MANUAL.

Similarly, the following standard statement related to project development must be included for all PD&E projects with FHWA involvement:

- *The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by FDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. § 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated May 26, 2022, and executed by FHWA and FDOT.*

Each notification method and corresponding requirement are discussed in the following sections. For more specific notification requirements, see the PD&E Manual Part 1, Chapter 11.

Notification to Elected and Appointed Officials

Notify all elected and appointed officials with jurisdiction in the project area at least 25 but no more than 30 calendar days prior to the public meeting. Elected officials should receive the invitation before the public is notified. Invitations may be sent by standard mail or email and should include a copy of the newspaper advertisement or public invitation letter/newsletter.

Notification to Property Owners and Tenants

Notify all property owners and tenants within at least 300 feet of the project centerline at least 14 to 21 days prior to the meeting. Those affected by the project may extend beyond 300 feet and should be contacted. The invitation can be sent by letter or as part of a newsletter. The addresses for this notification can be obtained from the county property appraiser. Because property owners may live elsewhere or tenants may occupy the property, be sure to include both the site address and property owner address if they differ.

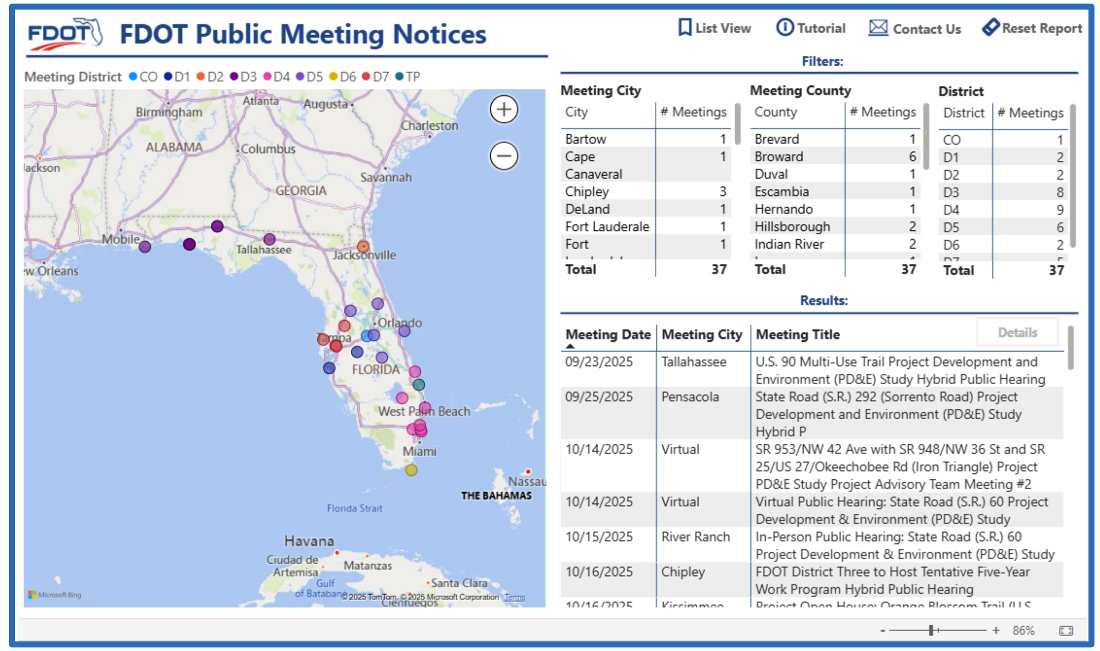
Florida Administrative Register (FAR)

Section 120.525, F.S., requires that notices for all public hearings, workshops, and meetings must be published in the *FAR* at least seven calendar days prior to the event. All notices to be published in the *FAR* are submitted electronically through the Florida Department of State's e-rulemaking website at www.flrules.org.

The FAR is published each weekday except on those days observed as official state holidays designated by Section 110.117, F.S. All materials to be published must be uploaded to the FAR website by 3:00 p.m. on the day prior to publication. For publication on Mondays, the ad must be uploaded to the website by 3:00 p.m. on the previous Friday. See the PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 11 for an example of a FAR notice.

FDOT Public Notices Website

To comply with Section 120.525, F.S., notices of all public hearings, workshops, and meetings must be published on FDOT's Public Meeting Notices website at least seven days before the meeting. Meeting notices are typically added to the website by the District Communications Office. The information to be provided to the District Communications Office includes the meeting title, District number, meeting type, meeting date and time, address of the in-person location, information on how to participate virtually, project website, and contact names and contact information. Include the standard nondiscrimination statement, NEPA Assignment statement (if applicable) and information about ADA requests.



The form for publishing these notices is located on the FDOT Intranet under E-Forms and requires an FDOT account to access. Once the form is submitted online, the District Communications Office will review and publish it to the website if approved. A copy of the notice should also be sent to the District Communications Office for their information and possible further distribution.

Project Website

If available, include information about the public meeting on the project website. Information should be posted at the same time that notifications to the public are sent out.

Newspaper Advertisement

Placement of a newspaper advertisement is not required but suggested for public meetings. If placed, the advertisement should be published 10 to 14 days prior to the meeting in a local newspaper with general circulation in the vicinity of the project.

Press Release

A press release may be sent to encourage media coverage about a scheduled public meeting. All press releases must be coordinated through the District Communications Office.

Social Media

FDOT uses Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube through the Central and District Communications offices. Social media can be helpful in expanding the reach of notifications in appropriate circumstances. All social media activity must be coordinated through the District Communications Office.

Reaching Affected Populations

Outreach to affected populations is critical. For distinct communities or groups, bringing information to their communities helps increase their awareness of public meetings. Further, engaging several of the community leaders (not necessarily elected leaders) and seeking their help to spread the word or provide ideas about how best to reach their community can be beneficial.

Translating meeting notifications may improve awareness for people for whom English is not their primary language. Consider posting the translated notice in a non-English language newspaper and on the project website.

504 Meeting Materials

Each public meeting should utilize a variety of display and meeting materials for communicating with the public. A typical in-person public meeting includes sign-in sheets, comment forms, project handouts, and display boards. The virtual component could include a PowerPoint presentation or a live question and answer session that walks participants through the project.

Sign-in Sheets

Sign-in sheets are used to capture a list of participants for record keeping. Sign-in sheets are considered to be part of the public record.

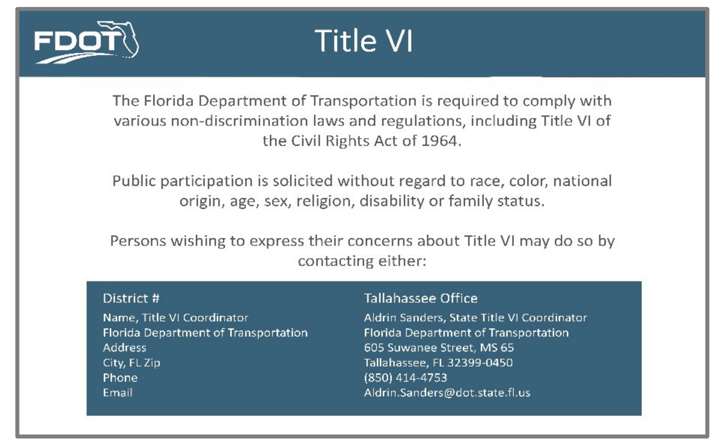
FOR MEETINGS HELD DURING THE PD&E PHASE, SEE PART 1, CHAPTER 11 OF THE PD&E MANUAL.

Comment Forms

Comment forms are the primary method for capturing comments at a public meeting. They should include plenty of space for the comment and an area for the person's contact information. Comment forms can also be used for survey questions such as "How did you hear about this meeting?"

Handouts

Attendees should be given written handout material outlining the purpose of the project, proposed alternatives or design, and how to provide additional comments. Handouts may also be required in alternative formats to aid people with disabilities and in the predominant non-English language(s) in the project area.



FDOT Title VI

The Florida Department of Transportation is required to comply with various non-discrimination laws and regulations, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Public participation is solicited without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability or family status.

Persons wishing to express their concerns about Title VI may do so by contacting either:

District #	Tallahassee Office
Name, Title VI Coordinator	Aldrin Sanders, State Title VI Coordinator
Florida Department of Transportation	Florida Department of Transportation
Address	605 Suwanee Street, MS 65
City, FL Zip	Tallahassee, FL 32399-0450
Phone	(850) 414-4753
Email	Aldrin.Sanders@dot.state.fl.us

Title VI Information

A Title VI board or display is required for all public meetings. The Title VI board provides participants with the contact information for District and State Title VI coordinators if they wish to make a Title VI complaint. This information must also be provided to virtual participants.

Project Display Boards

Project display boards are used to convey information about the project to the public. Some meetings could include the following boards depending on the context of the project:

- Project location map
- Purpose and need summary
- Traffic summaries
- Typical sections (existing and proposed)
- Concept boards with aerial background
- Intersection/interchange concepts (if applicable)
- Alternatives impact matrix (more applicable for PD&E projects)
- Summary of noise impacts (if applicable)
- Section 4(f) information (if applicable)
- Other environmental summaries (if applicable)
- Funding
- Schedule

Project Video or Presentation

In addition to display boards, project information can also be presented through a pre-recorded informational video. The project video can be played at the public meeting on a running loop so that attendees can view at any time during the meeting. The same project video should also be used during the virtual meeting.

Although not typical, a live presentation can be given during a public meeting. Ensure that the presentation time is clearly stated in the meeting invitation.

Virtual Access to Display Materials

There are several ways to provide virtual access to project materials, including on the project website, in a virtual room, or on the virtual meeting platform. These are passive methods where the public can participate at any time from their own computer. They can be used to enhance and augment the virtual experience but do not replace the interactive virtual meeting required by FDOT policy.

505 Conducting the In-Person Meeting

Setting Up

FOR MEETINGS HELD DURING THE PD&E PHASE, SEE PART 1, CHAPTER 11 OF THE PD&E MANUAL.

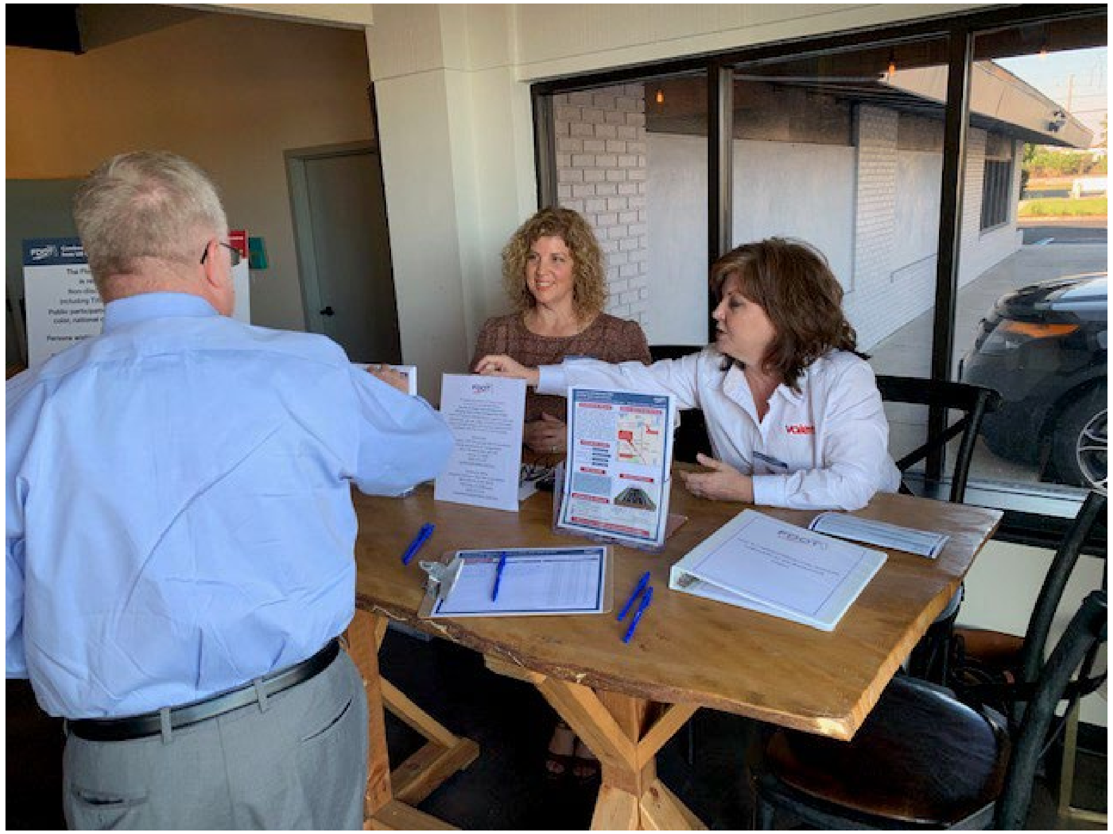
Arrive at least two hours in advance of the published start time to setup. More time may be needed depending on the number and size of display materials. Aim to complete the setup at least 30 minutes prior to the start time to welcome those who arrive early.

Staff Briefings

Prior to the start of the public meeting, a thorough briefing with staff will help eliminate the possibility of someone providing incorrect information. It is a best practice to gather the team and discuss roles, responsibilities, and anticipated questions from the public. Emphasize to staff that it's ok to say, "I don't know" and to find a team member who can answer the question. It's better to find someone to help rather than provide the wrong answer.

Welcome and Sign-in

As people walk into the meeting room, their first impression is the sign-in table and those who greet them. Welcome people as they enter and ask them to sign in. Having people sign in creates a record of who attended and provides a contact list in case additional follow-up is needed. If handouts are available, provide them at the sign-in table.



Display Area

The display area is where the boards, videos, and/or presentation are provided for public review and input. This area is generally staffed by the FDOT PM, Consultant PM, facilitators (if applicable), subject matter experts, and community engagement support team.

Arrange the display boards in a logical order best suited to the project. Not every board needs a staff member assigned to it. However, assign multiple team members to high traffic areas (i.e., concept boards). As people enter, allow them to review the materials at their own pace. Identify several team members who can float and provide staff support where it's needed most. The FDOT PM and Consultant PM should be free to roam the meeting room and dedicate their time to one-on-one conversations.

If a presentation or video is provided, assign a staff member to assist with operating the audio-visual equipment and with addressing technical problems.

Challenging Conversations

How staff handles conflict and objections from participants influences people's perception of both the project and the Department. People are more willing to collaborate and stay engaged if they are properly informed, kept in the loop, and treated fairly. Some conversations become difficult. The following suggestions can help defuse tense situations:

- Be respectful
- Actively listen
- Rephrase their concern to show you are listening
- Don't respond to what's unproductive
- Ask another team member for help
- Find the underlying interest or need
- End the conversation by directing the person to the comment form

Collecting Comments

Most public meetings follow an informal format where attendees are provided the opportunity to review display materials and ask questions. Team members are not expected to remember or record verbal comments provided during the meeting, nor can verbal comments be effectively captured for the meeting record. For this reason, after discussing the project with each person, direct them to fill out a comment form (written or electronically) or send an email to ensure that their comment is documented.

506 Conducting the Virtual Meeting

Welcome

As people join the meeting, the organizer should periodically thank them for joining and let them know that the meeting will soon begin. As an alternative, include a statement on the screen with a similar message.

Virtual Broadcast

The goal of the virtual meeting is to replicate, as much as possible, the experience and information provided at the in-person meeting. This can be achieved by walking through the various boards and display materials on slides or providing a presentation about the project. As part of the virtual broadcast, participants are typically encouraged to ask questions through the question box with the moderator reading the question and the FDOT or consultant PM providing a response. Make sure to discuss with the project team the most appropriate way to taking questions during the virtual broadcast.

Collecting Comments

During the virtual broadcast, invite participants to ask questions through the question box or verbally after unmuting them. Throughout the meeting, remind participants that they can send their comments by filling out a comment form and mailing it in or by sending an email to ensure that their comments are documented.

FOR MEETINGS HELD DURING THE PD&E PHASE, SEE PART 1, CHAPTER 11 OF THE PD&E MANUAL.

601 Planning and Preparation

All public hearings must be hybrid with the ability for anyone to participate in person or virtually. For the in-person public hearing, the typical format starts with an open-house where the public can view display materials at their own pace and have informal conversations with the project team. The open house is then followed by formal proceedings with a presentation (live or voiced over) and an opportunity to comment. The virtual component includes a broadcast of the presentation with a formal comment period. Planning and preparation follows a multi-step process as noted below.

The information presented in the 600 Series is intended for use in non-PD&E public hearings only. For guidance and materials specific to PD&E public hearings, refer to Chapter 11 of the PD&E Manual and the Public Engagement Resource Kit (PERK) for best practices and sample materials.

All public hearings are required to have an in-person and interactive virtual component. These do not have to be held at the same time.

Public Hearing Checklist

Use a public hearing checklist to ensure all public hearing details are considered. A sample checklist is provided at this link and can be used to organize the activities related to planning for a public hearing and ensuring notifications are completed and distributed within the required time frames.

12-16 Weeks Prior

General Planning

- Determine hearing date and location
- Prepare room layout plan
- Fill out hearing checklist

6-12 Weeks Prior

Production

- Prepare mailing list
- Prepare and finalize notifications
- Prepare draft display boards, presentation, videos, and other meeting materials

1-4 Weeks Prior

Notify and Finalize

- Distribute Notifications
- Finalize display boards, presentation, videos, and other meeting materials

1 Week Prior

Final Details

- Print/Plot all hearing materials
- Conduct rehearsal for virtual hearing

Public Hearing

1-2 Weeks After

Post-Hearing

- Document
- Respond to comments

602 Selecting a Public Hearing Time and Location

Public Hearing Time

Most FDOT-sponsored public hearings are held on Tuesday or Thursday in the late afternoon/early evening starting at 5:00 p.m. Typically, Mondays and Fridays are avoided as some people may be taking an extended weekend, and Wednesday nights may be avoided due to religious services. Consider the age of the anticipated audience, transportation availability, location access, distance, etc., when determining the time of the public hearing. Public hearings are typically divided into two parts – the open house portion where the public can review boards and materials at their own pace and the formal proceedings that include the public hearing presentation and public testimony. For the benefit of the public, the public hearing notification should include the time that the informal, open house starts and the time of the presentation.

Public Hearing Location

It is important, but not always easy, to find a venue that is in the project area, easy to reach (on a public transit route, if possible), complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), complies with the Department's policy on the Jessica Lunsford Act (avoid public K-12 schools), has sufficient parking, and has sufficient space for the public hearing format.

Public venues are preferred over privately-owned facilities. If the nearest public facility is not reasonable due to either insufficient space or is located too far from the project area, then a privately-owned facility can be used.

Document the site selection process in the project file.

Before selecting a facility, estimate the size required based on the expected number of attendees and the number and size of display boards. Prepare a room layout plan that shows the arrangement of the sign-in tables, display materials, tables, chairs, and space for attendees to confirm that the facility can accommodate your needs. It is important to visit the facility, take pictures and measurements and check the audio/visual equipment. Ask to meet the person who will be on duty at the facility during the public hearing. Consider the following when selecting a location:

- If a sound system is needed, does the facility provide such equipment?
- Will the facility allow entry into the space early enough for set up? Likewise, is there a closing time that restricts breakdown time?
- Are there enough tables and chairs available?
- Is there plenty of parking and is handicapped parking available?
- Are the restrooms handicap accessible?
- Is the parking lot well-lit?
- Is there a place for signage directing people to the correct room?
- Can people walk easily from transit?
- Is there a property manager on duty at the time of the public hearing for emergency purposes?
- Are there local sign regulations that require permits for way-finding signs?

Also make sure all of the following are considered before final approval of a location.

ADA Compliance: All public hearings must be held at a site that provides reasonable accommodation and access to disabled persons wishing to attend and participate. When notified at least seven days in advance, the Department must reasonably accommodate a person's disability to provide an equal opportunity for participation. While the Department cannot provide transportation for disabled persons, every effort should be made to accommodate special needs, such as wheelchair access and seating, materials for visual impairment (through the use of large print materials, for example), or referral to a transportation service that may suit their needs.

Jessica Lunsford Act: Public school facilities for grades K-12 should not be used for public hearings. School facilities may be used, however, if there are no other feasible options in the area, and with approval from the Department's Assistant Secretary of Engineering and Operations. Alternate educational facilities to consider include colleges, universities, and private schools.

603 Notification Requirements

There are a variety of methods for notifying the interested and affected community about an upcoming public hearing. Information regarding the public hearing should be clearly conveyed in all notifications and must contain, at a minimum, the following:

- Purpose of the public hearing
- Description of the project
- Date, time, and location of the public hearing (include venue location map)
- Instructions on how to participate virtually
- Nondiscrimination statement
- Information about ADA requests
- Notice of standard statement regarding FDOT assumption of FHWA NEPA responsibilities (Federal PD&E projects only)

The following nondiscrimination and ADA standard statements must be included for all notification methods:

- *Public participation is solicited without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability, or family status.*
- *Persons who require special accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act or persons who require translation services (free of charge) should contact ______________________________ at _________ at least seven days prior to the meeting.*

Similarly, the following standard statement related to project development must be included for all PD&E projects with FHWA involvement:

- *The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by FDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. § 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated December 14, 2016, and executed by FHWA and FDOT.*

Each notification method and corresponding requirement are discussed in the following sections. For more specific notification requirements, see the PD&E Manual Part 1, Chapter 11.

Notification to Elected and Appointed Officials

Notify all elected and appointed officials with jurisdiction in the project area at least 25 but no more than 30 calendar days prior to the public hearing. Elected officials should receive the invitation before the public is notified. Invitations may be sent by standard mail or email and should include a copy of the newspaper advertisement or public invitation letter/newsletter.

Notification to Property Owners and Tenants

Notify all property owners and tenants within at least 300 feet of the project centerline at least 20 days prior to the public hearing. Those affected by the project may extend beyond 300 feet and should be contacted. The invitation can be sent by letter or as part of a newsletter. The addresses for this notification can be obtained from the county property appraiser.

Because property owners may live elsewhere or tenants may occupy the property, be sure to include both the site address and property owner address if they differ.

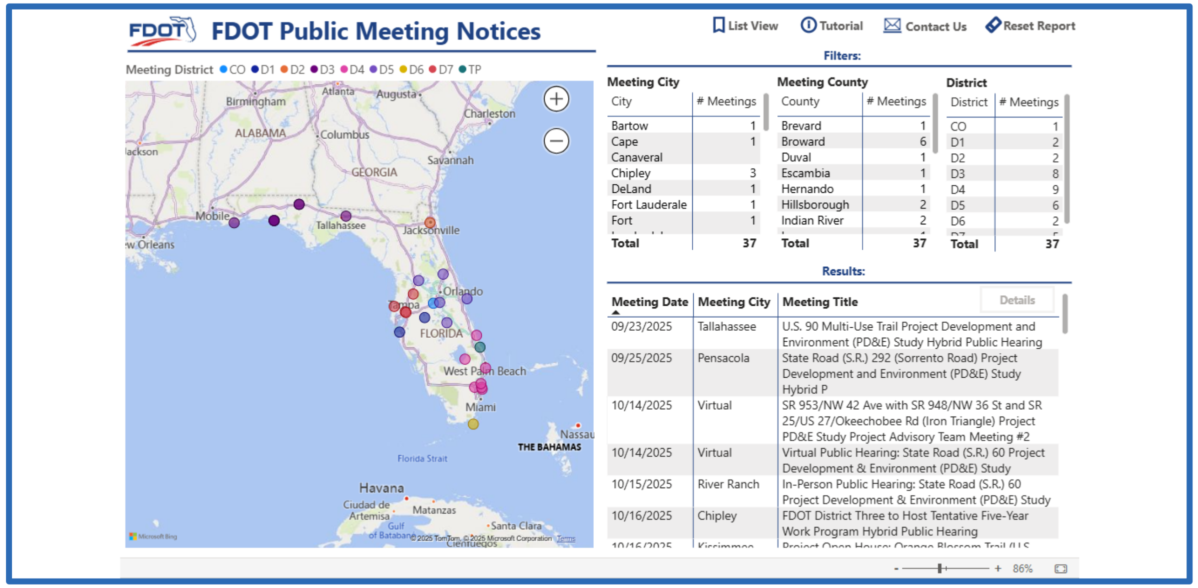
Florida Administrative Register (FAR)

Section 120.525, F.S., requires that notices for all public hearings, workshops, and meetings must be published in the *FAR* at least seven calendar days prior to the event. All notices to be published in the *FAR* are submitted electronically through the Florida Department of State's e- rulemaking website at www.flrules.org.

The FAR is published each weekday except on those days observed as official state holidays designated by Section 110.117, F.S. All materials to be published must be uploaded to the FAR website by 3:00 p.m. on the day prior to publication. For publication on Mondays, the ad must be uploaded to the website by 3:00 p.m. on the previous Friday. See the PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 11 for an example of a FAR notice.

FDOT Public Notices Website

To comply with Section 120.525, F.S., notices of all public hearings, workshops, and meetings must be published on FDOT's Public Meeting Notices website at least seven days before the public hearing. Public hearing notices are typically added to the website by the District Communications Office. The information to be provided to the District Communications Office includes the project title, District number, public hearing date and time, address of the in- person location, information on how to participate virtually, project website, and contact names and contact information. Include the standard nondiscrimination statement, NEPA Assignment statement (if applicable) and information about ADA requests.



The form for publishing these notices is located on the FDOT Intranet under E-Forms and requires an FDOT account to access. Once the form is submitted online, the District Communications Office will review and publish it to the website if approved. A copy of the notice should also be sent to the District Communications Office for their information and possible further distribution.

Project Website

If available, include information about the public hearing on the project website. Information should be posted at the same time that notifications to the public are sent out.

Newspaper Advertisement

To comply with Section 339.155, F.S., publish a public hearing notice two times within a newspaper of general circulation to the project area. The first advertisement should appear between 15 to 30 days prior to the public hearing, and the second advertisement should appear 7 to 12 days prior to the public hearing.

Press Release

A press release may be sent to encourage media coverage about a scheduled public hearing. All press releases must be coordinated through the District Communications Office.

Social Media

FDOT uses Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube through the Central and District Communications offices. Social media can be helpful in expanding the reach of notifications in appropriate circumstances. All social media activity must be coordinated through the District Communications Office.

Reaching Underserved and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Populations

Outreach to traditionally underserved and LEP populations is critical. For the traditionally underserved, bringing information to their communities helps increase their awareness of public hearings. Further, engaging several of the community leaders (not necessarily elected leaders) and seeking their help to spread the word or provide ideas about how best to reach their community can be beneficial.

Translating public hearing notifications may improve awareness for people for whom English is not their primary language. If the LEP community is large enough, there may be a non-English language newspaper or radio station where a public hearing notification could be placed. Consider posting the translated notice on the project website and establishing telephone numbers with voicemail for individuals to leave messages in their native languages for the project team. Include information about these options in the appropriate languages in public hearing notifications.

604 Public Hearing Materials

Each public hearing should utilize a variety of display and viewing materials for communicating with the public. A typical in-person public hearing includes sign-in sheets, comment forms, speaker cards, project handouts, display boards, and a presentation (PowerPoint or video). The virtual component includes the same presentation as the in-person public hearing. Any boards displayed at the in-person public hearing should be posted to the website for virtual participants.

Sign-in Sheets

Sign-in sheets are used to capture a list of participants for record keeping. Sign-in sheets are considered to be part of the public record.

Comment Forms

Comment forms are the primary method for capturing written comments at a public hearing. They should include plenty of space for the comment and an area for the person's contact information. Comment forms can also be used for survey questions such as "How did you hear about this public hearing?"

Speaker Cards

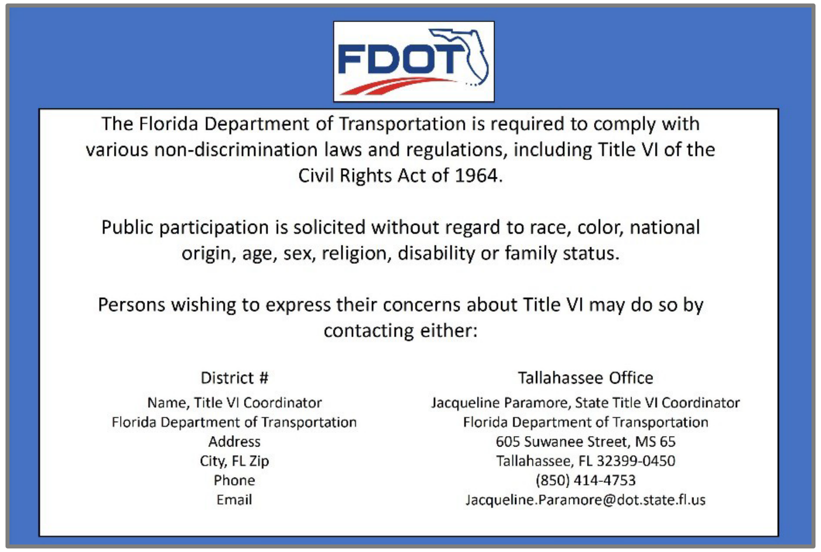
For anyone that wishes to speak during the formal comment period, provide a speaker card for them to fill out. The information requested on the speaker card includes name, address, and contact information. Speaker cards are used to capture the list of speakers for record-keeping.

Handouts

Attendees should be given written handout material outlining the purpose of the project, recommended alternative or design, and how to provide comments. Handouts may also be required in alternative formats to aid people with disabilities and in the predominant non-English language(s) in the project area.

Title VI Information

A Title VI board or display is required for all public hearings and meetings. The Title VI board provides participants with the contact information for District and State Title VI coordinators if they wish to make a Title VI complaint. This information must also be provided to virtual participants.



Project Display Boards

Project display boards are used to convey information about the project to the public. Some public hearings could include the following boards depending on the context of the project:

- Project location map
- Purpose and need summary
- Traffic summaries

- Typical sections (existing and proposed)
- Concept boards with aerial background
- Intersection/interchange concepts (if applicable)
- Alternatives impact matrix (more applicable for PD&E projects)
- Summary of noise impacts (if applicable)
- Section 4(f) information (if applicable)
- Other environmental studies (if applicable)
- Funding
- Schedule

Project Presentation

During the formal proceedings, a live or voiced-over presentation is provided that includes information about the project including the recommended alternative, summary of impacts, and ways to comment. A sample presentation script is provided in Part 1, Chapter 11, Section 11.2.5.6 of the PD&E Manual.

Virtual Access to Display Materials

There are several ways to provide virtual access to project materials, including on the project website, in a virtual room, or on the virtual meeting platform. These are passive methods where the public can participate at any time from their own computer. They can be used to enhance and augment the virtual experience but do not replace the interactive virtual hearing required by FDOT policy.

605 Conducting the In-Person Public Hearing

Setting Up

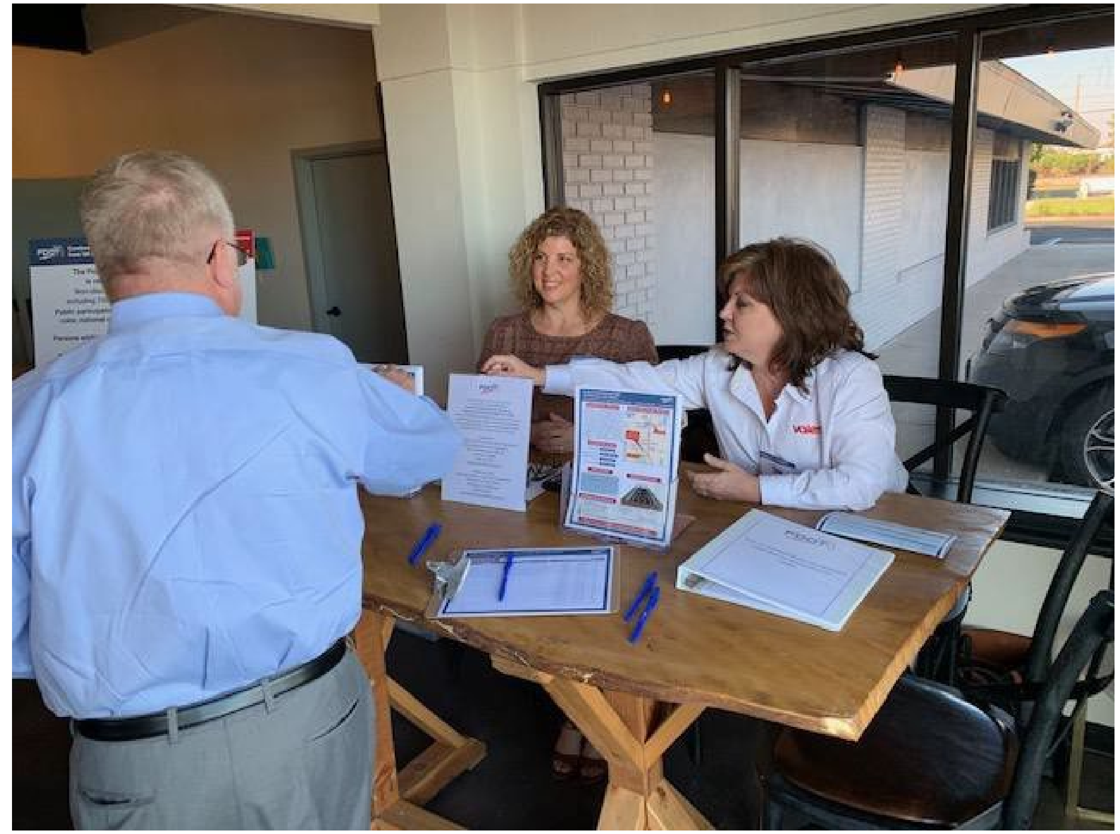
Arrive at least two hours in advance of the published start time to setup. More time may be needed depending on the number and size of display materials. Aim to complete the setup at least 30 minutes prior to the start time to welcome those who arrive early.

Staff Briefings

Prior to the start of the public hearing, a thorough briefing with staff will help eliminate the possibility of someone providing incorrect information. It is a best practice to gather the team and discuss roles, responsibilities, and anticipated questions from the public. Emphasize to staff that it's ok to say "I don't know" and to find a team member who can answer the question. It's better to find someone to help rather than provide the wrong answer.

Welcome and Sign-in

As people walk into the meeting room, their first impression is the sign-in table and those who greet them. Welcome people as they enter and ask them to sign in. Having people sign in creates a record of who attended and provides a contact list in case additional follow-up is needed. If handouts are available, provide them at the sign-in table.



Display Area

The display area is where the boards are provided for public review and input during the informal or open house portion of the public hearing. This area is generally staffed by the FDOT PM, Consultant PM, facilitators (if applicable), subject matter experts, and community engagement support team.

Arrange the display boards in a logical order best suited to the project. Not every board needs a staff member assigned to it. However, assign multiple team members to high traffic area (i.e., concept boards). As people enter, allow them to review the materials at their own pace. Identify several team members who can float and provide staff support where it's needed most. The FDOT PM and Consultant PM should be free to roam the meeting room and dedicate their time to one-on-one conversations.

Presentation Area

The presentation area is where the formal proceedings are conducted, which includes the project presentation followed by the public comment period. Provide a table up front for the moderator and chairs for the audience. The audio/visual support team assists with running the presentation. Others can provide speaker cards and help keep an orderly flow for the public wishing to speak at the microphone.

Challenging Conversations

How staff handles conflict and objections from participants influences people's perception of both the project and the Department. People are more willing to collaborate and stay engaged if they are properly informed, kept in the loop, and treated fairly. Some conversations become difficult. The following suggestions can help defuse tense situations:

- Be respectful
- Actively listen
- Rephrase their concern to show you are listening
- Don't respond to what's unproductive
- Ask another team member for help
- Direct the person to the comment form

Collecting Comments

Multiple ways to comment should be provided at the public hearing. Opportunities include the ability to provide written comments submitted through a comment form, by mail, or email, or verbal statements at the microphone during the formal proceedings. All public hearings have a minimum ten-day public comment period that starts on the public hearing date.

606 Conducting the Virtual Public Hearing

Welcome

As people join the meeting, the organizer should periodically thank them for joining and letting them know that the public hearing will soon begin. As an alternative, include a statement on the screen with a similar message.

Virtual Broadcast

The goal of the virtual public hearing is to replicate, as much as possible, the experience and information provided at the in-person event. As part of the virtual broadcast, participants should be able to view the presentation and then provide comments. Ask those interested to speak to include their name in the chat box and then call upon them at the appropriate time. The Organizer should mute everyone in the virtual meeting throughout the presentation and then unmute each speaker individually when they are called to speak. Make sure to discuss with the project team the most appropriate way to taking comments during the virtual broadcast.

Collecting Comments

Virtual participants can submit written comments through an online comment form (if available), by mail, or email, or verbal statements during the virtual broadcast. All public hearings have a minimum ten-day public comment period that starts on the public hearing date.

701 Responding to Public Comments

A primary objective of any community engagement activity is to inform the public and request their comments. Public comments help build an understanding of community issues that should be considered in designing transportation solutions that fit community needs.

The volume and nature of public comments received for a plan or project can vary greatly depending on the level of public interest. With greater interest, one could anticipate more public comments, including inquiries requiring a detailed response. In such cases, a protocol for organizing and managing public comments is recommended.

Process Steps

Step 1: Collecting Public Comments

The timing for collecting public comments is often in conjunction with plan/project milestones, typically at the beginning (kickoff), midpoint (alternatives), and endpoint (recommendations). However, public comments can be collected at any time during the decision-making process.

If comments are desired by a certain date, be sure to specify a closing date on related project communications by which all comments must be received. Include an address for mailing or emailing completed surveys and comment forms.

Frequently used tools for collecting public comments include:

Collecting Public Comments

Common methods	Surveys or questionnaires
	Comment cards/forms
	Real-time polling
	Idea walls or maps
	Games and puzzles

The method of delivery and receipt of comments can vary and include:

Ways Public Comments are Received

Common methods	Public meeting/hearing
	Project website
	Email
	Physical mail
	Telephone
	Text
	Fax
	Social media accounts (FDOT and partners)
	Smartphone applications

Step 2: Cataloguing Public Comments

Log Individual public comments to organize and manage the information for use in responding to comments and documenting community engagement results.

Cataloguing Public Comments

Key information	*Date received:* Indicator of related plan/project stage and benchmark for timely response
	Comment type: Essence of the comment to trigger an appropriate response
	Contact information: Necessary for responding to the comment
	Tracking number (optional): For example, the tracking number 031025 shows the comment year (03), month (10), and order received (25)

Step 3: Analyzing Public Comments

This step coincides with community engagement touch points and involves sorting and analyzing comments to identify trends and appropriate follow up. The table below shows a classification system for sorting public comments. For each category, assess the character and frequency of issues raised in the comments. Then, summarize the analysis findings in a report to support plan/project decision making.

Categorizing Public Comments into Types

Public comment categories	*General comments:* Relate directly to the project but do not require a detailed response
	Procedural comments: Related to the community engagement process
	Substantive comments: Relate directly to project development and require further analysis
	Other comments: Have no relationship to the plan/project but relate to another effort/action either within or beyond the Department's purview or influence.

Using the Analysis Findings

If you find that most comments pertain to a particular issue, such as aesthetics or safety, consider featuring the issue topic in the next public meeting program or newsletter. If comments are lengthy, it could be showing a heightened level of interest in the plan/project. In contrast, brief comments or incomplete comment form sections might indicate that people do not have the information they need to provide substantive input.

Step 4: Acknowledging Public Comments

Responding to public comments confirms that each comment has been received and considered. This practice also builds trust and credibility within the community and encourages continued involvement in Department plans and projects.

Regardless of type, all public comments should be acknowledged within 10 working days of receipt of the comment, even if only to thank the commentor for providing a comment or communicating that research for an appropriate response is underway. The public is usually willing to wait for a question to be answered if they know it has been received and is being considered.

The table to the right offers suggestions for acknowledging comments based on the type of comment received and the comment's timeliness.

Step 5: Distribution & Tracking Public Comments

Occasionally, comments are received that are not relevant to the plan/project, such as those that pertain to another plan/project or unrelated issues. Distribute these comments to the appropriate FDOT or non-FDOT personnel for processing.

Step 6: Incorporating Public Comments

All public comments directly related to the current plan/project should be considered in the decision-making process. Careful analysis of public comments can lead to innovative solutions that address community needs without compromising the Department's goals for the plan/project.

Step 7: Follow Up Responses

Responses to all public comments that require detailed information or feedback should include a complete answer and be distributed as soon as possible. A clear and easy-to-understand explanation of any research or analysis that forms the basis for the answer should also be included.

Additional information explaining how the individual can continue to be involved in the decision-making process is always appropriate.

Acknowledging Public Comments

Responses by public comment type	*General comments:* Acknowledge interest in the comment.
	Procedural comments: Acknowledge interest in the comment and provide information about the action that has or will be taken.
	Substantive comments: Acknowledge interest in the comment and, depending on the relevant phase, provide additional information as described below:
	• *Current project phase:* Include a brief description of the action being taken to address the comment and when to expect resolution. Determine if the comment request can be included in the project concept. • *Previous project phase:* Include an overview of the project history and prior decision making information on how to become involved in current or future project decisions. • *Future project phase:* Include a brief overview of the future project schedule that indicates when the decision will be made and convey that the comment will be passed on to the appropriate personnel. Document the comment (see Step 2)
	Other comments: Acknowledge interest in the plan/project, how the comment has or will be handled, and the appropriate FDOT or non-FDOT personnel to which the comment was forwarded and why.

801 Community Engagement Performance Measures

Community engagement is effective if the objectives of the community engagement plan or activity are achieved. These objectives may be broad, such as ensuring that public input is carefully considered for a specific project. They may also be narrower, such as soliciting input from a certain group of stakeholders. A variety of methods and measures can be used to gauge progress in meeting community engagement objectives.

This section provides guidance on basic concepts, how to evaluate whether a plan or activity is achieving community engagement objectives, key steps in the evaluation process, a sample performance measurement framework, and potential data sources and evaluation techniques.

Important Terms and Concepts

Indicators of performance are defined based on organizational *goals* (what the agency wants to achieve) and *objectives* (how the agency proposes to achieve the goal). *Indicators* establish measurable performance targets. For community engagement, qualitative data obtained through surveys will be a primary data source for measuring *targets*, as discussed below.

A set of indicators, rather than any single indicator, is often needed to obtain an accurate picture of performance in relation to an objective.

Targets establish a desired level of performance at a given point in time. Agency or individual progress in meeting the target provides insight into how well the community engagement activity is performing. Together, the goals, objectives, indicators, and targets serve as a framework for community engagement performance measurement, as illustrated below.

The following terms and concepts are important to understand when undertaking a performance measurement effort:

Goal: The overarching purpose of the program or activity

Objective: Specific statement of how the agency plans to achieve its goal

Indicator: A variable selected and defined to measure progress toward an objective

Target: A realistic, measurable criterion for evaluating an indicator

Performance Measure: A process of defining and monitoring indicators of organizational performance in relation to specified targets.

Example Community Engagement Performance Measures Framework

Goal:	All interested parties have an opportunity to participate fully in the decision-making process and public input is carefully considered
Objective:	Provide **equitable** access to transportation decision-making/Use a variety of **methods** to involve and engage the public
Indicator:	Convenience of meetings and events to public transportation/Access to information by persons with disabilities
Target:	80% of meetings are within one-eighth of a-mile of a transit stop/100% of electronic material is Section 508 compliant/100% of meetings and events are located at ADA compliant facilities

Establishing an Evaluation Framework for Community Engagement

The Public Involvement Plan (PIP) or Community Awareness Plan (CAP) typically consists of community engagement goals, policies, objectives, and descriptions of community engagement techniques. Therefore, the goals and objectives of a PIP or CAP should be written before attempting to define appropriate performance indicators.

Below is an example of a community engagement goal and objectives. They are typical of PIPs and could form an initial basis for an effective performance measurement framework.

Example Community Engagement Goals and Objectives

Goal: Ensure that all interested parties have an opportunity to participate fully in the transportation decision-making process and that public input is carefully considered.

Objectives:

1. Provide equitable access to transportation decision-making.
2. Inform the public early, clearly, and continuously.
3. Use a variety of methods to involve and engage the public.
4. Carefully consider public input in transportation decisions.

Identifying Appropriate Indicators–Outputs versus Outcomes

Indicators are those items used to measure or “indicate” progress toward an objective. When identifying indicators, consider whether the indicator addresses what really counts in regard to community engagement and not just what can be easily counted. Too often, evaluating the community engagement process becomes an exercise in counting heads at a public meeting or hits on a website, because it is easier to monitor products and services delivered (outputs) rather than results of the PIP or activity (outcomes).

To know if what is getting counted really counts, begin by preparing a set of performance indicators that help to explain whether a community engagement objective has been met. These indicators should attempt to monitor outcomes and not just outputs. Sets of indicators addressing both outcomes and outputs may be needed to obtain an accurate picture of performance. A set of sample indicators are provided below.

Example Community Engagement Indicators

EQUITY: Provide equitable access to transportation decision-making
Indicator E-1: Access to information and participation opportunities by persons with disabilities
Indicator E-2: Convenience of meetings and events to public transportation, where available
Indicator E-3: Geographic dispersion of community engagement opportunities
Indicator E-4: Convenience of meeting or event time
Indicator E-5: Convenience of meeting or event location
Indicator E-6: Availability of information in languages other than English
INFORMATION: Inform the public early, clearly, and continuously
Indicator I-1: Clarity and adequacy of project information
Indicator I-2: Response time to inquiries from the public
Indicator I-3: Awareness of affected parties of the proposed transportation action
Indicator I-4: Affected parties feel that ample notice was provided of public meetings
METHODS: Use a variety of methods to involve and engage the public
Indicator M-1: Participants are involved using multiple techniques
Indicator M-2: Affected parties feel they had an adequate opportunity to participate
Indicator M-3: Perception of the value of methods used
RESPONSIVENESS: Carefully consider public input in transportation decisions
Indicator R-1: Agency partners feel that their input was considered

Potential for Bias

One issue that complicates any evaluation of community engagement is that results may be biased by influences outside an agency's control. For example, a group that opposes a transportation project may report dissatisfaction with the agency's community engagement process, regardless of the quality of that process or the efforts made to address their concerns. Compounding this issue is the fact that controversial projects may draw more opponents than supporters to a community engagement event.

The potential for bias in evaluating community engagement activities can be reduced, or at least better understood, by evaluating performance systematically and by using sets of indicators, rather than relying on a single indicator or evaluation effort. Evaluation results can also be categorized by level of controversy, level of environmental review, or other characteristics that indicate whether a potential for bias may exist. Categorizing evaluation results also provides insight into the possible need for refinements to the community engagement approach by size of project or level of controversy expected.

Setting Targets

A target establishes a desired level of performance for an indicator. As such, it should be both realistic and measurable. One way is to simply choose a reasonable target based on past experience or best practices. The target can then be refined when sufficient data becomes available through the performance monitoring process.

A complete set of example targets is provided in the report [Performance Measures to Evaluate the Effectiveness of Public Involvement Activities in Florida](). For the purpose of illustration, consider the following examples. "Agency partners feel that their input was considered" is an indicator of agency responsiveness. A reasonable target might be for a majority of agency partners (i.e., 75%) to feel their input was considered. Setting the target at 75% rather than 100% recognizes that it may be unrealistic to attempt to satisfy all participants, given limited resources and the potential for bias noted previously.

Targets might be further broken down by type of respondent, as follows. A short follow-up survey of those who participated or commented would be needed to determine the result, as discussed below in **Surveys and Questionnaires.**

Indicator R-1: Agency partners feel that their input was considered.

Target: [75%] of government units feel that their input was considered.

Target: [75%] of organizations feel that their input was considered.

Target: [75%] of user groups feel that their input was considered.

Target: [75%] of individuals feel that their input was considered.

Where an indicator is monitoring something that is required by law, then an appropriate target would be to achieve 100% compliance. For example, the ADA requires government meeting locations and information to be accessible to persons with disabilities. In this situation, it would be reasonable to set targets at 100%, as shown in the example below.

Indicator E-1: Access to information and participation opportunities by persons with disabilities

Target: [100%] of meetings, events and project-related information sources are accessible to persons with disabilities.

This target would involve documenting whether meeting and event locations are ADA-accessible. It would also involve evaluating whether project information is provided in a manner that is accessible to those with disabilities, when requested.

Data Collection

Community engagement performance measures rely in large part on qualitative information, as opposed to quantitative data. How participants feel about the quality of the efforts made to involve them tells us more about performance than the number of people who participated. The degree of public satisfaction with a community engagement process or activity can only be understood by asking participants and, in some cases those who chose not to participate, for their opinion.

Data needed to measure indicators should also be cost-effective to collect. Although data on meeting attendance and other outputs may be routinely collected or readily available, data on the outcome of community engagement activities will involve other methods of gathering information.

Comment forms, questionnaires, and short surveys are all cost-effective methods that can be employed for this purpose. Geographic information system (GIS) analysis, internet tools, and staff debriefings or logs are other useful and relatively low-cost methods for collecting data needed to evaluate community engagement performance.

Surveys and Questionnaires

Surveys and questionnaires are essential data collection tools for evaluating community engagement. They are often the only way to obtain the qualitative data needed from the public for the evaluation. Surveys can be conducted in person, by phone, via internet, mailed, or emailed, and can either target specific groups or be a random sample.

Surveys can be distributed at meetings to be turned in or mailed back, inserted into publications, or mailed directly to potential respondents. Return postage for mail surveys is typically prepaid, as this leads to higher response rates. An advantage of email surveys is little or no reproduction or distribution costs. To use email surveys, it is necessary to have email addresses for the targeted respondents, and random distribution is generally not an option. Alternatively, questions may be asked by telephone or in person, allowing for follow-up questions and more in- depth discussion. Example surveys are provided on the next page.

Statistics

Basic statistics, such as percentages, can be useful in evaluating and monitoring the effectiveness of a community engagement program or activity. Survey responses can be calculated and compared to preset targets to determine performance in relation to a given indicator.

Once documented, evaluation results may be tracked over time to assess whether performance has improved, remained steady, or declined. They may also be aggregated across a number of projects for a sense of agency-wide performance over a specified period of time.

GIS and Internet Tools

GIS and internet tools are useful in evaluating indicators and targets with geographic elements. For example, Indicator E-2 provides the following example targets:

Indicator E-2: Convenience of meetings and events to public transportation, where available

> Target: [60%] of community engagement events are within one-eighth of a-mile of a transit stop.
>
> Target: [60%] of community engagement events are within paratransit

Information about transit availability to the meeting location can typically be downloaded directly from the area transit agency's website. A useful tool for this purpose is Google Transit®, a web-based application that maps public transit and other transportation systems, as part of Google Maps®.

Example Survey

We are committed to providing interested parties with the opportunity to participate in our transportation decision-making processes. Our records indicate that you have participated in some way in the following project. We appreciate your time in answering a few brief questions.

Project:

Project Description:

Which of the following best describes your role?

- Interested individual
- Government/agency representative
- Representative of an organization
- Representative of a user group

I was given the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process:

○ Strongly Agree ○ Agree ○ Disagree ○ Strongly Disagree

My ideas were considered in the decision-making process:

○ Strongly Agree ○ Agree ○ Disagree ○ Strongly Disagree

Comments:

Some transit agencies also provide detailed information on their websites detailing transit stop locations in the service area.

Staff Debriefings

Staff debriefings are an opportunity to reflect on the effectiveness of a community engagement process or activity in relation to agency objectives. A debriefing session following a specific involvement activity can help staff identify effective practices and potential areas to improve prior to the next event. Below are a few questions to contemplate during in-house debriefings.

In general, what seemed to work well? What didn't?

Staff perceptions and general comments received from the public can be valuable in beginning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of a process or technique.

A common problem for transportation agencies is lack of attendance at public meetings. If key segments of the community are not attending a public event, this may indicate a variety of issues. The timing and/or

What type of feedback did you receive from the public about the event?

Are enough people in the affected community participating in the community engagement activities?

Were those who participated representative of the affected community?

Did the audience include those who were expected to have an interest in the project?

locations may be inappropriate for some audiences. The notifications may not be reaching the intended audience. Area residents may not believe their comments are important or will be considered. They may simply prefer other ways to be informed and involved in the decision-making process. A follow-up survey with those invited and interviews with key stakeholders can provide insight into the reasons for low attendance and how to address the issue in the future

Are there significant unresolved issues on the project?

Consider the results of any surveys, comment forms, questionnaires, or personal comments received by staff in relation to the meeting or event. If many people indicated that the meeting was not at a convenient location, consider whether there is another potential meeting site closer to the affected area. Another alternative might be to attend scheduled meetings of interest groups in the area, or to provide updates via newsletters with information on how interested parties can provide comments or get involved. Alternatively, positive comments about meeting format provide reinforcement that the format is appropriate for reaching the intended audience.

Did the public seem to understand the information they were provided?

Are the right communication techniques being employed?

When providing information to the public it is important to keep the message clear, simple and informal. If the comments received are irrelevant to the project, this indicates people do not understand the information they were provided or what information/input is being sought. The public may have unrealistic expectations about how they can influence the project, their role in the decision-making process, or the type of decisions being made during the current phase of project development.

The level of involvement needed will vary according to the nature of a project and the level of public interest or concern. If significant opposition to a project remains following the community engagement effort, then it is likely that all relevant issues have not been identified and resolved to the satisfaction of the community. Continued dialogue and additional involvement opportunities are needed to develop acceptable solutions. Additional efforts may also be needed to demonstrate to the public how their input is being used.

Improvement Strategies

Performance measurement is a valuable management tool, as it provides essential information on how to improve upon past results. A common saying is “what gets measured gets done.” Certainly, there is some truth to this saying. However, it is only true if the results of the performance measurement effort are translated directly into improvements to the community engagement process or techniques evaluated.

Each time a community engagement evaluation is performed, a list of improvement strategies should be identified and then implemented in subsequent activities. When the targets for performance are not met, this is an indication that improvements are needed. Positive results help to inform what activities or approaches work best and should be used again

901 Maintaining a Community Engagement File

Community engagement documentation involves compiling, synthesizing, and analyzing supporting records and references and making them available for others who may be interested in the community engagement process and results.

A community engagement file is the repository of all materials used to engage the public about a plan or project and the results of that engagement. The file contents provide answers to the questions “who, what, where, when, why, and how” relative to the community engagement process, activities, and results. As a project moves into a new phase, the community engagement file from the earlier phase(s) carries forward important details about affected/interested publics, including community demographics and project-related concerns and preferences.

Purposes

The Department places importance on community engagement documentation for the following reasons:

Public Transparency

By documenting community engagement for transportation plans and projects, FDOT demonstrates that it has included others in plan/project conversations and considered their input in decision making. Transparency builds public trust and relationships.

Plan/Project Decision Making

Community engagement involves two-way communication aimed at incorporating the views, concerns, and issues of the public into decision-making processes. From planning through operations and maintenance, community engagement is on-going in all phases of the project lifecycle. Community engagement documentation ensures that commitments made to address community preferences in one phase are carried into and successfully carried out in future phases.

FOR PD&E DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS, SEE THE PD&E MANUAL, PART 1, CHAPTER 11 FOR GUIDANCE AND THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT RESOURCE KIT (PERK) FOR SAMPLES.

Process Improvement

Documentation is vital for measuring the performance of a community engagement strategy and its execution. Documentation is evidence that a community engagement process has or has not achieved its goals.

Legal Processes

Should any aspect of the plan/project be called into question as part of a legal process, documentary evidence of the community engagement process may be requested. The strength or sufficiency of the community engagement documentation could be a factor in establishing the merits of the case.

File Components

Plan for Community Engagement

The Public Involvement Plan for PD&E studies, the Communications Plan for planning, and Community Awareness Plan for design and construction projects should be included in the project file. These plans outline the strategy for community engagement including demographic data used to inform the strategy, planned community engagement activities, and the outreach approach for targeted audiences.

Meeting Notifications

The community engagement file contains the master contact list identifying all persons who were notified about the community engagement activities and how (e.g., letter, newsletter, or email) and when they were notified.

Community Engagement Activities

A description of each community engagement activity conducted for the plan/project and the progression of these activities is a key part of the community engagement file. Community engagement activities include all opportunities for the public to become informed about the plan/project and provide input. Public meetings, presentations to elected officials and other groups, project kiosks at community events, and web-based engagement are examples of community engagement activities.

All materials produced to support the community engagement activities are compiled to become part of the file. Such materials may include:

- Activities schedule with dates, times, and locations
- Public notification formats, distribution list (contacts list), method of distribution (mail, email, advertisement, social media posts, press release, media coverage, etc.), and date of distribution
- Registration materials (registration form, sign-in sheet, etc.)
- Presentation materials (agenda, slides, display boards, video, etc.)
- Activity materials (e.g., maps, charts, fact sheets)
- Public input forms (comment form, survey questionnaire, evaluation form, etc.)

Community Engagement Activity Results

Following each community engagement activity, including any specified comment period, the public input received is compiled, synthesized by topic or theme, and analyzed for substance. For example, public input may indicate the community's level of understanding or attitude about a proposal. With this knowledge, future public engagement activities can be tailored to fill information gaps or focus on a particular community concern. The results of each community engagement activity and supporting documents are included in the community engagement file.

This information may include:

- Number of attendees and sign-in sheets
- Ratio of attendees to the number of invitees
- Relationship of attendees to the plan/project (resident, business operator, agency stakeholders)
- Completed public input forms (comment cards, surveys, etc.)
- Other documented public input (e.g., drawing, sticky-note, or dot exercises; transcripts; and meeting minutes)
- Photos of attendees during the community engagement activity
- Post-activity media coverage
- Telephone/website comment logs
- Requests for information
- Responses to public comments

Summary Document

At the conclusion of the community engagement process for a project phase, the details about the community engagement process and findings are presented in a summary document. The summary document should include an accurate assessment of community issues and concerns and the Department's responses. As the phase of a project becomes more defined, these summary documents will provide an ongoing status of public input and Department decisions.