


406 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.



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.

IN DEVELOPING A MEDIA STRATEGY, THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS SHOULD BE ASKED:

What is the appropriate level of engagement effort that should be used for the particular project?

How will people react to the particular media source?

How many people can be reached by that source?

How implementable is the media strategy, from a resource and complexity perspective?

Develop a list of media contacts in coordination with the District Communications Office and maintain it throughout the life of the project. To involve traditionally underserved communities, additional effort may be required to identify community-specific and/or community-based media sources. Working with a community leader to identify these media sources can be helpful. It is important to share those contacts with the District Communications Office.

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

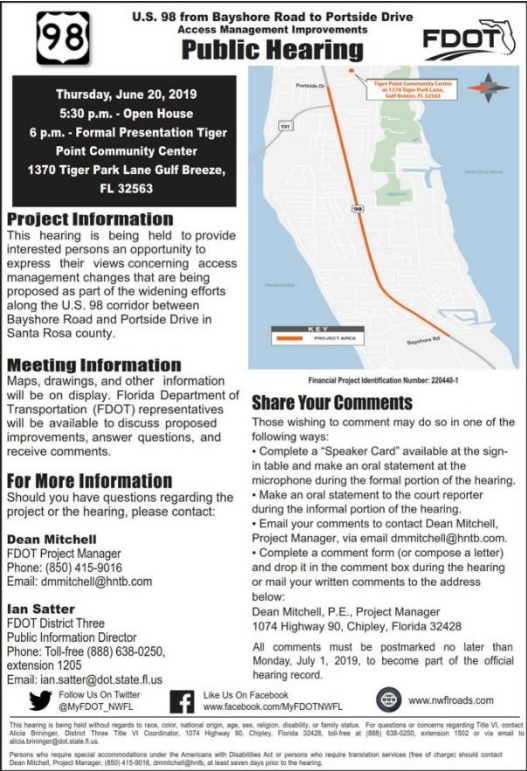
(e.g., email or a website form). Print/digital quality standards may be applicable. All of this information should be compiled and included as part of the media list.

The following are examples of different media sources that can be utilized for transportation projects.

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 and promote participation by traditionally underserved communities. 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.