

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



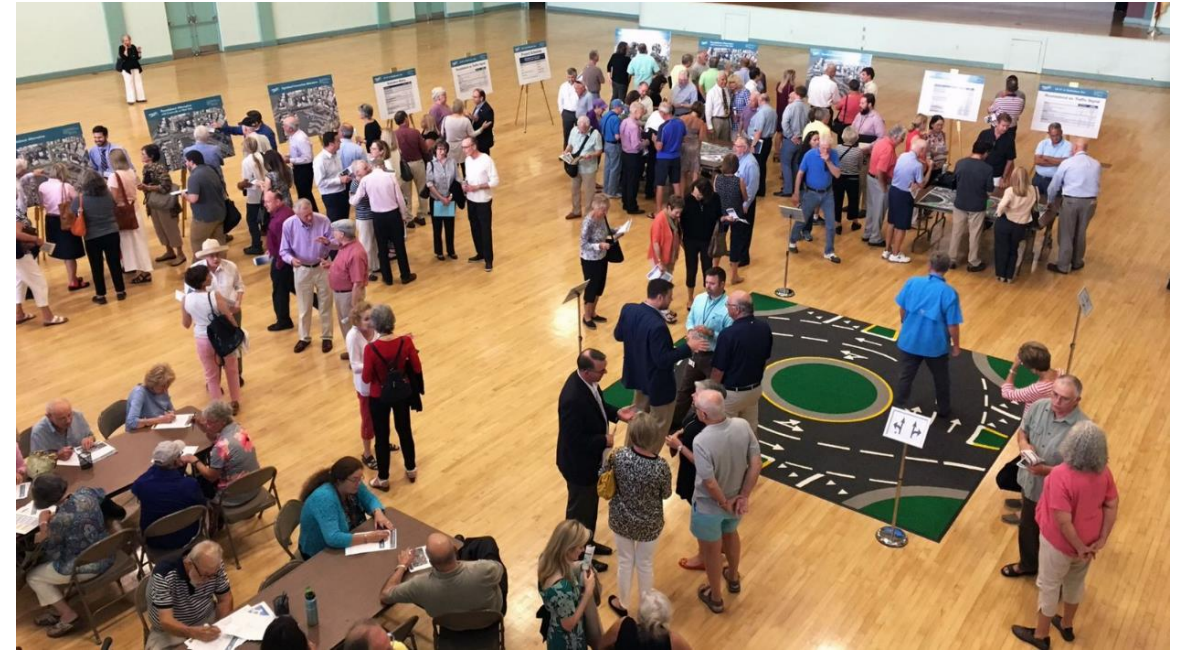
The term “public meeting” encompasses a wide variety of meeting formats and is used to distinguish less prescriptive forms of outreach from public hearings. The overall goal of any public meeting is to share information, initiate or continue a dialogue about the project, and start building consensus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

Public meetings must be 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 Department policy requires public meetings to utilize a diverse mix of methods to engage and collaborate with the public and stakeholders. Where possible, an option for the public to participate virtually should be offered.

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.

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.



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.

98 U.S. 98 from Bayshore Road to Portside Drive Access Management Improvements **FDOT**

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@hnb.com

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

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@hnb.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.

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This hearing is being held without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, marital status, or family status. For Americans with disabilities requesting Title VI, contact: Anna Brinkman, District Three Title VI Coordinator, 1074 Highway 90, Chipley, Florida 32428, toll-free at (888) 638-0250, extension 1502 or via email: ti.anna.brinkman@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@hnb.com, 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.

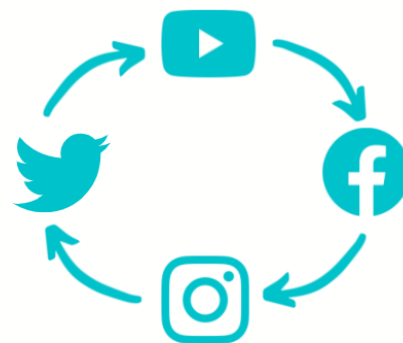
Radio and Television

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.

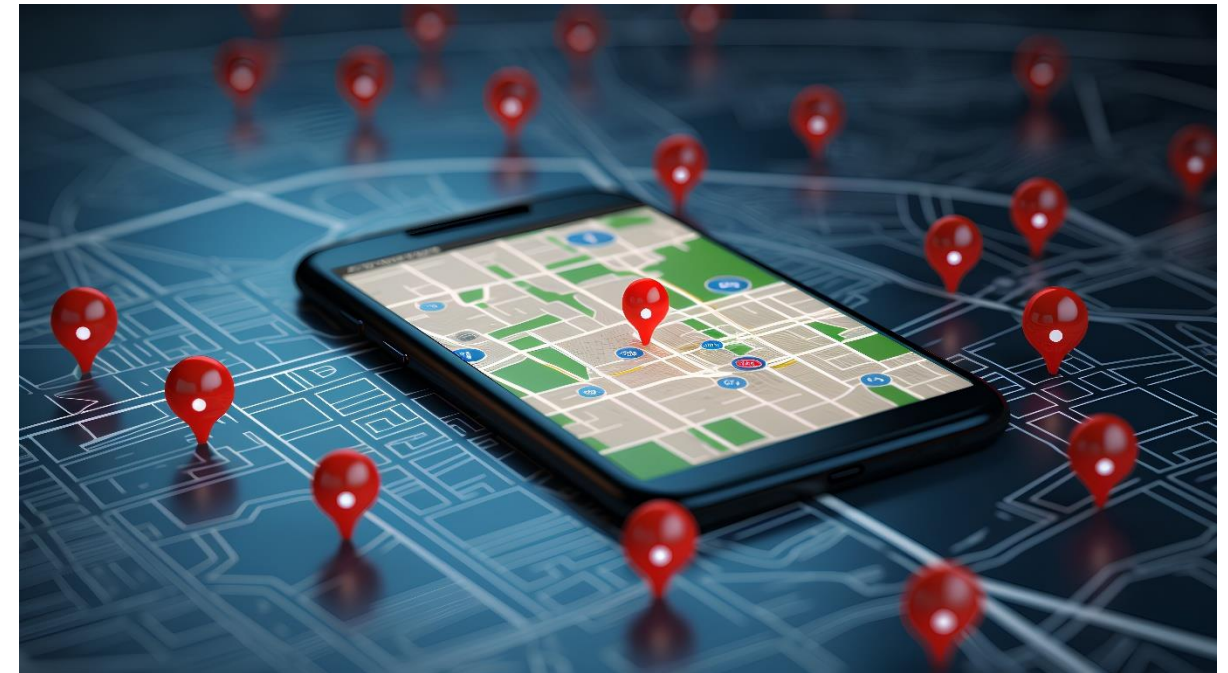
Geofencing

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>.

