

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.

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

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. This is when previous community engagement activities can really become crucial. During the PD&E phase, affected property owners should have been involved and received information about acquisition and relocation procedures. If the affected property owners feel they have been involved through the previous phases, they are more likely to be understanding and knowledgeable about the process and project as a whole.

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 with the 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.

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 meeting or hearing 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.