104 Public Involvement

104.1 General

FDOT's policy on ***Public Involvement, Topic No. 000-525-050*** states:

"It is the policy of the Florida Department of Transportation (Department) to use every possible opportunity to engage with and involve the public that leads to community-based decisions when planning, designing, constructing, and maintaining transportation facilities and services to meet the State's transportation needs. The participation of the public is an integral part of the transportation process and results in:

- 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 Department will promote public involvement, engagement opportunities and information exchange activities in all functional areas using various techniques adapted to the audience, local area conditions, and project requirements."

Detailed information on public involvement activities and requirements can be found in the ***Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Program Management Handbook, Chapter 6;*** the ***Project Development and Environment Manual (PD&E Manual) Part 1, Chapter 11*** and the ***Public Involvement Handbook***.

Typically, when a project reaches the design phase, many of the project commitments and community issues have already been identified. However, there are times when design alternatives need to be reevaluated to determine their community impacts. Any commitments made in previous phases are communicated to designers, who are responsible for carrying them out. If constraints arise that require design changes that affect FDOT's ability to meet commitments, then the process would require follow-up with the affected community. In such cases, additional public involvement and community impact assessment may be necessary to address public concerns.

Projects may have the following potential community impacts that are not identified until the design phase:

(1) Impacts on public safety, including people with disabilities

(2) School crossings or other areas of high pedestrian activity

(3) Aesthetic features such as landscaping or tree replacement

(4) Medians or access changes

(5) Intersections and driveways, including audible signalized intersections

(6) Accessibility of corridor businesses and neighborhoods

(7) Significant improvements to bicycle, pedestrian, and transit facilities

(8) Lighting

(9) Maintenance of Traffic

(10) Railroad crossings

(11) Location and extent of stormwater management facilities

104.2 Public Information and Outreach

Start developing and implementing a public information and outreach campaign when the design phase begins. Ongoing monitoring throughout the life of the project will be necessary. The following steps should be used when planning and implementing a public information and outreach campaign.

(1) **Determine appropriate size and nature**. The size and nature of a public information and outreach effort is determined by the characteristics of a project, its location, and the anticipated impacts. Address the size and duration of the project, the amount of delay anticipated, special traffic and safety conditions such as heavy truck traffic, changes to bicycle and pedestrian routes and facilities, and disruptions to other modes and key facilities such as airports, stadiums, and hospitals.

(2) **Identify resources**. Typically, public information and outreach spending is included in the project budget. In addition, the Department may need to tap existing resources, such as an operating 511 system and the Lane Closure Information System (LCIS) and leverage external resources such as free media coverage.

(3) **Identify partners**. Working with a range of partners to design and implement an information and outreach campaign will strengthen the strategies employed and may reduce the costs and resources. Partners may include state and local agencies, law enforcement, major employers, business and neighborhood associations, and local clubs and advocacy groups.

(4) **Identify target audiences**. Identifying target audiences is a key in developing an effective communication strategy. This determines the types of messages that should be conveyed and the best methods of communicating those messages.

(5) **Develop the message(s)**. The messages communicated should provide project information to maintain safety and minimize delays and should indicate that the agency cares about the traveling public, including transit riders, pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists. More specific messages might include details of the work zone, travel times through the work zone, alerts regarding the need for cyclists to share or control a travel lane and alternate routes and modes of transportation.

(6) **Determine communication strategies**. How information is communicated will depend on the audiences, the messages to be conveyed, and the campaign budget. The ***Public Involvement Handbook*** discusses a wide range of strategies for communicating information about a project.

(7) **Determine communication timing**. Begin public information and outreach before work commences to develop partnerships and inform the public about the project, its anticipated impacts, and additional sources of ongoing project information. Early contact and coordination with bicycle groups (such as Metropolitan Planning Organization Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committees or bike clubs) helps mitigate friction.

104.3 Community Awareness Plan (CAP)

The CAP identifies and documents the notification method to project stakeholders of potential impacts of a proposed construction project. Project stakeholders typically include local governments, law enforcement, affected property owners, tenants, and the public. The CAP establishes and maintains a strategy for early, meaningful, and continuous public involvement during the design and construction phases. Specifically, the intent of the CAP is to develop an approach to achieve the following objectives:

(1) Resolve controversial issues during the design phase.

(2) Develop and maintain stakeholder support for the project.

At a minimum, the CAP should include the following elements:

(1) **Project Description:** Identify the project background, existing conditions, and proposed project scope. Include special features or amenities to be included in the project when describing the scope of work.

(2) **Description of the Community:** Describe the area surrounding the project limits and properties that might be affected. Include special demographic data that would assist in determining the need for translation services or bilingual staff at a public meeting.

(3) **Potential Controversial Issues:** Identify community issues or concerns. Some level of controversy can be expected from the following: access changes, driveway modifications, parking removal, right-of-way acquisition, new signalized intersections, landscaping changes or removal, loss of aesthetic features, safety issues identified by law enforcement, or temporary construction impacts (e.g., lane closures, detours).

(4) **Special Commitments:** List the commitments made prior to or during the design phase.

(5) **Traffic Control and Access Impacts:**

(a) Temporary Traffic Control Plan – Describe the temporary traffic control plan, including lane closures, night work, or detours. Identify special community events that must be considered.

(b) Access Impacts – Describe temporary or permanent access changes, including driveway modifications.

(c) Construction Schedule – Identify when construction activities are expected to begin.

(d) Preliminary Contract Time – Include an estimate of the contract duration.

(6) **CAP Level:** Identify the public involvement level and justify the level selected.

(7) **Identification of Project Stakeholders:** List the property owners, tenants, elected and appointed officials, local, state, and federal agency representatives, law enforcement, and interested organizations.

(8) **Proposed Public Involvement Notification Methods and Activities During Design:** Describe the outreach efforts to conduct during the design phase, the anticipated schedule, and how the public will be notified.

(9) **Proposed Public Involvement Notification Methods and Activities During Construction:** Provide a timeline of public involvement activities for the construction phase.

104.3.1 CAP Levels

The FDOT CAP Guidelines for all design and construction projects identify four levels of public involvement based on the type of project:

Level 1: Project is noncontroversial, causes negligible accessibility impacts, and causes minimal traffic disruption.

Level 2: Project has general public acceptance, little impact on accessibility or traffic, and a moderate degree of traffic disruption. Examples include urban resurfacing, bridge repair projects, and other construction activities that may require lane closures.

Level 3: Project may be controversial, will significantly impact traffic flow, or will significantly affect accessibility to properties (temporary or permanent). Examples are parking removal, median openings or closures, access management issues, traffic signal removal, roadway widening, major reconstruction, and projects with detours.

Level 4: Project involves road widening or major reconstruction, bridge widening or replacement, new interchange, or closures (temporary or permanent) of the roadway, ramps, bridges, or railroad crossings.

104.4 Recommended Activities

A public information and outreach campaign involves communicating with road users, the general public, area residences and businesses, and appropriate public entities about a road project and its implications for safety and mobility.

104.4.1 Design Activities

The District Public Information Officer (PIO) should have final approval of informational documents intended for public distribution.

Typical activities corresponding to the CAP level are provided as follows:

CAP Level 1

(1) Provide Phase II plans to city and county officials and staff to solicit comments and concurrence.

CAP Level 2, 3, 4

(1) When requested, provide presentation(s) to city, MPO, County Commission, legislators and community groups regarding design, impacts, and construction status.

(2) Provide plans for all phase reviews to city and county officials and staff to solicit comments and concurrence.

(3) Provide plans for all phase reviews to maintenance, construction, and appropriate Operations Center.

(4) Following Phase II review:

(a) Send Notice of Access Impact (driveway closures/modifications) to affected property owners. If done by mass mailing, all proposed access revisions must be clearly stated in the mailing.

(b) Project Information Workshop(s) with city and county staff, law enforcement, elected officials, property owners, and interested public to solicit comments. Mass mailing of invitation or project flyers are typically coordinated by the Department Project Manager and the District PIO.

104.4.2 Construction Activities

Typical activities corresponding to the level type are provided as follows:

CAP Level 1, 2, 3, 4

(1) Two to four weeks prior to beginning construction activities, conduct a mass mailing of project information with construction dates and specific traffic impact information. Project flyers are typically coordinated by the Construction Project Manager and the District PIO.

(2) One week prior to beginning construction activities, include information regarding the project start date, pertinent project information and specific traffic impacts in the District PIO's Weekly Traffic Report (news release).

(3) Throughout the construction phase, include specific traffic impacts in the District PIO's Weekly Traffic Report (news release). It is the Construction Project Manager's responsibility to provide the District PIO with this information in a timely manner to meet media deadlines.

CAP Level 2, 3, 4

(1) After Letting, conduct a 'Hand Off' meeting including representatives from Design, Construction, Utilities, Traffic Operations and Maintenance. This meeting is typically scheduled by the Design Project Manager.

(2) When requested, provide presentations to city and county officials, legislators, community groups and property owners regarding project status, as needed or requested.

CAP Level 3, 4

(1) During the development of Scope of Services for C.E.I., determine if a consultant PIO is required for the project. This decision will be made by the Design Project Manager, the Construction Project Manager, and the District PIO. The District PIO should be involved in writing Requests for Proposals and Scopes of Services language that pertain to contracting with community involvement and public information consultants.

(2) For project websites, construction staff typically maintains the website in accordance with the Project Website Guidelines.

104.5 Combined PD&E and Design Projects

For projects that overlap the PD&E and design phases, a CAP is typically prepared. However, with input from the District PIO, preparation of a Public Involvement Plan (PIP) may be required instead. See ***Part 1, Chapter 11*** of the ***PD&E Manual.*** At the conclusion of the PD&E phase, document the following:

(1) Summary of community concerns and issues

(2) List of special commitments

(3) Summary of the Temporary Traffic Control Plan

(4) Description of access impacts

(5) Construction schedule

(6) Estimated construction duration

(7) Proposed public involvement activities during construction

104.6 Noise and Perimeter Walls

See ***FDM 264.4*** for public involvement requirements for noise and perimeter walls.