AASHTO Public Involvement Peer Exchange Summary Report

June 2021

Prepared for:

American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
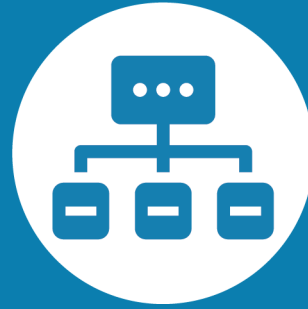
Center for Environmental Excellence

AASHTO
Center for
Environmental
Excellence

wsp

Table of Contents

BACKGROUND

The AASHTO Center for Environmental Excellence initiated a Public Involvement Peer Exchange in 2020 to foster peer learning among selected state Departments of Transportation (DOTs) from across the U.S. The Center's Technical Working Group selected this topic due to interest from member states. The peer exchange was funded through a cooperative agreement with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and conducted with support from WSP. Originally planned as a domestic scan tour, the format changed to virtual workshops due to the coronavirus pandemic. AASHTO conducted three half-day virtual workshops in the fall of 2020. A final in-person wrap-up session is anticipated in 2022.

AASHTO selected four lead states to provide examples of their public involvement practice and lessons learned for the peer exchange: Minnesota (MnDOT), North Carolina (NCDOT), Pennsylvania (PennDOT), and Utah (UDOT). An additional six states participated in the exchange: Colorado, Georgia, Montana, Ohio, Oregon, and Washington State. Topics identified for the exchange included:

- Current status of DOT public involvement programs (including changes brought about by the pandemic);
- Planning and project development frameworks that shape public involvement;
- Project development case studies, including those with a focus on the engagement of underrepresented communities;
- Federal perspectives on public outreach, public hearings and environmental justice;
- The role of data in planning and evaluating public involvement, and
- Emerging methods and approaches in public involvement.

The virtual workshops took place on September 29, October 6, and October 27, 2020 using the GoToWebinar platform. In addition to presentations, the sessions included open discussion, polls, and breakout groups. This summary describes each workshop and the key themes and lessons learned from the peer exchange overall. Additionally, a Resources section provides links to materials shared by participants.

SESSION 1 - SEPTEMBER 29, 2020

Welcome and Introductions

Melissa Savage, Director of AASHTO's Center for Environmental Excellence, welcomed participants and provided background on the Center and the purpose of the peer exchange. Introductions followed along with participant polls to better understand participants' backgrounds and roles in public involvement.

Federal Highway Administration Perspective

Danielle Blackshear of the FHWA Office of Human Environment gave a brief presentation on the importance of public involvement from the federal perspective, with an overview of FHWA's Every Day Counts (EDC) Virtual Public Involvement (VPI) initiative and resources. FHWA defines VPI as the "use of digital technology to engage individuals or to visualize projects or plans," and has categorized eight tools to help implement VPI: Mobile Applications, Project Visualizations, Do-It-Yourself Videos, Crowdsourcing Tools, Virtual Town Halls, Mapping Tools, All-in-One Tools, and Digital Tools to Enhance In-Person Events. FHWA is promoting VPI with fact sheets, videos, peer exchanges, and workshops. These resources are available on the FHWA website (see the Resources section for a link). An update to FHWA's Public Involvement Techniques Guide is also underway.

Where are we today with public involvement?

Next on the agenda was a discussion of where states stand today with public involvement. This included the

Sample FHWA Fact Sheets on VPI Tools

results of an advance survey of participants, followed by a breakout session to discuss the changes brought about by COVID-19.

Advance Survey

A survey of participants was conducted prior to the workshop to gather input for a discussion of current challenges, opportunities, and concerns. The survey questions were as follows:

What are the key challenges and opportunities your DOT is experiencing today in public involvement?

- What changes has your DOT made or experienced in doing public involvement under social distancing?
- Are there any special concerns or questions you hope to see addressed during the peer exchange?

Pam Lebeaux of WSP reported on the survey results, which are summarized in Table 1. Many of the reported challenges and opportunities focused on the use of virtual tools during COVID-19, including both the opportunity to reach more people and concerns about reaching underserved populations. Apart from COVID-19, general challenges include a lack of resources, reaching all populations, and achieving meaningful, long-term engagement. Participants expressed interest in learning more about best practices for reaching underserved populations, including those in rural areas that lack broadband service. There was also considerable interest in how the use of VPI might continue after the pandemic and what guidance would be available on how and when to use VPI tools.

Table 1: Advance Survey Results

Key Challenges – General

- Rising above the "din" of a 24-hour news cycle – "We have to get creative on how to produce content that will be seen and heard rather than just skipped over."
- Achieving meaningful, long-term engagement
- Lack of resources
- Making sure we reach everyone, including underserved populations

Key Challenges during COVID-19

- Finding effective online alternatives to an open house
- The technology—getting everything working, helping the public master the tech
- Making sure everyone can participate

Opportunities

- Reaching more participants through virtual public engagement than we normally do at in-person events, including a broader age range
- Receiving more comments than we normally do at in-person events
- Finding new ways to make technology work for us

Changes in Public Involvement with Social Distancing

- Switching to online meetings
- Postponing public involvement for some plans or projects
- Using telephone town halls
- Increased reliance on telephone conversations with community representatives or stakeholders
- Increased use of project websites and social media to convey project information and request public comment
- Accelerating construction work, with associated changes in communications schedules

Concerns and Questions for Consideration in the Peer Exchange

- Best practices for reaching underserved populations, especially in rural areas that lack broadband internet
- How can we address those who typically attend in-person meetings and encourage them to submit input in the virtual setting?
- Will the trend of online open houses continue?
- How can we continue this path toward virtual public involvement and not rely so heavily on in-person events in the future?
- Expanding our public involvement tools with guidance on how and when to use VPI tools post COVID-19
- Creative solutions other DOTs have developed

Breakout Groups: Changes brought about by Social Distancing

The discussion of changes during COVID-19 continued in breakout groups. Each group addressed the following three questions:

1. What has your DOT's experience been like during this time?
2. Do you think some of the public involvement changes you've made might be permanent?
3. How can states provide equitable inclusion in a world of virtual meetings?

Question 1: Experience during COVID-19

Across the breakout groups, nearly all states reported increased use of online meetings, with large increases in the number of people participating compared to traditional in-person meetings.

- "Now that they can attend from home, we've gone from 30 to 100 people at a meeting."
- "We're reaching lots of new people who would never have made time to go to a public meeting."
- "Our public involvement has dramatically increased."
- "Participation levels just keep going up."

Several states have been able to attract younger people, including those ages 18-25 who had avoided public meetings in the past but were willing to do so with a virtual option.

The states differed widely in their previous use of virtual methods. Some were already experienced with online meetings, while others faced a steep learning curve. For some, FHWA's VPI resources provided a knowledge base that helped in making the adjustment.

- "We started going virtual in 2013, so we already had a handle on doing business this way."
- "We had already moved a lot of our public involvement online."
- "Our move to the virtual space wasn't difficult – we were already set up for it – but we learned some new things."
- "We had an advantage" in that there's a state media services branch that does "professionally run webcasts."
- "We were just starting to experiment with online meetings when COVID hit."
- "It was crash and burn at first" but "it was a blessing in disguise because it forced us to learn how to use the technology."

The pandemic prompted states to experiment with new approaches:

- "It accelerated our ability to try new things."
- "Our social media presence catapulted...Now that virtual meetings are happening much more widely, people are sharing that there is a public meeting."
- Colorado DOT conducted its first on-demand virtual public meeting that was open for two weeks, with over 400 visits and 145 comments.
- Utah DOT took the opportunity to invest in a virtual platform, identifying funding and selecting an "all-in-one" tool for a one-year subscription.

Participants also reported on what they have been learning about VPI during this time.

- "We've seen the importance of practicing prior to an online meeting" to be sure the technology works correctly and speaker handoffs go smoothly.
- "Understanding transmission delay: if you're playing a video or taking live voice comments by phone" the lag time is different than for those participating online and it's "too hard for people to understand when they're supposed to speak... It's better if people on the phone can call in and leave a voice message."
- "Flexibility is key: virtual is not for everyone. In an elderly community, traditional outreach is preferred."
- Ohio DOT's Jacque Annarino created her own list of "dos" and "don'ts" for successful online meetings.

Question 2: Potential for Changes to Become Permanent

Across the groups, all participants expect the use of VPI to continue beyond the pandemic.

- "We've taken great leaps in VPI and are excited to see where it goes."
- "We see nothing but benefit."
- "We've been creating a lot of educational video content" and think this "will be a mainstay going forward...In our society people love to engage on social media" and would rather watch video than read. "It's going to be one of the main tools in our toolkit."

Beyond expanding participation, states cited cost savings, public expectations, and a better experience for staff as benefits of virtual meetings.

- It's been a "huge cost savings to do virtual meetings" on corridor studies instead of having to travel or have our consultants travel. "It was hard for staff to stay motivated with the low turnout at in-person meetings."
- "The public will now expect" virtual options.

Several cautioned that VPI should complement rather than replace traditional methods.

- "We're excited to have these tools in the toolbox going forward" but "will need to consider when is the right time to do virtual vs. other types of outreach."
- One suggested that public involvement for some projects "will go entirely virtual in future" while others will be a combination of virtual and in-person.
- Broadband availability remains a barrier to the use of VPI, particularly in rural states.

Question 3: Equitable Inclusion in a World of Virtual Meetings

Participants saw equitable inclusion in VPI as a challenge and spoke of the need to use alternative methods to engage hard-to-reach communities, such as providing telephone hotlines and working with community leaders who can serve as intermediaries.

- Several states provide a toll-free project hotline for those without internet access to contact project staff. They publicize this option in various ways such as print mailers, flyers, or through the news media, including radio. "We publicize the hotline number, so people know they can call, and someone will get back to them—it could be a printed packet mailed out, or just talking to someone about their comments, taking them down that way."
- Another approach is to engage community leaders along a corridor project. "We meet with them virtually, give them information to take back to their neighborhoods or places of worship to get the word out."
- Ohio DOT is working to develop more demographic data and metrics "to be sure we're getting a good representation of the public" in our project area, while MnDOT is conducting an equity study in each district that includes discussions with communities on preferred methods of engagement.

Other methods mentioned include the use of direct mail, print materials, and digital signs:

- "We use flyers, even though the meetings are online," and arrange to have them distributed at food banks or posted at businesses that are open, such as grocery stores and gas stations.
- For the public comment period on our STIP, "we coordinated with our maintenance folks to reach our low-income populations in areas that didn't have very good web service. We put out a digital message board" that directed people to a planner who would explain how to access project information at a local library.

Following the breakout session, the facilitators reported on what was shared in each group, as summarized above. To conclude the discussion on recent changes, Carolyn Nelson of FHWA's

Office of Project Development and Environmental Review spoke about the distinction between virtual meetings and NEPA-required public hearings. While VPI methods can be used to enhance the public hearing process, virtual meetings do not take the place of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) public hearings, which should continue to be conducted in-person, while following public health guidelines. [1]

Planning and Project Development Frameworks that Shape Public Involvement (Part I)

The next segment of the exchange focused on the planning and project development frameworks that shape public involvement. The varied approaches that DOTs take to developing plans and projects affect how public involvement is conducted and how it influences decision-making. To provide contrasting perspectives and promote information exchange, each of the four lead states was asked to present on one or more aspects of the process they follow for planning or project development. This topic spanned the first two workshops, with PennDOT and MnDOT presenting during Session 1.

PennDOT: Public Participation Plan, 12-Year Program, and PennDOT Connects

Jessica Clark and Brian Hare of PennDOT presented on three elements in their planning and project development framework: the development of their new Public Participation Plan for statewide planning, the public engagement efforts for their 12-Year Program, and their project planning framework, known as PennDOT Connects. (See the resources section for additional information on each topic.)

---

1 Since the peer exchange was conducted, FHWA has issued updated guidance on this point. See https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/coronavirus/virtualPI.cfm for updated information.

Public Participation Plan (PPP)

Jessica Clark described the process of updating PennDOT's PPP, a plain language document designed for the public which covers outreach and engagement for the Statewide Long Range Transportation Plan, the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program, and the 12-Year Program. During the PPP update, PennDOT's Program Center worked closely with their Bureau of Equal Opportunity and engaged a stakeholder group representing diverse voices to help shape the document. This group continues to play a role in advising PennDOT on inclusive engagement. PennDOT used multiple tools to solicit public feedback on the PPP, which received FHWA concurrence in May 2020.

12-Year Program

Next, Ms. Clark presented on the public involvement process for PennDOT's 12-Year Program. This mid-range capital programing document is updated every two years, providing an opportunity to refine and enhance the engagement process each time. PennDOT has been conducting an online public meeting for each cycle, as well as a custom-built public survey with an interactive map on which participants can note transportation issues. A unique feature of the map is the option for users to view active or planned projects in the area where they have noted an issue and indicate whether they think that project will address their issue.

- For the most recent 12-Year Program cycle, PennDOT's engagement goals were to increase the total number of participants and the number of 18-24-year-old participants, increase the quality of the feedback received, and improve the usability of the transportation survey. These goals were achieved, with a 33% increase in overall survey participation and a nearly 66% increase in participation by persons under 25 years if age. There were almost 6,400 responses to the survey and 2,500 issues noted on the interactive map.
- Outreach strategies that helped achieve these

results included email blasts to stakeholders and previous participants, social media, print and broadcast media, frequent website updates, and an online toolkit with resources to help partner agencies spread the word. The toolkit included social media messaging and videos promoting the survey, text messages, a paper version of the survey, and collateral pieces such as flyers. In addition, paid social media advertising was used to target 18-24-year-olds. The online public meeting was streamed from the PennDOT website and on Facebook Live and had over 2,100 participants

In addition to considering public feedback for the 12-Year Program, PennDOT shares the feedback with its metropolitan and rural planning organizations and posts the information online.

PennDOT Connects

Brian Hare presented on PennDOT Connects, a comprehensive stakeholder collaboration framework which PennDOT initiated in 2016. A key element is a meeting at the outset of each potential project that includes DOT staff, regional planning partners and local governments. These meetings occur prior to the development of a scope and cost estimate and include consideration of mobility needs (including bicycle and pedestrian accommodations and transit access), the community's overall vision, and land use plans. Related topics include stormwater management and green infrastructure. The goal is to encourage a holistic approach to project development and leverage transportation resources to benefit economic competitiveness and local quality of life.

MnDOT: Public Involvement Through the Project Development Process: Structuring Engagement to Inform, Consult, Involve, and/or Collaborate

Jeanne Aamodt outlined MnDOT's public engagement policy and guidance, which identify objectives for each phase of project development from long-range planning through scoping, environmental

review, design, construction, and maintenance and operations. The policy and guidance documents are intended to encourage a consistent approach across MnDOT districts and among the staff and consultants conducting public engagement for any project. MnDOT uses the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation as a framework to define the level of participation expected at each stage of a project, for example, to inform, consult, involve, or collaborate. The most intensive public engagement generally occurs during the scoping and environmental phases.

Next, Amber Blanchard described MnDOT's scoping process, which goes beyond NEPA-defined scoping and emphasizes the role of scoping as a stakeholder engagement activity. A scoping plan is created for each project that identifies stakeholders and how they will be engaged.

Example: Public Engagement in Scoping for the I-494 MnPASS Expansion Study

Ms. Blanchard presented an example of the scoping process, the I-494 MnPASS Expansion Study, which had an IAP2 level of engagement of Involve/Collaborate. A scoping survey was conducted
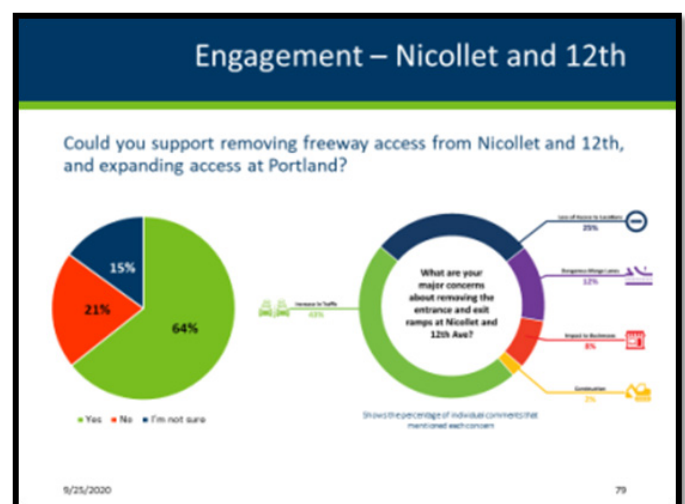
Example of survey results from MnDOT's I-494 scoping process

online as well as in-person in several low-income communities. The survey asked about the most important things for MnDOT to address when redesigning I-494. Over 3,200 completed surveys were collected along with nearly 2,000 comments, which were important in defining the project purpose and need. The comments also heavily influenced the alternatives developed and validated planned access changes.

Example: Public Engagement in Design for Highway 14 – New Ulm to Nicollet 4-lane Expansion

Peter Harff presented a second example, the engagement process for the design of an expansion project on Highway 14, where the IAP2 level of engagement was Consult/Collaborate. Much of the public engagement during the design phase involved one-on-one interaction to resolve dozens of drainage and access issues along the corridor, which runs through farmland. Mr. Harff commented that it's "one thing to have an online public meeting during COVID, but it's another thing to get a 75-year-old farmer on Zoom to walk them through the plans and explain that their drainage is not going to get messed up" by the project.

Example: Public Engagement in Construction for I-35W Downtown to Crosstown – Minneapolis

Erik Baxstrom presented a third example, strategic engagement for the I-35W construction project where the IAP2 level of engagement was Inform. During this four-year effort, MnDOT sought to go beyond traditional construction updates and develop lasting relationships with the affected communities. Pre-COVID, this included informal educational events called "Sips and Scoops," bus and bike tours of the project, STEM education projects, marketing collaborations with local businesses, and celebrations at construction milestones. Some of these events targeted Somali and Latino communities in the project area. With the pandemic, the project team has developed virtual alternatives for some of these

events, such as a session on the history of the original construction of the highway that attracted 300 participants, an online tour of the project using an interactive map, and activity books for students to use during remote learning. A self-guided tour is also in development in which physical information displays will be installed along the project.

MnDOT held an ice cream social as part of its community connections program for I-35W construction

SESSION 2, OCTOBER 6, 2020

Planning and Project Development Frameworks that Shape Public Involvement (Part II)

Session 2 began with presentations by UDOT and NCDOT, completing the discussion of the states' varied approaches to public involvement for planning and project development.

UDOT: Utah Transportation Vision and Solutions Development Process.

Teri Newell and Jordan Backman presented UDOT's new Transportation Vision and the Solutions Development process that has been developed to implement it. The vision, created with guidance from a high-level stakeholder group in response to state legislation, is aimed at achieving a better quality of life in Utah in broad terms that include the goals of good health, better mobility, a strong economy, and connected communities.

The Solutions Development process provides a flexible, context-based, multi-modal framework for developing transportation solutions that can be moved directly into the next phase of project development or fed back into long-range plans for later implementation. Public involvement is incorporated at the end of every study phase, and the input received is fed into the next phase. So far 15 studies have been completed or are underway using the process, varying in scale from an individual interchange to a regional mobility study. For the

regional study, the engagement process included an interactive workshop structured around the four-part Transportation Vision framework of good health, better mobility, a strong economy, and connected communities. UDOT is currently completing a manual, training, and outreach program for the new process.

NCDOT: NC Moves 2050 Engagement Program

Jamille Robbins and Nastasha Earle-Young presented on NCDOT's Statewide Long-Range Multimodal Plan, known as NC Moves 2050. NCDOT sought to reach the broadest possible audience, including the traditionally underserved. Public involvement for the plan was conducted in three phases, with an evaluation after each phase that led to adjustments in the approach.

- Phase 1 included workshops, advisory groups, and a public survey using PublicInput as well as paper surveys. The paper version of the survey was heavily used at the State Fair. (Staff have found that in a crowd, it's easier to hand out clipboards than to use multiple tablets, which could lose power or cell connections.)
- Marketing methods included a promotional toolkit for use by partner organizations, educational videos, traditional media, and paid advertising in rural and predominantly Spanish-speaking areas. Social media ads (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) with geotargeting were used to increase participation of groups with

historically low participation rates; these are now standard tools at NCDOT.

- After evaluating Phase 1, NCDOT created new outreach goals and targets for Phase 2, including Title VI "result checkpoints" in which Title VI participation rates were compared to the state's overall Title VI population. New tools were also added, including:
  - A pilot marketing partnership with a transit agency
  - A new Alternative Futures Survey using MetroQuest, which received over 10,100 responses (with one-third paper).
  - An online interactive map on which users could note transportation issues
  - Self-serve intercept survey boxes placed at locations such as transit stations
  - Partnerships with 15 rural school districts to engage parents of schoolchildren. (NCDOT found this approach effective in rural areas, but more difficult to implement in urban areas.)
  - Tabling at numerous community and industry events, including those oriented towards minority residents, such as Latino and African American festivals
  - Lunchtime visits to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), where staff set up either in the cafeteria or student center for a three-hour period
  - A do-it-yourself meeting kit called Table Topics which included a conversation booklet. This was used by representatives of the Deaf and blind community, local transit advocates, universities, and a group of students in the mountains area. Participants' stories about their personal transportation challenges provided useful insights for the plan.
- In Phase 3, the transit partnership was expanded to 28 transit systems (with laminated flyers for placement on buses and vans). NCDOT visited nearly all of the state's HBCUs as well as conferences of associated fraternities and sororities. They expanded coverage at the State

Fair from one day to all ten days, yielding over 2,000 paper survey responses. A poster contest was conducted for school students, with high schoolers receiving drones as prizes. The survey was translated into eight languages.

- Throughout the program, NCDOT leveraged internal contacts to help arrange targeted outreach. For example, the DOT's career services staff helped connect the team to HBCU contacts; DOT staff belonging to fraternities or sororities helped engage these groups, and both the Civil Rights office and a Hispanic contractors' association helped with Hispanic outreach.
- With the plan nearing adoption, NCDOT has developed an interactive web tool for users to learn more about the plan, including mapped information on the implications of future scenarios for different parts of the state (see link in Resources).

Project Development Case Studies

The second portion of Session 2 was devoted to case studies of public involvement in project development. Prior to the workshop, participants were asked to watch a 15-minute segment of a documentary on the history of I-94 in Minnesota as an orientation to the first case study (see link to Interstate 94: Part One – A History and Its Impact in Resources).

MnDOT: Rethinking I-94

Gloria Jeff and William Goff presented MnDOT's multi-faceted initiative to engage communities in developing improvements along and across a 15-mile segment of I-94 in the Twin Cities. The original construction of the highway in the 1960s destroyed homes and disconnected neighborhoods, resulting in widespread distrust of MnDOT. The goal of Rethinking I-94, which began in 2016, is to develop a people-centered, community-based approach focused on reconnecting neighborhoods, revitalizing

communities, and ensuring that residents have a meaningful voice in transportation decisions. The affected area is comprised of 23 neighborhoods with a highly diverse population, in which nearly one-third of households live in poverty. Ms. Jeff showed a video tour of the corridor that MnDOT created specifically for the peer exchange (see link to Rethinking I-94 Video Tour in Resources).

The project began with a "listening phase" and has now proceeded into a Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). During Phase 1, MnDOT partnered with the Metropolitan Council, the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), to provide funding to community-based organizations to conduct engagement activities. The two agencies also established a Community Leaders Group to serve as a sounding board for engagement methods and draft materials. The group is composed of neighborhood organizations, national organizations, and other interested organizations along the roadway. In Phase 2, the group continued to meet monthly, helping MnDOT refine the Purpose & Need, define critical messages, and develop engagement activities, including determining what tools should be used to reach community residents and businesses in the pandemic environment.

Ms. Jeff and Mr. Goff described MnDOT's efforts to build resilient relationships by "showing up when we're not asking for anything." Staff attend community events of all types, "even small ones such as block parties." They work with District Councils, which are neighborhood organizations in the Twin Cities, to make connections to local event organizers, "get a table, and have some swag to give out."

MnDOT has formed a livability initiative as a parallel effort to the NEPA process to address community issues that are outside of NEPA, including land use planning, economic development, and public health.

Lessons learned from the project include:

- The need for cultural competence to design and implement effective engagement in this corridor, which is home to "dozens of ethnicities"
- Community members are interested in issues beyond the freeway. They value involvement and want accurate, timely information, and want to see their values and visions reflected in designs
- It's important to acknowledge that some elements of outreach are simply information sharing, while others involve gathering ideas
- There is a need to educate the public on the NEPA Tier 1 process and importance of being involved.

MnDOT created a public engagement toolkit for the effort. It describes strategies for gathering and sharing information that are available to this and other MnDOT projects (see link in Resources).
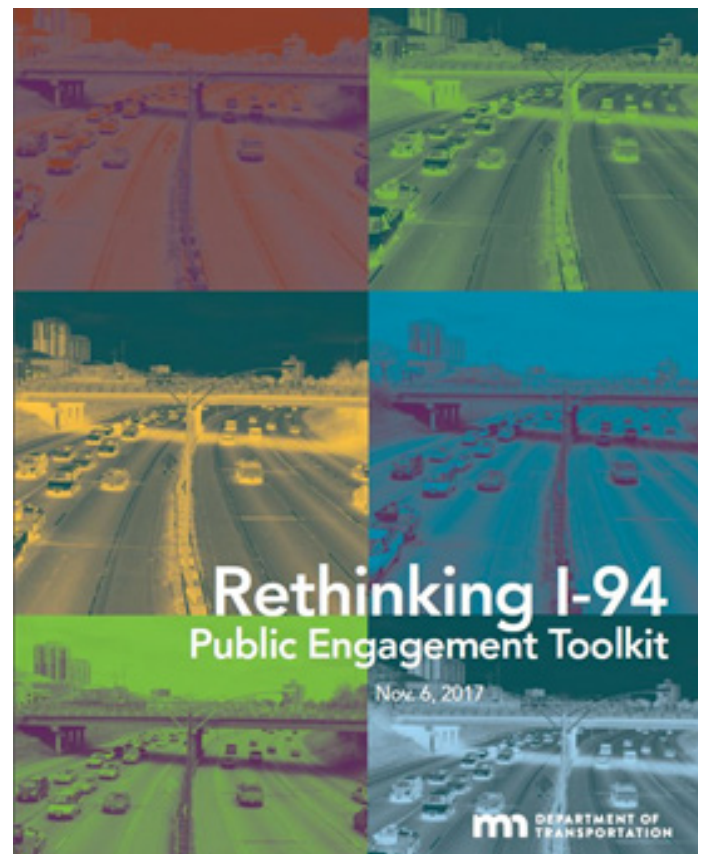
Engagement Toolkit created for the I-94 project

NCDOT: U.S. 21 and Catawba Avenue in Cornelius

Harrison Marshall presented the second case study, an intersection project in an historically African American neighborhood in Cornelius. He described the need to stop and rethink the project when it "caught on fire" as the community learned of the proposed design's adverse impacts to the neighborhood. Originally conceived as a roundabout, due to traffic growth NCDOT had altered the design and expanded the project footprint, resulting in concerns about commercial traffic on narrow neighborhood streets, a loss of community cohesion, and gentrification. In short, residents "did not see themselves included in future plans" which were "all burden, no benefits" for the community.

NCDOT recognized that standard public involvement approaches such as a newsletter and public meeting would be inadequate in this situation. More flexible tools were employed, including small group meetings intended for neighborhood residents only. NCDOT worked with a community organizer through the local church to arrange these meetings.

To address traffic issues with a lower impact solution, NCDOT's consultant came up with new design, a "bowtie" consisting of two roundabouts that would keep the project footprint out of the neighborhood. The community was offered a choice of whether local streets would be connected to the roundabouts; they chose no connection. Lessons learned from this experience included the importance of listening and flexibility. Mr. Marshall also stressed that problem-solving may be needed at any stage of a project – before, during, or after design.

In response to questions, Mr. Marshall described NCDOT's Community Impact Assessment (CIA) process in more detail. While they were initially separate, the CIA and public involvement process are now carried out in tandem. A key product

is a Community Characteristics Report (CCR), typically done by a qualified consultant who works for the project manager or the Community Studies unit. Its purpose to document whether or not community issues are present that may need further investigation as the project proceeds. The CCR includes a community context map, demographic data, and other pertinent information. FHWA's Community Impact Assessment: A Quick Reference for Transportation (2018 update) provides tools and techniques for conducting a CIA (see the Resources section).

In response to community concerns, NCDOT modified the design of proposed improvements at U.S. 21 and Catawba Avenue to a dual roundabout "bowtie" with fewer impacts. Residents were offered a choice of whether local streets would be connected to the roundabouts.

UDOT: Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS

To wrap up Session 2, Joshua Van Jura and Brianna Binnebose presented on the Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS. This project is intended to address safety, reliability, and mobility in a growing resort area. Complex challenges include the extreme congestion experienced during ski season, which affects residents' ability to commute to jobs outside the canyon, and the area's high degree of roadway avalanche danger. The primary alternatives being considered include enhanced bus service (with and without widening) and a gondola.

Public involvement has been a critical component of the project. UDOT began early to build relationships with two broad groups of stakeholders:

- Operational stakeholders, including ski resorts, law enforcement, local government, the USDA Forest Service, and Utah Transit Authority, and
- Public stakeholders, including residents, visitors, conservation groups, recreation groups, and the tourism industry.

In addition to stakeholder and public meetings, engagement methods have included special workshops, field visits, and design charrettes. During the pandemic, UDOT held virtual public meetings for the draft alternatives. A virtual public meeting Participant Guide was prepared (see the Resources section). In addition, UDOT offered a socially distanced in-person meeting option. Ms. Binnebose noted that "people are passionate about the canyon" and 6,500 comments were received on the draft alternatives.

Stakeholders expressed strong interest in seeing short-term actions advance while the EIS is still underway. UDOT developed concepts for high-T intersections and a merge lane to lessen congestion. These projects are moving forward, along with an improved traffic communications program that includes a UDOT Cottonwood Canyon Twitter feed.

Socially distanced in-person meeting for Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS

SESSION 3, OCTOBER 27, 2020

FHWA Update: Public Outreach, Public Hearings, and Environmental Justice

Session 3 began with a presentation by Carolyn Nelson on current topics in public outreach and environmental justice from FHWA's perspective. Building on her initial remarks during Session 1, Carolyn explained the distinction between public meetings in general and formal public hearings conducted during the NEPA process. While most public meetings have become virtual meetings during the pandemic, this is not true of NEPA public hearings, which remain in-person. Carolyn noted that FHWA has been working with states to develop approaches that incorporate virtual meetings, along with in-person public hearings, in the NEPA process. She also described some of the advantages VPI methods have offered for engaging environmental justice communities, when combined with in-person engagement options for those who are not online.

Role of Data in Public Involvement

The next topic on the agenda was the role of data in public involvement. DOT staff use data to identify stakeholders, monitor participation by demographic group or geographic location, and evaluate the reach and effectiveness of overall campaigns or specific tools. This segment began with presentations from MnDOT, followed by breakout groups that focused on measures of success. Prior to this session, participants were asked to identify one way in which their DOT gauges the effectiveness of public involvement and come prepared to discuss it.

MnDOT: 2019 Public Opinion Survey and Statewide Transportation Plan

Public Opinion Survey

Stephanie Fenner described MnDOT's 2019 Omnibus Public Opinion Survey, which is conducted every two years using a combination of telephone and online interviews. In addition to opinions on MnDOT's overall performance, the survey provides insight into how state residents engage with MnDOT, their level of trust in the agency, and their confidence in MnDOT's communications about plans and projects.

- Overall, the survey found that Minnesotans are satisfied with MnDOT's performance of its mission (69%).
- In 2019, MnDOT added a question on trust based on language from Pew Research Center's surveys on trust in government. Most respondents agreed that they "trust MnDOT to do what is right." However, trust levels were higher among Caucasian residents (63%) than African American residents (44%) or Hispanic residents (50%).
- Approximately two-thirds of the respondents agreed that MnDOT "considers customer concerns and needs when developing transportation plans" (67%).
- Most have confidence in MnDOT "communicating accurate information to citizens about their transportation plans and projects" (64%).
- Approximately one in four respondents had

engaged with MnDOT in the last year, with the primary method being visiting a project website or watching a video (47%). Among the secondary methods were using social media (17%), using 511 (14%), contacting a MnDOT employee by phone, email, or through an online form (13%), or attending a public gathering, event, or open house (12%).

Joint Statewide Transportation Plan Update

Next, Joshua Pearson presented on MnDOT's efforts to track the effectiveness of public engagement in the 2017 Joint Statewide Transportation Plan Update, which included the Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan and 20-Year State Highway Investment Plan.

- MnDOT set two high-level goals for the process: using (and testing) new and innovative methods and reaching more and different populations. This included piloting new tools and techniques to reach communities of color, women, people with disabilities and those with Limited English Proficiency. MnDOT also prepared an accessibility plan for the process.
- In addition to traditional outreach, staff conducted outreach at community events throughout the state, in workplaces, and using paper and online surveys. Online surveys were promoted with targeted Facebook ads. To track participation, MnDOT asked for demographic information on race/ethnicity, age, gender, and zip code. The demographic questions were optional and open-ended, enabling people to self-identify using their own words. About half of the participants provided at least one piece of demographic data.
- Through these methods, MnDOT achieved participation closely proportional to the state's population across age, race, and gender. Staff also tracked which activities were reaching targeted groups on a biweekly basis, allowing for adjustment of the strategies. Statewide,

community events helped most to boost non-white participation, while both community events and social media boosted female participation. Targeted Facebook ads were also effective in increasing participation from the targeted groups.

- Overall, the most cost-effective outreach in terms of responses per dollar was conducted at the State Fair, at $1.40 per interaction, compared to $192 per participant at stakeholder forums. Facebook ads cost an average of $14 per participant. However, to place these figures in context, Mr. Pearson cautioned that the level of interaction at the State Fair or similar events was more limited than that at stakeholder forums, typically involving just one question and in some cases, a short discussion (generally under two minutes).

Breakout groups: DOT Approaches to Using Data and Measuring Success in Public Involvement

The discussion on the role of data continued in breakout groups. Each group addressed the following three questions:

1. How does your state evaluate or measure success in public involvement?
   - Quantitative vs. qualitative measures
   - How (and to whom) are measures reported?
2. How have you used data to plan or make adjustments to public involvement programs?
3. How should we address the "intangibles"?
   - Quality of input received
   - Is public input reflected in decision-making?

Measuring Success

The groups identified a variety of methods and indicators being used to measure the success of public involvement:

- Surveys, both during and after events
- Numbers of comments received

- Website analytics
- Demographic data to understand who is being engaged
- Development of a project dashboard that includes public involvement metrics
- In both groups, there was some discussion of how public involvement data is reported or shared within the DOT. One participant spoke of having good measures at the project level, but no central effort to evaluate public involvement at the statewide level. Another participant identified a problem of data being kept in silos, with disconnects between communications and public involvement units as well as between engineering and planning staff.
- Some states felt they were behind in this area and were just now trying to develop a process for evaluating their public involvement.

Using Data to Plan or Adjust Public Involvement Programs

Data is also used to help plan or fine-tune public involvement approaches. Participants made the following points:

- Data is essential for "knowing your community" – data gathering is part of the necessary up-front work for a successful public involvement program.
- Tracking website data is useful to see what information people are looking at
- The high levels of participation in virtual meetings demonstrates success and shows that these should be used in the future.

Intangible Aspects

Participants offered the following observations about the intangible aspects of public involvement, including whether input is reflected in decision-making:

- One group discussed the importance of showing the public how prior input was addressed, for example when a project is restarted after prior

study. A suggested approach was to provide an FAQ on the website that explains the prior work and how prior input was used.
- Suggested questions to ask in an assessment include "Have we listened to the community and have we met their needs?"
- A related point is whether a project moves forward and gets constructed, and if so, whether it gets used in the way it was intended. An example is a project with active transportation features: were they actually used?

At the conclusion of the breakout groups, Eileen Barron of UDOT described a multi-state pilot program underway in North Carolina, Georgia, Utah, Arizona, and Texas to test a systematic approach to measuring the effectiveness of public involvement. The approach was developed through an NCHRP research project described in NCHRP Research Report 905, "Measuring the Effectiveness of Public Involvement in Transportation Planning and Project Development" (see the Resources section). The pilot test will be followed by a webinar and training on the tool.

"Lightning Round" Presentations from Invited States

Representatives of the invited states were offered the opportunity to participate in a "lightning round" of short presentations on their DOTs' recent experiences in public involvement. Four states participated in the lighting round: Colorado, Georgia, Montana, and Ohio.

Colorado DOT: I-270 Environmental Assessment

Presley Fowler presented on the virtual engagement that CDOT conducted for the I-270 Environmental Assessment. This project addresses aging infrastructure on a major freight corridor with a sizable lower income population. Since the project kicked off during the pandemic, the engagement has been virtual.

- Virtual stakeholder meetings were held over Zoom or Google Hangouts with over 20 agencies and organizations, including local school districts and community groups. The stakeholders agreed to serve as community ambassadors and help spread the word to those they represent.

- CDOT held a virtual public event using a simulated meeting room with display boards and an introductory video. An optional sign-in area was available with optional demographic questions. The virtual room was open on CDOT's website for two weeks. Close to 500 people visited the room and 127 submitted comments through the room's portal.

- Publicity for the virtual public event included social media, a mailing of approximately 7,000 postcards in Spanish and English, and media outreach, including direct calls to news stations to make sure they saw the information about the event.

- A key finding was the much broader age range of participants than CDOT usually sees at in-person events, ranging from 18-65, with 43% between 25 and 44 years of age.

- CDOT conducted an after-action review to see how they might do better next time and if there were any groups they had missed.

Georgia DOT: SR 400 Express Lanes Project

Katina Lear presented on Georgia DOT's virtual engagement for the SR 400 Express Lanes project, one of several projects that had to be quickly transitioned to virtual methods in the pandemic.

- GDOT used two interrelated tools, ESRI ArcGIS Hub and a plug-in virtual room similar to that used at CDOT. The virtual room provided an immersive experience with a welcome video and clickable displays, including virtual "handouts" available on a table.

- Ms. Lear mentioned that it was important to GDOT that all items created in their virtual environment be owned and hosted in-house

and could be created by GDOT staff with the assistance of consulting teams. Furthermore, it was important that anything opening in the virtual room stayed within the room rather than opening as separate windows on the user's desktop or taking them out to completely separate webpages.

- Suggestions were provided on how people could spend their time in the virtual room, for instance if they had 10 minutes vs. an hour to spend.

- In addition to the on-demand virtual room, GDOT scheduled a live virtual information meeting. There were over 7500 visitors to the virtual information meeting and virtual room combined.

- GDOT also held an in-person public hearing in an outdoor setting, using an open house format.

- GDOT now has an in-house virtual room template that staff can customize for any meeting. They are finding it is a good way to tell the story and "make the information more digestible to the public."
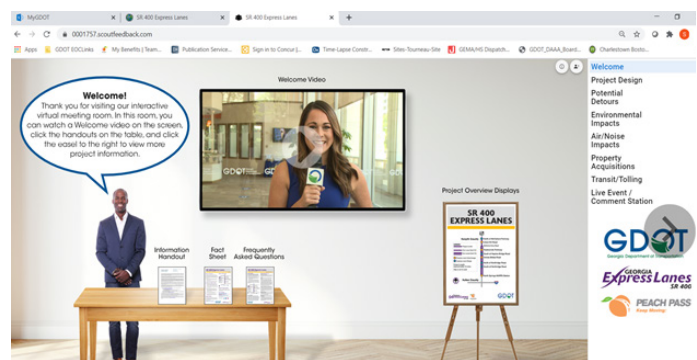
GDOT quickly transitioned to using a virtual open house platform during the pandemic

An in-person public hearing open house was also offered in an outdoor setting

Montana DOT: US 191 Corridor Study

Vicki Crnich presented on the public involvement conducted for MDT's US 191 Corridor Study. The study is being conducted using a Planning-Environmental Linkage (PEL) process with the objective of capturing information that can be used later in the environmental phase.

- Pre-COVID, MDT conducted open houses on each end of the corridor that were very well attended, as well as using a story map to gather comments.
- For the next round, with the need to pivot to VPI, they held a virtual meeting. Due to concerns about the lack of reliable internet service in the study area, MDT conducted a large-scale mailing with an offer to send hard copy materials on request, so that people could call in from a phone and follow along.

Ohio DOT: Virtual Public Meetings - Lessons Learned

Jacque Annarino presented on lessons learned from doing virtual public meetings during the pandemic. Her recommendations included:

- Research platforms for hosting virtual public meetings and choose something that makes it easy for the public to participate and doesn't create barriers to participation, such as requiring downloading an app, registration, or a computer or smartphone to participate. Keep in mind that the platform should also provide the ability to manage audience participation.
- Do not advertise an end time for virtual public meetings or you will be required to continue the livestream until the advertised end time and it's very difficult to fill "dead air."
- Have a set of FAQs ready to fill "dead air" in case attendees do not ask questions.
- Advertise early to accommodate any special needs, such as translation or requests for mailings of printed material. The option of printed material was important since internet

service is limited in Ohio's Appalachian region.
- Practice the meeting multiple times beforehand, using the same platform and setup that will be used at the actual meeting. Discuss exactly how audience comments will be handled, and have some staff attend the practice from the public perspective to check that everything works properly.
- Ms. Annarino recommends holding the last practice no more than a week prior to the event so that it's fresh in people's minds.

Emerging Methods in Public Involvement

The remainder of the third session was devoted to emerging approaches and trends, including the human-centered design framework and trends in visualization.

Launching Utah's Road Usage Charge Program: a Human-Centered Design Approach

Tiffany Pocock and Eileen Barron presented on UDOT's use of a user experience/human-centered design approach to guide the development of Utah's Road Usage Charge (RUC) Program. The program offers owners of electric and hybrid vehicles the option of paying their vehicle registration based on miles driven, rather than a flat fee, with the amount capped at the level of the flat fee. UDOT used a human-centered design approach to develop the program characteristics and choose communication tools.

The human-centered design process is making inroads into engagement efforts at several transportation agencies, with its focus on listening to customers/facility users to better understand their experience. As practiced at UDOT, human-centered design is an iterative process with four repeating steps: learn, define, design, and test. For the RUC program, initial learning included a peer exchange with other agencies in the RUC West organization and a baseline survey to gauge public awareness

and attitudes towards the RUC concept. The survey showed that 73% agreed that RUC is fair, but 61% said they would be uncomfortable using a device that transmits information about the number of miles driven. An Advisory Committee served as a study group to help understand options and define program characteristics, such as the decision to make enrollment optional.

As the program went into effect, UDOT monitored third-party customer service data and identified sticking points that affected user experience, such as a time-consuming activation process. UDOT created "explainer videos" to help walk users through the process with an action sequence: "Enroll, install, drive." Their goal is to improve the user experience at each touch point through continued research.

Trends in Visualization

The final topic of Session 3 was a look at recent trends in the use of visualization for public involvement. This included presentations by NCDOT and FHWA, followed by participant polls.

NCDOT's Use of Visualization for Public Involvement

Jamille Robbins gave a presentation on visualization for public involvement at NCDOT. Benefits have included the ability to explain projects to anyone regardless of prior knowledge, the ease of sharing visualizations through a variety of media channels, and enhanced engagement and dialogue at in-person events. Visualization products at NCDOT range from static renderings and conceptual images to photo simulations, animations, and video products.

- An economical approach has been to render a design concept and blend it into a photo of existing conditions (which do not have to be modeled).
- Video/visualization hybrids are used to integrate a visualization into live footage. A sample video showed the use of visualization to explain the concept of on-ramp signals (i.e., ramp metering).
- NCDOT also uses KMZ files (associated with Google Earth) to create pre-defined views that help users navigate through a project area. Labels, such as roadway names, are often added to visualizations to tell people what they're seeing.

NCDOT's visualization of the proposed Capital Boulevard project in Raleigh showcased proposed artwork on the Wade Avenue bridge

- NCDOT began using virtual reality (VR) visualizations about 6-7 years ago. These allow staff to show people how a project would look from different vantage points, such as street level, tree height, or drone height. An example is the use of panoramic images for the Complete 540 project (Triangle Expressway Southeast Extension). The public could access these visualizations online or at a public meeting. NCDOT produced business cards with a QR code for the VR site that meeting attendees could distribute to friends and neighbors. Similarly, for the I-440 Walnut to Wade Improvement Project, users could view visualizations at different project locations using a smartphone (with or without VR goggles) or a computer. (NCDOT has since moved from using plastic goggles to a lens clip that attaches to the user's smartphone.)

In choosing what type of visualization to use, the project stage is a key factor. Typically, for a preliminary outreach effort NCDOT uses static renderings, photo simulations and video, with full-blown 3D models used at a later stage. Mr. Robbins anticipates that the use of OpenRoads Design software will make the visualization process quicker and easier, promoting more widespread use in the future.

FHWA's Visualization Initiatives

Jim Talley of FHWA's Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division (EFLHD) presented on the Division's visualization initiatives. Visualization is used to quickly and easily explain complex designs to a varied audience and provide attention to aesthetics in environmental documents, at public meetings, for design checks and in research/simulation.

- Mr. Talley noted that even complex forms of visualization are becoming more affordable and taking less time than in the past, giving him the ability to create a 3D rendered environment in an hour rather than in days.
- While project budgets and timeframes are still important considerations in determining the level of effort for a visualization, it is "getting easier to generate something we can use, even if it's not the Cadillac version."
- Red flags that a visualization may be needed include high project cost or proximity to sensitive habitats such as cultural resources.
- In choosing a visualization method, it is important to get to know the audience: their background, their concerns, what they want to see, and whether are there any special needs.

While the use of VR goggles is on hold during the pandemic, Mr. Talley observed that it is harder for people to use VR on their own through a website than at a meeting where someone is on hand to explain it. Narrated instructions on a website could help overcome this barrier, however.

Jim is in the process of starting a workgroup for public agency visualization professionals and practitioners through EDC. He invites those interested to contact him at James.Talley@dot.gov.

Polls on Visualization

WSP conducted two polls on states' uses of visualization using the PollEverywhere tool. The first poll was multiple choice and asked participants how their DOT uses visualization.

- Top answers included using visualization to "help the public understand existing conditions or trends" and "help the public understand and compare alternatives."
- Other common uses included to "help the public understand future conditions" or "illustrate a conceptual solution to a problem under study."
- Less common was to "help inform feedback on a preferred alternative."

The second poll asked participants what types of visualizations their DOT had used in public involvement.

- Top responses included "illustration/adding color to 2D plans, animation or video," "photosimulations," and "3D models/renderings."
- Less common was the use of virtual reality.

Wrap-up and Next Steps

Session 3 concluded with a discussion of next steps, including plans for a final workshop to be conducted once in-person meetings can resume. Ms. Savage indicated that this would likely be a half-day or full-day session in conjunction with an AASHTO meeting. Rather than panel presentations, the format would be interactive.

Participants were asked to suggest topics they would like to see addressed in the final workshop. An open-ended poll yielded the following ideas:

- **After action reviews of project public information plans. What worked, what didn't, what can we change next time**
- **Equity considerations in outreach**
- **Measuring success in public involvement**
- Post survey project evaluations and other evaluations
- Demographic questions and their use
- Refining virtual outreach tools
- How to determine budget to improve equity

Participants had the option to "upvote" or "downvote" others' suggestions. The first three ideas (bolded above) received the most upvotes.

To conclude the session, participants were asked to identify takeaways for practice from the peer exchange. An open-ended poll question asked, "What is something you've learned from these sessions that you'd like to apply in your state?" Responses included:

- Virtual meeting rooms
- Creating an event on Facebook as an extra tool to advertise virtual public meetings
- More use of virtual reality or 3D renderings in public involvement
- Incorporating more visuals and graphics
- Dashboard type web tools that reflect a comprehensive and ongoing communication effort with the general public to improve understanding
- Getting public feedback about the effectiveness of our outreach efforts
- Hearing about new public involvement techniques - sometimes we get stuck on just a couple
- The public hearing discussion
- Planning processes integrated with public involvement

KEY THEMES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Key themes and issues that emerged from the peer exchange sessions are noted here along with lessons learned and notable practices.

Common Themes and Issues

- Across the board, states reported large increases in the number of people participating in meetings with the shift to online public meetings during the pandemic. Several states found that the virtual format attracted a broader age range of participants, including persons under 25 years of age.
- The states differed widely in their previous use of virtual methods. Some were already experienced with online meetings, while others faced a steep learning curve. The pandemic prompted states to experiment, and some took the opportunity to invest in a virtual platform for the first time.
- Short, engaging project videos are being widely used to supplement other forms of VPI and this trend has increased during the pandemic.
- All participants expect the use of VPI tools to continue beyond the pandemic. Factors cited include cost savings, convenience for both staff and participants, increased levels of participation, and public expectations: now having experienced the virtual option, the public has come to expect it.
- Participants expressed a need for more guidance on the appropriate use of VPI tools once in-person methods resume.

- Equitable inclusion in VPI is viewed as a significant challenge. There is strong interest in learning more about best practices for reaching underserved populations, both in the pandemic environment and generally.
- Broadband availability remains a major barrier to the use of VPI, particularly in rural areas.
- Several DOTs have incorporated livability or quality of life considerations into their planning and project development in a central way. Examples include PennDOT Connects, Utah's Solutions Development process, and MnDOT's Rethinking I-94, in which a livability initiative was established parallel to the NEPA process. In each of these examples, states explicitly recognized that solutions to community issues may go beyond the traditional boundaries of a transportation project, and that understanding this broader perspective requires a process for listening to community representatives early on.
- In a longer plan or project development process, a phased approach to public involvement can allow for systematic testing, evaluation, and adjustment of the techniques used.
- DOTs expressed interest in improving their approaches to evaluating public involvement outcomes, as well as improved processes for sharing public involvement metrics internally.
- Finding the resources for public involvement is a continuing challenge for some DOTs.

Lessons Learned on Inclusive Engagement During COVID-19

Throughout the three sessions, peer exchange participants identified a variety of methods for engaging hard-to-reach communities during the pandemic, including:

- Telephone hotlines
- Flyers distributed at grocery stores, food banks, and gas stations
- Digital message boards
- Increased reliance on community leaders and community-based organizations to serve as intermediaries
- Extensive use of print mailers to provide information on a project and on public involvement opportunities. Several DOTs used large-scale mailings to encourage residents without reliable broadband to call into a virtual meeting from a landline, request print materials, or call a hotline or staff member with their questions and comments.

While not specific to COVID-19, several speakers stressed that a key strategy for engaging low-income or minority residents is taking the time to build long-term relationships. This includes actively participating in community events whether or not a project is underway.

Tips for Effective Use of VPI Tools

- Participants emphasized the importance of practicing all elements of a virtual meeting ahead of time, including testing how the meeting will appear to the public.
- Several states mentioned the benefits of creating an in-house template for on-demand meetings, allowing for quick customization, a reduced staff learning curve, and a consistent look across projects.

Notable Practices

Participants described several notable practices during the peer exchange:

- The use of virtual meeting rooms with simulated environments that replicate the look of a traditional open house with virtual display boards, handouts, comment boxes, etc.
- Crowdsourcing of transportation issues and concerns on a statewide level for statewide plans or programs
- Multi-lingual social gatherings to talk informally about a project (pre-COVID)
- The use of "partner toolkits" with sample messaging and materials to encourage partner organizations to help spread the word about a public involvement opportunity
- Establishing a Community Leaders Group to serve as a sounding board for an engagement program; members can be asked to serve as project ambassadors, advise on public participation plans, or review draft communications materials
- Leveraging internal DOT contacts to make connections with groups already known to the DOT or its employees (for example, asking career services staff in Human Resources to help connect the team to HBCU contacts)

Resources Shared

FHWA

Virtual Public Involvement resources including fact sheets, videos, and recorded webinars: https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/public_involvement/vpi/

Community Impact Assessment: A Quick Reference for Transportation (2018 update): https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/livability/cia/index.cfm

PennDOT

PennDOT Public Participation Plan: https://www.penndot.gov/ProjectAndPrograms/Planning/Pages/Public-Participation-Plan.aspx

PennDOT Twelve-Year Program public involvement portal, "Talk PA Transportation": https://www.talkpatransportation.com/

PennDOT Connects: https://www.penndot.gov/ProjectAndPrograms/Planning/Pages/PennDOT-Connects.aspx

MnDOT

MnDOT Public Engagement Policy: http://www.dot.state.mn.us/policy/operations/oe008.html

MnDOT Public Engagement Guidance: http://www.dot.state.mn.us/publicengagement/

MnDOT I-35W Downtown to Crosstown STEM Activities and Virtual Project Tour: https://stem.35wat94.com/

MnDOT Interstate 94: Part One – A History and its Impact: http://www.dot.state.mn.us/I-94minneapolis-stpaul/background.html

MnDOT Rethinking I-94 Video Tour: http://www.dot.state.mn.us/I-94minneapolis-stpaul/educational.html

MnDOT Rethinking I-94 Public Engagement Toolkit: https://www.dot.state.mn.us/I-94minneapolis-stpaul/toolkit.html

UDOT

Utah's Transportation Vision: https://uvision.utah.gov/

Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS – Virtual Public Meeting Participant Guide: https://www.utah.gov/pmn/files/608793.pdf

NCDOT

NC Moves 2050 Web Tool: https://www.ncdot.gov/initiatives-policies/Transportation/nc-2050-plan/ncmoves2050/Pages/default.aspx

General

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation: https://www.iap2.org/page/pillars

NCHRP Research Report 905, Measuring the Effectiveness of Public Involvement in Transportation Planning and Project Development: http://www.trb.org/Main/Blurbs/179069.aspx

2020 Public Involvement Peer Exchange

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

AASHTO
Center for
Environmental
Excellence

The AASHTO Center for Environmental Excellence is conducting a Public Involvement Peer Exchange for selected state DOTs. Three virtual half-day workshops on September 29, October 6, and October 27, 2020 will be followed by a potential in-person session in 2021. Four lead states will provide examples of practice and lessons learned: Minnesota, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Utah. An additional nine states have been invited to participate: Colorado, Georgia, Louisiana, Montana, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Washington State. In addition to presentations, the sessions will include roundtable discussions, polls, and breakout groups. Participants will have a brief homework assignment prior to each session.

SESSION 1	Tuesday, September 29, 1:00 - 5:00 EST
1:00 to 1:30	**Welcome and Introductions** Melissa Savage, AASHTO; Danielle Blackshear, FHWA ▪ AASHTO welcome, background and goals ▪ Participant introductions ▪ FHWA perspective ▪ Logistics/housekeeping
1:30 to 2:20	**Where are we today with public involvement?** Pam Lebeaux, WSP; Carolyn Nelson, FHWA ▪ Breakout groups: changes brought about by social distancing ▪ Use of virtual public involvement tools to supplement public hearings
2:20 to 2:35	**Break**
	Planning and project development frameworks that shape public involvement
2:35 to 3:35	**PennDOT Connects, the Twelve Year Program, and PennDOT's Public Participation Plan** Brian Hare, Mark Tobin, Jessica Clark
3:35 to 3:45	**Break**
3:45 to 4:45	**MnDOT: Public involvement through the project development process:** Structuring engagement to inform, consult, involve, and/or collaborate Jeanne Aamodt, Peter Harff, Amber Blanchard
4:45 to 5:00	**Wrap-up** ▪ Look ahead to Session 2

SESSION 2	Tuesday, October 6, 1:00 - 5:00 EST
1:00 to 1:10	**Welcome and Introduction to Session 2** Melissa Savage, AASHTO ▪ Brief recap of Session 1 ▪ Housekeeping reminders
	Planning and project development frameworks that shape public involvement
1:10 to 2:00	**UDOT: Utah Transportation Vision and Solutions Development process** Teri Newell, Jordan Backman
2:00 to 2:30	**NCDOT: NC Moves 2050 engagement program** Jamille Robbins, Nastasha Earle-Young
2:30 to 2:35	**Observations across the states on public involvement frameworks** Pam Lebeaux, WSP: Danielle Blackshear, FHWA
2:35 to 2:45	**Break**

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT   Where are we today?

SESSION 2	Cont.
	Project development case studies
2:45 to 3:45	**MnDOT: Rethinking I-94:** Overview, video tour of corridor, discussion Gloria Jeff, William Goff
3:45 to 3:50	**Break**
3:50 to 4:20	**NCDOT: Catawba Avenue in Cornelius:** Community impact assessment/mitigation efforts in the historically African American neighborhood of Smithville Harrison Marshall
4:20 to 4:50	**UDOT: Little Cottonwood Canyon EIS:** Addressing conflicting interests in a growing resort community Joshua Van Jura, Brianna Binnebose
4:50 to 5:00	**Wrap-up** ▪ Look ahead to Session 3

SESSION 3	Tuesday, October 27, 1:00 - 5:00 EST
1:00 to 1:10	**Welcome and Introduction to Session 2** Melissa Savage, AASHTO ▪ Brief recap of Session 2 ▪ Housekeeping reminders
1:10 to 1:30	**FHWA Update** Carolyn Nelson, FHWA; Virginia DOT representative ▪ Public involvement and environmental justice ▪ Public outreach and public hearings
	Role of data in public involvement: planning, monitoring, and measuring effectiveness
1:30 to 2:00	**MnDOT: Public involvement measures of effectiveness** Stephanie Fenner, Joshua Pearson
2:00 to 2:30	**Breakout Groups:** Benefits and limitations of a data-driven approach to public involvement
2:30 to 2:40	**Break**
	New paradigms and emerging techniques in public involvement
2:40 to 3:10	**Lightning round presentations from participating states** Colorado, Georgia, Montana, and Ohio
3:10 to 3:40	**Applying a user experience/human-centered design framework to UDOT's Road User Charge Program.** Eileen Barron, Tiffany Pocock
3:40 to 3:45	**Break**
	Trends in visualization
3:45 to 4:10	**Varied uses of visualization for NCDOT's public involvement** David Hinnant and Jamille Robbins
4:10 to 4:15	**Interactive Poll**
4:15 to 4:30	**FHWA's visualization initiatives** Jim Talley, FHWA
4:30 to 5:00	**Wrap-up and Next Steps** ▪ Looking ahead to 2021 workshop ▪ Action item exercise

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT   Where are we today?

Participants

Jeanne Aamodt, MnDOT
Jay Aguilar, UDOT
Jacqueline Annarino, Ohio DOT
Nicole Auker, PennDOT
Jordan Backman, UDOT
Eileen Barron, UDOT
Erik Baxstrom, MnDOT
Brianna Binnebose, UDOT
Amber Blanchard, MnDOT
Tara Callahan-Henry, PennDOT
Jessica Clark, PennDOT
Vicki Crnich, MDT
Nastasha Earle-Young, NCDOT
Stephanie Fenner, MnDOT
Philip Forst, FHWA
Presley Fowler, CDOT
William Goff, MnDOT
Brian Hare, PennDOT
Peter Harff, MnDOT
Scott Higley, GDOT
Tim Hill, Ohio DOT
David Hinnant, NCDOT
Jan Huzvar, PennDOT
Gloria Jeff, MnDOT
Jessica Kalinoski, PennDOT
Dan Keane, PennDOT
Katina Lear, GDOT
Lauren Loebsack, WSDOT
Harrison Marshall, NCDOT
Teri Newell, UDOT
Ryan Overton, WSDOT
Joshua Pearson, MnDOT

Terrence Pinder, PennDOT
Tiffany Pocock, UDOT
Renee Raduenz, MnDOT
Eric Rasband, UDOT
Roberta Retzlaff, FHWA
Jamille Robbins, NCDOT
Philip Schaffner, MnDOT
Erica Schneider, Ohio DOT
David Scott, FHWA
Jyll Smith, Oregon DOT
James Spatz, PennDOT
Michael Taluto, PennDOT
Mark Tobin, PennDOT
Nissa Tupper, MnDOT
Joshua Van Jura, UDOT
Anna Varney, FHWA
Robert Washington, FHWA
Lynn Zanto, MnDOT

Project Team

FHWA

Carolyn Nelson, carolyn.nelson@dot.gov
Danielle Blackshear, danielle.blackshear@dot.gov
James Talley, james.talley@dot.gov

AASHTO

Melissa Savage, msavage@aashto.org
Burgoyne-Allen, Phillip, pballen@aashto.org
Peevy, Phillip, ppeevy@aashto.org
Jennifer Billo, jbillo@aashto.org

Consultant Support

Pam Lebeaux, WSP, pam.lebeaux@wsp.com
Sarah Parkins, WSP, sarah.parkins@wsp.com