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SUBJECT:
May 2021 Update to Publication 295 – Project Level Public Involvement Handbook

INFORMATION AND SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:

This revised Publication 295 - Project Level Public Involvement Handbook supersedes all previous versions of this Publication. The Project Level Public Involvement Handbook is intended to be a guide for department personnel, consultants assisting PennDOT, and personnel from other administrative jurisdictions - such as local project sponsors - engaged in project development.

The approach and techniques described in the Project Level Public Involvement Handbook provide the means to foster meaningful public involvement, while minimizing controversies that stop or delay projects, increase project costs and erode public trust.

CANCEL AND DESTROY THE FOLLOWING:

This handbook supersedes the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation Publication 295 - Project Level Public Involvement Handbook dated November 2011.

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Inform

Involve

PROJECT LEVEL PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT HANDBOOK

Engage

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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I. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT REQUIREMENTS AND HEARING PROCEDURES

Chapter I of this handbook describes the requirements for conducting public involvement in the development of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation's (PennDOT's) projects, as required pursuant to NEPA, 23 CFR 771.111(h), 40 CFR 1500-1508, and 23 USC 139. PennDOT's Public Involvement/Public Hearing Procedures are contained in *Appendix B*, were approved by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and are published in the Pennsylvania Bulletin.

Public involvement should be an **open and proactive process**, initiated early in project development. The goal of a public outreach process is to engage project stakeholders in meaningful ways to gain insight and input regarding what is important to the community. The use of this information should shape the transportation solutions under consideration. The public involvement process should be cooperative and collaborative and continue throughout project development. FHWA provides information, references, and best practices on its website (http://www.fhwa.dot.gov).

A. Preliminary Engineering (PE)/National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Process

During preliminary engineering and environmental decision-making (NEPA process), it is imperative to identify the community, natural and cultural environmental features in your project area, determine the community's needs, and develop ways to best fit the project into the surrounding environment, including the community. The public involvement process should be an active means of accomplishing these goals, particularly for complex projects. Public involvement should be **commensurate** with the project type, size, and issues of public concern.

In planning, prior to a project being added to a regional transportation improvement program (TIP), a PennDOT district with the associated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) or rural planning organization (RPO) collaborates with local governments to discuss the project, understand local issues, and collect local input. This PennDOT Connects process was developed to help provide local context and insight for activities that are undertaken in preliminary engineering (PE). (See *Design Manual 1A, Publication 10A*, for more information on the **PennDOT Connects Process**.) Knowledge of the activities and attitudes expressed in planning help the project team to focus the work to be done in the preliminary engineering and NEPA phase - work which includes understanding and addressing county, municipal and public concerns. In some instances, there may be **commitments** that PennDOT made that should be carried through to project development. There are likely **project considerations** that were documented. This information is entered into the PennDOT Connects system. The project manager and project team should review these materials and documentation at the onset of project development for consideration as the project is advanced.

Public involvement activities for project development should **occur as frequently as necessary** and be **well-documented**. Remember that local government officials can change through elections and staff turnover, and there can be changes in the sentiments and interests of local government from planning to the PE phase.

1. **NEPA PROCESS**

   Projects that involve federal actions, including projects that receive federal-aid funding and/or require federal actions (approval/permits) in any project phase, must comply with the **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)** and its associated implementing regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508). PennDOT's NEPA procedures are outlined in *Design Manual 1B* (Publication 10B). NEPA applies to all federal agencies and the many activities they undertake, regulate, or fund that could affect the environment. It requires federal agencies to disclose and consider the environmental consequences of their proposed undertakings before deciding a course of action. The FHWA/Federal Transit Administration (FTA)/ Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) implementing regulations (23 CFR 771) prescribe requirements for the NEPA process for transportation projects. The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations at 23 CFR 1800-1808 establish three classes of action (Figure 1), which prescribe documentation requirements for the NEPA process:

   ‣ Categorical exclusions (CEs)
   ‣ Environmental assessments (EAs)
   ‣ Environmental impact statements (EISs)

Figure 1: NEPA Classes of Action
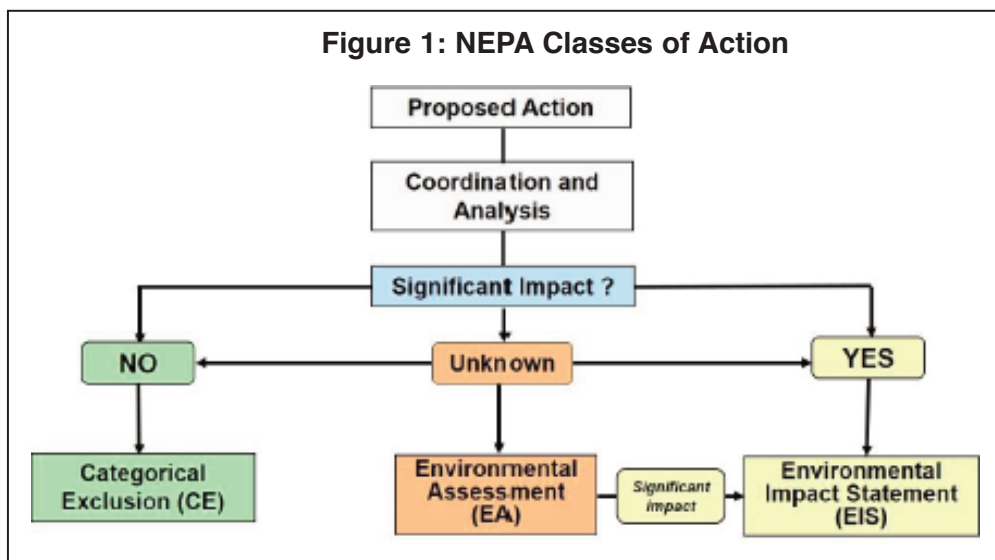
   Note that a project may also be **downscoped** from an EA to CE if there is high confidence that impacts are not significant. If this occurs, be cognizant to **manage public expectations** on the NEPA process and public involvement opportunities. With an EA, the public expects to be able to review the document and possibly provide testimony at a hearing. The same is not the case for a CE.

   Subsequent sections of this document discuss the public involvement requirements for each NEPA class of action.

   It is FHWA's policy to actively involve the public in a NEPA process that is **open, cooperative, collaborative, and continuing**. PennDOT's public involvement and hearing procedures support those goals.

If the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is the federal lead on a project, note that their NEPA public involvement procedures are different than FHWA's so coordinate with USACE early to ensure your public involvement activities meet their expectations.

For projects without a federal action (including funding), documentation is in the form of **environmental documentation (ED)** (for no significant impacts) or an **environmental evaluation Report (EER)** (for unknown or significant impacts) to comply with Section 2002(b) of the Administrative Code of 1929 (71 P.S. §512(b)). See Chapter 6 of *Design Manual 1B* (Publication 10B) for specific requirements related to the circulation of those documents. Keep in mind that often funding can change, and a federal agency may play a role in a project. This possibility on some projects may warrant consideration of what public involvement activities to partake, as well as their timing.

> **PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT LINKAGES (PEL) STUDIES**
>
> If a PEL study is being conducted, plan ahead and conduct public involvement in such a way that the purpose and need and alternative can be adopted into the NEPA process. EISs require that the public have the opportunity to be involved in defining purpose and need and the range of alternatives. (See Design Manual 1A (Publication 10A).)

Major preliminary engineering efforts, especially those requiring an EIS, necessitate the development of extensive public involvement programs. However, PennDOT also benefits from public participation for less complex projects.

2. **COORDINATION WITH LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS AND OTHER AGENCIES**

Identify stakeholders and applicable agencies at the onset of a project, through the scoping process, and throughout project development. This applies to all NEPA classes of action. Stakeholders is a term for a broad array of parties that may be interested in a project. They can include the following:

▸ Individual members of the public or special interest groups
  • Adjacent or potentially directly impacted property owners/residents
  • General area property owners/residents
  • General area business owners (who may rent, not own properties)
  • Commuters through and within project area
  • Citizens with specific interests, such as an environmental resource type

▸ Non-governmental organization (NGOs)
  • Organized groups
  • Informal groups

▸ Local governments (continuation of PennDOT Connects)

▸ Special populations and user groups
  • Minority and low-income populations (See Table 1)
  • Limited English proficiency (LEP) populations
  • Alternative transportation users (Old order Amish)

- Individuals with disabilities
- Public and private providers and users of services
    - School buses
    - Head Start transportation programs
    - Transportation for the elderly
    - Transportation for persons with disabilities
    - Other non-fixed route or unscheduled transportation services

▸ Providers and users of public transportation

▸ Freight representatives

▸ Users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities

▸ State Police, local law enforcement, fire departments, and EMS providers

▸ School districts

▸ Local, state and federal agencies with jurisdiction by law, special expertise or an interest in the project (see Design Manual 1B (Publication 10B) for guidance)

▸ Federally Recognized Native American Tribes (consult with Cultural Resource Professional (CRP) under NEPA and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act)

▸ Other

3. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS/REGULATIONS/EXECUTIVE ORDERS

During the preliminary design and environmental phase of the transportation project development process, there are additional federal and state environmental laws, regulatory processes and federal executive orders that must be complied with. These are often noted as falling under the **"NEPA umbrella"** because NEPA is a process and framework within which those requirements are addressed. Many of these have their own unique public participation requirements or needs that should be built into the public outreach program, as outlined in *Table 1.* Note that the USACE, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have their own public review requirements.

Table 1: NEPA Umbrella — Laws/Regulations/Executive Orders and Their Public Involvement Components

Title VI

Title VI of the 1964 Statute: Actively ensures nondiscrimination based on **race, color, or national origin** in federally funded activities. FHWA's Title VI program expands covered classes of the statute to include **sex, age, disability, and low-income**.

Considerations:

‣ Coordinate with the District Title VI Coordinator.

‣ Design public outreach program that reaches multiple populations in heterogeneous communities.

‣ Identify and address issues related to accessibility and timing when conducting public meetings.

*Refer to FHWA's **Environmental Justice, Title VI, Non-Discrimination, and Equity webpage.***

Section 106

Section 106 of National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) requires federal agencies to consider effects on historic properties resulting from their undertakings and allow the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) an opportunity to comment. The regulations implementing Section 106 (36 CFR 800, as amended) also require that public input be included in the Section 106 Process. Section 800.2(d)(2)&(3) provides that the agency **must provide the public with information** about the project and its effects on historic resources and seek input. This may be done through the public involvement procedures under NEPA; therefore, address Section 106 requirements and reference the Section 106 process in any public meeting notices.

*Refer to the **PennDOT Cultural Resources Handbook** (PUB 689).*

Section 4(f)/Section 2002

Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation (DOT) Act of 1966 and codified in Title 49 United States Code (U.S.C.), Section 303. Requires FHWA approval of the "use" of Section 4(f) properties (historic sites, publicly-owned parks, recreation areas, and wildlife and waterfowl refuges) when there is no feasible and prudent avoidance alternative and the project includes all possible planning to minimize harm or that the use has a de minimis impact on the property. Section 2002, a state requirement, requires PennDOT approval. In general, Section 4(f)/Section 2002 does not have a public involvement component. The exceptions to this include:

‣ De minimis impact findings (use not adversely affecting property):

  • Historic: determination must consider the views of the Section 106 consulting parties identified for the project through the Section 106 process.

  • Parks/rec/refuges: Public is afforded an opportunity to review and comment on the effects of the project on the Section 4(f)/Section 2002 property.

‣ Net benefit programmatic: information on the proposed use of the Section 4(f)/Section 2002 property and solicitation of public comment shall be communicated at public meetings and the public hearing or through some other public involvement techniques or activity consistent with the requirements of 23 CFR 771.111.

*Refer to the **PennDOT Section 4(f)/Section 2002 Handbook** (PUB 349).*

Table 1 (Continued) : NEPA Umbrella — Laws/Regulations/Executive Orders and Their Public Involvement Components

Noise

Certain projects require consideration of **noise mitigation** as per FHWA's noise regulations (23 CFR 772). If there are noise impacts on a project and construction of noise barriers are being considered, final design noise abatement public meeting(s) are held with the specific neighborhood/community impacted. The affected community has to have the opportunity to provide input into the development process.

Refer to the ***PennDOT Project Level Highway Traffic Noise Handbook*** (PUB 24).

Environmental Justice (EJ)

Executive Order 12898: "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice (EJ) in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations" (1994): Requires that each federal agency shall, to the greatest extent allowed by law, administer and implement its programs, policies, and activities that affect human health or the environment so as to identify and avoid "disproportionately high and adverse" effects on **minority** and **low-income** populations.

Considerations:

▸ Design public outreach program to meet the specific needs of minority and low-income communities in a project area. Identify minority and low-income communities and formulate strategies for involving them in project development.

▸ Seek out participation from Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations – a subset of minority populations.

▸ Ensure that efforts to solicit input and allow reasonable involvement from minority and low-income communities does not occur at the expense of other interests or the general public.

▸ Consult with the PennDOT District Title VI/EJ Coordinator about decisions concerning the public outreach program.

Refer to ***PennDOT Project Level Environmental Justice Guidance*** (PUB 746) and ***Every Voice Counts, Environmental Justice Moving Forward*** (PUB 737).

B. Categorical Exclusions (CEs)

By definition, **CE projects** are projects that **do not result in a significant environmental impact** (23 CFR 771.117) and are categorically excluded from preparing an EA or EIS with appropriate documentation. Note that projects utilizing the Bridge and Roadway Programmatic Agreement (BRPA) for environmental approval are also CE projects.

Project Managers should consider conducting public involvement for CE-level projects. Not all CE projects and their project areas are alike, and projects and their impacts can vary in complexities and issues (Figure 2). CE projects still can have environmental impacts; they just are not significant. Input from the public on a project can help confirm that there is not a significant impact. Questions and situations in which public involvement may be beneficial to a project are noted below. **It is important for the project manager to determine how the public should be involved, and the extent of public involvement should be discussed with the head of the district environmental unit, the Highway Design and Technology Section (HDTS) engineer, and FHWA (if applicable).**

NOTE:

Public involvement must be conducted <u>prior</u> to CE approval.

Public involvement is required as part of PennDOT's CE programmatic agreement with FHWA for processing projects classified as CEs.

Figure 2:

Public Involvement for CE Projects Prior to CE Approval

- Very Minor Complexity
  - No detour
  - No right-of-way acquisitions   INFORM

- Minor to Moderately Complex
  - Relatively short detour
  - Minor right-of-way acquisitions   INVOLVE
  - No major businesses

- Complex Project
  - Longer (>10 mi) or disruptive detour
  - Right-of-way impacts   INTERACT
  - Business impacts
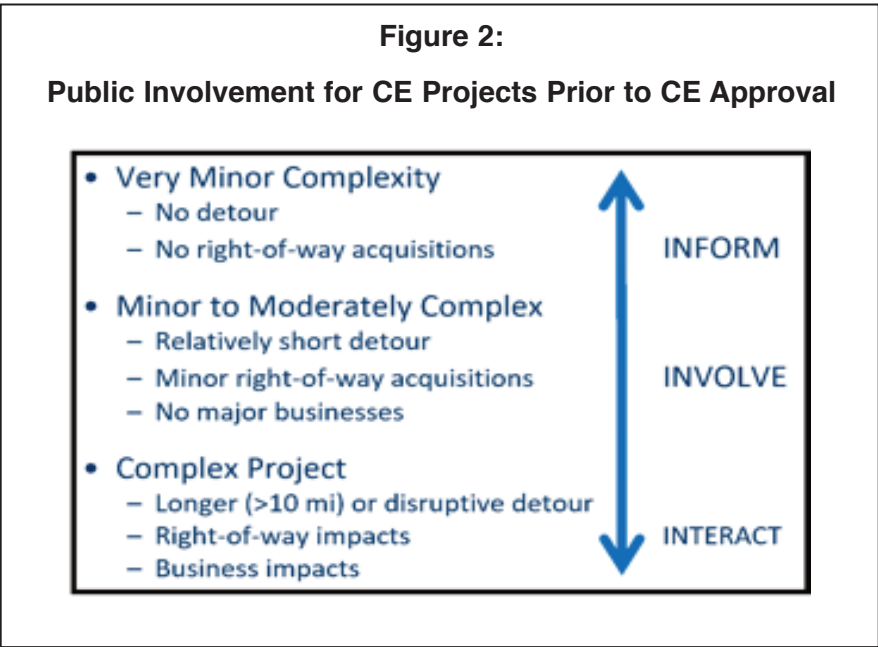
Points for consideration when determining the approach for Public Involvement for a CE project:

▸ As projects increase in **complexity**, their cost typically increases, but cost alone is not a factor in determining the appropriate level of public involvement. Refer to project complexity tables in *Design Manual 1* (Publication 10) (Tables 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3).

▸ Very minor CE projects (Level 1a) may not need any formal public involvement activities, but it is **project dependent**.

▸ **Public involvement approaches differ by project scenario.** What was done for a seemingly similar project in the past may not be appropriate for the next project. Projects and project areas are not all the same. Be aware of what makes them different. One size does not fit all.

▸ **Look at how a project could be of interest to local residents, businesses, commuters, etc.** Have there been inquiries about the project? Interest can be positive or negative in nature. Will engaging stakeholders add value to the delivery and outcome of the project?

▸ **Are there minority and/or low-income populations in the area affected by the project?**

▸ **Are there any groups with special transportation needs that could be affected by the project?** For example, is the Plain Sect present in the area? Is the project within close proximity to an Orthodox Jewish synagogue or an Orthodox Jewish community? Are there populations with high reliance on transit?

▸ **Is there a detour?** What is the nature of the detour? How are EMS and school buses impacted? Have you reached out to the school district superintendent and transportation director? Will the project affect a large amount of people? Are large neighborhoods close by? Businesses? Industry? Will pedestrian access change due to the detour? Is the detour long (10+ miles, could be subjective depending on the region and who/how affected)? What is the length of time for the detour? What is the average daily traffic (ADT) of the road? How are pedestrians and bicyclists affected?

▸ **Meaningful public involvement does not have to include a public meeting.** Depending on who you are trying to reach, think about what makes the most sense for maximum "bang for the buck." Sometimes the best way to make meaningful connections is to participate in community events,

meetings, and festivals that are held by faith-based or community/neighborhood groups that people from the community attend.

Think about:

- Social media and/or district website
- Stakeholder-focused meetings with specific groups or neighborhoods
- Piggyback on existing municipal or other stakeholder meetings
- Digital media (text messaging, emails, other project alerts)
- Stakeholder engagement – ask them to get the word out by the means they already have established, such as municipality websites, social media, newsletters, email blasts, etc.

▸ **Will there already be public involvement being conducted due to other laws' requirements?** If there are requirements associated with other laws to conduct public involvement (Table 1), be thoughtful in how the public involvement for the overall project is approached, taking what has to be conducted into account.

▸ **When input is collected from the public, document that it was received, what was done with that input, and were the results shared back to the public.** Did it influence and inform the project? If attempts made to reach stakeholders resulted in no response, document that those attempts were made and be specific.

▸ **Keep commitments related to public outreach follow ups.** This follow through is just as important with a CE project as with an EIS project.

As noted above, public involvement is not limited to a public meeting. There are many methods available to reach the public. (See Chapter III.)

The following are examples of information that should be documented:

▸ Format of public involvement and accessibility
▸ Date
▸ Participants
▸ How and when it was advertised
▸ Input received
▸ How input was considered
▸ How the project team responded to input
▸ How results of public involvement were shared

There may be other necessary public involvement due to requirements outlined earlier. A summary of the public involvement activities undertaken should be incorporated into the CE documentation. If there are commitments related to public involvement, track those commitments using the Environmental Commitments and Mitigation Tracking System (ECMTS).

If appropriate, a **public hearing** can be held for a CE project. While it is unusual for CE projects, the project team may decide to hold more formal proceedings to present project information and gather public input. Follow the procedures in the EA section for public hearings. Key comments should be attached to the CE document while the full public hearing transcript is maintained in the project file.

Once a CE is approved in the CE expert system, it is automatically moved to the archive and accessible to the public.

C. Environmental Assessments (EAs)

An EA is prepared for those projects for which the **significance of impacts is not clearly established**. More analysis is necessary to determine whether impacts are significant; if they are significant, an EIS will need to be prepared. Because of this unknown, public input on community and environmental resources can be insightful.

> **NOTE:**
>
> For **examples** of EA project materials discussed within this section, contact the **EPDS Chief or designee.**

1. EARLY AND THROUGHOUT THE NEPA PROCESS

Introduce the project to the public through a public meeting or other public involvement method at the beginning of the NEPA process, after it is determined that an EA is likely the appropriate class of action. If a PEL study was previously conducted, the public should already have some familiarity with the project. Reach out to the public before in-depth engineering and environmental studies are too far along, because it is important to get public input early in the NEPA process. The public should have the opportunity to review the purpose and need of the project and provide the project team with any comments or concerns during project scoping.

Implement public involvement activities as warranted by the impacts the project may have on the surrounding communities. The extent of public involvement should be discussed with the head of the district environmental unit, HDTS, and FHWA. A public involvement plan should be developed for the project outlining the means and timing of public participation for the remaining phases of the process. Utilize the available public involvement methods to facilitate meaningful interactions with the identified stakeholders. Generally, a public meeting should be held on a project prior to identifying a preferred alternative. Consistent with 23 CFR 771.119(b), public involvement conducted is summarized in the EA. The sections that follow detail both the CEQ and FHWA implementing regulations, as well as PennDOT's public involvement and public hearing procedures, as approved by the FHWA PA Division office.

2. PUBLIC HEARING/NOTICE OF OPPORTUNITY

A **public hearing** is the official method for receiving public comments on the EA which documents the results of a project's environmental and engineering studies. Its format is formal, often held to meet legal requirements, including USACE requirements if applicable, and has a specific structure that mandates how it is to be conducted.

A public hearing must be held, or the opportunity for a hearing afforded, on all federal-aid projects (23 CFR 771.111(h)) when the project will:

▸ Require the acquisition of significant amounts of right-of-way;

▸ Substantially change the layout or functions of connecting roadways or of the facility being improved;

▸ Have a substantially adverse impact on abutting property;

▸ Otherwise have a significant social, economic, environmental or other effect; or

▸ When PennDOT, in consultation with FHWA, determines that a public hearing is in the public interest.

For projects classified as EAs, there are **two options**:

1. A notice of opportunity for a public hearing is published if it is not clear that a hearing is warranted, and the level of public interest is unknown;

2. PennDOT may forgo advertising the opportunity for a public hearing and schedule a public hearing. This is typically done when there is a known level of public interest.

Comprehensive guidance on preparing for and conducting a public hearing can be found in Chapter III.

3. EA AVAILABILITY, NOTICES AND COMMENT PERIOD

The **EA comment period** will begin on the day that the notice of the document's availability appears as a **block ad** in a newspaper of general circulation within the study area of the proposed project. In addition to the block ad requirement, PennDOT, in consultation with FHWA, will utilize at least one other means of electronic advertisement, direct mailing, or other media. PennDOT will distribute the document to convenient locations within the project area and make it available online in advance of the beginning of the comment period.

The EA comment period will extend for **30 days** unless determined that a longer period is warranted. If an individual Section 4(f) evaluation is included with the EA, then the EA comment period is 45 days to align with the requirements for Section 4(f).

In the notice of EA availability:

▸ Provide where the EA can be found
  • List of physical locations where the document is available for review in the project area
  • Web address to access the EA online

▸ Describe where information concerning the project may be obtained

▸ Invite comments from the public, including where comments should be sent and the deadline for submitting comments

▸ Note either the information regarding the public hearing date or the opportunity for a public hearing (see next two sections)

4. EA AVAILABILITY WITH A NOTICE OF OPPORTUNITY FOR A PUBLIC HEARING

If it is unclear whether there is sufficient public interest in holding a public hearing for an EA project, the district should publish a **notice of opportunity** (as part of the EA notice of availability, as discussed previously) asking citizens to respond in writing with a request for a hearing.

In the notice, state that written requests are to be received by a specific date – generally a minimum of 15 days after the notice is published. The public must respond to the notification within the stated timeframe. Also, in the notice, inform the public that a hearing will be scheduled only if two or more individuals/groups request a hearing and the concerns on environmental grounds cannot be addressed without a hearing.

If you receive a request for a hearing, coordinate with FHWA and work with the individual to resolve the issues of concern. **A public hearing is warranted if at least two requests based on environmental grounds remain outstanding and cannot be resolved.** If the interested party's concerns can be resolved, a hearing will not be necessary.

If there is no interest in holding a public hearing, PennDOT will relay this to FHWA with proof that a public hearing opportunity was offered. If USACE is involved in the project, discuss the decision whether to hold one with them.

5. EA AVAILABILITY WITH A PLANNED PUBLIC HEARING

The EA must be available **at least 15 days** before the scheduled public hearing. The requirements for a public hearing are discussed below and in *Chapter III*.

6. PUBLIC HEARING NOTICES

A **block ad** must be placed in a local newspaper no less than **15 days in advance** of the hearing. The notice should additionally be used to announce that the EA is available for review (as discussed in the previous section), indicate how copies may be obtained, where comments will be received, and the deadline for receiving comments. The notice should include a request that persons with disabilities requiring assistance, or with limited English proficiency (LEP) and require translator services should contact PennDOT in advance to make arrangements. Ensure that the document has been distributed before placing the ad. Notice should also be published by at least one other means of electronic advertisement, direct mailing, or other media, e.g., a press release and/or posting it on the project's or PennDOT's website.

If the public hearing must be postponed for any reason, be sure to re-advertise. The block ad should make it clear that the hearing has been rescheduled.

If the public hearing is to be a **joint hearing** with another federal agency (e.g. USACE), see the EIS public hearing section for further discussion.

7. RESPONDING TO COMMENTS

If a public hearing is held, a court stenographer records the public hearing proceedings and produces a verbatim **hearing transcript** of presentations and oral testimony. PennDOT's official statement, whether presented orally or contained in meeting handouts, will be included in the public hearing transcript. PennDOT will officially certify to FHWA that a public hearing was held and forward a copy of the transcript. Written comments are also accepted and incorporated into the public record.

At the close of the document comment period, FHWA/PennDOT review the hearing transcript, as well as written comments received on the EA. Depending on the volume of comments received, there are different approaches to organize and respond to the comments. Be sure to be consistent in your responses to similar comments. It may be necessary to conduct a meeting with FHWA in order to jointly assess and consider comments received and determine a methodology for documenting and responding. For further insight on responding to comments, refer to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) *Practitioner's Handbook 02 – Responding to Comments on an Environmental Impact Statement*. It contains a section on responding to EAs.

Comments can be addressed by:

▸ Explaining why the comments do not warrant further FHWA/PennDOT response
▸ Making factual corrections or clarifications
▸ Supplementing, improving or modifying the analysis,
▸ Modifying alternatives, including the proposed action
▸ Developing and evaluating alternatives not previously given serious consideration

The EA/hearing comments and responses are part of PennDOT's request to FHWA for issuance of a **finding of no significant impact (FONSI)**. A FONSI is issued at the end of the EA process for projects where the project team determined there is no significant impact. For EA projects during which it is determined there will be significant environmental impacts, an EIS must be prepared instead.

8. **NEPA AND ACT 120 DECISION NOTICES**

When FHWA issues a **FONSI** and PennDOT makes an **Act 120 finding**, PennDOT must provide a notice of availability of the FONSI to affected federal, state, and local government agencies, and the FONSI must be available to the public upon request. A notice should also be provided to the public as a **press release and posted on the project's or PennDOT's website or another form of media or electronic advertisement**. This notice should describe PennDOT's selected course of action, explain that the project will proceed into final design, and announce that the FONSI is available to the public upon request.

If there are **commitments** related to public involvement, track those commitments using **ECMTS**.

There is an additional requirement to publish a notice in the Pennsylvania Bulletin for the **Act 120 Finding**. (See Design Manual 1B, Publication 10B.)

D. Environmental Imact Statements (EISs)

An **EIS** is prepared when the environmental impacts for a project are **significant**. All EIS projects must follow FHWA's formal environmental review process as the framework for the NEPA process (23 U.S.C. 139). This section will concentrate on only the public involvement requirements for EISs. See *Design Manual 1B* (Publication 10B) for additional guidance for EIS requirements. Note that in some circumstances an EA can also follow the environmental review process if agreed upon by FHWA.

Public Meetings will be held, when appropriate, at various stages during project development, typically to:

‣ Introduce the project to the community

‣ Assess local issues and concerns

‣ Present project needs

‣ Present preliminary and detailed alternatives and their associated effects, and

‣ Present possible mitigation measures.

> **NOTE:**
>
> For **examples** of EIS project materials discussed within this section, contact the **EPDS Chief or designee.**

If a **PEL study** was conducted, the public will have some knowledge of the planned project. In some cases, purpose and need and alternatives may have already been presented to the public for input.

Remember that meetings are not solely to present information to the public but rather to obtain information regarding the public's interests, concerns, priorities, and perceptions, and to clarify issues and reduce misunderstandings and/or conflicts which might arise. General purpose public meetings will be held for the general public and, when needed, special purpose meetings may be targeted to a specific stakeholder group. All public involvement decisions should be a collaborative decision between the project manager, the head of the district environmental unit, HDTS engineer, and FHWA.

1. **NOTICE OF INTENT (NOI)**

    FHWA will prepare a **notice of intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS** when a decision has been made to prepare an EIS. PennDOT will forward a copy of the information for the NOI to FHWA. The NOI is published in the Federal Register and is the first formal public notice of the project in the NEPA process.

2. **PROJECT SCOPING**

    Formal scoping for an EIS project is held after the NOI is published in the *Federal Register*. Formal EIS scoping is different than the scoping that PennDOT does on every project.

    The first step of scoping is to coordinate with agencies. PennDOT and FHWA will identify cooperating and participating agencies for the project and conduct a scoping meeting with those agencies.

Following the scoping meeting with the agencies, a **scoping meeting will be held with the general public**. The meeting could be in-person or held virtually.

Formal scoping accomplishes the following:

‣ Continuation of early coordination with public
‣ Determine scope of project and study area
‣ Distinguish between important and minor issues
‣ Assistance in identifying other relevant studies to be conducted

The public is invited via a press release as well as at least one other means of advertisement such as direct mailing, email blasts, social media, or other media, for example an advertisement in a newspaper of general circulation within the study area of the proposed project. It should also be announced in the notice of intent for the project published in the Federal Register. Conduct the scoping meeting as a **formal presentation** introducing the project, following by specific prompts to agencies and the public for input. Include **boards/visuals** showing the study area and staff prepared to discuss the proposed project with the public. Prepare **input forms** for the public to complete. Additionally, initiate the project website and include the information presented at the scoping meeting.

Scoping, even for EISs, is documented in the CE expert system. When conducting scoping, review the previously conducted PennDOT Connects collaboration, as documented in the PennDOT Connects system.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

A **coordination plan and schedule** are required for EISs. Prepare the plan in cooperation with FHWA and the regulatory and resource agencies. This plan must be prepared within 90 days of the publication of the NOI. Part of that requires a **public participation plan** for the project. Prepare it at the onset of a project to outline the who, what, where, and when of coordination with the public for the duration of the NEPA process. The public participation plan should include:

‣ Goals and objectives
‣ Stakeholders and public groups
‣ Outreach techniques
‣ Schedule
‣ Ongoing evaluation and revision

Additionally, the coordination plan and schedule with the public participation plan must be shared with the public and will address the methods of public involvement to be used. The plan should provide for public input during the project development process, including developing the purpose and needs and the alternatives analysis. Posting it on a project website would meet this requirement.

4. **PURPOSE AND NEED AND ALTERNATIVES**

As noted above, it is a requirement of the environmental review process that the public must have the opportunity to be involved in defining the **purpose and need** and the **range of alternatives** for a project. This is often accomplished by holding two separate public meetings at appropriate times in the project timeline. See *Chapter III* for further discussion of public meetings and other techniques to involve the public at these important milestones.

5. **PUBLIC HEARING**

A **public hearing** is the official method for receiving public comments on the **draft EIS (DEIS)** summarizing the results of environmental and engineering studies. **Holding a public hearing is required for EIS projects**. A public hearing is unlike a public meeting in that it is formal, often held to meet legal requirements, and requires specific protocol to follow. Comprehensive guidance on preparing for and conducting a public hearing can be found in *Chapter III*.

6. **DEIS AVAILABILITY, NOTICES AND COMMENT PERIOD**

An EIS project is required to have a DEIS that is made available to the public and agencies for comment. The DEIS typically identifies a recommended preferred alternative and its associated impacts and mitigation. A summary of the public involvement and agency coordination conducted for the project to that point is included in the DEIS. **During the comment period, a public hearing is held.**

PennDOT will distribute the DEIS to convenient, publicly accessible locations within the project area and post online for public review. The DEIS shall be available for public review at the same time the document is provided to (formally filed with) the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to ensure that the document is ready for review. The EPA publishes the notice of the document's availability in the Federal Register.

The **DEIS comment period** will begin on or after the day a notice of the document's availability appears in the Federal Register. **The public hearing may not be held sooner than 15 days after the DEIS is available**. The comment period will extend for a **minimum 45-day comment period**, the deadline for which will be specified in the Federal Register notice. A **maximum comment period of 60 days** is allowed for more complex, controversial projects.

PennDOT will publish a **block advertisement** in a newspaper of general circulation within the study area of the proposed project as well use as at least one other means of electronic advertisement, direct mailing, or other media to advertise the information. See *Chapter III* for discussion of those other techniques, such as a press release or posting on the project website. Information to be relayed:

▸ Locations where the DEIS is available for public review
▸ How copies of the document may be obtained
▸ Where comments should be sent
▸ Deadline for comments

7. PUBLIC HEARING NOTICES

As noted above, the **public hearing** is held during the **DEIS comment period**, but it cannot be held sooner than 15 days after the DEIS is available.

A **block ad** must be published no less than 15 days in advance of the hearing. This notice, which will be published as an ad in a newspaper of general circulation within the study area of the proposed project, as well as at least one other means of electronic advertisement, direct mailing, or other media, will announce the locations where the draft EIS is available for public review, will describe how copies of the document may be obtained and where comments should be sent, and will include the details of the public hearing. The notice should include a request that persons with disabilities requiring assistance or with LEP requiring translator services contact PennDOT in order to obtain the appropriate arrangements. Ensure that the document has been distributed before placing the ad.

If the public hearing has to be postponed for any reason, be sure to re-advertise. The block ad should make it clear that the hearing has been rescheduled.

Joint Public Hearing

If agreed upon during project scoping, FHWA and the USACE may conduct a **joint public hearing** to satisfy both NEPA and Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 404 requirements (see the *PennDOT Environmental Permitting Handbook*, Publication 783). Joint public hearings will be held whenever possible to facilitate project development and planning. Joint public hearings must be conducted to meet the needs and mandates of the involved agencies.

The USACE has their own requirements for the advertisement and conduct of hearings. These requirements are set forth in the USACE regulations found in 33 CFR 327. USACE regulations require that notice be given at least 30 days in advance of the public hearing. This notice must be given to all federal agencies affected by the proposed action, state and local agencies, and other parties having an interest in the subject of the hearing. In addition, the notice must be sent to all persons who requested a hearing, posted in appropriate government buildings, and provided to newspapers of general circulation for publication. PennDOT will still adhere to the requirement for publishing a public hearing notice as part of the notice of availability of the NEPA document.

Include information regarding the Section 404 issues in the public hearing notices. Coordinate with the USACE on the exact language. USACE regulations require that the notice contain the time, place and nature of the hearing; the legal authority and jurisdiction under which the hearing is held; and the location of the DEIS. The notice should contain contact information for the USACE, and instructions on submitting written comments (i.e., written statements, proposed findings and recommendations) for inclusion in the record of the hearing. The notice should also contain the cut−off date for presenting such written comments (not less than 10 days after the close of the hearing).

8. **RESPONDING TO COMMENTS**

A stenographer records the public hearing proceedings and produces a verbatim **hearing transcript** of presentations and oral testimony. PennDOT's official statement, whether presented orally or contained in meeting handouts, will be included in the public hearing transcript. PennDOT will officially certify to FHWA that a public hearing was held and forward a copy of the transcript to FHWA. Written comments are also accepted and incorporated into the public record.

At the close of the document comment period, FHWA/PennDOT reviews the hearing transcript, as well as written comments received on the DEIS. Depending on the volume of comments received, there are different approaches to organize and respond to the comments. Be sure to be consistent in your responses to similar comments. It may be necessary to conduct a meeting with FHWA to jointly assess and consider comments received. For further insight on responding to comments, refer to the AASHTO *Practitioner's Handbook 02 – Responding to Comments on an Environmental Impact Statement.*

Comments can be addressed by:

‣ Acknowledging the comments and explaining why the comments do not warrant further response
‣ Making factual corrections or clarifications
‣ Supplementing, improving or modifying the analysis
‣ Modifying alternatives, including the proposed action
‣ Developing and evaluating alternatives not previously given serious consideration

The DEIS/hearing comments and responses are part of the final EIS (FEIS)/record of decision (ROD), which is the NEPA decision. If the FEIS and ROD are not combined, then the DEIS/hearing comments and responses are included in the FEIS.

9. **COMBINED FEIS/ROD AVAILABILITY AND NOTICE**

After circulation of the DEIS and consideration of the comments received, an **FEIS** is prepared including a discussion of all substantive comments received on the DEIS, responses thereto, and a summary of the public involvement. FHWA's preferred process is to **combine the FEIS and ROD**. There are circumstances where the FEIS may be a stand-alone document made available for review prior to the issuance of the ROD. See the next section for that scenario.

Once FHWA approves the FEIS/ROD, the FEIS/ROD is made available in the following ways:

‣ A Federal Register notice is published by EPA.
‣ A notice of public availability will be provided to the public as a block ad in a newspaper of general circulation within the study area of the proposed project. This notice should announce the locations and web address where the FEIS/ROD is available. PennDOT will distribute the document to the same locations, if appropriate, at which the DEIS had been available and post the document online.

▸ A notice should also be published by at least one other means of electronic advertisement, as a press release, a posting on the project's or PennDOT's website, or other form of media or electronic advertisement.

▸ PennDOT will forward the FEIS/ROD to any persons, organizations, or agencies that made substantive comments on the DEIS and/or requested a copy of the final document as required by FHWA.

▸ PennDOT will post the FEIS/ROD to the project or district website.

There is an additional requirement to publish a notice in the Pennsylvania Bulletin for the **Act 120 Finding**. (See ***Design Manual 1B***, Publication 10B.)

If there are **commitments** related to public involvement, track those commitments using ECMTS.

10. **FEIS AND ROD AVAILABILITY AND NOTICES WHEN NOT COMBINED**

There are circumstances where the **FEIS may be a stand-alone document** made available for review prior to the issuance of the ROD.

Copies of the FEIS should be available for public review at the time a notice of availability of the document is published in the Federal Register. PennDOT will distribute the document to the same locations, if appropriate, at which the DEIS was available. Additionally, PennDOT will, to the extent required by FHWA, forward the FEIS to any persons, organizations, or agencies that made substantive comments on the DEIS and/or requested a copy of the FEIS.

The FEIS public review will begin on or after the day a notice of the document's availability appears in the *Federal Register*. The document will be available for public review for a period of **at least 30 days**, the deadline for which will be specified in the *Federal Register* notice.

In addition to announcing the locations where the FEIS is available for public review, a notice, which will be published as an **ad in a newspaper** of general circulation within the study area of the proposed project and at least one other means of electronic advertisement, direct mailing, or other media, will describe how copies of the document may be obtained and where comments should be sent. The FEIS should be available on the project's website.

Once **FHWA issues a ROD** for the project, announce this issuance by a press release, a posting on the project's or PennDOT's website, or other form of media or electronic advertisement. This notice should describe PennDOT's selected course of action, explain that the project will proceed into final design, and announce that the ROD is available to the public upon request. If posted on the project website, note that in the announcement. When the FEIS and ROD are not combined, there is not a requirement for the ROD for a block ad.

There is an additional requirement to publish a notice in the Pennsylvania Bulletin for the **Act 120 Finding**. (See ***Design Manual 1B***, Publication 10B.)

If there are **commitments** related to public involvement, track those commitments using **ECMTS**.

11. **STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS NOTICE**

When the lead federal agency makes a final decision on a permit, license, or approval relating to a highway or public transportation capital project, the agency may invoke a 150-day statute of limitations by publishing notice of the final decision in the *Federal Register*. This notice is not a requirement and is up to discretion by FHWA. If the notice is filed, then anyone who wishes to contest the final decision in court must file their litigation within 150 days or they are barred from doing so. This is intended to expedite the resolution of issues affecting transportation projects. This should reduce the risk of litigation occurring later in the project when delays may be more costly.

FHWA and PennDOT encourage efforts to help stakeholders and the public to understand this law. For that reason, it would be useful to include a statement summarizing §139(l) in EISs:

> *"A federal agency may publish a notice in the Federal Register, pursuant to 23 USC §139(l), indicating that one or more federal agencies have taken final action on permits, licenses, or approvals for a transportation project. If such notice is published, claims seeking judicial review of those federal agency actions will be barred unless such claims are filed within 150 days after the date of publication of the notice, or within such shorter time period as is specified in the federal laws pursuant to which judicial review of the federal agency action is allowed. If no notice is published, then the periods of time that otherwise are provided by the federal laws governing such claims will apply."*

E. Final Design

During final design, continue to coordinate with the community (including elected officials, community leaders and the public) to document any changing needs and to provide updates on the status of the project. It is also important to communicate with emergency service providers, school districts, public transportation providers and businesses that may be affected by project construction.

Public involvement commitments made during the environmental process and included in the environmental document and ECMTS must be implemented/addressed during this stage of the project through ECMS and/or special provisions. This can ensure that public commitments are included in the construction bid package/contract. Some commitments may be appropriately deferred to the construction phase as well.

If there are noise impacts on a project and construction of noise barriers are being considered, conduct final design noise abatement public meeting(s) targeted with the specific neighborhood/community impacted. The affected community has to have the opportunity to provide input into the development process. See the ***Project Level Highway Traffic Noise Handbook*** (Publication 24) for more details on conducting those public involvement activities.

There may be instances where public input is sought for design elements and details, such as landscaping and lighting plans, within communities.

Tailor public outreach during final design to keep the public informed and up to date on what is happening with the project. Remember to be cognizant of what information had been provided previously and to circle back to the public as appropriate regarding changes to the project through final design. Note that more complex projects (EAs or EISs) typically have project websites that are developed during preliminary design and environmental decision-making. Maintain these websites throughout final design and even into construction as a means to continue to involve and inform the public.

F. Construction

Similar to final design, keep the public updated on projects during construction. Do this particularly for those projects requiring lengthy detours, road closures, or substantial changes in existing traffic patterns.

Note that any public involvement commitments made during environmental clearance and included in the environmental document and ECMTS must be addressed during this stage of the project if not completed during final design.

Even when your public outreach program has been successful and there is consensus concerning the need for the project, you must consider how the public will experience the period of construction, which – in the case of a large, complex project – could last for several years.

By continuing to reach out and involve the public during construction, inconveniences can be minimized, and the public's attention kept focused on the larger picture and long-term benefits of the project. Typical public involvement activities include updated websites, press releases, and signage.

II. PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Beyond the requirements outlined in Chapter I, PennDOT conducts public involvement during project delivery because it results in better projects that fit the needs of communities and all modes of the traveling public. The members of the public are the users of the transportation system, and they may be residents of adjacent and surrounding communities. Public involvement should provide local citizens with the opportunity to participate fully in the dialogue to influence the decision-making process that can affect their individual lifestyles and shape their collective futures. Through an effective public involvement program PennDOT can:

‣ Hold an open dialogue with interested citizens

‣ Allow the public to help develop solutions for their community

‣ Assess the public's reaction to proposed projects

‣ Integrate public views and preferences into decision-making and document their consideration

‣ Reach a consensus within the community on a recommended course of action

> Public involvement does not cause public controversy, but the lack of appropriate public involvement certainly can.

Effective public involvement engages the public early in the process, considers the community perspective, proactively identifies and resolves concerns, and builds relationships that PennDOT can count on in the future.

Project Managers should ensure that anyone on the project team who is directly interacting with the public be familiar with this chapter.

A. Making Interactions Meaningful

Do not conduct public involvement activities merely to be able to check a box that they have been completed. Consider the time and resources that go into those activities. Make them appropriate, thinking about how both the public and the project will benefit from the engagement. Virtual engagement techniques may be used to supplement the more traditional outreach highlighted in this chapter, where appropriate and meaningful.

1. AN OPEN PROCESS (NOI)

Openness is the fundamental ingredient of successful public involvement. It is not enough to simply open the door and invite the public to participate. Give careful thought to ensure that a broad cross section of the affected community is represented and approach the public as partners early in project development. The public wants timely access to information. **Be open and accessible to the public**, providing stakeholders with opportunities to adequately represent their interests. This interaction enhances our understanding of citizens' concerns and provides a sense of shared responsibility for project development and builds public confidence in PennDOT. Additionally, PennDOT **sets the basis for credible and defensible decisions** when conducting an open process.

2. EARLY AND OFTEN

Citizens may best represent their interests when they become involved at the **earliest possible opportunity**. The earlier we know about issues, the earlier we are aware of them and can work to address the issues. Early involvement of the public is important and will:

▸ Minimize the spread of rumors

▸ Prevent local leaders from feeling ignored and from becoming distrustful

▸ Inform the community about project development

▸ Shape public expectations regarding PennDOT's abilities and limitations

▸ Develop a spirit of cooperation and collaboration

Effective public outreach does not just happen – it must be planned and occur at key points throughout the project development process, as discussed in *Chapter I*. A program of **early and continuous coordination** with the community will lead to a constructive, working relationship so decisions can reflect the input received along the way.

3. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Cooperation between PennDOT and the public promotes a **beneficial exchange of information**. Local citizens, the traveling public (commuters, through traffic, freight carriers, emergency service providers, pedestrians, cyclists, etc.), and elected officials can help identify transportation needs and provide valuable information about local conditions and other factors that may have otherwise never been considered. Additionally, agency relationships within state government, through entities like the Governor's Affinity Commissions, can help foster relationships between PennDOT and various communities served by those organizations.

The public's input also helps to develop a project that is **sensitive to community concerns**. With the input of those who live and/or travel within the project area, better project decisions can be made. Understand community values and opinions for a public involvement program to be successful. Work to develop a relationship with the communities you serve outside of specific project work so that when project needs are identified, you have an established relationship already in place. Work with citizens to more effectively identify and resolve environmental issues. Ask citizens for meaningful input with the intent of listening and responding. By working with the community in this way, a shared sense of long-term public interest develops.

4. INFORMING THE PUBLIC

Communication is the cornerstone of an effective public outreach program. Since knowledge is a guide to action, public involvement must be **informative and inform stakeholders on the transportation project development process**. Remember that most members of the public are not engineers or planners. Explain transportation planning and project delivery, as these processes and procedures are not widely known. The public likes project timelines and updates when there is something to report or if something has changed. Present information in a simple, easy to understand format for public use. Work with the community relations coordinator (CRC) to identify the media/outreach tools most effective for a particular area.

B. Earning Trust and Credibility

Trust can take a long time to earn but can be lost in the blink of an eye. Earning trust and maintaining credibility is important for effective public involvement and successful project delivery. Provide an effective two-way exchange of information that is open, honest, and consistent to earn the public's trust and confidence.

1. COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

First impressions can be lasting ones, making it very important to be conscious of the communication skills of those interacting with the public. If a team member is understanding and responsive, the impression created can be one of an understanding and responsive PennDOT. If the staff person seems cold, unsympathetic or defensive, so too will PennDOT.

TOP 10 WAYS TO GAIN CREDIBILITY

1. Involve people in decisions that will directly affect their lives.
2. Provide information that meets people's needs in a timely manner.
3. Listen to what people are telling you; respond appropriately.
4. Respect people's values and feelings.
5. Speak in plain language.
6. Be open and candid; respond in a personal way, not as a bureaucrat.
7. Only make promises you can keep.
8. Be honest; admit when you do not have the answers or when you have made mistakes, and do not get defensive.
9. Act consistently trustworthy.
10. Follow through when you say you will get back in touch with someone later and provide them with a realistic timeframe in which that will occur. Manage expectations.

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2. INTERPERSONAL VS. TECHNICAL SKILLS

The public wants to talk to those who know the technical aspects of the work, can answer questions, and has the authority to make decisions. Send **knowledgeable staff who also possess interpersonal communication skills** and who may have background training in dealing with people. Be cognizant that not all technical staff have good people skills. If they do not, interacting directly with the public may not be the best choice without training or coaching. Depending on the type of forum, it may be necessary to send several representatives to afford the public an opportunity to ask questions in different areas of expertise (e.g. engineering, noise, cultural resources, right-of-way, etc.). If you have multiple representatives, consider having a "frequently asked questions" (FAQ) sheet with consistent answers.

Be thoughtful in communications. Use two-way channels as frequently as necessary to provide updated information to interested groups or individuals as it develops, regardless of whether the news is good or bad. It's always easier to deliver good news, but honesty, respect

and sincerity are most recognized and appreciated when you care enough to directly share negative information. Bad news is best communicated personally and directly (preferably in person); written correspondence, including email, does not provide for effective feedback or response. Written communication lacks the non-verbal clues like facial expression, vocal tone, and body language that add depth of understanding to your conversation.

3. EFFECTIVE LISTENING

Successful two-way communication requires that all parties express themselves clearly, have their messages understood accurately, and in return, receive and understand the messages of others. Effective listening may require a team member to tease out and help make sense of what people are saying when they may not have a very clear understanding of what they are trying to say. Being attentive, responsive, and open-minded are three important skills in effective listening.

Team members who may have in-person or virtual face time with the public should **revisit the Top 10 Listening Skills** below prior to those situations.

> Effective listening is the cornerstone of successful communication.

TOP 10 LISTENING SKILLS

1. Stop talking. Make eye contact.
2. Be an active listener. Keep full attention on the speaker and focus on the heart of the subject. Don't simply wait for your chance to speak.
3. Listen for emotional content.
4. Ask clarifying questions when you don't understand.
5. Focus on the main points.
6. Summarize the speaker's main points in your own words to make sure you heard correctly.
7. Make no assumptions.
8. Recognize your own feelings, then put them aside. Show empathy. Empathy is understanding and acknowledging their feelings and viewpoint. This differs from sympathy, where you share in their feelings.
9. React to ideas, not to the person presenting them.
10. Be aware of the speaker's body language. In turn, be mindful of your body language and the message it may convey.

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4. **UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING ELEMENTAL PUBLIC CONCERNS**

Understanding the elemental concerns of people can help reduce the potential for conflict. An affected community will react to projects based on how responsive we are to their basic human concerns. Positive relationships evolve with the public as we demonstrate our understanding of their concerns, thus enhancing our credibility. Elemental concerns are described as basic quality of life issues. As you develop your public involvement plan, consider:

Concern	Address Through Public Involvement
Control	People expect to be involved in decisions that affect their property and quality of life. Establishing a formal relationship with the community and sharing timely information establishes a collaborative climate in which individuals may influence their community's future and be more accepting of project consequences.
Choice	Voluntary situations are more acceptable than those imposed upon the public. Focus on the content and merit of the proposal; allow the community to become involved in the decision-making process by soliciting input and comments early in a project, making them "investors" in the outcome. This will avoid conflict that can delay a project and increase costs.
Knowledge	All community segments have knowledge about the project area that may be significant based upon their own perspectives. Be sure to involve representatives of each stakeholder segment.
Trust	Trust can be established by being the first, best source of information about your project. A credible source is less likely to generate anger, hostility and a demand for justification. Be responsive to community concerns early on and communicate with stakeholders in a timely manner.
Fear of Loss	Managing conflict is often about dealing with anger, which arises from fear and a sense of loss. With many proposed transportation projects, people may feel threatened by a loss of control, the loss of a valued resource, the loss of property, or a reduction in their quality of life.
Understanding, Empathy	Taking time to learn and understand the community's perspective will convey a sense of empathy and will help facilitate your project's progress.
Fairness	People are concerned about being treated fairly and need to understand the benefits of proposed change. If the impact of a project on a community cannot be fairly distributed, then the affected public needs to understand how and why decisions were made.

5. **BEING UNDERSTOOD**

When PennDOT, or consultants on PennDOT's behalf, are conveying information to the public, it is important to send a **clear message** and that the point is being received accurately. Include background detail to make sure everyone is up-to-date and understands what you are talking about. **Be thoughtful in the words you use**; words sometimes have different meanings for different people. **Avoid technical jargon**. If you are not sure whether your main points were understood, ask clarifying questions.

6. SENSITIVITY

Transportation projects often **generate emotion** because of the potential change they represent to a community. Dismissing emotionally charged issues as unfounded can result in outrage and opposition. Be consistently fair and accommodating while acknowledging people's feelings. Document concerns. This helps to diffuse some issues that arise.

Listen effectively to people's values and feelings. Different people will respond to issues differently depending upon their own perspectives. People may feel that issues important to them have not been adequately addressed or that they have not been involved or heard if everyone is treated like they have the same concerns. When people do not feel they are being heard, they feel frustrated, and may express their concerns more strongly or more loudly in order to be heard. When this happens, the project team needs to adjust their approach to more effectively listen and communicate.

TIPS ON NOT TAKING IT PERSONALLY

When dealing with the public, remember that the people attending public meetings are concerned that their homes, jobs and ways of life may be changed by the proposed project.

Do not take their reactions personally but do remember that it is personal to them.

TIPS ON ADDRESSING AN EMOTIONAL PUBLIC

1. When people are speaking emotionally, first respond to their emotions.
2. Acknowledge people's feelings to indicate that they have been heard.
3. Do not discount their concerns.
4. Look for creative approaches to solutions that such exchanges can offer.
5. Do not merely respond with data or logic.
6. Use an impartial group to act as a buffer or intermediary between PennDOT and the public.
7. Recognize that a community's values are as legitimate as PennDOT's.
8. Deal with people's feelings and they are more likely to trust you.

7. BE CONSISTENT

Work proactively to ensure that information provided to the public is **consistent regardless of who may be delivering the message**. Begin by anticipating what the public needs to know and will want to know in order to participate effectively and develop a list of questions that are likely to be asked. Develop honest, accurate responses to each question that are consistent with PennDOT's position. This information can be assembled in the form of a **frequently asked questions (FAQ)** list with corresponding answers for coordination with the project team. This helps prevent contradictory information that can happen when different members of the project team are responding to questions from different community members. Inconsistent information damages credibility.

8. **BE RESPONSIVE**

Trust and credibility take time to build. It can be gradually accomplished by being open, giving good information, and remaining in continual contact with the community.

Designate a **single contact person** to ensure continuity with the community – select someone residents and officials can call to directly discuss the project and voice their concerns. Establish a clear system for handling and documenting phone calls and emails from the public so that the project team can be made aware of evolving concerns. Have a backup contact person who can provide answers when the primary contact is not available. Consider creation of a project email account that can be monitored by multiple members of a project team. The public should get prompt responses to their inquiries, if possible, and should not be made to wait.

Try to maintain continuity in project staffing. The public can be suspicious, and may feel betrayed, when someone they have trusted is taken off the project. The time it takes for a new person to get up to speed may be uncomfortable for the public and for the new person who will need to learn about the community and its needs.

Follow up with people. Show that you have done what you said you were going to do. If a group provides advice to PennDOT and then nothing happens for a long time, the spirit of participation and consensus building may dissipate. If you tell a public meeting attendee that you will look into an issue and get back to them, make sure that someone gets back to the person in a reasonable amount of time. Keep tracking sheets to make sure promises are not broken.

By being responsive, you will find that public involvement becomes progressively easier. Opposition typically dwindles as the public finds that concerns have been addressed.

C. Managing Conflict

It is not unusual to encounter conflict on a project. Conflict can come in many forms and in varying levels of intensity. Some examples of conflict include:

▸ Residents and business owners concerned about possible acquisition of their property
▸ A local government who does not agree with the proposed alternative for a project
▸ Environmental groups who are at odds on the approach to mitigation for project impacts
▸ Neighbors disagreeing whether they want the proposed noise barrier in their backyards
▸ Business owners and residents at odds of what streetscape elements and parking should look like in the downtown mixed-use area of a city

Conflicts can be effectively managed by assessing the controversy and developing a strategy to deal with it. Understanding conflict will require your direct interaction with the community to identify concerns and to help decide which conflict resolution techniques to use.

Carefully assess conflict at its source by interviewing parties who are directly and indirectly involved to collect data regarding the substantive issues in question. Questions to consider include:

▸ Who are the key parties and spokespersons?

▸ Are there other less involved parties who have a role in finding a solution to the conflict?

▸ Are all the parties willing to work together?

▸ What is the basis for the conflict? Differing interests? Values? Perceptions?

▸ What are the central and secondary issues? Are they negotiable?

▸ What do the parties have in common? What separates them?

Use information from the assessment to design a **conflict resolution process** considering possible techniques or approaches and whether the level of expertise within your project team may require additional, outside expertise. Set clear goals for the process, including:

▸ Exchanging information

▸ Identifying issues and interests

▸ Developing acceptable options

▸ Reaching agreement on a preferred action

Having a **conflict resolution process** that addresses issues before they arise can avoid a need to enter into formal negotiations. An effective conflict resolution process should:

▸ Address issues early

▸ Emphasize collective problem-solving, not adversarial behavior

▸ Rely on staff members trained in conflict resolution

▸ Rely on staff members who understand community concerns

Implement the process by striking a compromise, accommodating each other's interests, or negotiating an agreement. These and other conflict resolution approaches can help maintain a good working relationship with the other party and can be used to develop solutions that meet their needs.

Facilitating solutions. When a project team chooses to address conflict without the use of third-party assistance, have team members who can serve as facilitators. The facilitators should be able to identify signs of unexpressed disagreement and attempt to identify the parties' feelings and requirements for satisfaction concerning the issue.

TIPS ON RESOLVING CONFLICT

1. Disagree with ideas, not with people.
2. Identify and prioritize the issues that are central to the conflict.
3. Avoid polarizing the conflicting positions.
4. Avoid adopting a position that allows for only one solution to meet your needs.
5. Brainstorm to identify solutions through which both parties may gain.

III. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT TECHNIQUES

This chapter concentrates on the various techniques that can be utilized in projects at various points, whether required or recommended (*Chapter I*) to conduct effective and meaningful public involvement (*Chapter II*). **The project manager, in coordination with the district CRC and head of the district environmental unit, must ensure that the following topics are addressed on a project.**

The CRC should review all collateral prepared for use with the public to ensure that it is easily understood and without jargon.

Document how public involvement was conducted on a project, including dates, materials and information shared, and feedback received.

A. Community Interests and Values

When starting a new project, get familiar with the project area. Not every project area community is the same; they are all unique with different and sometimes conflicting interests and values. In order to plan meaningful public involvement for a project, it is essential to know and understand the people who utilize the transportation facility and who live nearby. Take extra care to identify minority and low-income communities or those with limited English proficiency that may need specific outreach to ensure inclusivity in public involvement. Work to develop a relationship with the communities you serve outside of specific project work so that when project needs are identified, you have an established relationship already in place. Having knowledge of the project area community interest and values is key to understanding issues that may be of particular concern to the public and can help guide in developing the public involvement plan for the project.

B. Project Considerations

Once you understand your project scope, complexity, and project area, select tools that make the most sense for the project.

Questions can include:

- What is the complexity of the project?
- Is the project a CE, EA, or EIS?
- Where is the project in the project delivery timeline?
- Should information merely be relayed or is two-way communication necessary for public input and comment?
- How extensive is the project area?
- Are there multiple communities that are very different in their interests and values?
- Does the project cross municipal and/or county lines?
- Is the setting rural, suburban, or urban?
- Are there minority or low-income communities, LEP communities, or other special or unique communities in or adjacent to the project area?
- Is there sufficient lead time in the schedule to apply a technique?
- What is the budget?
- What resources, staff, and skills are available?

Every project with its unique circumstances is different, there is not a one size fits all approach to public involvement.

C. Techniques

There are a variety of tools and techniques from which to select when developing a public outreach and involvement program for a project. Techniques can be mixed-and-matched to provide the most meaningful and appropriate public involvement for a particular project and project area. Supplemental virtual tools and techniques can be implemented along with in-person formats to enhance engagement. The subsequent sections in the chapter discuss the following techniques (note that this list is not all inclusive), with additional detailed guidance for digital public meeting resources in *Appendix D, Digital Public Involvement Guidance*:

- ▶ Announcements
- ▶ Public meetings
- ▶ Public hearings
- ▶ Pop-up outreach
- ▶ Social media
- ▶ Surveys/polling
- ▶ Interactive maps
- ▶ Geographic information systems (GIS) and webmaps
- ▶ Visualization techniques
- ▶ Websites
- ▶ Brochures
- ▶ Newsletters
- ▶ Media relations
- ▶ Citizens advisory committees (CACs)
- ▶ Project office or drop-in centers

NOTE:

For **examples** of recent materials discussed within this Techniques section, contact the **EPDS Chief or designee**.

STAKEHOLDER LIST

An effective tool to manage public involvement is to develop and maintain a stakeholder list for a project, which includes individuals and groups who have attended public meetings or contacted PennDOT, as well as local government and agency representatives who would be expected to have a stake in the project. The list would include contact information (mailing and email addresses) for receiving project information and updates.

1. **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

   Use a variety of media to inform the public about opportunities for their involvement in project development and to inform them of department actions, operations, or activities. This could be to announce an upcoming meeting or event, a website, the start of a project, or the availability of a document. This section describes several announcement techniques.

   a. **Notice of Intent**

      A **Notice of Intent** is a requirement to officially notify the public of the preparation of an EIS. It should be prepared as discussed in *Chapter I* and is published in the *Federal Register*.

   b. **Newspaper Advertisements**

      Announce project events like public meetings, public hearings, or the initiation of a project by publishing a **display advertisement (commonly referred to as a "block ad")** in a newspaper with the highest circulation in the project area. Block ads combine text and graphics to convey information about large-scale public involvement activities like general public meetings, public hearings, or the initiation of a project.

   Notes:

   ‣ In rural or suburban areas served by local newspapers (typically published weekly), many people may not subscribe to the daily "big city" newspaper that covers their region. Even many of those newspapers that used to be daily only publish paper copies a few days a week. Plan an advertising strategy to reach as many readers as possible.

   ‣ In today's world, do not limit efforts to newspaper ads since more and more people receive their news and information from more digital means. **Use the newspaper ads in cooperation with other techniques** noted in this chapter.

   ‣ When and where available, consider advertising in prominently **established minority or foreign language publications** to be inclusive to those populations.

   ‣ In order to attract attention, design display and block ads with an appealing layout, sharp headlines, and an informative, easy-to-understand explanation of the event. PennDOT Graphic Services should be used in the creation of all graphics and publications. The district CRC can facilitate this process.

   ‣ In the meeting notice, request that **disabled persons who require assistance**, or those who need translator services contact PennDOT in advance so appropriate arrangements can be made. Contact Office Services to utilize existing contracts if translator services are needed.

   ‣ Contact the display ad department (often separate from the classified ad section) for information on publishing deadlines and column widths. You should format ads according to each paper's column width and length requirements. You may need to prepare more than one version.

   ‣ While not required, some districts document meeting advertisements with a proof of publication (POP), which is a notarized statement of the date of advertisement. Newspapers usually charge a small fee for POPs. A copy of the published advertisement, along with the date of publication, can also be used to document the announcement.

c. **Press Release**
An official **PennDOT press release** can relay information out quickly by utilizing a process and format already put in place by PennDOT. See the media relations section for further guidance.

d. **Direct Mail**
Direct mail can communicate many types of messages using an array of print materials including meeting announcements, project newsletters, brochures, surveys, postcards, and notification of planned project activities. Unlike other techniques that may not reach everyone in the project study area, direct mail has the ability to send a direct message to every home. Some direct mailing may go to every household, while others may go to particular stakeholders, depending on the mailing and purpose of the communication.

Notes:

‣ Avoid the use of technical jargon in any correspondence. The general public does not know PennDOT terminology. Keep it simple and to the point. Letters sent on other projects can be a good starting point as a guide if they were well-prepared and concise.

‣ Mailing lists may be developed by PennDOT, provided by local government or planning agencies, obtained from the U.S. Postal Service's Every Door Direct Mail service, or purchased from commercial mail houses. Initial mailings using acquired mailing lists can be disappointing, sometimes resulting in a large rate of returned, undelivered mail. One way to avoid returned mail is to address it to "Current Occupant." The U.S. Post Office's Every Door Direct Mail service is a useful tool for delivering direct mail without the need to compile mailing addresses. The relatively low-cost service, which can be used to disseminate information to large numbers of property owners in a project area, allows mail to be sent to all addresses along one or more mail routes or within one or more zip codes. More information on the service is available through the U.S. Postal Service's website.

‣ Be careful not to accidentally omit a zip code or portion of a community. When members of a group discover that they have been excluded, it may take some time to repair the feeling of being slighted by PennDOT.

‣ Depending on the size of the study area, it may not be cost-effective to use direct mail. A less expensive method of distributing direct mail to a large population is postcards. Postage is less than traditional mailings but can reach the same households to relay information about an event like a public meeting.

A routine form of correspondence is the **notice of intent to enter (NOITE) letter**, which is sent to property owners when there is a need to access a property for studies, survey, etc. This letter is sent out by PennDOT, utilizing a standard NOITE form letter (Form RW-983, found in *PennDOT Right-of-Way Manual*, Publication 378) that includes legally accepted language. A cover letter can be provided with the NOITE letter to provide additional project-specific information. One best practice is to also include a questionnaire in the mailing that requests useful information from property owners, such as phone number/email address, and locations of such things as wells, septic systems, property boundary pins, etc.

e. **E-Mail Blasts**
    An **email blast** is sent all at once to a large mailing list to convey a message, provide project updates, announce a meeting, or solicit feedback through a survey.

    Email blasts are much less expensive than direct mail. The effectiveness of email stacks up favorably against direct mail campaigns. A well-designed email campaign, with a predictable publication frequency can be highly effective in building credibility and a trusting relationship with residents and interested parties. This trust and credibility gives PennDOT an opportunity to maintain an ongoing relationship with the individual.

Notes:

▸   Be aware that **not everyone has internet or email access**; therefore, other means of communication may be necessary in addition to the email blast including radio announcements.

▸   A collection of email addresses can be obtained through voluntary sign-up at public meetings or via the website and maintained in the **stakeholder list**. These addresses can be stored in a database and referenced by a web application or batch email process to deliver messages directly to stakeholders.

▸   These types of emails may be blocked through spam filtering, depending on email systems.

▸   Writing good subject lines is especially important, both to encourage recipients to open the newsletter and to reduce the probability that it will be confused with spam and deleted.

▸   Consider design and content when developing an email blast. Design content that is easily scanned by the reader is useful and quickly digested.

▸   Include **links to project pages** and other useful sites where additional information can be found to keep the email as short as possible.

▸   Make your privacy policy clear. State what you will and will not do with the information you collect.

f. **On-line Announcements**
    Similar to newspaper advertisements, announcements of project status, items of interest, public meetings, and other projects events can be made online.

Notes:

▸   If a **project website** is created, then an announcement can be prominently posted on the home page or on the district's home page. Note that project pages or websites must reside on the PennDOT website unless approval is received from the PennDOT Digital Director and Governor's Office of Communications prior to a separate domain's creation.

▸   Share links to online announcements through PennDOT social media accounts, such as Facebook, Twitter, etc. to convey information. To do this, coordinate with the press office. (Social media is further discussed beginning on page 49.)

▸ Look for opportunities for local communities, other organizations, or groups to post an announcement on their websites or share with their own social media accounts. Organizations can include planning partners, local governments, area newspapers, and civic or other stakeholder groups.

▸ The announcements can be simple text announcements or take the form of an eye-catching graphic.

g. Flyers and Posters
Flyers and posters can be used to get the word out quickly. They can also be used to supplement or complement other announcement techniques to better publicize PennDOT's activities.

Direct mail or other distribution of flyers is one way to get attention. Like newspapers, however, flyers are disposable. **Posters**, on the other hand, are visible to large numbers of people for long periods of time. They can be used in tandem with flyers to increase awareness of upcoming events.

Notes:

▸ One standard, letter-sized page should suffice for a flyer.
▸ Posters should be fairly large and easily readable, with as little text as possible.
▸ Highlight the following essential items in large, bold type:
  • The official project name and PennDOT logo
  • The date, time, and location of the event
  • Notice of access to people with disabilities and availability of translator services
  • Project website (if applicable) and,
  • A phone number and email address to contact for additional information.
▸ Use **bright colors** to draw attention to your flyer or posting, ensuring that it is easily noticed by passersby.
▸ Hang posters announcing public involvement activities in **visible public places** such as grocery stores, bus shelters, train stations, municipal buildings, post offices, public libraries, state and federal buildings, laundromats, community centers, schools, and churches. These places may have community bulletin boards specifically designated for announcements. Ask permission before hanging posters. Also, if possible, leave stacks of flyers near entrances and on countertops in stores and places where other free publications appear.

h. Variable Message Boards
PennDOT uses road signs for a variety of reasons to inform, warn, or direct the motoring public. Limited road signing can also be used as a public outreach tool. When utilized, all signs along Pennsylvania highways must meet PennDOT design standards. To ensure safety and compliance, coordinate with the PennDOT District Traffic Unit and with FHWA, if necessary.

2. PUBLIC MEETINGS

Personal interaction allows a relationship of real trust and cooperation with the public to be built. This relationship is essential to the realization of PennDOT's primary goal: to provide transportation improvements that respond to the needs of communities.

Public meetings should be held, when appropriate, at various stages during project development as a means to inform the public, to obtain information on the public's interests, concerns, priorities and perceptions, and to clarify issues and concerns in order to reduce misunderstandings and conflict. **Public meetings can be held in-person, virtually, or both**. Public meetings should be available to the local community at convenient times, at reasonably accessible sites that are in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. PennDOT will assist persons with disabilities to enable them to participate in any public meetings. **A sample Public Meeting Preparations Action Plan** and **a Public Meeting Plan Template** are found in *Appendix C* and can be modified for use in planning public meetings. This process differs by project and best practice is to coordinate this effort with the project manager.

TIPS FOR IN-PERSON PUBLIC MEETINGS

1. Be thoughtful in **choosing the meeting location**. Is it in the project area? Is it ADA accessible? Does it have enough space? Enough parking? Near public transportation/transit if needed for community attendance? If the meeting is in the evening, the facility should be safe and well-lit. Schools and community centers are ideal.

2. Determine if it is appropriate to incorporate virtual components of the public meeting to accommodate those who may prefer online participation.

3. Make sure your **meeting date** does not conflict with major holidays, other relevant holidays applicable to the project area community, or other major community events.

4. Pick your **meeting time** with consideration of who will be able to attend the meeting with regards to a workday. If expecting the general public to attend, consider scheduling the meeting in the 4:00 to 8:00 PM range. Some people may stop on their way home from work. Retired individuals may want to attend prior to rush hour and dinner time.

5. Place **visible signs** at the entrances and intersections to direct participants to the appropriate parking lot and building entrance. Do not assume people will know where to go once they get there.

6. Compile **talking points for public meeting staff** to review in advance of the meeting. Schedule a meeting or conference call with meeting staff to discuss the talking points. These points should include the schedule and other details of the project that the project manager feels are important to be consistent. Nothing will shoot down PennDOT's credibility faster than the public receiving conflicting answers to questions from different staff at the same meeting.

> **TIPS FOR IN-PERSON PUBLIC MEETINGS (CONTINUED)**
>
> 7. Figuring out the **appropriate level of staffing** for a public meeting can be tricky. There are risks for being understaffed – people may get frustrated that they have to wait a while to talk to staff. The risk for being overstaffed is that public perception may be that there are unnecessary staff standing around, and that PennDOT is wasting money paying those people to do nothing. It may be safer to err on the side of overstaffing, anticipating that some staff can be sent home if attendance is lower than expected.
>
> 8. Discuss **staff dress code** prior to the meeting so that all are on the same page. Consider dress code thoughtfully for the project area. Suits may be expected to be worn by staff in some areas of the state, but they may make staff in other areas seem unapproachable.
>
> 9. Consider whether there should be a **law enforcement presence** at a meeting. The project team will typically have a good sense of a project area and level of controversy to make this decision. If needed, the district should contact local law enforcement to request a uniformed officer(s).
>
> 10. Hold a project team **debriefing session** within a short period after a public meeting to discuss the outcome of a public meeting.

a. **Traditional Public Meetings**

Most PennDOT meetings are widely publicized and open to all residents within a project area. General public meetings allow PennDOT to interact with members of the community and bring together interest groups who might otherwise be isolated from each other. Consider integrating virtual components in addition to a traditional public meeting format in order to reach a larger audience.

Open houses are unstructured meetings which rely on one-on-one discussion of project issues. Citizens can look at a wide range of visual displays and proceed at their own pace through stations.

Formal meetings use structured programs to inform or solicit comments from the public. Typically, such meetings incorporate a PowerPoint or video presentation with a Q&A session.

Dual format meetings combine formal and open house elements into the same meeting. Typically, an open house or plans display will precede a formal presentation.

These meeting types have two broad objectives:

‣ To present general information regarding recent project developments, and

‣ To learn the community's views on all aspects of the project.

Ideally, all sectors of the public are represented at these larger public meetings. But in reality, individual community leaders and well-organized special interest groups can drown out the voices of average citizens, and hostile opposition parties tend to steer large meetings away from discussion into confrontation. Project teams must be prepared to cope with these difficult situations. Since large meetings are more conducive to problem identification than problem solving, PennDOT often seeks other ways to develop compromises and build consensus.

TIPS ON CREATING EFFECTIVE MEETING DISPLAYS

1. Include a **legend, scale, and North arrow** on all maps and aerial photographs.

2. Label **streets** on plans and aerial photographs. Remember that the public may need this information to get their bearings if they are not used to looking at this type of resource.

3. **Renderings** are preferable to engineering cross-sections when depicting the features of improvement alternatives.

4. Photos should be **large** and described with simple captions.

5. Use **common language** rather than technical jargon. Limit text to the bare minimum necessary.

6. Limit the **number of lines/layers** on design files. Use colors that are easily distinguishable. Keep in mind that some of the population is color blind when choosing colors.

7. Make the displays a **large enough** size that multiple people can view them at once. If you expect a large turnout, consider **duplicate boards** to allow for more viewing.

8. Consider how the display will look if shared **virtually**. Materials may need to be formatted differently when viewed on a device like a tablet or phone.

Public officials meetings are typically held prior to a public meeting. See the later section specifically discussing those meetings. Make sure that public officials are made aware of upcoming public meetings prior to the public notification so that they can answer constituent questions.

OPEN HOUSE FORMAT

Department personnel greet each participant at the entrance at a registration area with a **sign-in sheet**, briefly explain the format and purpose of the meeting, distribute handout materials, direct participants to exhibits, and point out other staff members who are available to speak with them in detail. The sign-in sheet should note that personal information will be kept private and not shared.

The **plans display** is the central focus of citizen participation and discussion in the open house format. A series of display boards presents pertinent project information. Display boards should follow a logical sequence – moving from general to specific information, and perhaps chronologically moving through project development. These are often organized into **stations**, spaced out enough to allow for comfortable viewing. Project team members are assigned to exhibits that pertain to their areas of expertise. Other personnel may be available to talk with those who have general or specific questions not relevant to the exhibits.

Notes:

▸ Participants can proceed through the displays at their own pace and come and go at any time during the meeting.

▸ There is **no formal presentation**. By using displays and speaking one-to-one with participants, the project team can effectively cover a wide variety of topics that could seem overwhelming when presented in a formal "lecture."

▸ Consider preparing **handouts** highlighting key topics. Participants may not have time to read the material at the meeting but may appreciate reading it later.

▸ Some topics warrant a more highly detailed presentation versus others. Consider creating a **brief video** (10-15 minutes) to cover a topic of special interest. This could be played at regular intervals throughout the meeting so that participants can watch it at their convenience.

▸ Participants are encouraged to discuss their reactions, concerns, and questions with any of the staff members. Typically, there are **comment forms** for attendees to complete and leave with staff or take home and mail back at their convenience.

▸ Staff members can take notes during discussions with participants, jotting down the names of those who offer opinions. A post-meeting **"debriefing" session** is important in evaluating an open house. A summary of verbal and written comments should be included in a **meeting report**.

TIPS ON GETTING PEOPLE ACTIVELY INVOLVED AT MEETINGS

1. Attendance and participation are not synonymous. Encourage people to do more than just view the displays; give them opportunities to actively contribute.

2. The most basic level of participation is conversation. Ask people for their views on the project and record their comments.

3. Participants view a project in terms of its effect on their own homes and surrounding environs. Create activities that capitalize on this natural tendency. For example:

   • Ask citizens to identify where they live on a map of the project area.

   • Allow people to label sensitive environmental features, community resources or other areas of concern on a map of the project area. Residents of the area are well aware of nooks and crannies that even the most thorough project team may have overlooked.

   • Offer individual maps to mark up or provide sticky notes for people to provide their own information or concerns.

4. If some express a concern about a resource or particular feature of an alternative, explore why they have that concern.

5. If a meeting is anticipated to possibly be controversial, consider developing meeting ground rules to manage the meeting so that interactions do not escalate.

FORMAL MEETING FORMAT

In a formal meeting, a project team representative delivers a **presentation** to the assembled citizens. Sometimes a panel of specialists addresses topics in their fields of expertise during the presentation. A question and answer session follows. The meeting leader recognizes those who wish to speak, passes questions to the appropriate panel members, and generally maintains order during this period. The mood of these meetings can be either formal or informal.

Notes:

‣ A formal presentation is the easiest way to ensure that all participants have access to the same basic knowledge about the project. This approach has proven especially useful in the earliest stages of project development, when introducing the project team and explaining the range of improvements to be considered and the types of studies required.

‣ Sometimes the most knowledgeable project team members may not be the most accomplished public speakers. Try to select **effective speakers and personnel with good interpersonal skills** when staffing a meeting. A relaxed presentation that seems spontaneous (yet does not ramble) requires either natural talent or extensive practice. If several people are presenting, make sure that everyone stays within predetermined time limits.

▶ There are some advantages to airing issues in **open question and answer sessions**. Some communities value the opportunity to hear the opinions and concerns of their neighbors. Public exchange of this kind often helps people to articulate their own ideas and may lead them to raise issues that they would not think to discuss on their own.

▶ PennDOT has found that informal meetings are more effective than such highly structured formats. However, formal meetings can be very effective for providing participants with a consistent message, background, or status.

▶ Consider inviting participants to view an **informational plans display** before the formal presentation. A plans display consists of graphics and text boards that illustrate and explain key concepts. The display should be on view at least two hours before the presentation. Project personnel should be available to answer any questions about the display.

▶ Consider **breaking** before the question and answer (Q&A) session, so the audience may review display boards, which may resolve any confusion and reduce the need to ask a question.

▶ Use language without technical jargon. Large-scale reproductions of maps or charts from the plans display could be used to illustrate important concepts. A **PowerPoint presentation or brief video** could also add variety to the presentation.

▶ The audience's attention begins to wane after 20 or 30 minutes, even when the presentation is accompanied by visual aids. Therefore, a **tight focus** is essential. Covering too many complex topics at one meeting leads to information overload.

▶ Consider preparing a **handout** that summarizes and graphically illustrates the material. This will reinforce the main points of the presentation and give the participants a place to record their observations as well.

Q&A CONSTRUCTIVE OR CHAOTIC?

• The size of the group and the collective attitude of the participants determine whether a Q&A session is fruitful.

• Depending on turnout and the number of individuals wanting to speak, time constraints may limit the number of participants whose comments can be addressed.

• The Q&A session is meant to be a free discussion of general issues. If one topic becomes the subject of debate, or one stakeholder group dominates the discussion, other important issues may not receive the attention they deserve.

b. Participation in Other Standing Meetings
Another meeting option is to participate in a non-PennDOT meeting as a means to reach the public. This is often a **practical option for CE projects** where the projects do not have significant impacts and keeps costs down by not holding a separate meeting. These meetings could be regularly held municipal meetings, such as a township supervisors meeting, a borough council meeting, a planning commission meeting, or a zoning hearing board meeting.

Notes:

▸ Agendas for these types of meetings need to be set in advance of the meeting. Make sure to understand those agenda deadlines and plan into your project schedule.

▸ Be specific for the agenda item as to what you want to discuss. For example, if a Section 4(f) de minimis finding is sought for a park impact, make sure that language is part of the agenda item. If it is not, the attempt may not be acceptable to FHWA as public notification.

▸ Consider appropriate ways to announce that a presentation will be conducted as part of a bigger meeting. This could be done through a press release, social media or other effective means.

▸ Provide the materials presented to the host of the meeting so that they can be posted online or viewed at a municipal office in advance of the meeting as well as afterwards. These materials also become part of their formal documentation of their meeting with the minutes.

c. Public Officials Meetings
Public officials meetings are an integral part of any project that has the potential to affect a community. These **briefings** encourage a free exchange of information among local elected officials, planning partners, and PennDOT. Typically, briefings precede large public meetings or hearings that local officials would be expected to attend.

In carrying out their responsibilities, these officials are on the "hot seat," often without information and the tools to make the necessary judgments expected of them. It is in PennDOT's best interest to provide local officials with all the data they need to discuss projects intelligently with their constituents. In turn, public officials provide PennDOT with information on transportation needs, the socioeconomic environment, sensitive community resources, local interest groups, and public opinions.

Notes:

▸ Identify key public officials and get them involved early in the process.

▸ Develop a working relationship with county and municipal officials, and regional, county, and local planning commissions- these contacts form the core group that is invited to public officials meetings.

▸ **State senators and representatives** may also be invited depending on the scope of the project or the agenda of the meeting.

▸ When notifying officials of a briefing, keep in mind the primary goal of the meeting and invite individuals who will most effectively accomplish this goal.

▸ Briefings are often held on the **day before or the day of a public meeting or public hearing**. For example, officials might be invited to come to the meeting facility in the late afternoon to preview the information to be presented that evening.

▸ Make sure that public officials are **made aware of public meetings** via public officials meeting invitations prior to the public being notified about an upcoming public meeting so that they can answer questions from constituents.

▸ In order to make the best use of public officials' time, give a short presentation, followed by a **question and answer** period. Highlight potential sources of conflict and relate how the officials may assist PennDOT in its efforts.

d. Special Purpose Meetings

Some sensitive, controversial, or localized issues are best handled in smaller groups. At special purpose meetings, discussion centers on very specific topics and PennDOT engages in joint problem solving with members of the interested or affected public.

By their very nature, special purpose meetings are exclusionary. To be successful, they require small groups of people who are committed to active participation. Citizens may even be hand-picked by PennDOT in consultation with community leaders.

It is essential to keep the process open. Consider permitting the general public to observe at special purpose meetings and/or report out any information gathered or conclusions reached. Take steps to provide minority and low-income populations with greater opportunities for involvement and access to information.

Special purpose meetings include:

▸ Focus groups
▸ Neighborhood meetings
▸ Workshops

At special purpose meetings, PennDOT might discuss efforts to avoid cultural resources with historic preservationist groups, identify access issues in consultation with farmers or business people, or generate ideas for alternative transportation modes with trail associations and bicycle clubs. Even more importantly, small group meetings allow PennDOT to interact on a more personal level with residents in the neighborhoods who would be most affected by transportation improvements. Make every effort to adapt presentations and displays to the group's level of knowledge.

FOCUS GROUPS

A focus group is a **research tool** that gathers public opinion. The market research industry has applied focus group research to glean opinions on everything from soap to political candidates. There are a number of uses for focus groups in transportation planning and the delivery of transportation projects.

In a focus group, a small number of selected individuals are brought together to discuss a limited number of questions on a single topic. The people who participate may be selected at random, selected to represent a particular homogeneous group, or selected

to provide expert opinion. The focus group discussion is led by a professional leader, who explores the participants' opinions in depth. The setting is **informal**, the mood spontaneous, the questions open-ended and the format free of criticism. The facilitator makes sure that everyone's opinions are aired and that no one dominates the group.

The content of a focus group discussion is analyzed to **identify major points of agreement and divergence of opinion** within the group and in comparison with other focus groups. The substance of these discussions can help identify user needs, define preferences, gauge reaction to policies, give representation to underrepresented groups, and supplement other citizen input. The input gained from focus group research is qualitative. It does not replace quantitative responses and cannot be scientifically used to project representative attitudes, but focus groups help to identify issues of concern.

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS

"Neighborhood meeting" is a generic term for a **meeting with a stakeholder group** (usually geographically based). The department may seek out and initiate informal, one-to-one communication with stakeholder groups, or express its willingness to meet with these groups at their convenience. This may require department participation in established community and faith-based events, fairs, festivals, and meetings.

Neighborhood meetings range in style from informal discussions in private homes to structured meetings at the township building. This category encompasses meetings with:

‣ Residents of a neighborhood, retirement village, or public housing facility
‣ The local business community (e.g., main street association, business district)
‣ Agricultural interests
‣ Individual property owners who would be affected by right-of-way acquisition,
‣ Groups of carpoolers, ride-sharers, or transit users traveling within a designated area
‣ Other interest groups like historical societies, environmental conservation groups, bicycle clubs, etc.

These groups and individuals may request informal neighborhood meetings with PennDOT to:

‣ Gather information on a specific topic, like the relocation assistance program
‣ Discuss community concerns about a proposed alternative
‣ Present a proposal developed by the citizens themselves
‣ Provide input for the development of enhancement or mitigation measures

Notes:

‣ If we wait for interested citizens to come forward, opportunities to head off conflict may be lost. Identify stakeholder groups in **scoping** and plan to meet with them throughout project development.

‣ PennDOT's available data on public outreach shows that we have historically been significantly less successful at engaging communities of color and individuals who identify as disabled. Developing relationships with a variety of trusted leaders in these communities can assist in later outreach and engagement.

‣ **Civic organizations** like the Kiwanis Club or Rotary Club sometimes ask PennDOT representatives to give brief presentations at their regular meetings. Such speaking engagements usually focus on general rather than project-specific topics.

‣ When **members of the community call a meeting**, they – not PennDOT – set the agenda. This is especially true of open town council sessions and municipal-sponsored formal public meetings. Our role is usually limited to presenting information and responding to questions, and moderators from the sponsoring organization will most likely facilitate any discussion. In some such situations, it may be inappropriate for PennDOT to conduct surveys, pass out newsletters or handouts, or gather names for the project mailing list. Never walk into someone else's meeting without a strategy. Always discuss the agenda with the sponsoring group in advance. Remember, you do not have to participate if the meeting is designed to put the department on the defensive.

‣ Do not hide the fact that you are meeting separately with a stakeholder group and make it clear that PennDOT is prepared to meet with any other group. It should not appear as if PennDOT is using neighborhood meetings to enlist the support of some groups to combat other, opposing groups.

‣ Sometimes it is appropriate to **discuss sensitive issues** with potentially affected stakeholders privately before releasing information to the press or the general public. For example, potentially affected homeowners should not learn that their property may be acquired by reading about it in the newspaper. Although the specifics of property acquisition may not be discussed until after the NEPA process is complete, the right-of-way process and procedures can be discussed earlier to help the potentially affected understand how the process works and what to expect.

WORKSHOPS

Workshops are **informal working sessions** that deal with a specific task or problem and aim at reaching a definitive goal or objective. A design workshop is a small group session that involves participants in structured activities aimed at generating ideas for the design of improvements, enhancements, and mitigation features. **Brainstorming and role playing** are just two of the many techniques that may be used to focus small group discussion of issues that concern interest groups or the general public.

Workshops are procedurally informal, but thematically structured. When setting the agenda for a workshop, clearly define the topics open for discussion and develop activities that will bring the group toward a satisfying resolution of the prominent issues. A workshop might be held to:

‣ Identify the community's transportation, development, and residential lifestyle needs

‣ Discuss how PennDOT might minimize potential impacts

‣ Assess participants' knowledge of the project and correct misinformation

‣ Facilitate understanding of complex studies
‣ Promote compromise among divisive interests and the department.

Although neighborhood meetings and workshops are discussed separately, in reality a workshop could be used to open discussion between the department and stakeholder groups in the community. A workshop could also gather a cross-section of community residents and local motorists to delve deeper into issues raised at larger public meetings.

Design workshops have been used in both preliminary and final design to:

‣ Identify sensitive natural, cultural, and socioeconomic resources
‣ Assess the community's values, its expectations regarding improvements, and its perceptions of potential impacts
‣ Get reaction to alternatives and allow citizens to suggest modifications
‣ Identify opportunities for enhancements such as bike lanes, pedestrian paths and landscaping
‣ Enlist participation in the design of such mitigation measures as noise barriers and agricultural access roads

Notes:

‣ Workshops should last **no more than two hours**. Limit PennDOT's introductory presentation to allow more time for activities and discussion.
‣ Consider selecting a **community chairperson** to facilitate discussion and record participants' input.
‣ Citizens who express an interest in attending, as well as recognized community leaders and public officials, should be directly invited. Try to limit personal invitations to 15 or 20 people per session, because the community at large should also be asked to participate. A group of 25 to 30 is optimal for such a workshop.
‣ **Color mapping** is the most commonly used technique for involving the community in selecting potential locations for new transportation facilities. Provide participants with topographical maps (or aerial photos) of the study area and an array of colored pencils and markers. Major landmarks, recognized neighborhoods, bodies of water, and street names should already be clearly labeled, and the boundaries of the study area should be clearly shown on the maps. Ask the participants to label other significant community features and to highlight areas according to usage (coloring parks and recreation areas green, for example). This could be done via a tablet or computer instead of on paper.

e. **Supplemental Virtual Public Outreach Formats**
Technology and the internet along with cultural shifts have changed the landscape of traditional public meetings. Shareware, wireless technology, and video/internet are just a few of the technologies leading the meeting revolution. Public outreach efforts can be expanded to include online public information meetings or web-based virtual meetings that may include PowerPoint presentations, video, or other interactive multimedia to

supplement in-person public meetings. Meeting transcripts, presentations, online quizzes and polls, related project information and display materials can be downloaded and reviewed prior to, and after the public meeting.

This is a substantial tool to bring an audience together from many different locations and present critical and/or project information to citizens who may have special needs due to a disability or have LEP when utilizing formats that provide support. With shared access, discussions can be conducted in real-time and are more collaborative and productive.

Keep in mind that **not everyone has internet access**, so know your project area and do not rely on virtual techniques as the only public involvement technique utilized.

Virtual public meetings can take many different formats. A sampling is listed below, followed by brief overviews:

‣ Web conferencing
‣ Webinar
‣ Webcast
‣ Podcast
‣ Telephone town halls
‣ Virtual public meeting

> **Appendix D Digital Public Invomement Guidance**
>
> Additional digital public meeting resources can be found in Appendix D.

Consider a format where the live examples below can be recorded and posted for viewing after the live date to maximize viewing opportunities. Note in the advertisement and during broadcast where the video will be posted later.

Dry runs of virtual public involvement should be held just as they are for in-person situations. Testing the technology is important to ensure the actual interaction goes as expected.

WEB CONFERENCING
Web conferencing is designed for **many-to-many interaction**. It can combine the ease of audio conferencing with the interactivity of video conferencing directly from a device. Each participant sits at their own device and is connected to other participants through an online application. This can be either a downloaded application on each of the attendees' device or a web-based application where the attendees will enter a web address to enter the live meeting or conference. With a few clicks, viewers can watch a presentation the minute it is submitted online.

WEBINAR
A webinar is a type of web conference. Although the direction of the presentation is **primarily one way** from the presenter to the audience, a webinar can be designed to be interactive between the presenter and audience. A webinar is live in the sense that information is conveyed according to an agenda, with a starting and ending time. The

presenter will lead the information being presented on screen, and the audience can interact and ask questions either by typing in or asking over a phone line/device micrphone.

WEBCAST

A webcast is **live online video streaming**. Essentially, webcasting is broadcasting over the internet. The broadcast of a public meeting live online is one option that works well if meetings must take place in different locations simultaneously. Citizens may attend the webcast public meeting at the broadcast location or in the comfort of their home or office. Attendees at the meeting location and those attending via a device may view project maps and materials, ask questions of project team members, and complete a comment form.

PODCAST

PennDOT does not create podcasts for projects, but there may be media or local stakeholder podcasts where interviews from department or project staff could be valuable as a means of disseminating project information. A podcast is a digital media file; a collection of files (usually audio and video) residing at a unique web "feed" address, that is distributed online using **syndication feeds for playback** on devices and personal computers. A podcast is distinguished from other digital media formats by its ability to be syndicated, subscribed to, and downloaded automatically.

People can "subscribe" to this feed. When new "episodes" become available in the podcast, they will be automatically downloaded. Unlike radio or streaming content on the web, podcasts are not real-time. The material is pre-recorded, and users can check out the material at their leisure, offline.

TELEPHONE TOWN HALL

Telephone town halls are **large-scale, live discussions via phone** that allow large numbers of people to listen in and interact with agency staff during the development of a project, and to participate in real-time polling. Telephone town halls can reach thousands of people through automated outgoing calls. Those contacted are invited to stay on the line, ask questions of staff, and provide input. Others may call directly through a publicized call-in number. Specialized vendors are available to handle the logistics of the process, including placing calls to phone numbers in a defined geographic area and managing a queue of callers who wish to speak. This technique utilizing phone lines instead of the internet accommodates rural residents with limited or slower internet service as well as persons spread across large regions.

VIRTUAL COMPONENT ALONG WITH AN IN-PERSON PUBLIC MEETING

The virtual component can be developed to go along with an in-person public meeting. This consists of the **availability of public meeting materials** (displays, handouts, and comment forms) on a project or PennDOT website for citizens to review anytime of the

day at their leisure. The virtual component may be available for a period of time following and/or leading into the traditional public meeting. More of this is discussed in the later Websites section.

BEST PRACTICE:
UTILIZING PENNDOT'S DISTRICT PUBLIC MEETINGS WEBPAGE

On the PennDOT website, every district has a webpage that includes "Public Meeting" in its menu on the right side.

Some districts post public meeting notices here, while others go as far as to post materials from the meetings to allow those who did not attend the meeting in person to be able to review and comment on the information.

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3. PUBLIC HEARINGS

The public hearing is an official, formal method for receiving public comments on the results of the environmental and engineering studies. *Chapter I* of this handbook contains more specific information on the legal requirements of a public hearing for **EA and EIS projects**, including information on comment period time frames and public notice content. This section provides general guidance on how to conduct the public hearing and make it a success.

A public hearing is **not a forum for debate**. Its purpose is to formally gather public and agency testimony before an alternative is selected for implementation. The public hearing is the culmination of a cooperative project development effort.

FORMAT

In Pennsylvania, PennDOT uses a hearing format that combines the **best features of the formal and open house public meeting formats**. This combined format includes venues for presenting testimony in conjunction with an opportunity to review plans and ask questions of the project's design team and right-of-way staff. With this format, hearing participants can clarify issues in the open house area before they speak in front of an audience, provide individual oral testimony, or provide written testimony in the formal hearing area. Project team members can address concerns in one-on-one discussions and perhaps diffuse tensions before testimony is given.

Public Hearing Objectives

Environmental disclosure: To ensure that the public is aware of the information contained in the environmental document.

Decision making: To allow members of the community to express their views on the project before an alternative is selected.

Public accountability: To provide a mechanism for addressing the public's questions and concerns.

To facilitate this format, set up an area for viewing plans and display boards, staffed by technical experts. Have **copies of environmental documents** available for review. Provide spaces for discussions with **right-of-way representatives** and, if appropriate, the viewing of a video.

Reviewing displays and talking with the attending technical experts prepares the public to provide informed testimony. The open house should be set up adjacent but separate from the formal hearing proceedings. Schedule the open house to begin an hour or more before the hearing. Announce the start of the formal session a few minutes before it is to begin and explain to the public that questions are not permitted nor are they responded to during testimony. The meeting room should provide the proper setting. **Auditoriums** are good for formal presentations, but do not allow for much interaction with the public. Chairs should be comfortable. Check out the acoustics beforehand. Bring all the audiovisual equipment you may need.

For projects with substantial public interest, consider having one or more additional stenographers available to take testimony in **small room settings**. Since many people fear public speaking, either out of shyness or anxiety about how their neighbors will react to their testimony, this format provides opportunities to present their comments in a quieter, private setting.

Provide a collection point for **written testimony** and instructions for submitting comments at a later date. Make sure the public understands that such testimony, taken outside of the formal session, is also transcribed to the public record.

The **public testimony** portion of the hearing should begin with a brief (less than 20 minutes) presentation by PennDOT, typically followed by testimony of public officials who are in attendance, and then by time limited testimonials from the public (typically five minutes) in the order that they signed the register to testify.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACCESSIBILITY

- Are primary entrances accessible?
- Are the facilities (phones, water fountains, restrooms) at wheelchair height?
- Is there parking for persons with physical disabilities?
- Is the meeting site accessible by public transit or paratransit?
- Is there circulation space available for wheelchairs throughout?
- Can the microphone be adjusted to wheelchair height?
- Is an interpreter available for people with hearing disabilities?
- Is there a Text Telephone available for use?
- Are handouts available in alternate formats?
- Is there a contact person identified to address accessibility questions?

PUBLIC HEARING PRESENTATION

Public hearings will be held at convenient times, at reasonably accessible sites. Hearings conducted by PennDOT will be in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. When requested, PennDOT will assist persons with disabilities to be able to participate in the meeting. Persons with limited English proficiency will be provided with translator services (in-person or over-the-phone) to enable them to effectively participate in the hearing. Contact Office Services to utilize existing contracts if translator services are needed.

At a public hearing, the district executive (DE) presides as the **moderator**. A formal **script** is drafted and reviewed by the project team prior to the hearing.

The moderator will provide an overview of information presented in the NEPA document including:

- A description of the project, including its purpose and needs
- A description of alternatives studied and their major design features
- A statement of the project's consistency with the goals and objectives of any local planning agency(ies)
- An explanation of the known or anticipated social, economic, environmental and other effects of the proposed project or alternatives
- A description of the preferred alternative, if determined, and reasons it was identified as such
- An explanation of the state's relocation assistance program and right-of-way acquisition process, along with an announcement of the name of the right-of-way representative and where the representative is stationed at the public hearing

Also, in accordance with Pennsylvania Act 120, Section 2002, the public hearing moderator will state that the NEPA documentation considers the project's effects on:

- Residential and neighborhood character and location
- Conservation, including air, erosion, sedimentation, wildlife, threatened & endangered species and general ecology of the area
- Noise, air, and water pollution
- Multiple uses of space
- Displacement of families and businesses
- Replacement housing
- Recreation and parks
- Aesthetics
- Public health and safety
- Hazardous and residual wastes
- Fast, safe, and efficient transportation
- Civil defense
- Economic activity

- Employment
- Fire protection
- Public utilities
- Religious institutions
- Conduct and financing of government, including the effect on the local tax base and social service costs
- Natural and historical landmarks
- Archaeological resources
- Property values
- Education, including the disruption of school district operations
- Engineering, right-of-way, and construction costs of the project and related facilities
- Maintenance and operating costs of the project and related facilities
- Operation and use of transportation routes and facilities

Coordinate with FHWA representatives in advance of the hearing to determine if a FHWA representative will speak to the public as part of the hearing. If the hearing is a joint hearing with USACE, a USACE representative will likely opt to speak for the USACE.

Another option in lieu of a full, formal presentation of the above information- provide one or a number of meeting handouts at the hearing. The moderator will identify the location of the meeting handouts and explain that these contain FHWA's and/or PennDOT's official statement.

Before opening the floor to the audience, the moderator must also:

- Explain the purpose of the hearing and why it is required
- State the opening date of the NEPA document review
- Cite the locations where the documents are available
- Provide the closing date for submission of written comments
- Describe how comments will be addressed
- Describe the procedures that will be used for receiving both oral and written comments from the public, noting that oral testimony will be limited to a specific amount of time (typically five minutes) and that the testimony can be provided publicly or privately in a separate room
- Present a general schedule for further project development

If necessary, to receive all public testimony, the hearing may be extended to **more than one meeting**. Try to plan ahead when two days of testimony may be required based on previous public interest and advertise for a two-day hearing. When this is not possible or the unexpected occurs, a second hearing date should be scheduled and advertised in the same manner as the first hearing date.

At the conclusion of the testimony, the moderator should mention that PennDOT will accept additional written statements from the public until the closing date of the comment period. Any correspondence will receive the same consideration as comments offered at the public hearing and will be addressed in the FEIS or in a comment response document if the project requires an EA.

PUBLIC HEARING TRANSCRIPT

One or more stenographers record the public hearing proceedings and produce a verbatim hearing transcript of presentations and oral testimony. Written comments are also accepted and incorporated into the public record. PennDOT's official statement, whether presented orally or contained in meeting handouts, will be included in the public hearing transcript. PennDOT will certify to FHWA that a public hearing was held and will forward a copy of the transcript to FHWA.

TIPS ON MODERATING A PUBLIC HEARING

1. **Rehearse** prepared script before the hearing. Be sure you know how to pronounce the names of officials and others you may introduce.

2. Try to make people comfortable. **Welcome them** and acknowledge the effort and interest in citizen participation. Acknowledge the special effort people might have made to attend in inclement weather.

3. Give those who wish to speak the opportunity to provide the **pronunciation** of their names on registration materials.

4. Remind participants that **time limits** have been established to provide everyone who registered an opportunity to speak.

5. You may delegate the job of **timekeeper** to another, but do not hesitate to cut off a speaker who has exceeded the time limit.

6. Allow speakers to make **additional comments** after all the registered speakers finish.

7. Firmly state that disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated. Intervention should occur immediately.

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4. POP-UP OUTREACH

Pop-up outreach is used as a direct way to **engage people where they already are**, using a table or booth at a high-density location to provide information and get quick feedback for a project. Also known as intercept outreach or "event tabling," pop-up outreach can take place wherever people congregate—this can include a farmers market, library, sporting event, shopping center, county fair, or other community event. This method can distribute project information and brochures, as well as incorporate a short survey, conducted verbally, or on a tablet or survey card.

Notes:

▸ Reach people who may not attend public meetings, yielding new perspectives

▸ Quick and convenient for participants

▸ Scalable, from a single event to many; new locations are easily added with existing materials

▸ Requires little lead time and no publicity

▸ Allows direct targeting of transportation facility users, such as transit passengers at a bus stop or rail station, cyclists at a bike shop, or truck drivers at a truck stop

▸ Interactions are typically brief, limiting the depth of the exchange

▸ Outdoor events are subject to wind and weather conditions

▸ Partner with organizations that are already holding scheduled events to leverage shared resources

▸ Choose high-volume locations where people are not in a hurry; consider captive audiences, such as people standing in line or waiting at a bus stop

▸ Keep lead questions or surveys short and simple — one or two questions that can be answered in under two minutes

▸ Use a sign-up sheet to gather names and contact information of people interested in further involvement

▸ Share event information on social media to enhance awareness

5. SOCIAL MEDIA

Similar to newspaper advertisements, announcements of public meetings and other project events can be made through social media. **Social media**, such as Facebook, Twitter, etc. can also be utilized to convey event information. Coordinate with the **PennDOT Press Office** to disseminate project information out through PennDOT's social media accounts.

Notes:

▸ The PennDOT Press Office can create a Facebook page dedicated to a single project with high public interest. This can assist with a continuity of information sharing through the design and construction processes.

▸ Facebook **event postings** allow interested parties to RSVP digitally and then receive a calendar reminder about the event through their private social media account. Event postings can also serve as a place to share project information prior to the meeting such as maps, renderings or other information.

▸ The announcements can be simple text announcements or take the form of an eye-catching designed piece.

▸ Also, look for opportunities to post an announcement through the social media accounts of **other organizations**, such as a planning partner, county, municipality or other stakeholder groups willing to share the announcement. Providing links to posts on PennDOT's social media accounts and/or providing jpg versions of graphics are often helpful ways to get others to share, retweet, or post the announcement.

▸ **Maintain a record** in the project file documenting how social media outreach was conducted for the project.

▸ The more **postings and shares** there are to the announcement, the more people see it and are made aware of its message.

6. SURVEYS/POLLING

The survey is a technique that allows us to measure the opinions and sentiments of the study area population. Surveys can be designed to test the public's knowledge of the facts about a project, but more often they are geared toward gathering opinions, attitudes and sentiments. Opinions are beliefs held with confidence, but not based on positive knowledge. These are subject to change as people learn more about a subject. An attitude is a general state of mind regarding some matter. Sentiments are attitudes based more on emotion than reason. We need to understand all three types of viewpoints.

Surveys are often used to:

▸ Increase public awareness of a project
▸ Gauge the public's expectations
▸ Rank the public's transportation needs
▸ Present alternatives and gather reactions
▸ Search for new design concepts
▸ Measure changes in the public's attitudes and opinions at various stages of a project

Notes:

▸ Participants must understand that **a survey is not a vote**. Make it clear that while their views are taken into consideration, PennDOT must weigh many factors in making its decisions.

▸ Great care must be taken to write survey questions that ask for meaningful input, are easy to understand, and do not slant toward a particular outcome.

▸ A systematic, population-wide survey can **give the "silent majority" a voice**. This technique allows us to reach those who may not choose to actively participate in public meetings, workshops, or advisory committees.

▸ A survey is a **very limited form** of public participation. Questions are asked and answered without a chance for in-depth discussion. A survey does nothing to satisfy the public's curiosity or to ease their concerns. **Never substitute a survey for active involvement**.

‣ A **self-administered survey** provides the respondent with time to think carefully before answering. Distribute questionnaires at general public meetings, workshops, and or other meetings, or make the survey available online. Unfortunately, the response rates for self-administered surveys are generally low. A 25-30% response rate is considered acceptable.

‣ **Telephone and personal surveys** tend to have higher response rates because people feel more compelled to respond to other people. Although these types of surveys can be expensive to conduct – often requiring the use of a market research firm – they offer another advantage: the surveyor may explain or rephrase questions that the respondent does not understand.

‣ A **randomly selected, statistically valid sample** is necessary to gather opinions that accurately reflect those of the population as a whole or those of a target group (like individuals with disabilities, for example). This type of survey is most effective in reaching the "silent majority" in a large study area population. If this is your goal, consider hiring an experienced firm that is qualified to design and conduct the survey and to analyze the results scientifically.

CRAFTING EFFECTIVE SURVEYS & QUESTIONNAIRES

- Define your objectives precisely. Ask yourself how you want people to react and provide input through the questionnaire. What do you want to know? How will the results be incorporated into decisions?

- Determine the type of information you want to collect. Be specific when formulating your questions.

- Develop a brief introduction that gives the reason for the questionnaire and instructions to complete it.

- Be straightforward and clear when creating questions. Use simple language and write questions in a way that cannot be misinterpreted.

- Limit the number of responses for each question. Make it multiple choice to simplify calculating the results.

- Try to limit the number of questions and keep the entire survey to one page. The length of your questionnaire will affect the response rate and willingness to participate in surveys in the future.

- Remember that it is the quality of the information collected – not the quantity – that matters.

7. INTERACTIVE MAPS

Use interactive maps to gather ideas for plans and projects from the public and display them online. Also called "**crowdsourcing**," this popular method gives participants a direct voice in project development. Users click on a map to point out the locations of transportation problems, unmet needs, or potential improvements, as appropriate. There are a variety of ready-to-use mapping platforms at different price points, or a custom tool can be created to meet specific needs. These platforms typically allow users to add symbols and a descriptive comment; some also allow them to upload photos and respond to other people's comments, enabling dialogue among participants.

Notes:

▸ Remember that the public, in general, are not used to reading maps. More people use Google Maps and Google Earth than ever but **remember who your audience is** for these products.

▸ Economical, off-the-shelf tools available

▸ Can engage thousands of participants at a **relatively low cost**

▸ Quick and convenient for users

▸ Display input in real time, providing **transparency**

▸ Requires **internet access** and comfort with maps and computer-based tools; as a result, participants may not be representative of the overall population (such as elderly, homeless, low income households, etc.)

▸ **Detailed, location-specific insights** about transportation issues and needs

▸ Organized display of public input

▸ Publicity is essential. Consider enlisting local media and utilizing social media to **share the map link**.

▸ Maps can be good visuals for the non-English speaking public, but consider limiting the amount of text that would need to be interpreted

▸ Encourage people to use the map during public or stakeholder meetings; designate a mapping station at an open house meeting

▸ Create a paper version of the map for use at pop-up events, or have tablets available

8. GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS) AND WEB MAPS

Geographic information systems (GIS) represent a **set of tools for analyzing and displaying spatial information**. GIS is a powerful medium for presenting site-specific environmental and socioeconomic information to the public. It can be used to present constraints mapping, viewshed modeling, and slope mapping. GIS applications can be used to present very specific, two-dimensional geographic information about an area. For example, use GIS in a small meeting with public officials and planners who have a need to examine and discuss in detail the available mapped information for a site.

A newer technology that is available for website applications are **web maps**. These GIS-based maps can be project-specific and have layers and features that can be turned on or off by a user depending on what they are interested in. Different base maps could be chosen as well (aerial vs. street mapping) to assist the public.

9. VISUALIZATION TECHNIQUES

Visualization is the creation of **visual imagery** with the intention of conveying concepts or designs to the masses. When a new transportation project is proposed, people begin to imagine how their community might be changed. Their first instinct is to visualize the changes. They look at plans and aerial photographs to understand the big picture, but what they are often concerned about is:

‣ How will the new facility look as they drive or walk through familiar places?

‣ How will the altered landscape appear?

‣ What will they see from the windows of their homes?

Even when people have an understanding of the physical space that will be used for a project, they may react differently to a proposal when they can visualize the texture of sound walls, the color of a steel bridge, the aesthetics of old-fashioned harp lights, or the enhancements of landscaping.

Today's public is aware of the technical advances that make it possible to visualize a new project before it is built. Visual renderings can present increasingly realistic depictions of how a building, bridge, or highway can fit into the existing viewscape. The public also equates technological sophistication with expense; however, there are many methods of helping people to see what is proposed that are still highly-effective and not costly. A picture is worth a thousand words. These techniques can also assist those with language barriers to understand a project vision.

a. Photo Renderings

This imaging technique allows graphic artists to add structural design elements, such as a bridge or enhancements like sound walls, decorative retaining walls or landscaping, to a photograph. The resolution of the modified image may be so fine it is barely perceptible as an enhanced photograph. Photo renderings are especially effective when an audience needs to see a "**before and after**" effect of a design.

b. 3-D Design

Designing in 3-D allows for the creation of **simulated models** of high accuracy and detail. Three-dimensional capabilities in computer aided drafting (CAD) can help avoid problems that are sometimes overlooked when using 2-D visualization techniques. In the design phase, 3-D models can form the foundation of the whole design process. The computer can generate a variety of views, altering the placement of lights, textures, shadows and shading to achieve photorealistic quality. Two-dimensional construction drawings, such as plans, sections, and elevations can all be extracted from a 3-D model.

c. 3-D Animation

One of the most powerful tools in 3-D presentation is computer-generated animation. This use of 3-D wire- frame models and photorealistic renderings allows for the creation of a computer simulated animation of a real world 3-D model of an area. For example, a user of this technology can drive down a highway, fly over a proposed project, see a 3-D overview of existing and future traffic patterns, or witness vehicle accident recreations.

d. Scale Models

Sometimes even the best graphic cannot adequately convey a project's features to the intended audience. Then, a technique that relies on 3-D visualization is needed. **Models of a project**, built to scale, offer a clear picture of a built project in context of existing surroundings.

Suppose that a new freeway interchange, located near a mixed residential and commercial area, will be built on fill and will be 35 feet higher than the existing surface streets. The new interchange with its noise walls and high mast lighting will alter the landscape. It might change the view that people have from their homes and the amount of light that reaches their properties. Local businesses that were once visible from the freeway may no longer be seen from the new elevation. "Flat art" (2-D) cannot capture the real space this project will occupy in the community. Building a model of the new project and soliciting the public's response involves citizens in a realistic evaluation of a proposal. The consequences of not helping them to visualize a project may include surprise, outrage, and organized opposition during and after construction. In central business districts of urban areas, models can help the public – including downtown interested parties – to visualize how transportation structures will be integrated into the city. The public may be pleasantly surprised to see how unobtrusively a new facility will exist alongside downtown buildings and green space.

Scale models can provide a **realistic depiction** of design elements, like the profile of a proposed roadway, which might be difficult for the public to imagine. Models, including those utilizing 3-D printers, can be built in-house, by architectural or consulting engineering firms, or freelance model-makers.

e. Videos

A well-developed video will not only attract, but also maintain an audience's attention. Many people have grown accustomed to receiving information in a **fast-paced, colorful, lively package** and may prefer such packaging to an in-person presentation.

Notes:

‣ Since an audience is more likely to recall what they have both seen and heard, consider using video to **introduce a project** to the public.

‣ Video can incorporate field views of the study area, including footage that illustrates the need for improvements, such as congestion or sharp curves; presentation graphics that summarize data; and mapping techniques that present alternative alignments for a proposed project.

‣ Reflect PennDOT's understanding of a community. Include footage of community landmarks, on-camera interviews with local residents, and other material that balance the engineering of the project with the community's values.

‣ Videos are a **public information** tool that may be used at public meetings,

> **Appendix D: Digital Public Involvement Guidance**
>
> Additional digital public meeting resources can be found in Appendix D.

workshops, field offices, and public hearings.

‣ Post videos **online** and share on **social media**.

‣ Scripting the video will require good communication and interaction between the department and the video production vendor. Identify the **objective, scope, and audience** of your video.

‣ Videos should be **captioned** for accessibility to those who are hearing impaired or do not have good audio on their computers.

‣ **PowerPoint** can be used to produce **simple videos** and offers a fairly user-friendly process to record each slide individually. Some viewers may be turned off by what they regard as "slickness." Viewers may make this interpretation when the use of an authoritative narrator, fancy graphics, an aggressive music track, and a persuasive tone in the video script combine to sell a project rather than to simply inform. Be thoughtful in the presentation.

‣ The **PennDOT Press Office** can provide guidance on producing simple videos in-house.

‣ Consider the platform in which the video will be viewed. The average person watches less than one minute of a video playing on social media channels.

MANDATORY PROCESS FOR PROJECT VIDEOS

• Contact the press office with video requests/ideas. Communications staff will determine whether the request can be met in other ways and whether the department will handle the request with internal staff/resources.

• Commonwealth Media Services (CMS) has right of first refusal per Management Directive: https://www.oa.pa.gov/Policies/md/Documents/220_1.pdf.

• If a request will move forward to CMS, you will receive a CMS request form to fill out. It is then submitted to the Governor's Office of Communications. If they approve of the project, it goes to CMS.

• If a project is rejected by CMS and a defined need still exists beyond department capabilities, the Creative/AV/Production Services (4400008677) contract through the ITQ MUST be used: https://www.dgs.pa.gov/Materials-Services-Procurement/Procurement-Resources/Pages/ITQ-Documents.aspx. Communications staff and the Bureau of Office Services will facilitate this process.

• Video should not be inherently done by existing consultant staff.

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10. **WEBSITES**

The website is an important resource in the public quest for facts, information and points of contact for a project. Any larger public outreach effort should include an **online presence**. Individuals can then access information at their convenience. A good website is a cohesive blend of design, multimedia, writing, interactivity, technology and usability.

When developing a website:

▸ Contact the communications office to determine if a website is needed. For most projects, creating a page on the district's subsite will suffice.

▸ Select a short URL that can be used for marketing purposes and contact the communications office to have this set up. This can be something like www.PennDOT.gov/ProjectName. Outline specific goals for the website

▸ Develop a site map

▸ Collect graphics, mapping and multimedia

▸ Outline/develop written content

> **Appendix D: Digital Public Involvement Guidance**
>
> Additional digital public meeting resources can be found in Appendix D.

Provide answers to questions such as:

▸ What is the goal of the project?

▸ When and where are public meetings?

▸ How will this project affect my concerns or issues?

Notes:

▸ **Keep content updated**. Nothing frustrates the public more than obviously old information.

▸ Keep in mind that there are sectors of the population who don't use the internet. Make sure there are other mechanisms for those individuals and/or communities to engage PennDOT on the project.

▸ Follow the **state design standards** for colors, fonts and graphics.

▸ Develop a **navigation scheme** (based on the site map) and keep it consistent throughout the site, and consider existing web conventions

▸ Optimize graphics to facilitate **rapid download time**

▸ Make sure that there are **no broken links**

▸ **Follow up** on comments submitted

▸ **Monitor web stats** and what pages people visit and how long they stay

▸ **Advertise** the project website; include the URL on all products

▸ **Maintain documentation** in the project file of when the website was updated and what edits were made at those times.

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BEST PRACTICE:
UTILIZING PENNDOT'S DISTRICT PUBLIC MEETINGS WEBPAGE

On the PennDOT website, every district has a webpage that includes "Public Meeting" in its menu on the right side.

Some districts post public meeting notices here, while others go as far as to post materials from the meetings to allow those who did not attend the meeting in person to be able to review and comment on the information.

This can be a great spot to include all upcoming meetings, as well as a spot to keep past meetings posted for some length of time. Remember to remove outdated materials, as the public will look to this for the latest information.

If it is determined that a separate website is necessary, digital staff will help facilitate this process.

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ONLINE FEEDBACK FORMS

Express forms are available from the digital staff that work with the Commonwealth's websites that provide an easy tool to collect form submissions online. These forms are secure, mobile-friendly, and maintain PennDOT's online brand.

When feedback is submitted, the commenter will receive a confirmation email. An email will also be sent to a predefined resource account as an alert that a submission has been received. See *Appendix D* for more information.

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11. BROCHURES

A brochure presents information on a specific topic in a compact, manageable format like a book or folded pamphlet. While a newsletter series provides time-sensitive reports on a specific project, brochures (which have a long shelf life) usually present background information about the transportation project development process or useful facts to guide drivers through construction.

General topics that might be covered in a brochure include:

▸ The steps for preparing an EIS, EA or CE
▸ Environmental regulations and the roles of the resource and regulatory agencies
▸ Public hearing procedures
▸ Information on noise analysis and mitigation
▸ Right-of-way acquisition and the relocation assistance program
▸ Types of construction or maintenance projects and estimated timeframes

‣ Contact information and website address if applicable
‣ Subject specific information – targeted at key issues for the project
‣ Special information (e.g., how to drive in a roundabout)

Notes:

‣ Brochures will be of little use unless they are read by the audience for whom they were produced. Consider how to **distribute** the brochures to the project stakeholders.
‣ Keep **convenience** in mind when designing brochures for distribution at meetings and hearings.
‣ Brochures are well-suited to presenting **maps** – from long, narrow corridors to panoramic study areas. A brochure "centerfold" also lends itself to the presentation of **charts, graphs, and photos**.
‣ **PennDOT Graphic Services** should be used in the creation of all graphics and publications. The district CRC can facilitate this process.

TIPS ON MAKING READER-FRIENDLY BROCHURES

1. Use **simple, direct, active language**.
2. **Avoid technical jargon and acronyms**. If you must use it, explain it in simple terms.
3. Use **bullets** and **short paragraphs** to facilitate reading.
4. Use **large, bold headings** in the text to introduce new subjects.
5. Use **different fonts, symbols, frames, ruling lines or shading** to set off items in the text that deserve special attention.
6. Incorporate **white space and graphics** to break up the monotony of text.
7. Make graphics simple and self-explanatory; use color wherever possible.
8. Provide **legends** for maps.

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12. NEWSLETTERS

Like newspapers, newsletters report on events and issues of interest in a timely manner. These publications can be as brief as one page and should not exceed six pages. Newsletters can be mailed or emailed to interested people or groups and also may be distributed as handouts at meetings and hearings.

When deciding whether to include newsletters in your public outreach program, consider:

‣ **The scope and anticipated length of the project**. Newsletters are most effective when published as a continuing series over an extended period of time.

▸ **The community characteristics of the study area.** Consider estimated literacy rates, whether languages other than English are spoken, diverse populations, where the community gathers, what groups in the community might be separated from the community as a whole (such as Plain Sect populations), etc. Depending on the community characteristics, additional project resources, such as translators, may be required.

▸ **District resources**. Community relations coordinators (CRCs) are skilled in the aspects of newsletter production, but not all CRCs have the time to personally prepare newsletters for every project. If the resources you need to produce a newsletter are unavailable in-house, consider using PennDOT Graphic Services or a consultant with expertise in graphic design and writing for the public. Final newsletter copy should be reviewed by the CRC.

Notes:

▸ Community groups, interested individuals, local officials, legislators, and the media form your newsletter readership. The project **stakeholder** list is the primary source of new "subscribers."

▸ Design **informative, readable, attractive** newsletters that will engage the interest of each distinctive audience.

▸ Keep in mind the **demographics** of the project area and tailor your approach to your target community. The concerns of rural farmers, for example, differ from those of urban professionals. Likewise, each community may respond differently to certain techniques for presenting information. The readership may include a large population of **non-English speakers**. PennDOT provides information to these audiences more effectively if newsletters are written in their own language.

▸ The people on your mailing list will look forward to receiving (via standard mail or email) the newsletter on a **regular basis**. The public outreach program should include a stated printing **schedule** for the project newsletter. As the project progresses, re-evaluate and revise this schedule.

▸ Publish when you have something important to communicate. Fairly sizable newsletters should be prepared at **major milestones** in preliminary design; for example, following the project needs analysis or alternatives analysis. If a project is progressing slowly, yielding little interesting news, send out **brief status updates** just to keep in touch.

▸ If you have received input from the public on various issues, acknowledge their contributions in the newsletter. Include the **results of surveys and questionnaires**, perhaps in chart or graph form.

▸ List concerns raised at public meetings and respond to them. A **Q&A format** allows you to carry on such a conversation in print. Based on input received through public meetings and correspondence, prepare a list of typical questions that define critical issues. Provide clear, succinct responses to these questions.

13. **MEDIA RELATIONS**

The news media's coverage of project-related events and issues keeps the public informed and, ideally, generates interest in project development. As guardians of the public interest, the media are particularly attentive to community concerns and potential controversies. When a segment of the public is dissatisfied with a project, the media will be sure to publicize the conflict. It is PennDOT's responsibility to provide the media with factual information that helps the public to fully understand the issues. A professional, cooperative relationship with the media is "good news" for your project and the department's overall reputation.

PennDOT CRCs/Press Office should be the voice of PennDOT to the media and will use press kits and press releases to package information.

These information sources not only report the facts, but also provide interpretation and analysis. News coverage amplifies and molds the public's perception of the department. The media, especially newspapers and online via social media, often critique our work and provide a forum in which members of the public can express their own views.

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MEDIA CONTACT

Notify the District Press Office/CRC when:

- You, or anyone in the district, are contacted by the media about a project.
- There is a public meeting where you anticipate the media will be present.
- Media inquiries indicate that an unanticipated story may be about to break in your district.

It is the CRC's responsibility to handle all media inquiries. Project managers and consultants should work with CRCs to ensure up-to-date and accurate information is available.

Project Managers should not be handling media inquiries without the involvement of the press office and should offer to get the media in touch with the district CRC before answering any questions.

</div>

a. **Press Release**

Press releases are written announcements of upcoming events or recent developments in a project. Whenever possible, try to release information a week before an upcoming media event, to accommodate deadlines and to give reporters the opportunity to research a story in advance. A release should be sent out at least two weeks in advance of public meetings in order to give the public fair notice. Releases should be distributed to all the major print, broadcast and online media. Email news releases to ensure quick receipt of your message.

Some newspapers may print releases verbatim, so a journalistic style (AP Style) is needed. Reporters always put the most important information in the first few paragraphs because editors tend to cut stories from the bottom. This is known as the "inverted pyramid" style. Pay particular attention to your lead (first) paragraph; it should grab the reader's attention. Remember to include "conversation"; that is, quotes from PennDOT representatives. All press releases must be approved by and distributed to the media by the District Press Office.

The District Press Office can provide the needed wording and other important aspects of the release, including the logo and dateline at the top. The Project Manager should work with the District Press Office to prepare the release.

Elements of PennDOT press release style include:

- Single spacing
- Short sentences and paragraphs
- Active voice
- Common language rather than technical jargon
- ### centered at the end of the release
- Never split a paragraph between pages. Center the word "More" at the bottom of the page when you are continuing.

b. **News Conference**
A news conference should only be called when you have **real news to report**. Some possible reasons for holding a news conference include announcing a significant new project; announcing substantive changes to a project schedule; or addressing an immediate crisis, such as a construction accident or hazardous waste issue.

News conferences should only be scheduled and held in coordination with the **District Press Office** who can help invite the media and other stakeholders through PennDOT's formal media advisory process.

Notes:

- News conferences should be **timed carefully**. Mondays are often days when the media are looking for stories. Avoid weekends and holidays when there are fewer viewers, listeners, and readers who will be exposed to your news. Also try to avoid "heavy news days" when you will be competing with other known planned events and major breaking news.

- The **location** of your news conference is also important. Choose a site that is convenient for the media and that also makes sense for the story. Consider the appropriateness of the visual backdrop you are creating.

- One or more speakers typically present a **short statement** and a **question-and-answer session** follows. Try to anticipate the questions that will be asked and practice your responses beforehand. Consider whether large graphic displays, slides or a short video would be useful visual aids.

▸ Prepare **press kits** that contain a transcript of the speaker's statement, along with general background information to all participants. This helps to ensure that the statement will be quoted accurately. The District Press Office can help determine what should be included in the press kit.

▸ Invite **all appropriate local officials, and state or federal agency representatives** to attend.

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN A PRESS KIT

1. News release
2. Text of spokesperson's prepared statement
3. Who's who on the project team
4. Reproducible maps and graphics that present simple interpretations of technical data
5. Public relations materials such as brochures and project newsletters
6. Project history and overview

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14. **CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEES**

A long-time staple of representative public outreach, **citizens advisory committees (CACs)** are comprised of 1-2 representative members of various groups or interests likely to be affected by a transportation project or proposal. Roles and responsibilities of the CAC members should be carefully defined. CACs help to identify problems and to articulate and clarify key issues. By meeting regularly to discuss and resolve project issues, CACs can provide guidance and direction to the department.

TOP 10 OBJECTIVES OF CACS

1. Advise PennDOT on issues within the community, including those of underrepresented and vulnerable populations.

2. Convey the concerns of local organizations, governments and businesses to the project team.

3. Relay information and proposals presented by the project team back to community groups.

4. Evaluate transportation deficiencies and needs and recommend priorities for transportation improvements.

5. Strengthen public understanding of the project development process and its regulatory framework.

6. Discuss project progress, work efforts and activities.

7. Develop solutions collaboratively and build toward a CAC-recommended course of action.

8. Facilitate broad-based public involvement.

9. Ensure that information is understandable to the public.

10. Provide continuing visibility and credibility for the public involvement program.

Notes:

▸ To be effective, a CAC must include people who **represent the varied and often divergent interests in the community**. Membership should fairly represent the concerns of planners, local government officials, environmentalists, business organizations, neighborhood groups, different transportation modes, historic preservation groups, the elderly, individuals with disabilities, and other diverse interests.

▸ **Community leaders and influential persons** can be included among the members. However, be aware that a CAC may function best when elected officials are not members. The citizens may then be more receptive to an open discussion.

▸ Membership in a CAC does not require participants to have sophisticated communication skills or prior specialized knowledge.

- ▸ **Members** are generally selected in one of two ways. One way is to carefully identify all stakeholders, including the general public. The other way is to identify key interests and allow these groups to appoint their own delegates to the committee. Keep the number of delegates limited to 1-2. However, monitor their choices to ensure that the committee is not dominated by like-minded associates and followers. If that happens, go back to the group and request a more balanced representation, if it is known that it exists. Once a core group is established, others may be invited to serve on the committee at any time.

- ▸ Appoint additional members to represent any new interests that develop in the community as the project progresses. The general public may regard a CAC with suspicion if its membership does not **keep pace with changes in the community**.

- ▸ Membership in a CAC should generally range from **10 to 35 people**, including project team members and, if appropriate, a facilitator. Since smaller groups better promote discussion between members, a large CAC may be divided into **subgroups**. These subcommittees may explore specific issues and hold meetings between the regular sessions of the CAC. However, holding separate meetings limits interaction between interests. Develop procedures for bringing these issues back to the table for discussion by the whole committee.

- ▸ A CAC is an advisory body with **limited power and authority. Establish roles and responsibilities.** This can be defined in a charter that is signed by all members. All members should understand that, while serious consideration is given to the group's input, FHWA, with PennDOT, is responsible for making decisions and setting policy.

- ▸ **Ground rules** should be established so that there is a general agreement in the group on how the committee and its individual members will function.

- ▸ The CAC meeting **may or may not be open to the public** but only CAC members may participate in discussions, except during a designated public comment period.

- ▸ A **technical advisory committee (TAC)** may be established if technical advice is sought. A TAC is comprised of a small number of members from the department and community who have recognized technical knowledge and expertise on transportation and planning issues.

- ▸ A **task force** may be organized for the purpose of examining/advising on a specific issue.

- ▸ The most complex projects may need a coordinating committee to harmonize the activities of the other groups. A **coordinating committee** consists of a small number of representatives from other committees. The committee's chief role is to facilitate communication among the groups.

15. PROJECT OFFICES OR DROP-IN CENTERS

Project offices are **temporary offices** established in the community where a project or issue has the potential for significant impact, such as a complex or very large project with multiple alternatives. They offer the public an ongoing, open forum for both individual discussion and group meetings. It provides a setting for frequent walk-in community involvement, a departure from the traditional emphasis on "public events." A project office for public involvement purposes differs from and should not be confused with a construction field office, which is used to administer the construction contract.

Notes:

▸ Project offices allow PennDOT to take a project more directly **into the life of the community**. Interested citizens can stop by to get information at their leisure and get explanations in a more relaxed, comfortable setting.

▸ Project offices allow PennDOT to reach groups that may be **under-represented** at public meetings. This is especially important when the affected community is large or populated by cultural groups, such as the Plain Sect, which do not typically participate in such public events. These "outposts" allow for informal interaction with local residents, commuters, and other users of transportation facilities.

▸ Project offices enable **two-way communications**. They should be used to disseminate information and document public opinion. Project offices distribute brochures, maps and project updates; provide access to internet resources; and display large maps and plans. Project offices can also serve as reference centers, housing copies of environmental documents, project newsletters, project videos and relocation information.

▸ During a project's design, project offices also offer the opportunity to **solicit and document public comments**. Visitors can be asked to complete comment forms, and project office staff can maintain a written record of public contact, including phone calls. This documentation will enable tracking of issues to be able to respond accordingly.

TIPS ON PROJECT OFFICES

1. A project office can serve as the community base or headquarters for implementing a public involvement program. Locate the office in a highly visible part of the community to be convenient to the largest number of people. Consider locations that are accessible, visible, and that provide ample parking and/or are near transit stops.

2. Project offices can be stationary (an office or commercial location) or mobile (a trailer).

3. As the focal point for participation in the study, it can be a local meeting place for workshops, task force meetings, open houses or other events.

4. Department and consultant staff can use it as a base from which to conduct fieldwork.

TIPS ON PROJECT OFFICES (CONTNUED)

5. The project team can staff a toll-free project information phone number located in the office.

6. A project office can operate for a substantial duration of the design or construction phases or it can remain open only for a short period of time – perhaps preceding some major procedural event like a public hearing. Keep an office open during the period in project development when you expect neighborhood interest and anxiety to peak.

7. Consider holding one or more publicized open houses at the project office. Plan them to be relaxed, informal events. Advertise using other techniques as described in this handbook.

8. Adjust the hours of operation to the needs of the community. Advertise and maintain posted hours.

9. Staff the project field office with people who are capable of answering questions and soliciting opinions from the local community. It is important to present qualified staff members who can explain plans and programs and make a good impression on the community.

ACRONYMS

ACHP - Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

ADA - Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

AASHTO - American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials

BRPA - Bridge and Roadway Programmatic Agreement

CAC - Citizens Advisory Committee

CAD - Computer Aided Drafting (Design)

CE - Categorical Exclusion

CEE - Categorical Exclusion Evaluation

CFR - Code of Federal Regulations

CRC - Community Relations Coordinator

CRP - Cultural Resource Professional

DEIS - Draft Environmental Impact Statement

EA - Environmental Assessment

ECMS - Engineering and Construction Management System

ECMTS - Environmental Commitments and Mitigation Tracking System

ED - Environmental Documentation

EER - Environmental Evaluation Report

EIS - Environmental Impact Statement

EJ - Environmental Justice

EMS - Emergency Medical Services

EPDS - Environmental Policy and Development Section

FEIS - Final Environmental Impact Statement

FHWA - Federal Highway Administration

FONSI - Finding of No Significant Impact

FRA - Federal Railroad Administration

FTA - Federal Transit Administration

GIS - Geographic Information Systems

HDTS - Highway Design and Technology Section

LEP - Limited English Proficiency

MPO - Metropolitan Planning Organization

NEPA - National Environmental Policy Act of 1969

NHPA - National Historic Preservation Act of 1966

NOI - Notice of Intent

NOITE - Notice of Intent to Enter

PE - Preliminary Engineering

PEL - Planning and Environmental Linkages

PennDOT - Pennsylvania Department of Transportation

PI - Public Involvement

PR - Public Relations

Q&A - Question and Answer Session

ROD - Record of Decision

RPO - Rural Planning Organization

SHPO - State Historic Preservation Office

TAC - Technical Advisory Committee

TIP - Transportation Improvement Program

USACE - United States Army Corps of Engineers

USC - United States Code

APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY

A

Act 120 - A Pennsylvania Legislative Act passed on May 6, 1970, which in part created the PA Department of Transportation and granted it certain powers, duties, and responsibilities. The act also orders the Department of Transportation to coordinate highway and transportation development projects with other public agencies and authorities. Section 2002 of the Act states that the Department must issue specific findings whenever lands from recreation areas, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, historic sites, forest, wilderness, gamelands, and public parks are needed for highway or transportation purposes.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) - Passed in 1992, this federal law prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in the services, programs, or activities of all state and local governments. Under the provisions of ADA, PennDOT must take steps to make all public involvement activities related to the transportation project development process accessible to persons with disabilities. This includes providing services and/or auxiliary aids to those with special needs.

B

Brainstorming - An exercise which encourages participants to voice new ideas and recommendations by spontaneously suggesting as many ideas as possible in a certain time frame without stopping to analyze or comment on them.

Block Ads - Also known as "display advertisements," these print advertising tools combine text and graphics to convey information about large-scale public involvement activities such as general public meetings and public hearings.

Brochure - A brief informational pamphlet that describes a particular facet of a project (e.g. project history, regulations, the transportation project development process). Brochures can be distributed at public meetings, hearings, or workshops.

C

Categorical Exclusion (CE) - 1. A classification given to federal aid projects or actions that do not have a significant effect on the environment either individually or cumulatively. Categorical exclusions do not require extensive levels of environmental documentation. 2. The written documentation to support a class of action that satisfies federal criteria describing non-significant impacts.

Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) - A group of residents, community leaders, and public officials called together by the agency to represent the ideas and attitudes of the study area public. The CAC represents community interests and contributes valuable information to project sponsors about the location, design, and implementation of proposed transportation improvements.

Color Mapping - A workshop technique in which participants are given a topographic map and asked to label significant community features and highlight areas according to usage.

Comment Period - Usually two weeks or longer during which a document is reviewed by agencies and the public, who may submit comments.

Community Relations Coordinator (CRC) - A representative from the Department responsible for maintaining citizen awareness and participation throughout the Department's projects and activities.

Consultant - An individual, partnership, or firm with qualified expertise in engineering or environmental disciplines that is contracted by the Department to provide technical services for design and study purposes.

Cooperating Agencies - Federal agencies with jurisdiction by law or special expertise related to a project. Other federal, state, local, and tribal agencies may be invited to become cooperating agencies as circumstances deem appropriate.

Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) - The agency responsible for the development of national environmental policy and the oversight of federal agencies implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The CEQ was created by NEPA.

D

Debriefing Session - A meeting at which a work group or study team discusses the outcome of a public meeting, presentation, or some other activity where studies or proposals related to transportation development are reviewed; usually takes place within a short period following a scheduled event.

Department - Pennsylvania Department of Transportation

Display Advertisements - Also known as "block ads," these print advertising tools combine text and graphics to convey information about large-scale public involvement activities such as general public meetings and public hearings.

Dual Format Meetings – A form of public involvement which combines formal and open house elements. Typically, an open house or plans display will precede a formal presentation.

E

Email Blast - A message sent all at once to a large mailing list to convey a message, provide project updates, announce a meeting, or solicit feedback through a survey. Email blasts are much less expensive than direct mail and the effectiveness of email stacks up favorably against direct mail campaigns.

Environmental Assessment (EA) - A public document that analyzes the environmental impacts of a proposed federal action and provides sufficient evidence to determine the level of significance of the impacts. An EA determines if an EIS or a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) should be prepared.

Environment Documentation (ED) – The documentation required by PennDOT for 100% state-funded projects that do not have a significant effect on the environment. This would include projects that would otherwise qualify as a CE.

Environmental Evaluation Report (EER) - The documentation required under PA Act 120 for 100% state-funded projects that have the potential to significantly affect the environment. This would include projects that would otherwise be an EA or EIS.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) - The detailed statement required by NEPA when an agency proposes an action that significantly affects the environment.

Environmental Justice - Efforts to avoid disproportionately high and adverse impacts on minority and low-income populations with respect to human health and the environment.

F

Facilitation - A process in which a neutral guide (a facilitator) works collaboratively with a group to accomplish a specific task or reach a certain goal, without making substantive comments or providing input.

Fact Finding - A method of resolving disputes that draws upon information provided by the disputing parties, as well as independent research by the fact finder who recommends a resolution. This is usually a non-binding method of conflict resolution.

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) - An agency of the U.S. Department of Transportation responsible for carrying out federal highway and transportation mandates through a network of regional offices and a division office in each state.

Field Office - A temporary or permanent office established at an accessible location in the project community which is designed to facilitate active communication between project personnel and the affected public.

Final Design - The development of detailed working drawings, specifications, and estimates for approved transportation improvement projects. Final design can begin once environmental clearance, that is NEPA approval, is obtained.

Focus Group - A group of individuals, typical of a particular constituency, gathered together to discuss a specific topic, subject, or item in order to generate a clear image or understanding of the groups' perceptions of the subject. The focus group responds to a set of ideas in order to give a sense of how the larger constituency is apt to respond.

Formal Meetings - A form of public involvement which uses structured programs to inform or solicit comments from the public. Typically, formal meetings incorporate a PowerPoint or video presentation with a question and answer session.

G

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) - A set of tools for analyzing and displaying spatial information. GIS is a powerful medium for presenting site-specific environmental and socioeconomic information to the public.

I

Impacts - Positive or negative effects upon the natural or human environment resulting from transportation projects.

Information Lines - Telecommunication devices which are used by the public to acquire information or forward comments and opinions. Examples include toll-free telephone hotlines, electronic mail systems, electronic town meetings, etc.

Interest - A basic underlying concern which a party seeks to address.

Interested Parties - Citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation users and employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other parties, such as Native American Tribes.

Issue - The substantive matter about which an agreement is needed.

M

Mailing List - A list maintained by the public involvement team containing the names and addresses of persons or organizations desiring information or notification about project activities.

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) - Required by federal law in urbanized areas of 50,000 or more people in population, MPOs develop and maintain a Long Range Transportation Plan of at least 20 years and a Transportation Improvement Plan that covers four years. MPOs are supported by federal and state planning funds. MPO members include local elected officials, representatives of the major modes of transportation, PennDOT, and other transportation stakeholders.

N

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) - Federal legislation that requires states to document the environmental impact of transportation projects. To comply with NEPA, PennDOT's transportation project development process has been developed to address all potential environmental, social, cultural, and economic impacts of a proposed transportation project before decisions are reached on design. Public involvement is an integral component of the NEPA process.

Negotiation - A solving process between two or more parties used to resolve differences by making concessions and searching for new alternatives.

Neighborhood Meeting - A special purpose meeting held for a specific neighborhood or community that will be, or has the potential to be, affected by the project.

Newsletter - Periodic informational publications that announce upcoming events and outline important issues throughout the development of a project. Generally, newsletters are mailed to interested parties, and also may be distributed at public meetings.

Notice of Intent to Enter Letter - A written letter sent to property owners when there is a need to access a property for studies, survey, etc.

O

Open House Meeting - An informal public meeting usually consisting of informational tools such as project display boards, brochures, and audio/visual presentations to convey project information. PennDOT and consultant personnel are on hand to answer the public's questions.

P

Participating Agencies - Agencies with an interest of some kind in a project. They may be federal, state, or local; but must be an "agency."

PennDOT Connects - An approach to enhance local engagement and improve transportation-project planning, design, and delivery. This approach expands PennDOT's requirements for engaging local and planning partners by requiring collaboration with stakeholders before project scopes are developed. PennDOT Connects aims to transform capital and maintenance project development by ensuring that community collaboration happens early, and that each project is considered in a holistic way for opportunities to improve safety, mobility, access, and environmental outcomes for all modes and local contexts.

Planning Partner - An agency or organization working together to achieve the same goal as PennDOT throughout the project planning process, including meaningful public involvement while completing transportation improvements.

Plans Display - A public exhibit of graphics depicting pertinent project information usually available at public meetings, open house meetings, and public hearings.

Position - A particular strategy adopted to achieve the interest, or to attempt to identify and satisfy interests.

Preliminary Design - The engineering and environmental studies associated with the development and comparison of alternate locations, alternate alignments, detailed analysis, ongoing public and agency interaction, project review, and final selection of a project alternative. Preliminary design occurs concurrently with the NEPA process and concludes with environmental approval, which is NEPA approval.

Press Kit - A packet of information distributed to members of the media for the purpose of providing them with up-to-date detailed information on a particular project.

Press Release - A written announcement to the media of an upcoming event or recent development.

Project Manager - The supervisor of the overall process of planning, developing, or implementing one or more phases of a given project.

Project Team - The group of professionals representing specific disciplines who work together for a designated period of time to perform the tasks in the development of a project. For a transportation project, a project team consists of the Department and its consultants, PennDOT Central Office, FHWA, and cooperating agencies.

Public - The members of the general community including residents, business owners, civic associations, special interest and minority groups, and local governments and their elected officials.

Public Hearing - The official method for gathering public comments on project alternatives and EAs or EISs. The format of this hearing may be formal or informal and the purpose is to afford the public the fullest opportunity to express support or opposition relevant to a transportation project in an open forum. A verbatim record (transcript) of the proceedings will be part of the project record.

Public Involvement Plan (PIP) - An outline of activities and practices which can be used to assimilate the public's knowledge, viewpoints, and preferences into project development.

Public Meeting - An informal meeting held by the Department at any level of project development to provide the public with updated information.

Public Officials Meeting - Conducted by transportation officials, this meeting is held to inform and advise local public officials and other governmental authorities of particular details and schedules associated with a given project.

Public Relations - The art and science of evaluating public attitudes, identifying the policies and procedures of an individual or an organization with the public interest, and planning and executing a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance.

R

Record of Decision (ROD) - Issued at the end of the EIS process. The ROD explains the agency's decision, describes the alternatives the agency considered, and discusses the agency's plans for mitigation and monitoring, if necessary.

Rural Planning Organization (RPO) - An organization that identifies local transportation needs, conducts planning, assists local governments, and supports the statewide transportation planning process in non-metropolitan regions of the state. RPOs can be designated as a method for formalizing the engagement of officials from areas with a population size less than 50,000 as they incorporate rural transportation needs in the statewide transportation planning process.

S

Scoping - The process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to a proposed action.

Section 2002 – Section of the Administrative Code of 1929 defines the powers and duties held by PennDOT. Act 120 of P.L. 356 amended Section 2002 in 1970 to add requirements to address environmental impacts from transportation projects and serve as a state counterpart to Section 4(f). Section 2002 applies to all PennDOT transportation projects.

Section 404 of the Clean Water Act of 1972 (as amended 1977) - The act requires permits for the discharge of dredged or fill material into non-tidal waterways, adjacent wetlands, isolated wetlands, forested wetlands and lakes. The USACE and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) jointly administer the Section 404 Permit Program. The USACE has the sole authority to issue or deny these permits, while the EPA assists in the development of the program's environmental standards and is responsible for enforcement along with the USACE. In addition, the EPA can veto the USACE's decision to issue a Section 404 permit.

Section 4(f) – A section of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966 stipulates that the Federal Highway Administration (and other Department of Transportation agencies) cannot approve the use of land from publicly owned parks, recreational areas, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, or public and private historical sites unless there are no prudent and feasible alternatives to using those resources, and the proposed project plans include all possible planning to minimize harm to the property or the project has a de minimis impact on the property. Approval can be granted for de minimis findings.

Section 106 – The section of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 which governs the identification, evaluation, and protection of historical and archaeological resources affected by federal transportation projects. Principal areas identified include required evaluations to determine the presence or absence of sites, the eligibility based on National Register of Historic Places criteria, and the significance and effect of a proposed project upon a National Register-eligible or listed site.

Stakeholder - An individual or group with an interest or investment in the way an issue is resolved.

Study Area - A designated geographic area that has been determined to be adequate in size to evaluate engineering and environmental information pertaining to the development of a transportation project.

Survey - A method of collecting data and gauging public attitudes about a proposed project. Surveys are primarily conducted through mailed forms, handouts at public meetings, or sessions of questions over the phone.

T

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) – A group comprised of a small number of members from the Department and community who have recognized technical knowledge and expertise on transportation and planning issues.

Task Force - An offshoot of the CAC composed of representatives from the major interest groups in a project area. Its goals are to guide the project team throughout project development, solve problems in a collaborative fashion, and build consensus on a course of action.

Transcript - A typed record, usually prepared by a certified stenographer, providing a verbatim account of the official proceedings that take place at all public hearings and some public meetings. This transcript will be made a permanent part of the project record.

W

Workshop - An informal working session at which individuals are given information about specific project issues and asked to generate possible solutions and recommendations.

APPENDIX B

PENNDOT PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT/PUBLIC HEARING PROCEDURES

**PennDOT Public Involvement/Public Hearing Procedures
for the Preliminary Design, Final Design, and Construction Phases of the
Transportation Project Development Process for Federal-Aid Highway Projects
(March 2021)**

1.0 Project Scoping

Projects requiring an environmental impact statement (EIS) will use a scoping process to coordinate with appropriate federal and state agencies to identify the significant issues of a project and the alternatives to be studied. As part of project scoping following coordination with agencies, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) will hold a scoping meeting open to the general public. The meeting could be in-person or held virtually. A notice of the scoping meeting will be made through a press release as well as at least one other means of advertisement such as direct mailing, email blasts, social media, or other media, for example an advertisement in a newspaper of general circulation within the study area of the proposed project. It should also be announced in the notice of intent for the project published in the Federal Register. The public scoping meeting serves as an informational exchange between PennDOT, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)/Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and the public.

On projects of a lesser scope, such as those requiring an environmental assessment (EA) or categorical exclusion evaluation (CEE), scoping with FHWA/FTA and appropriate federal and state agencies will be initiated, if appropriate, to discuss a proposal and to gain assistance in determining the areas of concern.

2.0 Definition of Project Purpose and Need and Range of Alternatives

An opportunity for public involvement in defining the purpose and need and the range of alternatives is required for a project requiring an EIS. PennDOT may hold two separate public meetings at appropriate times in the project timeline, or this may be accomplished by utilizing other public involvement techniques noted in section 5.0.

3.0 Section 4(f) and Section 2002/PA Act 120 De Minimis Findings

For a de minimis finding under Section 4(f) of the USDOT Act of 1966, public notice and an opportunity for public review and comment is required concerning the effects on the protected activities, features, or attributes of the property. This is also necessary to satisfy Section 2002/PA Act 120. This requirement can be met in conjunction with other public involvement activities conducted for a project, such as a public meeting as long as the advertisement for the meeting and meeting materials specifically call out Section 4(f) and ask for comment on the de minimis finding. A public meeting should not be held just for purposes of a de minimis finding; this requirement can also be met using other public involvement techniques, as noted in section 5.0.

4.0 Public Meetings

Public meetings will be held, when appropriate, at various stages during project development as a means to inform the public, to obtain information on the public's interests, concerns, priorities and perceptions, and to clarify issues and concerns in order to reduce misunderstandings and conflict which might arise. General purpose public meetings will be held for the general public and, when needed, special purpose meetings may be targeted to specific stakeholder groups. Public meetings may involve presentations or may provide information in more of an open house format; they will also include opportunities for informal interaction and exchange of information with local residents. In-person public meetings will be held at convenient times, at reasonably accessible sites. Public meetings may also be held virtually through an online format.

4.1 Meeting Notices

Reasonable notice will be given to announce general purpose and special purpose public meetings.

The notice of a general purpose public meeting will be made through a press release as well as at least one other means of advertisement such as direct mailing, email blasts, social media, or other media, for example an advertisement in a newspaper of general circulation within the study area of the proposed project. This notice will include a request that persons with disabilities requiring assistance, translation, interpretation, or other special concerns contact PennDOT so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

The notice of a special purpose public meeting will be made through an announcement tailored to the particular type of meeting to be held. The announcement may be made through formal or informal means. Other means may additionally be used to reach interested or affected individuals and groups. These means may include direct mailings, email blasts, social media, press releases, and other forms of broadcast and print media.

5.0 Other Public Involvement Techniques

In addition to public meetings and hearings, a number of other techniques may be considered as means for informing and involving the public in project development. These techniques will be selected to fit the scope of the project and its impacts, not only in terms of providing notification and involvement opportunity, but also to avoid exceeding the amount of public involvement needed (i.e., projects without significant effects or public interest).

Techniques which will be considered include but are not limited to: direct mailings, email blasts, pop-up outreach, media relations, social media, website updates, fliers and posters, newspaper advertisements, newsletters, road signs, brochures, citizen advisory committees, surveys/polling, visualization techniques, and project offices.

6.0 Public Hearings

6.1 Determination of Need for Public Hearing

A public hearing will be held for every project requiring an EIS.

For projects other than those that require an EIS, a public hearing will be held or the opportunity for a public hearing afforded (per 23 CFR 771.111(h), on a Federal-aid project when it will:

- Require the acquisition of significant amounts of right-of-way;
- Substantially change the layout or functions of connecting roadways or of the facility being improved;
- Have a substantial adverse impact on abutting real property;
- Otherwise have a significant social, economic, environmental or other effect; or
- When PennDOT, in consultation with FHWA/FTA, determines that a public hearing is in the public interest.

An opportunity for public hearing, at a minimum, will be provided for a project requiring an EA under NEPA. A project requiring a CEE does not require an opportunity for public hearing, or a public hearing, although it could be provided if deemed appropriate by PennDOT and the lead Federal agency.

6.2 Public Hearing Notice of Opportunity

If PennDOT determines to offer the opportunity for a public hearing for projects requiring an EA or CEE, it will publish a notice of opportunity asking interested citizens to respond. The notice will state that written requests are to be received within the stated timeframe, a minimum of 15 days after the notice is published. If requests are received, individuals may be contacted to resolve the issues of concern. If at least two requests remain outstanding based on environmental grounds, PennDOT will hold a public hearing.

The notice of opportunity for a public hearing will be published as an ad in a local newspaper of general circulation as well as at least one other means of electronic advertisement, direct mailing, or other media. The notice of opportunity will also announce the availability of the NEPA document and where it may be obtained or reviewed.

If there is no interest in holding a public hearing (i.e., less than two outstanding requests based on environmental grounds), PennDOT will certify to the appropriate FHWA/FTA office that a hearing opportunity was offered.

6.3 Document Availability, Notices and Comment Periods

For projects requiring an EIS, the document will be available for public review at the time a notice of availability of the draft EIS is published in the Federal Register. PennDOT will distribute the document to convenient locations within the project area.

The draft EIS comment period will begin on or after the day a notice of the document's availability appears in the Federal Register. The comment period will extend for a minimum of 45 days to a maximum of 60 days, the deadline for which will be specified in the Federal Register notice. The draft EIS will be available for review for a period of at least 15 days prior to the hearing.

A notice, which will be published as an ad in a newspaper of general circulation within the study area of the proposed project as well as at least one other means of electronic advertisement, direct mailing, or other media, will announce the locations where the draft EIS is available for public review, will describe how copies of the document may be obtained and where comments should be sent, and will include the details of the public hearing.

For projects requiring an EA, PennDOT will first determine (pursuant to section 4.1) if a public hearing will be held. If a public hearing is needed, the document will be made available for public review. PennDOT will distribute the document to convenient locations within the project area prior to the beginning of the comment period.

If a public hearing is to be held, the EA comment period will begin on or after the day a notice of the document's availability appears as an ad in a newspaper of general circulation within the study area of the proposed project as well as at least one other means of electronic advertisement, direct mailing, or other media. The comment period will extend for 30 days unless determined that a longer period is warranted. If an individual Section 4(f) evaluation is included with the EA, the comment period for the EA should also be 45 days to align with Section 4(f) requirements. The document will be available for review for a period of at least 15 days prior to the hearing. In addition to announcing the locations where the NEPA document is available for public review, the notice will describe how copies of the document may be obtained and where comments should be sent.

If a public notice opportunity is pursued, EAs will be available for public review for a 30-day comment period beginning with the distribution of the EA and the notice of availability of the document as an ad in a local newspaper of general circulation as well as at least one other means of electronic advertisement, direct mailing, or other media.

For any public hearing held, written testimony will be accepted, and a verbatim transcript of oral testimony will be recorded by a stenographer. PennDOT's official statement, whether presented in oral form or contained in meeting handouts, will be included in the public hearing transcript. Written comments are also accepted into the public record.

If PennDOT determines to a hold a public hearing or to offer an opportunity for a public hearing for a project requiring a CEE, PennDOT will follow the process set forth above for projects requiring an EA.

6.4 Public Hearing Notices

For an EIS, an announcement of a public hearing will be combined with the notice of availability of the draft EIS and will be published as an ad in a newspaper of general circulation within the study area of the proposed project no less than 15 days in advance of the hearing. In addition, an announcement of a public hearing will occur through at least one other means of electronic advertisement, direct mailing, or other media. This notice will include a request that persons with disabilities requiring assistance, translation, interpretation, or other special concerns contact PennDOT so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

For an EA or CEE, an announcement of a public hearing will be combined with the notice of availability of the NEPA document and will be published as an ad in a newspaper of general circulation within the study area of the proposed project no less than 15 days in advance of the hearing. In addition, an announcement of a public hearing will occur through at least one other means of electronic advertisement, direct mailing, or other media. This notice will include a request that persons with disabilities requiring assistance, translation, interpretation, or other special concerns contact PennDOT so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

6.5 Public Hearing Presentation

Public hearings will be held at convenient times, at reasonable accessible sites. Hearings conducted by PennDOT will be in accordance with the Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended. When requested, PennDOT will assist persons with disabilities to enable them to effectively participate in the hearing. Holding a public hearing virtually can be an option if circumstances preclude in-person settings. FHWA needs to agree to pursue a virtual public hearing option.

At the hearing, a summary of the following information will be presented either orally or as a handout: (1) the project's purpose and need, (2) the project's alternatives and major design features; (3) the social, economic, environmental, and cultural impacts of the project; (4) the relocation assistance program and right of way acquisition process; (5) the procedures for receiving both oral and written statements from the public; and (6) when the comment period closes following the hearing. If handouts are used, an announcement of where the handouts are located is required.

6.6 Response to Comments

At the close of the document comment period, FHWA/PennDOT reviews and considers the hearing transcript, as well as written comments received on the CE, EA or draft EIS. Comments can be addressed by:

- Acknowledging the comments and explain why the comments do not warrant further response,
- Making factual corrections or clarifications,
- Supplementing, improving or modifying the analysis,
- Modifying alternatives, including the proposed action, or

- Developing and evaluating alternatives not previously given serious consideration.

The draft EIS/hearing comments and responses are part of the final EIS. The EA/hearing comments and the responses are part of the request to FHWA to issue a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). For a CE, key comments are attached to the CE while the full hearing transcript is maintained in the project file.

6.7 Public Hearings for Supplemental NEPA Documents

A new public hearing may be held or the opportunity afforded if a Supplemental NEPA document is required. If a Supplemental NEPA document is required, PennDOT will consult with the appropriate FHWA/FTA office to determine whether additional public involvement activities are warranted. If an additional public hearing is to be held, the hearing notification requirements for this hearing will be the same as for the original public hearing.

7.0 Combined Final EIS/Record of Decision (ROD) Notice

Once FHWA/FTA approves the final EIS/record of decision (ROD), a Federal Register public availability notice is published. A notice of public availability will also be published as an ad in a newspaper of general circulation within the study area of the proposed project and at least one other means of electronic advertisement, press release, direct mailing, or other media. This notice should announce the locations and web address where the final EIS/ROD is available. PennDOT will distribute the document to the same locations, if appropriate, at which the draft EIS had been available and post the document online.

Additionally, PennDOT will, to the extent required by FHWA/FTA, forward the final EIS/ROD to any persons, organizations, or agencies that made substantive comments on the draft EIS and/or requested a copy of the final EIS.

8.0 Final EIS Availability, Notice and Comment Period When Not Combined With the ROD

Copies of the final EIS will be available for public review at the time a notice of availability of the document is published in the Federal Register. PennDOT will distribute the document to the same locations, if appropriate, at which the draft EIS was available. Additionally, PennDOT will, to the extent required by FHWA/FTA, forward the final EIS to any persons, organizations, or agencies that made substantive comments on the draft EIS and/or requested a copy of the final EIS.

The final EIS public review will begin on or after the day a notice of the document's availability appears in the Federal Register. The document will be available for public review for a period of at least 30 days, the deadline for which will be specified in the Federal Register notice.

In addition to announcing the locations where the final EIS is available for public review, a notice, which will be published as an ad in a newspaper of general circulation within the study area of the proposed project and at least one other means of electronic advertisement, direct

mailing, or other media, will describe how copies of the document may be obtained and where comments should be sent.

9.0 NEPA Environmental Decision Notice

For an EIS project, once a ROD not combined with a final EIS is received from FHWA/FTA, notice should be provided to the public as a press release, posting on the project's or PennDOT's website, or other form of website or electronic advertisement. This notice will describe PennDOT's selected course of action, explain that the project will proceed into final design, and announce that the ROD is available upon request of the public. The ROD should be posted on the project's or PennDOT's website.

For EA projects, when FHWA issues a finding of no significant impact (FONSI), PennDOT will provide a notice of availability of the FONSI to affected Federal, state, and local government agencies, and the FONSI will be available to the public upon request. Also, notice should be provided to the public as a press release, a posting on the project's or PennDOT's website, or other form of media or electronic advertisement. This notice should describe PennDOT's selected course of action, explain that the project will proceed into final design, and announce that the FONSI is available to the public upon request. If PennDOT and FHWA determined that the project will result in significant environmental impacts, an EIS will be prepared consistent with this policy.

10.0 Statute of Limitations Notice

When the lead federal agency makes a final decision on a permit, license, or approval relating to a highway or public transportation capital project, the agency may invoke a 150-day statute of limitations by publishing notice of the final decision in the *Federal Register*. This notice is not a requirement and is up to the discretion of FHWA. If the notice is filed, then anyone who wishes to contest the final decision in court must file their litigation within 150 days or they are barred from doing so.

APPENDIX C

PUBLIC MEETING ADS

Public Meeting Preparations Action Plan – Sample

(PROJECT) PUBLIC MEETING PREPARATIONS ACTION PLAN (MEETING DATE)

Time Prior to Public Meeting	Activity to be Completed	Responsible Person/ Group	Anticipated Completion Date	Date Completed
8 Weeks	Purpose of Meeting Defined			
	Meeting Location(s) Identified			
6 Weeks	Meeting Location(s) reviewed and selected			
	Draft Meeting Plan			
	Draft Block Ad (if req)/Other Advertising			
	Prepare Sign-in Sheets			
	Develop Name Tag List			
4 Weeks	Update/ensure that project website (if there is one) is current			
	Finalize Block Ad (if req)/Advertising and send out			
	Draft News Release			
	Draft Brochure			
	Draft Floor Plan/Meeting Layout			
	Draft Boards and Displays			
	Draft Invitation Letter/emails (mailing list, public officials, and agencies)			
	Draft Comment Form or Questionnaire			
	Meeting Presentation Outline			
	Final Meeting Plan			
2-3 Weeks	Send out block ad #2 (if req)			
	Finalize News Release			
	Finalize Brochure			
	Finalize Floor Plan/Meeting Layout			
	Finalize Boards and Displays			
	Finalize Invitation Letter/Email			
	Sent out invitations/post info on district website			
	Prepare Name Tags			
	Finalize Comment Form or Questionnaire			
	Meeting Staffing Assignments			
	Dry Run Meeting Presentations			
Meeting Day	Arrange Meeting Rooms			
	Staff Briefing			
	Upload meeting information to website or district website			

Public Meeting Plan Template

Proposed Date: _____

Time: _____

Location: _____

_____

_____

Format: _____

Purpose: _____

_____

_____

Promotion: *Public Officials and Project Partners:*

_____

Key Stakeholders:

_____

Property Owners (Business and Residential Impacted and Non-Impacted):

_____

General Public:

_____

Translation Services: _____

Media Coordination: _____

Page 1 of 3

Handouts: _____

                      _____

                      _____

                      _____

Directional
Signage: _____

Suggested
Dress Code
for Staff: _____

Anticipated
Q&A: *Prepare standard answers to anticipated questions for meeting*
                      staffers.

Display Area Plan: *[if stations]*

STATIONS	DISPLAY BOARDS	OTHER INFO/ MATERIALS	EQUIPMENT	STAFF
Station 1: **Meeting Registration**	• • •	• Sign-in/electronic or print • Meeting Handout • Comment Form • Public Officials Packet • Press Packet	• Table • 2 chairs • 2 easels	2 people

   *Expand to as many stations as needed

Page 2 of 3

Facility Layout: *Include a scale drawing with layout of stations, entrance from parking lot/front door, etc.*

PUBLIC MEETING

FOLLOW-UP: *Following the Public Meeting, access to the meeting materials will be made available as follows (project website, PennDOT District website, District office, MPO/RPO office, municipal building, etc.):*

_____

_____

_____

_____

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APPENDIX D

DIGITAL PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT GUIDANCE

Digital Public Involvement Guidance

Updated March 26, 2021

Offering digital public meeting resources is a great customer service option for our constituents, especially in situations where having an in-person event is not feasible. Below are some options we can and should provide on our website. However, use of VPMs does not relieve the Department of our commitment to compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. If your project is located within an environmental justice area, please coordinate with the District's Title VI Coordinator. You should always follow specific guidance in the Department's Public Involvement Handbook or PUB 295 (PDF) first and foremost.

Public Meeting Pages

Every district has an existing public meetings subsite on their website. We recommend adding new pages for each project that you are holding a public meeting. If you plan create web pages extensively, we also recommend organizing them by counties. (See District 1 for an example.)

Possible Content

- Time/date/location of meeting/display
- Description of project
- Map
- Plans (PDF)
- Comment form (PDF)
- Handout (PDF)
- Anticipated detour (if any)
- Project contact information
- Standard paragraph about accessibility
- Proposed construction start month and/or year
- PowerPoint presentation (PDF)
- Additional handouts
- Project phasing
- Conceptual drawings/boards
- Drone pictures
- Links to external websites
- Information from previous meetings
- Recap of public feedback
- **Presentation video (see below section)**
- **Online feedback form (see below section)**

Process to Implement

District press staff have the capability to create these pages themselves along with district IT coordinators. (Basically, whoever currently makes updates to your district websites.)

Digital staff from the central press office also can assist for districts with limited resources. Contact the digital director and deputy digital director. (Districts 1, 10, 11, and 12 should work with their regional digital community relations coordinator on these pages. District 6 should work with their digital community relations coordinator.)

Presentation Pre-Recorded Video

In lieu of large in-person meetings, districts can choose to pre-record a presentation that would normally occur at a public meeting.

Per our video policy, these should be recorded using existing equipment, such as your department-issued iPhones. **These should NOT be outsourced to consultants or staff outside of the press office without consent of the central press office.**

Important Notes:

- **Consultants may provide raw video to be edited by the digital staff.**
- **Project visualizations do not fall under these guidelines. The consultant may continue to provide these types of videos but they must be shared with digital staff to be appropriately branded prior to publishing.**
- **If you have questions about what video products a consultant can or cannot provide, please contact the digital director. These guidelines are dictated by commonwealth policies and management directives.**

Basic one-shot videos of a presenter are OK, but graphics and other elements can be edited in. Also, **all videos must include captions for accessibility purposes.** For these reasons, we suggest recording the video at the district level and then providing the video to digital staff to be edited.

Process to Implement

- Contact the digital director and deputy digital director with your intention to produce a public meeting presentation video. (Districts 1, 10, 11, and 12 should also CC the regional digital community relations coordinator. District 6 should CC their digital community relations coordinator.)
- Digital staff will coordinate and assist, as needed, in getting the base video recorded.
- District staff will provide the base video to digital staff, along with any graphics they would like included in the video.
  - This could include charts, maps, conceptual plans, etc.
  - Please also provide the name and title of anyone who appears in the video.
- Digital staff will edit the video and provide proofs to district staff to review and approve.
- Once approved, digital staff will upload to the department YouTube page, and then embed on the appropriate project webpage.

Presentation Live Video

Districts may also choose to hold a virtual live meeting, where constituents could potentially provide real-time feedback and questions.

At this time, the preferred tool to hold virtual meetings is either Microsoft Teams or Teams Live Events. You may also use Skype for Business or Skype Broadcast. The department does not recommend Zoom due to security issues. If a consultant or third-party is hosting the meeting, other tools may be explored, such as WebEx or GoToWebinar. This bulletin from the Office of Administration explains more about collaborating securely.

Microsoft Teams

Microsoft is a telecommunications tool used throughout the Commonwealth. It provides a variety of add-ons that can be used to enhance your basic video call.

- Up to 250 participants
- Automatically provides a call-in number for users with no internet access
- Can share your screen and/or present existing slides
- Can limit access by granting users entrance into the "meeting room"
- Can be recorded so users can watch later
- Chat features, live captions, and more

For more information on Microsoft Teams and it's many features, see the Commonwealth's Microsoft Teams Training Portal page.

Microsoft Teams Live Events

Teams Live Events is another tool that can be used for live webinars where you are expecting a very large audience and need more control over audience participation.

- Up to 10,000 participants
- Can share your screen and/or present existing slides
- Can add a Q&A
- Add team members who will be the only ones permitted to present
    - Tips for producing a Skype Broadcast event can be found at PennDOT Shared>Press Office> Microsoft-Teams-Live-Events-Tips.pdf (attached)
- Can limit access to anyone with the link, anyone within your organization, or invitation only
- Can be recorded so users can watch later
- Can add non-CWOPA users as a producer or presenter with ease

It's important to note that Teams Live Events does have some limitations.

- Only one video feed can be shared at a time
- Does not provide a call-in number, limited to users with internet access

Skype for Business

Skype for Business is the telecommunications tool used throughout the Commonwealth. It provides a variety of add-ons that can be used to enhance your basic video call.

- Up to 250 participants

- Automatically provides a call-in number for users with no internet access
- Can share your screen and/or present existing slides
- Can add polls and a Q&A
- Can pre-designate presenters
- Can limit access by granting users entrance into the "meeting room"
- Can be recorded so users can watch later

For more information on setting up Skype meetings and managing meeting add-ons, visit the Commonwealth's Skype for Business Meeting Effectively video portal.

Skype Broadcast

Skype Broadcast is another tool that can be used for live webinars where you are expecting a very large audience and need more control over audience participation.

- Up to 10,000 participants
- Can present existing slides
- Can add a Q&A
- Add team members who will be the only ones permitted to present
  - Tips for producing a Skype Broadcast event can be found at PennDOT Shared>Press Office> Skype-Broadcast-Tips.pdf (attached)
- Can limit access to anyone with the link, anyone within your organization, or invitation only
- Can be recorded so users can watch later

It's important to note that Skype Broadcast does have some limitations.

- Can't add non-CWOPA users as team members in advance of the meeting
  - If you have someone who is part of a consultant team that should be a team member for the event, submit an IT Service Request as soon as possible in advance of those meetings. Requests will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.
- Can't share your screen
- Only one video feed can be shared at a time
- Does not provide a call-in number, limited to users with internet access

The Commonwealth also provided a handy user guide on setting up and joining Skype Broadcast meetings (PDF).

Online Feedback Form

Pennsylvania Interactive (PAI), the Commonwealth's website vendor, has created an Express Forms option that provides agencies an easy tool to collect form submissions online.

These forms are secure, mobile-friendly, and maintain PennDOT's online brand presence. They can typically be implemented within five business days. An example form is our Yellow Dot Online Participation Form.

When feedback is submitted, the user will get a confirmation email. An email will also be sent to a pre-defined resource account of your choosing letting you know that a submission has been received.

Depending on what information is included in the form, we may not be able to include all submission data within this email due to privacy reasons. You can then log in to the Express Forms admin interface to view all submissions. From there, submissions can be viewed, printed, and/or downloaded to an Excel spreadsheet. (Users will be provided with a guide to assist in navigating the admin interface.)

Possible Content
- Name (First and Last)
- Email address
- Phone number
- Physical address
- County of residence
- Open feedback
- Brief project description
- Guided questions, such as:
    - Do you have any concerns regarding the project details and/or the project schedule?
    - Do you have any questions about the traffic control and/or the detours?

Process to Implement
- Fill out the Express Forms Request Form to provide all needed information, then send to the digital director and deputy digital director. (Districts 1, 10, 11, and 12 should also CC the regional digital community relations coordinator. District 6 should CC their digital community relations coordinator.)
    - This can be found at PennDOT Shared>Press Office> Online-Request-Form.pdf (attached)
- Digital staff will coordinate with PAI on creating the online form.
- Digital staff will provide a proof of the form for review and approval.
- Once approved, digital staff will provide a finalized link that can be added to the project webpage. (If needed, digital staff can also add the link to the webpage.)
- Appropriate staff will be provided information on how to access the admin interface and given training, if needed.

Methods to Notify the Public of Virtual Public Involvement Opportunities
- Mail out postcard fliers, if feasible
- Notify applicable municipalities and request that they publicize via their website
- Place notification in applicable newspapers/websites
- Utilize various social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter

Case Study
District 1 press staff has been working with their design team to make public meeting pages and announcements as effective as possible.

This effort started in early 2019 when press and design discussed ways to possibly use the website and social media accounts to increase public participation in our meetings and plans displays.

To give a little background, the district would set up a plans display for a small bridge replacement project and, according to the municipality displaying the information on our behalf, there might be 2-5 people who visit the display and only one might provide feedback. During the meeting, the district decided to try online efforts to increase that participation and make the plans more available. Instead of simply posting the press release announcing the plans display or public meeting is happening, they started creating tiles and pages to publish PDF files showing all the information that was available at those events. This was later expanded to include all projects and intersection/corridor studies.

Once the regional digital community relations coordinator came on board, District 1 really started formalizing the process. The digital CRC put together a simple analytics report for the design team to access whether folks were using the online options to see the plans.

An example analytics report can be found at PennDOT Shared> Press Office> D1-public-meeting-analytics.pdf (attached). Remember, some of these projects had less than five people participating in the traditional process, so the online postings are helping increase those numbers.

As part of the process, the district is determining how long to leave the pages up and what do to do when ready to take them down from public viewing.

For more information on the District 1 process, contact Jill Harry, district press officer, or Hannah Stiller, regional digital community relations coordinator.

Microsoft Teams Live Events Tips

The Commonwealth has put together an extensive Teams Live Events guide (PDF) already. The below document should be considered in addition to, not in place of, that guide.

Teams Live Events is a great tool that can be used for live webinars, meetings or events where you are expecting a very large audience and need more control over audience participation.

You can:

- Up to 10,000 participants
- Can present existing slides
- Can share your screen
- Can add a Q&A
- Add team members who will be the only ones permitted to present
- Can limit access to anyone with the link, anyone within your organization, or invitation only
- Can be recorded so users can watch later
- Turn on live captions

It's important to note that Teams Live Events does have some limitations.

- Only one video feed can be shared at a time
- No direct call-in option for attendees at this time, though there is a work-around (see Call-In Workaround)

Team Member Roles

To run a smooth event, it's important to designate roles beforehand. Detailed tips for each role can be found later in this document. Consider having the following:

- Organizer: This is the person who creates the event and sends out the invites. This person may also be the producer.
- Producer: This should be someone not actively involved in the event as a speaker or moderator. They will oversee starting and stopping the broadcast, switching video and content feeds, and monitoring who is muted.
- Presenters: Those who will be speaking and/or be seen on the screen.
- Moderator: Someone who provides transitions between speakers. This person may or may not be seen on the screen, but will most likely be heard via audio. If you are including a Q&A, this person would likely also monitor those questions.

Event Organizer

Before the Event

- Create the Teams Live event, adding presenters and producers within the event details.
  - The organizer will automatically be added as a producer.

- o   Anyone added as a presenter or producer will automatically be sent a meeting invite to add to their calendar.
- Copy and send the meeting invite information to be sent to the overall audience.
- If the event is primarily for Commonwealth users, remind them in the general invite to disconnect from the VPN before logging in to view the event.

During the Event
- If you are not the producer, then you likely don't have any responsibilities during the event. Watch and enjoy!

Producer
Before the Event
- If it's the first time that you or any of your presenters have done a Teams Live event, consider scheduling a separate dry run a few days prior.
  - o   You and the presenters should log in as your roles to make sure you don't run into any issues and can become familiar with the meeting broadcast page.
  - o   If using video, have each of the presenters test their video feed.
  - o   Do a quick run-through so everyone is familiar with the order of events.
  - o   Note: The producer screen will look different than the presenter experience. Learn more here: https://app.quickhelp.com/pa/skills/87221
- Gather any slides from presenters so you can easily load them into Skype in advance. Also, coordinate with the presenters regarding how you will progress through their slides. An easy solution is to ask them to say, "Next slide, please."
  - o   Note: Presenters can share and run their own slideshows, if necessary. Work with the event team to decide what works best for the event.

During the Event
- Make sure everyone but the first speaker is muted before starting the broadcast.
- Make sure you have selected the appropriate live feed before starting the broadcast, as well as whether it should be a single feed (only video or only content) or double feed (video and content side-by-side).
- Pay attention! Be sure to follow any script or outline so you know who is speaking when. You don't want to miss a slide change or cue to switch to a different video feed.

Presenters
Before the Event
- If you are presenting using slides, coordinate with the producer as to when they should switch slides. An easy solution is to just say, "Next slide, please."
  - o   Or if controlling your own slides, make sure you are familiar with how to share the content and progress through them.
- Note: The presenter screen is different than the producer screen. Learn more here: https://app.quickhelp.com/pa/skills/87354/
- Finalize your slides and send to the event organizer so they can be loaded into Skype prior to the event (if not controlling your own slides).

- Watch this YouTube video for tips on setting up your computer and workspace for optimal video.

During the Event

- Active audio is not tied to the active video. If you are not on mute, you can be heard by the audience. Make sure you mute and unmute yourself as necessary.

- Pay attention! Be sure to follow any script or outline so you know who is speaking when. You don't want to miss your cue to start, or a question that is being asked (if there is a Q&A).

Moderator

Before the Event

- Create an outline of how of the event will proceed, specifically noting the order of the speakers. This will be helpful for everyone , especially the producer.
- Decide if you wish to be on screen or just audio. Let the producer know.
  - If you choose to be on camera, watch this YouTube video for tips on setting up your computer and workspace for optimal video.
- If the event is having a Q&A:
  - Work with the presenters and producer to decide if questions will be asked throughout the event or saved for a dedicated time at the end.
  - Work with the presenters to decide what will be done about unanswered questions. Will you provide those to presenters to answer after the event? How will you get those answers to the audience?

During the Event

- Pay attention! Be sure to follow any script or outline so you know who is speaking when. You don't want to miss your cue to transition between presenters.
- Monitor the Q&A panel.
  - If asking questions throughout the event, decide an appropriate time to interrupt the presenter with the question.
  - If asking questions at the end, work through them in a chronological order.
  - Combine similar questions.
  - If you don't get to all the questions, let the audience know how you and the presenters have decided to handle that. Will you post answers somewhere? Where? Will you email participants directly?

Attendee Call-In Workaround

Microsoft Teams Live Events do not offer a call-in phone number for attendees. (The phone number you see in the meeting invite is strictly for presenters and producers.)

Microsoft has provided the below workaround, though.

Step 1: Dedicate a person to be responsible for merging the two meetings. This should be that person's only role in the Live Event. (They should not be a speaker for the event but must have the producer or presenter role in the live event.)

Step 2: Set up your live event invite. Also create a regular Teams meeting invite for the exact same time.
- Make sure there are no lobby restrictions in the regular Teams meeting.
  - In the regular Teams meeting invite, select "Meeting options." This is found as a link near the bottom of the login information in the invite.
  - In the first option, "Who can bypass the lobby?" select "Everyone."
- If you don't know you meeting organizer PIN number, now is a good time to reset it and write it down. You'll need that PIN later on.
  - In the regular Teams meeting invite, select "Reset PIN."

Step 3:
- Have that dedicated user dial-in to the Teams Live Event phone number (the one only for the producers and presenters)
  - You'll be prompted to enter the meeting ID.
  - When asked if you are the organizer, IGNORE IT, and you'll eventually be added to the Live Event.
  - The main Live Event producer will have to let you in from the lobby. The producer should see a pop-up, or they can go to the participant list and add you there.
- Next, have the call-in producer use their phone to "add a call" and dial out to the regular Teams meeting phone number
  - You'll again be prompted to enter the meeting ID.
  - When asked if you are the organizer, HIT * to say you are the organizer. You'll then be asked for your PIN. Enter it. You should then be added to the meeting.
- Select "Merge Calls"

Now this person should be dialed in to the Live Event and also the regular Teams meeting. When the calls are merged, the users who dialed into the regular Teams meeting will be able to hear everything in the Live Event.

The dedicated person is now in both calls. The main Live Event producer will need to ensure the dedicated call-in person's line is always muted in the Live Event to reduce any distractions or audio coming from their line. However, the dedicated call-in person should make sure they are not otherwise muted on their phone (via the regular Teams meeting).

When you send out the invite to attendees, simply copy/paste your Live Event Join information, and copy and paste ONLY the dial-in information from the regular Teams meeting.

        Example:
            Link to join our Live Event:
            https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_M2U4MDNmZGEtN2JlYi00NzIxLTk1YzItMDkyMzE5MDY3YmFk%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%2272f988bf-86f1-41af-91ab-2d7cd011db47%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22d492944b-1f7f-4aec-ab5a-bb43ae83fc9b%22%2c%22IsBroadcastMeeting%22%3atrue%7d

Dial-in option: +1 323-849-4874

(Or make it a vanity link)

Live Event Link **(11 AM – 3 PM)**

Dial-in option: +1 323-849-4874

Skype Broadcast: Tips for Producing an Event

For instructions on how to set up and join a Skype Broadcast event, see the Commonwealth's Skype Broadcast cheat sheet (PDF).

Skype Broadcast is a great tool that can be used for live webinars, meetings or events where you are expecting a very large audience and need more control over audience participation.

You can:

- Have up to 10,000 participants;
- Present existing slides;
- Add a Q&A;
- Add team members who will be the only ones permitted to present;
- Limit access to anyone with the link, anyone within your organization, or invitation only; and
- Record so users can watch later.

It's important to note that Skype Broadcast does have some limitations.

- Can't add non-CWOPA users as team members (presenters/participants) in advance of the meeting
  - If you have someone who is part of a consultant team that should be a team member for the event, submit an IT Service Request as soon as possible in advance of those meetings. Requests will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.
- Can't share your screen (see member roles below)
- Only one video feed can be shared at a time
- Does not provide a call-in number, limited to users with internet access

Team Member Roles

To run a smooth event, it's important to designate roles beforehand. Detailed tips for each role can be found later in this document. Consider having the following:

- Event Organizer: This is the person who creates the event and sends out the invites. This person may also be the producer.
- Producer: This should be someone not actively involved in the event as a speaker or moderator. They will oversee starting and stopping the broadcast, switching video and content feeds, and monitoring who is muted.
- Presenters: Those who will be speaking and/or be seen on the screen.
- Moderator: Someone who provides transitions between speakers. This person may or may not be seen on the screen, but will most likely be heard via audio. If you are including a Q&A, this person would likely also monitor those questions.

Event Organizer

Before the Event

- Send a separate meeting invite just to your presenters with the link and instructions reminding them to select the option to log in as a team member.
- If the event is primarily for Commonwealth users, remind them in the general invite to disconnect from the VPN before logging in to view the event.
- If your event has added a Q&A, provide the link to the Q&A panel to your moderator (or the person who will be fielding questions).

During the Event

- If you are not the producer, then you likely don't have any responsibilities during the event. Watch and enjoy!

Producer

Before the Event

- If it's the first time that you or any of your presenters have done a Skype Broadcast event, consider scheduling a separate dry run a few days prior. You will need to set this up as a separate event with a unique link
  - You and the presenters should log in as team members to make sure you don't run into any issues and can become familiar with the meeting broadcast page.
  - If using video, have each of the presenters test their video feed. Send a video tip sheet in advance so those who will be on camera have appropriate lighting/framing. This video also is a great resource.
  - Do a quick run-through so everyone is familiar with the order of events.
- Gather any slides from presenters so you can easily load them into Skype in advance. Also, coordinate with the presenters regarding how you will progress through their slides. An easy solution is to ask them to say, "Next slide, please."

During the Event

- Make sure everyone but the first speaker is muted before starting the broadcast.
- Make sure you have selected the appropriate live feed before starting the broadcast, as well as the correct layout (video only, video/content, or content only).
- Pay attention! Be sure to follow any script or outline so you know who is speaking when. You don't want to miss a slide change or cue to switch to a different video feed.

Presenters

Before the Event

- If you are presenting using slides, coordinate with the producer as to when they should switch slides. An easy solution is to just say, "Next slide, please."
- Finalize your slides and send to the event organizer so they can be loaded into Skype prior to the event.
- Watch this YouTube video for tips on setting up your computer and workspace for optimal video.

During the Event

- Active audio is not tied to the active video. If you are not on mute, you can be heard by the audience. Make sure you mute and unmute yourself as necessary, unless you have determined beforehand that the producer will handle all muting/unmuting.

- Pay attention! Be sure to follow any script or outline so you know who is speaking when. You don't want to miss your cue to start, or a question that is being asked (if there is a Q&A). Note that it may take some time for the video to switch away from you, so maintain neutral/relaxed features before and after you speak in case you are on camera for a longer period of time. Unfortunately, there isn't a great way to know when you are off camera. The best way to tell is if your video feed shows a thicker blue bar at the bottom – this means yours is the live feed.

Moderator

Before the Event

- Create an outline of how of the event will proceed, specifically noting the order of the speakers. This will be helpful for everyone, especially the producer.
- Decide if you wish to be on screen or just audio. Let the producer know.
  - If you choose to be on camera, watch this YouTube video for tips on setting up your computer and workspace for optimal video.
- If the event is having a Q&A, be sure to get the link to the Q&A panel from the event organizer in advance.
  - Work with the presenters and producer to decide if questions will be asked throughout the event or saved for a dedicated time at the end.
  - Work with the presenters to decide what will be done about unanswered questions. Will you provide those to presenters to answer after the event? How will you get those answers to the audience?

During the Event

- Pay attention! Be sure to follow any script or outline so you know who is speaking when. You don't want to miss your cue to transition between presenters.
- Monitor the Q&A panel.
  - If asking questions throughout the event, decide an appropriate time to interrupt the presenter with the question.
  - If asking questions at the end, work through them in a chronological order.
  - Combine similar questions.
  - If you don't get to all the questions, let the audience know how you and the presenters have decided to handle that. Will you post answers somewhere? Where? Will you email participants directly?

PennDOT Online Form Request

Please fill out the below fields in order to request an online form. Send the completed request to Larissa Newton (lanewton) and Allison Beck (allbeck). If you are in Districts 1, 10, 11, or 12, please also send to Hannah Stiller (hstiller).

What is the form name?

Is there an existing form? ▢ Yes ▢ No
If yes, please provide URL below or send document along with this form.

If this is a new form, please provide detailed questions and fields you want included. You may send a separate document with this information, if needed.

Has verbiage been approved? ▢ Yes ▢ No

An email will be sent to a resource account when a submission is received. What

resource account should be used?

Please provide the CWOPA IDs of all users who will need access to see submissions.

Estimated daily submissions (1, 5, 10, 50, etc.):

Date to be deployed (please allow for at least 5 business days):

Who is requesting the form?
Name:

Email:

PENNDOT DISTRICT 1 ANALYTICS

District Web Page Report November - January

Number of Pages Posted

Crawford	**2**
Mercer	3
Venango	4
Warren	3

Total **12**

Total Number of Views

	Page Views	**Unique Page Views**
Crawford	67	59
Mercer	105	84
Venango	424	345
Warren	937	862

Total **1,533** **1,350**

PENNDOT DISTRICT 1 - Crawford County

North Perry Street Bridge Replacement

Analytics Report: JANUARY

City*	Page Views	Unique Page Views
Titusville	7	7
Harrisburg	4	2
Erie	2	2
(not set)	1	1
Lebanon	1	1
Meadville	1	1
Oil City	1	1
TOTAL 7	17	15

*Location is based off of unique IP addresses that are regionally assigned

PENNDOT DISTRICT 1 - Crawford County

Route 618 Bridge Replacement

Analytics Report: DECEMBER

City*	Page Views	Unique Page Views
Conneaut Lakeshore	3	3
Harrisburg	2	2
Coffeyville	1	1
San Antonio	1	1
Ashburn	1	1
TOTAL 5	8	8

Analytics Report: JANUARY

City*	Page Views	Unique Page Views
Harrisburg	12	11
Meadville	10	9
Conneaut Lakeshore	7	3
(not set)	2	2
Cheyenne	2	2
Lebanon	1	1
Edinboro	1	1
Erie	1	1
Stoneboro	1	1
Ashburn	1	1
Quincy	1	1
Manor	1	1
Moon	1	1
Penn Hills	1	1
TOTAL 14	42	36

*Location is based off of unique IP addresses that are regionally assigned

PENNDOT DISTRICT 1 - Mercer County

Lake Wilhelm Road Bridge Preservation

Analytics Report: DECEMBER

City*	Page Views	Unique Page Views
Meadville	2	1

TOTAL	1	2	1

Analytics Report: JANUARY

City*	Page Views	Unique Page Views
Harrisburg	28	17
Grove City	10	6
Pittsburgh	6	6
Mercer	4	3
(not set)	3	3
Heath	1	1
Boardman	1	1
Edinboro	1	1
Erie	1	1
Franklin	1	1
Quincy	1	1
Penn Hills	1	1
Ross Township	1	1

TOTAL	13	59	43

*Location is based off of unique IP addresses that are regionally assigned

PENNDOT DISTRICT 1 - Mercer County

Route 418 Improvement Project

Analytics Report: JANUARY

City*	Page Views	Unique Page Views
Harrisburg	9	9
Pittsburgh	4	4
(not set)	1	1
Rochester	1	1
Thompson	1	1
Boiling Springs	1	1
Hermitage	1	1
Wexford	1	1
Progress	1	1
Spry	1	1

TOTAL	10	21	21

*Location is based off of unique IP addresses that are regionally assigned

PENNDOT DISTRICT 1 - Mercer County

Columbia Avenue Improvement

Analytics Report: JANUARY

City*	Page Views	Unique Page Views
Harrisburg	9	6
Pittsburgh	4	4
Greenville	3	2
Hermitage	2	2
Mars	1	1
Sharon	1	1
Chester	1	1
Cheyenne	1	1
Conneaut Lakeshore	1	1
TOTAL 9	23	19

*Location is based off of unique IP addresses that are regionally assigned

PENNDOT DISTRICT 1 - Venango County

Tarklin Road Bridge Rehabilitation

Analytics Report: JANUARY

City*	Page Views	Unique Page Views
Harrisburg	7	7
Seneca	2	2
(not set)	1	1
Lebanon	1	1
Franklin	1	1
TOTAL 5	**12**	**12**

*Location is based off of unique IP addresses that are regionally assigned

PENNDOT DISTRICT 1 - Venango County

Liberty and 12th Intersection Study

Analytics Report: December

City*	Page Views	Unique Page Views
Franklin	19	19
Harrisburg	11	9
(not set)	8	8
Oil City	8	8
New York	6	6
Pittsburgh	6	6
Meadville	5	5
Seneca	3	3
Sugarcreek	3	3
Nashua	2	1
Clarion	2	2
Erie	2	2
Titusville	2	2
Cheyenne	2	2
Brantford	1	1
Washington	1	1
Ocala	1	1
Kennesaw	1	1
Ann Arbor	1	1
Springfield	1	1
Columbus	1	1
Edinboro	1	1
Philadelphia	1	1
Slippery Rock	1	1
Venus	1	1
Ashburn	1	1
Reston	1	1
Boardman	1	1
Conneaut Lakeshore	1	1
Hialeah Gardens	1	1
TOTAL	**29**	**95**	**92**

Analytics Report: JANUARY

City*	Page Views	Unique Page Views
Franklin	68	57
Harrisburg	18	16
Pittsburgh	10	10
Springfield	9	8
Oil City	8	8
(not set)	7	7
Sugarcreek	4	3
Mars	3	3
Linglestown	3	3
Erie	2	2
Columbia	2	2
Minneapolis	1	1
Kernersville	1	1
Lebanon	1	1
New York	1	1
Greensburg	1	1
State College	1	1
Stoneboro	1	1
Venus	1	1
Wexford	1	1
Waxahachie	1	1
Quincy	1	1

TOTAL	22	145	130

*Location is based off of unique IP addresses that are regionally assigned

PENNDOT DISTRICT 1 - Venango County

Route 8 Improvement Project

Analytics Report: NOVEMBER

City*	Page Views	Unique Page Views
(not set)	5	2
New York	3	2
Youngstown	3	2
Mechanicsville	3	1
Kennesaw	2	1
Erie	1	1
Harrisburg	1	1
TOTAL 7	18	10

Analytics Report: DECEMBER

City*	Page Views	Unique Page Views
Harrisburg	15	10
Murrysville	4	1
(not set)	3	1
Pittsburgh	3	2
Brooklet	2	1
Montoursville	2	1
Thompsonville	2	2
Sugarcreek	2	1
Chicago	1	1
Raleigh	1	1
New York	1	1
Valley City	1	1
Kane	1	1
Oil City	1	1
Mayfield Heights	1	1
TOTAL 15	40	26

Analytics Report: JANUARY

City*	Page Views	Unique Page Views
Harrisburg	12	8
Franklin	10	6
Shanor-Northvue	8	6
Oakland	4	2
Titusville	4	2
(not set)	3	2
Columbus	2	2
Erie	2	1
Pittsburgh	2	2
Brunswick	2	1
Penn Hills	2	1
New York	1	1
Rochester	1	1
Grove City	1	1
Oil City	1	1
Zelienople	1	1
Austin	1	1
TOTAL 17	**57**	**39**

*Location is based off of unique IP addresses that are regionally assigned

PENNDOT DISTRICT 1 - Venango County

Route 62 Bridge Replacement Project

Analytics Report: December

City*	Page Views	Unique Page Views
Harrisburg	9	7
(not set)	7	2
Franklin	2	2
Hermitage	2	1
New York	1	1
Erie	1	1
Ashburn	1	1
Sugarcreek	1	1
TOTAL 8	24	16

Analytics Report: JANUARY

City*	Page Views	Unique Page Views
Harrisburg	21	11
Franklin	3	3
Penn Hills	3	1
Erie	2	1
Pittsburgh	2	2
(not set)	1	1
Lebanon	1	1
TOTAL 7	33	20

*Location is based off of unique IP addresses that are regionally assigned

PENNDOT DISTRICT 1 - Warren County

Miles Run Road Bridge Replacement

Analytics Report: NOVEMBER

City*	Page Views	Unique Page Views
(not set)	2	1
Erie	2	1
Harrisburg	2	2
Warren	2	1
Pittsburgh	1	1
TOTAL 5	9	6

Analytics Report: DECEMBER

City*	Page Views	Unique Page Views
Erie	2	2
Harrisburg	2	2
Brooklet	1	1
Thompsonville	1	1
TOTAL 4	6	6

Analytics Report: JANUARY

City*	Page Views	Unique Page Views
Erie	1	1
Harrisburg	1	1
Ross Township	1	1
TOTAL 3	3	3

*Location is based off of unique IP addresses that are regionally assigned

PENNDOT DISTRICT 1 - Warren County

Route 6 Bridge Replacement Project

Analytics Report: JANUARY

City*	Page Views	Unique Page Views
(not set)	189	172
Kane	107	99
Warren	87	86
Saint Marys	79	74
New York	66	61
Columbus	41	32
Altoona	41	38
Greensburg	37	32
State College	37	34
Pittsburgh	28	24
Springfield	23	21
Youngsville	20	19
Erie	9	8
Titusville	8	6
Harrisburg	7	6
Curwensville	4	4
Punxsutawney	4	4
Boston	3	3
Brookville	3	3
Crown	3	3
Meadville	3	3
Monroeville	3	3
Smethport	3	3
San Diego	2	2
Mount Laurel Township	2	2
Athens	2	2
Cleveland	2	2
Massillon	2	2
Newton Falls	2	1
Wooster	2	1
Bradford	2	2
Brockway	2	2
Corry	2	2
DuBois	2	2
Hollidaysburg	2	2
Huntingdon	2	2

Indiana	2	2
North East	2	2
Palmyra	2	1
Williamsport	2	2
Hemet	1	1
Simi Valley	1	1
Denver	1	1
Greeley	1	1
Leesburg	1	1
Miami	1	1
Ormond Beach	1	1
Tampa	1	1
Atlanta	1	1
Waleska	1	1
Cedar Rapids	1	1
Pocatello	1	1
Bedford Park	1	1
Chicago	1	1
Parkville	1	1
Detroit	1	1
Gastonia	1	1
Lebanon	1	1
Albany	1	1
Buffalo	1	1
Jamestown	1	1
Salamanca	1	1
Seneca Falls	1	1
Canton	1	1
Dover	1	1
North Olmsted	1	1
Salineville	1	1
Bellefonte	1	1
Canonsburg	1	1
Coudersport	1	1
East Freedom	1	1
Edinboro	1	1
Fairview	1	1
Grove City	1	1
Mansfield	1	1
Mechanicsburg	1	1
Murrysville	1	1
Northern Cambria	1	1
Oil City	1	1
Scranton	1	1
Southampton	1	1
Tyrone	1	1
Washington	1	1

West Mifflin	1	1	
Myrtle Beach	1	1	
Rapid City	1	1	
Kingsport	1	1	
Waco	1	1	
Ashburn	1	1	
Hurricane	1	1	
Cheyenne	1	1	
Beckett Ridge	1	1	
Chicora	1	1	
McCandless	1	1	
Moon	1	1	
Ross Township	1	1	
Westmont	1	1	
TOTAL	**96**	**896**	**826**

*Location is based off of unique IP addresses that are regionally assigned

PENNDOT DISTRICT 1 - Warren County

Route 62 Bridge Rehabilitation Project

Analytics Report: JANUARY

City*	Page Views	Unique Page Views
Harrisburg	11	10
Warren	7	7
Ross Township	2	1
(not set)	1	1
Erie	1	1
Penn Hills	1	1

TOTAL			
6		23	21

*Location is based off of unique IP addresses that are regionally assigned