

**INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION OFFICE OF
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

**DRAFT PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT
PLAN TEMPLATE
JANUARY 2011**

**GUIDANCE DOCUMENT FOR STATE
AND LPA PROJECTS RECEIVING
FEDERAL AID AS PART OF THE
FUNDING MECHANISM**

SAMPLE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

See INDOT Public Involvement Procedures at: <http://www.in.gov/indot/2354.htm>

This Public Involvement Plan has been developed for the _____. (Name of the Road or segment) is a (insert a description and project location). It provides connectivity between the _____ terminus at _____ and the _____ terminus at _____. The project corridor is _____.

The project corridor contains _____. It is anticipated that the entire length of the project along _____ would involve a rehabilitation of the pavement, curbs and gutters and sidewalks or a multi-use trail OR (insert specific project description and features). A new storm sewer system will likely be included. The existing _____ degree curves will likely require some realignment. The project development began in the _____ of (year) and construction is currently scheduled for (year).

City/County/Municipality/Transportation Agency of _____ residents play an important role in shaping the transportation decisions that will affect their community. They rely on the transportation system to move around the community and through the state for work and leisure activities. Residents rely on this facility to reach their destinations and return safely home. Businesses rely on this facility to move products and materials. In addition to their reliance on the facility to meet transportation needs, all of these users have a stake in transportation decisions because they are taxpayers, stakeholders, and are users of the facility proposed to be improved.

As the City/County/Municipality/ Transportation Agency makes decisions on transportation improvement projects, it must integrate:

- Input from the public,
- Input from other local governmental agencies,
- Input from resource agencies (federal and state agencies which have responsibility for environmental resources, such as water resources, historic resources, air quality, and endangered species), and,
- The City's/ County's or Municipality's own assessment of transportation needs, cost, funding availability and engineering constraints.

The City/County/Municipality of _____ recognizes that a key component in the success of any transportation project depends on many factors, none of which are more essential than the involvement of its community members. It also understands the importance of involving the public in information exchange when providing transportation facilities and services to best meet the City's/County's/ Municipality's transportation challenges. Therefore, the _____ supports the policy of the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) in their Local Public Agency's Project Development Process (PDP) to promote public involvement opportunities and information exchange activities in planning, developing, designing, construction, operations, and maintenance of transportation projects. The public involvement procedures, as outlined in this plan, provide opportunities for early and continuing involvement of the public in developing transportation plans, programs, and projects and provide complete public information, timely public notice, and public access to key decisions.

Public involvement is a two-way communication aimed at providing information to the public and incorporating the views, concerns, and issues of the public in the transportation decision-making process. The public provides input on transportation needs, community concerns, and environmental considerations.

An open line of communication between local officials, the public and the Project Management Team is a key component in developing a transportation plan that will best address the concerns of the community. The Project Management Team involved with this project consists of representatives of the City of _____; the INDOT District Office; INDOT Central Office; the local Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), and the consulting firm of _____. This Team will manage the overall project relative to interpretations of scope and products, achieving the project schedule milestones, resolving project issues, implementing agency and public involvement activities, and coordinating the City/County/Municipality of _____ and other members of the project team.

The public involvement process begins with the gathering of information from the local officials and community members that will be involved with the project. The process continues by providing information to these same stakeholders and keeping them informed of the project's progress and direction. This exchange of information is a dynamic process that continues throughout the life of the project. Goals of the Public Involvement Plan include the following:

- Identify potential project stakeholders such as local officials and community members impacted by the project
- Develop partnering activities that assist with gathering information from stakeholders
- Foster a positive relationship with stakeholders and keep them informed of the project progress
- Adequately evaluate potential levels of controversy to address specific concerns and develop context sensitive plans
- Work together to develop a transportation solution that has broad public support
- Provide productive forums for members of the public to provide comments

The _____ Project includes an extensive Public Involvement Plan. It contains communication details such as how, when and where to expect to hear project status reports and to be involved. It is made up of a variety of activities and forums to allow many opportunities for involvement. **A PROJECT KICK-OFF COORDINATION MEETING (INDOT/LPA, MUNICIPALITY, MPO, CONSULTANT, PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM) IS TYPICALLY THE FIRST STEP IN DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A SOUND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN.** Elements of the plan may consist of:

- Project information and updates on the City/County/Municipality of _____ website
- News Releases
- Project Kick-off Meeting , possibly a Public Information Meeting, possible CAC group formation
- Project (NEPA) Public Hearing and/or Hearings opportunity
- Stakeholder meetings (small group meetings or presentations)
- Resource Agency Coordination
- Section 106 Consulting Party Coordination

Following the initiation of the project and at various key points (milestones) throughout the project development process, the Project Management Team will make the most current information related to the study available for review and comment. The Project Management Team members will review all comments received and will incorporate comments into the development of the project as appropriate.

I. Updates on the INDOT/City's/County's/Municipality's Website

To provide the public with access to the most current project information available, the Project Management Team will provide project-related information to the City's/County's/Municipality's website. Information that will be available on this website includes but is not limited to:

- Project News and Updates
- Specific Project Information Such As:
 - Project Schedules
 - Listings of Project Meetings
 - Copies of Various Project-Related Documents
- Contact information for providing comments
- Project Maps
- Links to Other Websites Including the MPO, INDOT and FHWA

II. News Releases

The Project Management Team will provide news releases during the study process. The releases will be distributed to regional media and will be posted on the City's/County's/Municipalities web site at key project milestones and will be the primary method for informing and involving a wide public audience.

III. Project Kick-off Public Meeting

The first Public Information Meeting could be an open house-style Project Kick-off Meeting that will be advertised and held prior to beginning the project design. The Project Kick-off Meeting could be advertised in the local newspaper(s). Agency website and media coordination could be used to encourage attendance as well. An announcement/notice could also be mailed to individual property owners within the project area and project stakeholders on INDOT's statewide and project mailing lists. This notice will specify the date, time, place and purpose of the meeting and will contain a brief description of the project. In addition, the notice provides contact information for requesting assistance for persons with disabilities.

The Project Kick-off Meeting will be held at a place and time generally convenient for persons impacted by or interested in the proposed undertaking. The meeting location will be accessible in order to accommodate people with disabilities. The kick-off meeting has two primary objectives. The first is to introduce the public to the project and to provide information related to the Public Involvement Plan. Maps of the project area as well as graphics of potential improvements to the roadway will be available for viewing. The second objective is to collect valuable information from residents related to unique features – wells, tiles, drains, etc. – that may be present in the project area and to receive comments and project-related concerns. Members of the Project Management Team (which includes the City/municipality) will be available to

answer questions and to obtain public views regarding the problems that need to be addressed and the conceptual solutions that need to be considered. Receiving this information early in the development of the project provides the Project Management Team with a better understanding of the project area, issues and constraints prior to beginning design of the facility. This will lead to the development of a transportation improvement project that will best meet the needs of the community and its residents.

IV. Public Information Meeting(s)

A second public meeting could be held to present possible alternatives to solve transportation improvement issue, discuss alternatives screening process, or provide a general status update of the project.

A. Public Information Meeting

Should the requirements for a formal Public Hearing not be met, a second Public Information Meeting will be held. It will provide an opportunity for the public to provide comments on the project immediately before project decision-making. The Public Information Meeting will be advertised via a media release, website announcement, direct mail, etc. An announcement could also be mailed to individual property owners within the project area and project stakeholders on INDOT's statewide and project mailing lists. The announcement (notice) will specify the date, time, place and purpose of the meeting, contain a brief description of the project and will specify where the pertinent project documentation is available for inspection. In addition, the notice provides contact information for requesting assistance for persons with disabilities.

The Public Information Meeting will be held at a place and time generally convenient for persons affected by or interested in the proposed undertaking. The meeting location will be accessible in order to accommodate people with disabilities. Representatives of the Project Management Team will explain the following information:

- The project's purpose, need and consistency with the goals and objectives of the local transportation plan
- The project's alternatives and major design features
- The social, economic, environmental and other impacts of the project
- The availability of any appropriate project materials
- Procedures for receiving public comments for consideration as project develops

At this meeting, the Project Management Team will provide a description of the scope and location of the project, preliminary locations of new right-of-way acquisition, maintenance of traffic schemes, and a preliminary opinion of probable construction costs. A set of preliminary design plans and the environmental document will be on-hand for public review and comment. The Project Management Team will make a PowerPoint presentation to help describe the project.

In cooperation with INDOT, the City/Town/LPA/MPO of _____ is committed to providing a Public Information Meeting format that allows public participation. Therefore, the Project Management Team will provide the opportunity for an attendee to provide written comments which will be accepted in person at the public meeting, by mail or via the internet during an announced period after the meeting (typically about 2 to 4 weeks). Members of the Project Management Team will be available to address individual questions and concerns; however, verbal comments will not be

accepted. A summary of public meeting proceedings will be included in the final environmental document.

B. Public Hearing or Hearings Opportunity at NEPA stage of Development

The Public Hearing is an opportunity for the public to make formal statements of their views on the project immediately before project decision-making. It is viewed as a specific, observable administrative benchmark for public involvement. The Public Hearing will be held once preliminary plans have been developed and a draft environmental document has been approved. The Public Hearing will be advertised via a public notice that will be run twice in the legal notice section of the local newspaper(s). The first notice will be at least 15 days prior to the hearing. The second notice will be approximately 5 to 7 days prior to the hearing. Notice will also be made on the INDOT/City/Municipality website as well as a press release distributed to local media. The notice will also be mailed to individual property owners within the project area and project stakeholders on INDOT's statewide and project mailing lists. The notice will specify the date, time, place and purpose of the hearing, contain a brief description of the project and will specify where the pertinent project documentation is available for inspection. In addition, the notice provides contact information for requesting assistance for persons with disabilities.

The Public Hearing will be held at a place and time generally convenient for persons affected by or interested in the proposed undertaking. The hearing location will be accessible in order to accommodate people with disabilities. Representatives of the Project Management Team will explain the following information:

- The project's purpose, need and consistency with the goals and objectives of the local transportation plan
- The project's alternatives and major design features
- The social, economic, environmental and other impacts of the project
- The relocation assistance program and the right-of-way acquisition process
- The availability of the appropriate environmental document
- Procedures for receiving both oral and written statements from the public

At this hearing, the Project Management Team will provide a description of the scope and location of the project, preliminary locations of new right-of-way acquisition, maintenance of traffic schemes, and a preliminary opinion of probable construction costs. A set of preliminary design plans and the environmental document will be on-hand for public review and comment. The Project Management Team will make a PowerPoint presentation to help describe the project.

In cooperation with INDOT, the City/Town of _____ is committed to providing a Public Hearing format that allows full public participation. Therefore, the Project Management Team will provide the opportunity for an attendee to choose from at least three methods to provide comment which will include:

- Public statements before an audience of concerned citizens, with a transcript made of these statements.

- Verbal comments made privately during the meeting to a tape recorder, which the Project Management Team will include in the hearing transcript
- Written comments which will be accepted in person at the public hearing, by mail or via the internet/e-mail.

A transcript will be made of verbal statement and comments made at the public hearing. The transcript is accompanied by copies of all written statements from the public, both submitted at the public hearing and during an announced period after the hearing (typically between 2 to 4 weeks). A summary of public hearing proceedings in addition to addressing all substantive comment will be included in the final environmental document.

V. Stakeholder Meetings

Throughout the project, stakeholders – neighborhood associations, school corporations, civic organizations, local officials, community and business groups, parks and refuges and any other interested individuals – are welcome to meet with members of the Project Management Team to share information and ideas. While such meetings are intended to focus on concerns related to a specific group of individuals, they are open to the public but will not be advertised. The Project Management Team will prepare the agenda and necessary handouts for all such meetings. Project Management Team members will also have numerous contacts with stakeholders throughout the project and will answer numerous questions and address comments throughout the project via e-mail and by telephone.

VI. Resource Agency Coordination

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) calls for an examination and consideration of impacts of a proposed action on sensitive resources for a project such as this McDonald Lane Rehabilitation. These resources include, but are not limited to, floodplains, wetlands, endangered species, historic and archaeological sites, parks, air quality, wildlife habitat, etc. There also are the transportation needs that must be fulfilled and socio-economic impacts that require consideration. Because of impacts to resources, socio-economic impacts and needed transportation improvements, there is a balanced decision-making process that considers a range of factors of both impacts to the resources and the transportation needs. To produce better environmental decisions, agencies with special expertise or jurisdiction by law are included in the study process. This resource agency involvement begins early in the study to identify important issues related to the proposed action and continues throughout the study to avoid conflict later, ensuring full input from the various agencies.

VII. Section 106 Consulting Party Coordination

Congress set forth the importance of historic and archaeological resources upon the fabric of American life as a part of the National Historic Preservation Act (1966) (NHPA), which states that “the historical and cultural foundations of the Nation should be preserved as part of our community life and development in order to give a sense of orientation to the American people.” As a result of the NHPA, federal agencies are required to take into account the impact of federal undertakings upon historic properties in the area of the undertaking. Historic properties include buildings, structures, sites, objects, and/or districts within the Area of Potential Effects (APE). This consulting party involvement begins early in the study to identify important issues related to the proposed action and continues throughout the study to avoid conflict later, ensuring full input from the various agencies.