

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTION PLAN (PIAP)

Route 17 Bottleneck Project M.P. 10.19 – 12.04

Revised – May 31, 2011

INTRODUCTION

Public participation is required to achieve community “ownership” in the proposed project and therefore it is a critical element in the successful implementation of the transportation program. The Public Involvement Action Plan (PIAP) promotes an on-going public partnership to ensure that the transportation benefits are considered within the context of the impacted communities and allows for the public’s input in the transportation improvement process to be meaningful. The PIAP will assist in the development of public understanding of the problem definition and will provide a mechanism for obtaining public input in the identification of possible solutions. The PIAP will also marshal public and agency support in the selection for a preferred alternative, and can provide for early identification of any potential “fatal flaws” that would prevent the advancement of the project, or its ability to adequately address the identified problem(s).

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT GOALS

In order to increase public awareness of the project and to ensure that the issues of the general public would be heard and appropriately addressed by the project team members, the NJDOT and Bergen County have set the following public involvement goals:

- To establish credibility and trust with the communities and highway users.
- To provide effective education of the general public regarding the funding, permitting, design and construction process, and their role within this process.
- To obtain public input in the development of project alternatives and promote public understanding of the reasons for selection of a Preferred Alternative;
- To provide clear, concise information in a manner encouraging feedback.

PIAP IMPLEMENTATION, STRATEGIES & TECHNIQUES

This comprehensive public outreach program is intended to apprise the public of the project and provide a forum for all interested parties to present their views and concerns. The public outreach program is dynamic in nature and is anticipated to evolve with the progress of the project. As such, this PIAP may be reassessed and updated as necessary to ensure that the identified strategies remain adequate given the project circumstances and ongoing community impact assessment. Implementation of the PIAP will involve early, frequent and continuous consultation with the public through various methods as discussed below.

Stakeholder/Mailing List

Key stakeholders will be identified and a mailing list will be developed and maintained throughout the project. In addition to federal, state, county and local officials, the mailing list is expected to be comprised of neighborhood associations, civic and cultural groups, environmental organizations, associations of low income, minority, elderly and/or disabled constituents, etc. The mailing list will also include residents within a prescribed distance to the project limits. The notification distance and overall mailing list will be re-evaluated as needed with stakeholders possibly being added throughout the project delivery process as

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pertinent individuals/groups become evident. This list will be utilized to send project related information and invitations to public meetings and/or officials briefings. In addition to direct mailings it is anticipated that the public meetings may be advertised via the local newspaper(s), through the municipal offices and web pages, at local libraries, etc.

Public and Officials Meetings

Local Officials

The NJDOT and Bergen County are committed to establishing and maintaining contact with local officials. A series of introductory meetings will be held with municipal officials from Paramus, Rochelle Park and Maywood. During these meetings information will be distributed regarding the purpose and need for action as well as the preliminary alternatives being considered. Input from these officials or their designees will be solicited and considered by the study team. The information gathered and issues raised during these meetings is expected to relate to local knowledge of the Route 17 corridor and surrounding vicinity, municipal policy and issues, street standards, business and economic issues, zoning and land use initiatives (including redevelopment plans) and emergency services information. Discussion items for the meetings will also include the anticipated project schedule, the goals of the study and the role of the stakeholders in the overall process.

These meetings will likely be “workshops”. In this format, the attendees may be more likely to provide input and suggestions. Follow-up will be conducted as appropriate in order to establish an understanding between the NJDOT, County and the local governing bodies so that all are partners in the presentation of the project to the public. Subsequent meetings and presentations are also anticipated to request resolutions of support for the Preferred Alternative from the local governing bodies. Meeting minutes will be prepared and distributed to the attendees for comment.

Public Information Centers

Public Information Centers will be held at key project milestones to allow for public review, the exchange of information and ideas and to seek public input. Team members will answer questions and hear comments from attendees. Comment sheets will be provided so that interested residents and other stakeholders can submit written comments to the project sponsors. For each of the PIC's, a summary will be prepared to identify and document the major issues raised by the public and other stakeholders regarding the project. These issues will be taken into consideration during the project development process.

Four distinct rounds of public meetings are envisioned at key milestones in the project development process. Each round will include a Local Officials Meeting, with the second and third rounds followed shortly thereafter by a Public Information Center, at which comments from the general public will be accepted. Each round of meetings will be focused in the following manner:

- During the first round of meetings, the project team will present the program and discuss the purpose and need, including a review of existing conditions and concepts

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to be advanced for further study. A separate Local Officials Meeting will be convened with each municipality. A joint Public Information Center (PIC) for the general public of the three communities will not be held at this time.

- During the second round of meetings, the project team will discuss the status and progress of the Alternatives Analysis and technical studies. At this time, the alternative(s) and/or variations being considered for the Preferred Alternative will be presented, and additional comment will be sought. Separate meetings with local officials of the three municipalities will be scheduled, followed by the first Public Information Center for the general public, to be convened at a public meeting place.
- *Due to changes in the project schedule stemming from enhanced interagency review and coordination, a third round of public outreach has been added to the PIAP prior to the adoption of the Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA) and the compilation of the Draft Environmental Assessment (DEA) and associated Technical Support Documents. This third round of meetings will be similar in scope and intent to the second round; i.e., to inform public officials and project stakeholders of revisions made to the preliminary engineering of the project prior to the compiling the DEA, and to solicit an additional round of input.*
- The *fourth* round of meetings will represent the formal public hearing in a Public Information Center format, and will occur once the *Draft* Environmental Assessment has been circulated for comment. The Preferred Alternative will be presented at this time. This *fourth* round will again include a Local Officials Meeting followed immediately thereafter by the Public Information Center / Public Hearing.

Project Specific Website

A project website will be developed to facilitate dissemination of project information. This website is anticipated to contain the following:

- Notices of events and meetings;
- A project overview as well as details and benefits of the project;
- Fact sheets, brochures and/or flyers;
- A project timeline;
- Frequently asked questions (FAQs)
- A study area map;
- Project documents, including the Environmental Assessment and other project studies;
- Information on how interested parties can provide comments and input;
- A form that interested parties can complete to register for email updates on the project.

This website will be updated through the design and construction phases and will serve as a repository for project-related information.

Project Brochures/Flyers/Fact Sheets

Project brochures, flyers, fact sheets will be prepared and distributed at all meetings with local officials and later to the public at the Public Information Centers. These materials are expected to include project history, purpose and need information, project issues, project

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study area or alternative maps, etc. These materials will generally be updated for each officials/public meeting to reflect the most up-to-date project information available and illustrate the focus of the meeting.

Public Display Boards

Display boards will be utilized as appropriate to illustrate existing conditions and the proposed improvements to the local officials and the public. Project display boards may include project aerials, a project process display, project deficiency display, conceptual solutions displays and a Preferred Alternative display. The display boards may also be displayed via a projector when necessary, and will be posted on the project web page. At critical stages during the course of the project, presentation boards will be displayed in public venues such as the municipal building and library of the communities within the project limits.

Issues Log

In addition to documenting the key issues raised by public agencies and interested parties during the public/officials meetings, the project team will maintain a chronological file of all specific written comments or questions submitted via comment forms, email, formal letter, etc. A summary of the issues will also be prepared documenting the key issue topic and sub-topic as appropriate, specific comment/question/issue presented and information on how each issue was noted, considered or addressed by the project team.