DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLANNING HANDBOOK

2021

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLANNING

Contents

The Public Engagement Planning Handbook is for anyone involved in a project, study or plan to use to help walk through the steps of public engagement planning. The handbook doesn't cover every topic or issue that may arise, but can help guide the thought prcess. For more complex questions, the Public Engagement Policy and guidance offers a more in-depth approach.

Worksheets are provided within the document, however each resource is linked to the Word version of the worksheet for electronic use.

The appendices located at the end of the handbook include templates or reference sheets too long to include alongside the information and a list of acronyms.

Why we do public engagement

MnDOT is committed to engaging the public in its issues-identification and decision-making processes for several reasons:

- Engagement early and often informs MnDOT decisions to best meet agency goals

- Problems and issues that require mitigation will emerge

- Collective problem-solving takes advantage of the unique and creative insights of everyone involved

- Engagement increases trust in MnDOT, which leads to stronger policies and support

- Decisions made when the public are engaged are likely to be more implementable and sustainable

- Involved stakeholders and community members have more ownership of solutions developed

Keep in mind

Recognizing that public engagement must always consider the unique characteristics of communities and MnDOT projects, it is beneficial to approach the practice of public engagement with these points in mind:

- Public engagement is an ongoing process involving communications and interaction between MnDOT, the general public, stakeholders, communities and constituent groups.

- Public engagement can and often occurs outside of a project life-cycle, on topics such as noise walls, traffic signal timing, speed limits, snowplowing, congestion management and pedestrian safety – just to name a few.

- Staff should be cautious about prejudging the level of public engagement needed based on their own perceptions of the project's complexity or previous project experiences. Early public engagement provides insight about potential controversy.

- Public engagement efforts should be scaled to match the magnitude or complexity of the project, including the potential challenges of a project, such as right of way acquisition, relocation or the historical context of MnDOT's relationship with the community.

> There is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to public engagement. MnDOT recognizes that any public engagement effort must be flexible to address the anticipated impact the plan, project, program or service may have on the surrounding community. All employees are responsible for engaging the public in their work as appropriate to develop sustainable transportation projects, plans, programs and services.

- Engagement planning should be flexible, fluid and updated as the project, study or plan progresses in response to changing conditions. Staff should hold routine check-ins to track the progress on the Public Engagement Plan and related communications to assess and make adjustments as necessary.

- Public engagement specific to projects is needed through all phases of project development, from the early planning and scoping stages to construction, operations and maintenance.

- The act of planning for engagement (e.g., completing a stakeholder analysis or assessment regarding public expectations and impact) will help one determine the level of recommended engagement appropriate for a project, program, or mode.

- There is no "silver-bullet" approach or level of engagement prescribed or pre-determined for any particular type of project, program, or mode. Developing appropriate engagement strategies for different audiences is recommended.

Planning Process

Public engagement planning is in constant flux. The process applies to scoping, as well as policy planning. The following six steps are used for public engagement planning. Any public engagement plan developed is a starting point and should be updated and revised throughout the planning study or project. Staff are encouraged to remain flexible by considering feedback received throughout, addressing issues that may arise, and making course corrections/adjustments as necessary to the public engagement plan.

Engagement is scalable to the type of project and project staff are responsible for managing the public's expectations during lower- and higher-impact projects. MnDOT district staff, specialty and modal offices and project teams retain the final decision on determining the level of engagement and corresponding techniques for their specific planning study, project, program, service or ongoing engagement needs.

These steps and their accompanying worksheets are to help you frame your plan. The Public Engagement Policy and Guidance offer more concrete expectations.

Step 1: Define expectations

Clearly define the project and MnDOT's expectations and commitment

Step 2: Identify issues

Identify stakeholders, issues and needs

Step 3: Determine level of engagement

Determine the level of engagement and public influence

Step 4: Clarify Roles

Clarify public role in decision making

Step 5: Create a plan

Create and implement public engagement plan

Step 6: Evaluate

Evaluate engagement efforts (after action review)

Step 1: Define Expectations

Start the public engagement planning by clearly defining the problem, challenge, project or planning study and key milestones. It is important for MnDOT to not only describe the problem or challenge from the agency's perspective, but also to listen to and include the public in identifying the problems or challenges as they see them in their community. MnDOT should be clear on the decisions that need to be made during the planning study or project and how much influence the public should have on those decisions (i.e., understand internal expectations before managing external expectations).

Considerations should include:

- What is the planning study or project objective and goals?

- What does the public identify as the problem or challenges?

- What does successful and meaningful engagement look like?

- What are the best ways to communicate with impacted communities?

- How will public engagement advance the goals of the project, study, plan or program?

- How will equity goals be advanced?

- Are the objectives or problem that the project is anticipated to solve clear to the public?

- Do stakeholders and the public understand or agree on the problem to be solved? If not, could it be clarified and communicated?

- How much decision-making influence does MnDOT want and expect people to have?

- What are the plan or project milestones and time frame?

Resource: MnDOT Expectations Worksheet

MnDOT Expectations Worksheet

Directions: Using the scale below (0 to 3), put the appropriate number where you think it belongs. Then, follow the instructions in the worksheet to score your assessment. Refer to the Levels of Engagement spectrum on page 12 for recommendations.

Scale:

0 – Indicates very low – Level of engagement spectrum recommendation: **Inform**
1 – Indicates low to moderate – Level of engagement recommendation: **Consult**
2 – Indicates moderate to high – Level of engagement recommendation: at minimum **Involve**
3 – Indicates high to very high – Level of engagement recommendation: **Collaborate (or consider Empower)**

Assessment Questions	Very low	Low to moderate	Moderate to high	High to very high
1. Are there legal requirements for public engagement on this project?				
2. What's the expected level of political controversy?				
3. What is the expected level of media interest?				
4. What level of public anger and opposition is anticipated?				
5. To what extent do internal staff members believe the public would help improve the outcome of this project?				
6. What level of internal (and other) resources are available to support public participation?				
7. What level of influence do internal staff members think the public can have on the decision?				
8. What is the likelihood that decision makers will fully consider public input?				
9. What is the potential for undesirable outcomes if appropriate public engagement doesn't occur?				
Add numbers in each column for score:				

Add the column scores together and enter the total:

Divide the total score by the number of questions (9):

Enter the result here:

This is the average score that may help you select the best Spectrum level for this project (the higher the number, the higher the public engagement level that is likely to be most effective).

Source: IAP2

Step 2: Identify Issues

A critical step to public engagement planning involves conducting a thorough stakeholder analysis. It will assist in better understanding of who might have an interest (or stake) in the study, project, plan or program. It also helps to identify the key issues they care about and what needs they may have.

When identifying stakeholders, think about the range of voices and perspectives that "should" be heard, but may not show up at public meetings or open houses. Also think about who will be impacted and who could influence the outcome. A stakeholder analysis should be comprehensive to include general public, stakeholders and transportation partners. Consider plotting the positions and needs of stakeholders on a grid according to their level of interest in the study, project, plan or program and their level of influence.

Considerations should include:

- What is the initial feedback from public and stakeholders on the project?

- Who are the all of the stakeholders? Who cares about the plan/project?

- What do people know, believe and fear?

- What are the key issues?

- What communities will be impacted?

- What level of interest and influence do stakeholders have in/over decisions?

Resource: IAP2 Stakeholder Analysis and Interest and Influence Grid

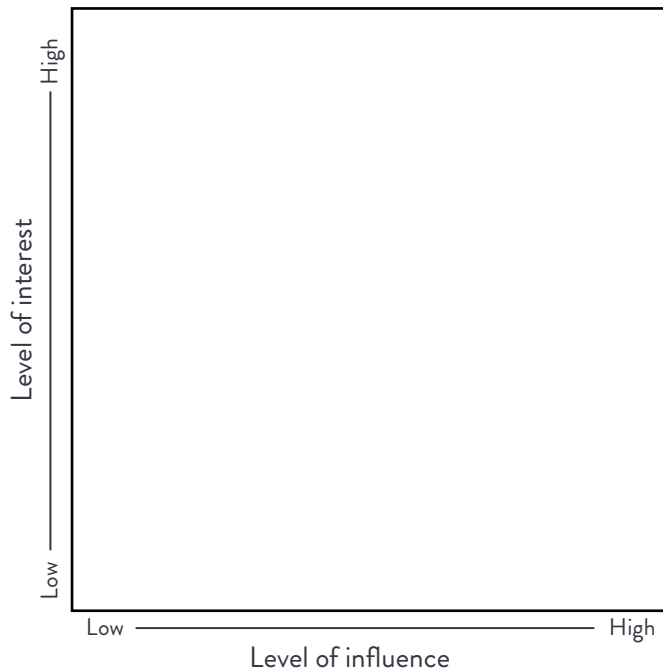Hwy 71 roundabout

Saint Croix Crossing

IAP2 Stakeholder Analysis and Interest and Influence Grid

Use the grid to determine who your stakeholders are, the issues they may care about, their interest in the decisions regarding that issue and the expected influence they may have over that decision. Then, determine how important that issue is to the overall project and determine how much that particular stakeholder group will need to be engaged based on your answers.

STAKEHOLDER	ISSUE			NEED TO ENGAGE	
Stakeholder	Issue	Interest in decision*	Expected influence over decision*	Importance to decision*	Interest + Influence + Importance*
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					

*Use the following to indicate a rating: N=None, L=Low, M=Moderate, H=High, U=Unknown

Some people find it helpful to plot the position of stakeholders relative to their impact on decisions. These groupings can help to think about different engagement strategies at appropriate levels of the spectrum. Where do your stakeholders fit on this chart?

Level of interest (vertical axis: Low to High)
Level of influence (horizontal axis: Low to High)

Source: IAP2

Step 3: Determine Level of Engagement

The Scaling Public Engagement Factors Reference Sheet and Worksheet may be useful when making decisions on the level of intensity of public engagement needed for a project. The document outlines common factors that may affect the level of engagement that may be needed for projects or studies. Factors fall into five main categories: people, relationships, impacts, community, and existing studies and plans. Possible mandates to consider are listed with each factor. Then, each factor is rated from very low to very high to indicate the intensity of public engagement that may be needed.

Resources:
Scaling Public Engagement Factors Worksheet
Scaling Public Engagement Factors Reference Sheet

Rondo Plaza in Saint Paul's Rondo Neighborhood

Scaling Public Engagement Factors Worksheet

This worksheet can be used as a tool when making decisions on the level of public engagement that may be needed for a project, plan or study. The table lists common factors that can affect the desired level of public engagement. See the MnDOT Public Engagement: Factors Reference Sheet for more detail.

For each factor, consider: "What is the impact of this factor in this project?" Then, rate each factor from very low to very high by putting an X in the appropriate column. Next, review the factor ratings and put an X on the arrow at the bottom to indicate where most factors were rated. More factors rated to the right side of the arrow indicate staff should plan for a higher level of public engagement while more factors rated to the left side of the arrow indicate staff should plan for a lower level of public engagement.

	Factor	Very low	Low	Moder-ate	High	Very high	N/A	Notes
People	Demographics							
Politics	Partner relationships							
	Public relationships							
	Tribal Populations							
Past experience	Past relationship with MnDOT and other government agencies							
	Policies, plans and studies							
Project	Business impact							
	Difficulty of project							
	Environmental impact							
	Traffic impact							
	Rural/Suburban/Urban							

Lower level of public engagement ⟵――――――――――⟶ **Higher level of public engagement**

Scaling Public Engagement Factors Reference Sheet

The table below can be used as a reference when making decisions on the level of intensity of public engagement needed for a project. The table lists common factors that can affect the necessary level of public engagement. Factors fall into five main categories: people, relationships, impacts, community and existing studies/plans. Possible mandates to consider are listed with each factor. In addition, a description of components and reflection questions support staff in determining how much impact the factor may have in a project. Having factors with a higher degree of impact may indicate a more intense level of public engagement is appropriate for the project.

Factor	Description of Components	Reflection Questions
Business impact Mandates include: • Business impact mitigation and liaison	• Type of business • Delivery schedules • Access (general, parking) • Signage • Customer base	• What types of businesses will be impacted? How? • Is a business liaison needed? • Can EDA be involved?
Demographics Mandates include: • EJ/NEPA • ADA • Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act	• Characteristics of those affected (income, race/ethnicity, education, auto ownership) • Psychographics (attitudes, values, beliefs, etc.) • Access to technology • Primary language • Vulnerable populations	• Who will be most impacted by the project? • What considerations are there for engaging with these communities? • What voices do we need to hear from in our public engagement? • Are there culturally specific processes for how we engage? • What degree of participation do stakeholders appear to want?
Difficulty of project	• Complexity of project • Likelihood of unknowns in project process/outcomes	• What is the probable level of difficulty in addressing the problem/opportunity?
Environmental impact Mandates include: • EJ/NEPA, EIS, EA	• Impacts identified in studies • Environmental concerns • Impacts on vulnerable populations	• What are environmental concerns? • How might environmental impacts affect stakeholders?
Historical relationship with MnDOT	• Past engagement experience • Historical impact of transportation projects	• What MnDOT/transportation-related history in this community may affect public perceptions or expectations?
Planning process/existing studies Mandates include: • City comp plans • Major transportation plans • EA, EIS, EJ	• Environmental studies • Long-range plans • Impacts of existing plans • Corridor studies • Statewide plans • Adopted/approved studies by MnDOT/locals	• What are the known impacts of existing plans? • How will the results of existing studies affect this project? *Table continued on the next page*

Factor	Description of Components	Reflection Questions
Public relations/politics Mandates include: • Public notice requirements • MPO	• Controversial project • Fatalities or serious injuries associated with project • Political interest • Support from local political leadership • Legislative concerns • Local opinions • Stakeholder groups with influence • Previous projects/MnDOT work • Funding options for local government • Corridor Coalition Groups	• Are there attributes in the project that may be controversial and elevated to the Commissioner or a legislator? • What stakeholders have political influence in this project? Are there competing interests? • What level of community support does the project currently have? • What is MnDOT's relationship with local government leadership and other local stakeholders? • Will the news media be interested in this project? Why?
Traffic impact Mandates include: • TMP • Federal or state policies • Oversize/overweight permits	• Detours • Delays • Road closures • Freight (type, truck routes) • Access • Transit • Non-motorized detours • Employers with shift work and strict start/end times (hospitals, delivery companies, certain freight)	• Who or what will be impacted with this project? How much? • When, how, and where do people and freight move through this project area?
Tribal Populations Mandates include: • MnDOT Public Engagement Policy • FHWA	• Tribal lands and Indian Country • Tribal Interests • Tribal employment	• Review information contained in the MnDOT Public Engagement Policy relative to Tribal Populations • Has the Office of Tribal Affairs (tribal liaison) been contacted?
Rural/Suburban/Urban Mandates include: • Municipal consent • MPO • County ditches on R/W • Legal process	• Density of land use • Land use context • Municipal consent • Number and type of stakeholders to engage	• Is the land use changing? • Does the project pass through a residential area/city? • What is community vision (comp plan) for the area of interest?

Levels of engagement

Public engagement at MnDOT refers to the agency's commitment to listen first and ultimately inform, consult, involve, collaborate and/or empower stakeholders and the public in transportation decision-making.

Since the goals of engagement will vary from one phase of the project to the next, the activities and level of engagement will vary along the spectrum from Inform to Empower.

See page 13 for examples of projects that could correspond to each level of engagement.

INFORM

Provide balanced and objective information to help understand the problems, alternatives and/or solutions

CONSULT

Obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions

INVOLVE

Work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered

COLLABORATE

Partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution

EMPOWER

Place final decision-making in the hands of the public

Source: IAP2

What does public engagement look like?

The following are engagement tools and activities that can be used for each level of engagement in different types of projects.

INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Provide balanced and objective information to help understand the problems, alternatives and/or solutions	Obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions	Work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered	Partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	Place final decision-making in the hands of the public

Examples of tools used to achieve each level of engagement

INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
• Project website • Fact sheets • Email updates • Newsletters • Social media • Public open house • U.S. Postal Delivery • Press release	• Interviews, focus group or listening sessions • Small meetings with stakeholders or business owners • Online surveys • Field walks and tours • Community or stakeholder events • Online meeting chat box • Website comment box	• Commission or advisory group • Online forum • Stakeholder meeting • Roadway design activity • Planning study • Community liaisons • Scenario planning • Design charrette • Rendering of options	• Citizen or stakeholder advisory committee • Collaborative work group • Partnerships with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) • Empowering community representatives • Participatory budget or decision-making	• Voting committee • Survey balloting or polling • City Council vote (municipal consent) • Visual quality committees

Examples of when and/or how these tools might be used

INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
• Informing audiences about lane closures, detours or construction schedules • Posting project, plan, program or service information • Providing information about MnDOT's District Bicycle Plans to the public • Attending a fair, conference or community event • Responding to public inquiries	• Obtaining feedback from audiences on pavement resurfacing or road and bridge realignment projects • Consulting with businesses to develop potential mitigation strategies to lessen construction impacts on businesses • Conducting a pedestrian safety survey during career day at the tribal college • Gathering input on modifications to products and plans	• Conducting listening sessions to obtain and incorporate input on policies • Hosting focus groups to obtain, understand and consider public and stakeholder behaviors, opinions or sentiment • Conducting 1:1s to develop relationships with community-based organizations to advance transportation equity	• Collaborating with stakeholders when conducting corridor planning studies or doing scoping outreach • Engaging with the public to develop the Capital Highway Investment Plan • Collaborate with industry and agency partners on large oversize/overweight load projects	• Allowing the public to vote for or against noise walls, allowing snow fence or accepting or rejecting a "road diet" plan • Allowing public to make decision on specific project design aspects (e.g., light fixtures, landscaping, railings, etc.) • Empowering communities through distributed Master Planning process (Aeronautics).

These tools are not limited to one level of engagement.

Most often, tools from previous levels are used in combination with the tools in the level of engagement you're working in.

Source: IAP2

Step 4: Clarify Roles

As part of step four, ensure there is agreement with the public/stakeholders on the problem to be solved. If there isn't agreement, determine how to address or facilitate a resolution of the problem identification before determining the public's role in decision-making.

Considerations should include:

- How much influence or control is MnDOT willing to allow the public to have?

- How much has MnDOT been willing to engage the public in the past and to what degree is MnDOT now willing to share control of this decision with the public or other stakeholders?

- How much influence or control does the community want or expect?

- What does the decision-making process look like? Which project decisions will be made by the public?

Resource: Public Expectations Worksheet
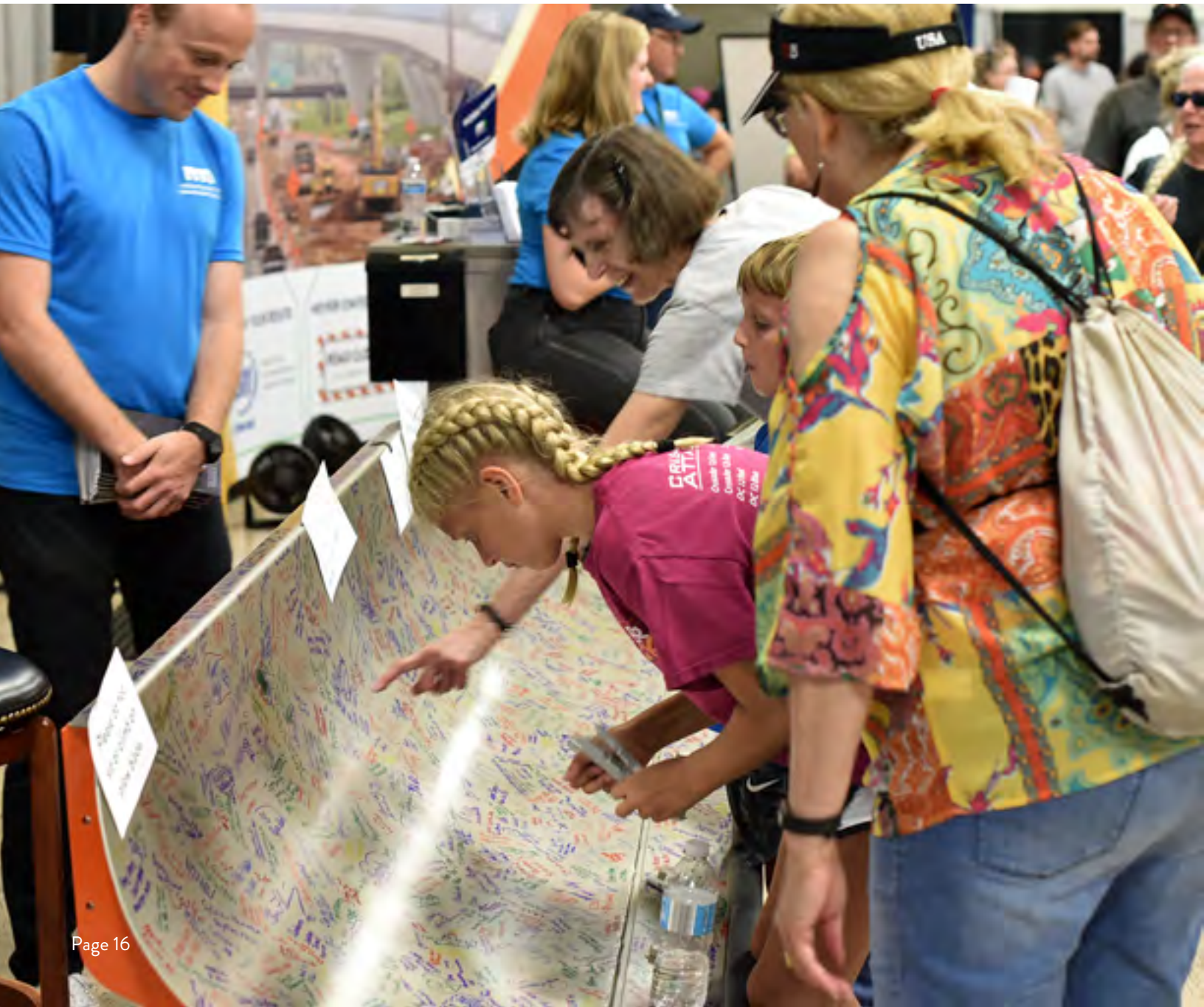
Public Expectations Worksheet

Directions: Using the scale below (0 to 3), put the appropriate number where you think it belongs. Then, follow the instructions in the worksheet to score your assessment.

Scale:

0 – Indicates very low – Level of engagement spectrum recommendation: **Inform**
1 – Indicates low to moderate – Level of engagement recommendation: **Consult**
2 – Indicates moderate to high – Level of engagement recommendation: at minimum **Involve**
3 – Indicates high to very high – Level of engagement recommendation: **Collaborate (or consider Empower)**

Assessment Questions	Very low	Low to moderate	Moderate to high	High to very high
1. How intrusive/disruptive will the public perceive this project to be?				
2. How significant are the actual negative impacts of the project to people, neighborhoods, communities, special interests, political entities?				
3. How much do stakeholders care about the issues and the decisions to be made?				
4. What level of public anger and opposition is anticipated?				
5. What degree of involvement in the process do stakeholders appear to want?				
6. What "promise" is the agency willing to make to the public about its level of influence in the decision?				

Add the column scores together and enter the total:

Divide the total score by the number of questions (6):

Enter the result here:

This is the average score that may help you select the best spectrum level for this project (the higher the number, the higher the public engagement level that is likely to be most effective).

Source: IAP2

Step 5: Create a Plan

The worksheets and analysis completed in Steps 1-4 may be compiled to develop a Public Engagement Plan. A Public Engagement Plan is an iterative process and the plan should be updated and refined throughout the project. Project-based Public Engagement Plans should be developed before entering the State Highway Investment Plan.

The Public Engagement Plan may include documentation of:

- Goals and objectives for public engagement and MnDOT's Expectations Worksheet (Step 1)
- Community demographic data and helpful statistics
- Stakeholder analysis and issues and Influence and Interest Grid (Step 2)
- Communication plan
    - o Audience
    - o Key messages to reach the target audiences
    - o Strategy
    - o Delivery tool (social media, open houses, community conversations, email, project website)
    - o Timeline
    - o Roles and responsibilities among team members
    - o Note: The tools and methods used will depend on the audience, their goals, their level of trust, etc.
- Public engagement level, activities and budget plus Engagement Level Assessment Worksheet (Step 3) *Also, see Cost Guidance section in the Public Engagement Policy Guidance document*
    - o Contacts made, activities conducted, input received and decisions made
    - o Individuals/organizations contacted and interacted with (and dates of touchpoints)
    - o Channel(s) used to reach individuals/organizations
    - o Input received from open houses, public hearings, online meetings, surveys, etc.
- Public role in decision making and worksheet (Step 4)
- Evaluation plan (Step 6)

Resource: Public Engagement Plan Template, *Appendix 1*

Step 6: Evaluate Engagement Efforts (After Action Review)

Project team members should pause and assess the impact and outcomes of engagement activities throughout by asking the evaluation questions below and documenting the responses to learn and improve public engagement efforts along the way. In addition, staff may reference existing mandated indicators or data points that they are required to collect and report. Evaluation efforts may be scaled with resources appropriate to the level of project and public engagement activity. It is important for MnDOT to close the loop with internal and external audiences by summarizing what was learned during the engagement process, and how the input informed the project plan or study, and (if needed) explain why MnDOT was not able to use selected input.

Survey questionnaires

To evaluate an open-house or meeting, use these survey questions and send a post-meeting evaluation.

In order to track attendance at meetings and events and identify gaps (people or groups who are not attending the engagement events), it is important to ask participants to provide demographic information on a sign-in sheet (for in-person meeting) or send a post-meeting survey (for virtual meetings) to participants to collect this information. The information collected at an in-person meeting will not be as comprehensive as what is collected in an online survey, so be sure to scale back questions on a sign-in sheet. Compare the demographic information collected to the demographic make-up of the community (through Census or ACS data) to identify gaps in participation and use the information to strategize new engagement methods/techniques to reach people you are missing from current engagement efforts.

Resource: Evaluation framework, *Appendix 2*
Resource: Standard demographic questions, *Appendix 3*

Evaluation questions

1. **How well is MnDOT managing the engagement process (either directly by MnDOT staff or through a consultant)?**

   o Are we creating a spreadsheet to track who we engaged with, the tool or channel that was used, what comments were received?

2. **How effective are MnDOT communications? (e.g., Is MnDOT communicating the "right" information to the "right" audience?)**

3. **How well is MnDOT documenting its engagement work?**

4. **To what extent is MnDOT ensuring that key stakeholders are informed/engaged?**

5. **How well does the communication or engagement plan and its strategies meet the needs of the project and key stakeholders?**

   o What engagement effort(s), if any, stand out as being particular insightful, or exceeded expectations? How so?

   o What engagement effort(s), if any, were not particularly effective? How so?

   o Is project information available in languages other than English?

   o Do key stakeholders (especially vulnerable populations) perceive that they had an adequate opportunity to participate?

   o Are meeting locations ADA accessible?

   o How could MnDOT modify and/or improve upon future engagement efforts?

6. **Has MnDOT shared what it heard back to the community or stakeholders along with what it did with the feedback?**

   o Close the loop with internal and external audiences by summarizing what MnDOT learned during the engagement process, and how the input informed the project plan or study, and (if needed) explain why MnDOT was not able to use selected input.

   o What recommendations/changes made came directly from input received from the public? (i.e., examples of how engagement efforts can impact decisions and are not just done for engagement's sake)

   o Are there any summaries of the public engagement efforts that someone could review/view if they wanted more detail? What and how can others access (URL, contact person, etc.)?

7. **Are there any specific recommendations to help other staff succeed in their public engagement efforts? Are there any tips about logistics, planning, timing or anything else that seem to impact participation or quality that come to mind?**

   o Staff should consider sharing lessons learned with the MnDOT community of practice to grow institutional knowledge (i.e., at monthly Discussing Public Engagement meetings, staff meetings, annual project management leadership group or planning management group forums).

Resources:
Evaluation Framework, Appendix 2

Standard Demographic Questions, Appendix 3

Appendices

Public engagement definitions

Public engagement

Public engagement is any process that:

- Involves the public in identifying and solving challenges and problems;
- Uses public input to make sustainable decisions;
- Educates or informs the public about a topic or issue; or
- Seeks to build meaningful connections and trust with the public through communication and interaction.

Public

For the purposes of this handbook, the term public is used in the broadest sense to include the general public, stakeholders and transportation partners.

- General public: any individual or group not necessarily associated with decision-making power or special interests but may have an interest in the outcome of a decision.
- Stakeholders: any individual or group that has, or perceives they have, a stake in the outcome of a decision.
- Transportation partners: governmental or nongovernmental entities that work in partnership with MnDOT.

Acronyms

ACS – American Community Survey

ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act

CBO – Community-based organization

CHIP – 10-year highway investment plan

EA – Environmental assessment

EDA – United State Economic Development Administration

EJ – Environmental Justice

EIS – Environmental impact statement

FHWA – Federal Highway Administration

FTA – Federal Transit Administration

HSIP – Highway Safety Improvement Program

LEP – Limited English Proficient

MEPA – Minnesota Environmental Policy Act

MMB – Minnesota Management and Budget

MnDOT – Minnesota Department of Transportation

MPO – Metropolitan Planning Organizations

NEPA – National Environmental Policy Act

PE – Public Engagement

RDC – Regional Development Commission

R/W – Right of way

SHPO – State Historic Preservation Office

SMTP – Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan

STIP – State Transportation Improvement Program

TMP – Traffic Management Plan

Appendix 1: Public Engagement Plan Template

Project Name: FILL

This worksheet should be used by planning and project management staff to assist in assessing your process, purpose, audiences, potential barriers, impacts and strategies to inform your overall approach to creating a public engagement plan for your project.

You'll note several places, identified with an asterisk (*), where you should consult with MnDOT engagement and outreach staff to finalize your plan and identify specific ways to reach your audiences and achieve your engagement outcomes. Engagement and outreach staff will also be able to help you identify existing community partnerships that may benefit your effort.

- The project team needs to establish an outline of the public engagement plan as early in the project development phase as possible, ideally in scoping.

- The plan must include any federally required public hearings as well as additional public engagement efforts (in person, online, community based, etc.) that will contribute to better decisions on the location, design and/or details of the project.

- This plan may need to be adjusted as the project advances and should therefore be reviewed by the project team at critical stages in project development.

Project Purpose:

Briefly describe your project and what the project will accomplish

What is the purpose of engagement on your project?*

- What engagement goals does your project hope to achieve/what transportation decisions are to be made?

- How can the public and stakeholder groups be involved in the decision-making process? Consider both public officials (elected and staff) and community members. What is the desired level of involvement/influence (inform, consult, involve, collaborate, empower) and why?

Is there any history of public engagement related to this project?

Who will specifically be affected by your project (both positive and negative impacts) and how?*

- Community profile: cities, counties, neighborhoods, businesses, specific populations including communities of color, people with disabilities, low income, non-English speakers, other racial/ethnic groups)

- What do you know about public and stakeholder perspectives on any issues involving this project? What information will they need? How can we otherwise address any concerns?

- Assessment of community awareness/knowledge about this project

- Identification of special sensitivities and/or requirements related to public engagement methods and activities

Align actions within the plan with the project development process
Refer to the MnDOT Project Development Continuum, which can be found at: mndot.gov/projectdevcycle/

Objectives

Briefly describe what you hope to achieve through public engagement.

Level of public involvement

Based on the information provided, what level of public engagement can you achieve?

- Inform
- Consult
- Involve
- Collaborate
- Empower

Describe the overall approach for public engagement

- Outreach
- Education
- Gathering of input
- Opportunities for direct engagement
- Pathways for incorporating input into decision-making
- Feedback to public about decision-making
- Plan for monitoring/evaluating/readjusting the public engagement plan

Define the specific action steps, techniques and timing for public engagement

- Who will do what?
- Within what timeline?
- With what resources?

Use the action table below to answer the questions above and create a timeline.

Timeframe/ Schedule	Strategy/Tool	Targeted Audience	Purpose/ Outcomes	Responsible/Lead	Status

Will you need additional resources for engagement?*

Guidance for this information comes from the MnDOT Public Engagement Policy, at mndot.gov/policy/operations

Additional resources for public engagement guidance and planning can be found on MnDOT's Public Engagement ihub site at http://ihub/publicengagement/index.html.

Appendix 2: Evaluation Framework

Purpose

Based on feedback from various roles, districts and offices, Market Research created a standardized, statewide post-project survey template that can be administered after a project is completed. Standardization across MnDOT allows greater experience to be gained with the system, and helps to reduce silos of information within MnDOT. Building a shared understanding of how well MnDOT is doing from a state-level perspective requires common metrics.

	Survey/Evaluation Questions	Measures and Outcomes
Title and introduction	"MnDOT [PROJECT NAME] Public Engagement Evaluation" • Brief introduction that details the survey and project	
Screening criteria	• How familiar are respondents with the project? If not at all familiar, they are excluded • Respondent role and its impact on their responses (to ascertain possible bias). They are not excluded, but an important factor in data analysis	• % of respondents who are familiar or unfamiliar with project • % of respondents who work for MnDOT, a government agency, the media, a road design/construction firm, a market research/PR/advertising firm, or none of the above.
Project benefits and impacts	• What is the purpose of the project? • Did they understand the benefits, financial costs, negative impacts (e.g. inconveniences like traffic delays, detours, timeline) of the project?	• % of respondents who understood the purpose of the project • % of respondents who think the project was done in a timely manner, and if not, the degree of impact on them
Expectations	• High-level overview of what public engagement at MnDOT means, and what our commitment to public engagement is/looks like • Were there sufficient opportunities to engage with MnDOT? • How well did MnDOT incorporate public input into project decisions?	• % of respondents who understood public engagement goals • % of respondents who felt they had sufficient knowledge about engagement and opportunities to inform decision-making
Communication	• Was notification of public engagement opportunities given in a timely manner? • Did the public engagement process last long enough for respondents to give input? Were they given sufficient time to understand major decisions?	• % of respondents who felt they had adequate time to give input • % of respondents who felt they were informed of opportunities to provide input in a timely manner

	Survey/Evaluation Questions	Measures and Outcomes
Overall public engagement	• Did they feel heard by MnDOT? • How helpful were public engagement activities?	• % of respondents whofelt heard by MnDOT • % of respondents who felt that public engagement activities were interesting and informative
Accessibility and locations	• How accessible were the public engagement opportunities?	• % of respondents who thought public engagement activities were held on convenient dates and times • % of respondents who felt comfortable voicing their concerns/opinions • % of respondents who felt public engagement activities were accessible to people with disabilities and accessible by transit
Overall project	• Were they satisfied with the public engagement process and completed project? • Did the project add value given the cost and impacts?	• % of respondents who were satisfied with the public engagement process and the overall project • % of respondents who felt the project added value • % of respondents who felt traffic delays were acceptable
Project notification and participation	• How did you hear about the project? • How did respondents participate in PE activities? • What could improve the PE process? • How much of the time can you trust MnDOT to do what is right? • How could MnDOT improve?	• % of respondents who initially heard about the project through various means (e.g. social media, email, flyers) • % of respondents who participated in various public engagement opportunities (e.g. attended public meeting or open house, received project emails, read, or listened to media) • % of respondents who think they can trust MnDOT to do what is right (e.g. all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, never)
Demographics	• Are respondents demographically representative of the affected community? • Identifying and addressing barriers to engagement for specific underrepresented groups • Demographic questions (e.g. age, education, race, language, disability status)	• % of respondents who were associated/involved with the project and how (e.g. resident, business owner in area, employee of the area)
Comments	• When thinking about the project and its public engagement activities and opportunities, what else should be MnDOT aware of?	• Qualitative question: when thinking about the project and its public engagement activities/opportunities, what else should be MnDOT aware of?

Appendix 3: Market Research Public Engagement Question Standards

This document outlines the Market Research unit's recommended demographic question standards for public engagement purposes.

This document was last updated on July 31, 2020.

Demographic Questions

Demographic questions are required for the respondent to answer and an explicit "prefer not to answer" option should be provided.

Introduction

Question Wording
Our goal is to get input from a wide range of individuals. In order to understand who is participating in this survey, we are collecting demographic information to identify who we're hearing from. Providing data is optional, however, by answering you will be helping MnDOT understand the needs and preferences of the diverse communities that MnDOT serves. Your responses will be compiled in aggregate and will not be associated with you, personally.

Explanation
An introduction before the demographic section of a survey informs respondents of why you are collecting demographic information and what you intend to do with the results. It is important respondents know that their responses will only be used in aggregate and will not be associated with them, personally.

Ableness

Question Wording
Do you have a long-lasting or chronic condition (physical, visual, auditory, cognitive or mental, emotional, or other) that substantially limits one or more of your major life activities (your ability to see, hear, or speak; to learn, remember, or concentrate)?

1. Yes

2. No

3. Prefer not to answer

Explanation
For this question, the respondent will select one option.

Age

Question Wording
What is your age?

1. Under 18

2. 18-24

3. 25-34

4. 35-44

5. 45-54

6. 55-64

7. 65-74

8. 75+

9. Prefer not to answer

Explanation
For this question, the respondent will select one option. These are the standard age ranges used in analysis.

Education

Question Wording
What is the last grade or level of education that you completed? Was it...

1. High school or less

2. Technical or vocational school

3. Some college

4. College graduate

5. Post graduate work or advanced degree

6. Prefer not to answer

Explanation
For this question, the respondent will select one option.

Note: This question can be used as a proxy for income if that is determined to be too sensitive of information to ask of a respondent since education and income often correlate.

Ethnicity

Question Wording
Are you of Hispanic descent?

1. Yes

2. No

3. Prefer not to answer

Which of the following best describes your racial background?

1. American Indian or Alaska Native

2. Asian

3. Black or African-American

4. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

5. White

6. Some other race/More than one race (please specify)

7. Prefer not to answer

Explanation
This is a two-question series regarding race and ethnicity. Both questions are asked of all respondents, and the respondent will select one option for each. If someone selects "Some other race/More than one race," an open-text field should be displayed allowing them to specify.

Question Wording
What best describes your racial background? (OPEN ENDED)

Explanation
This is an open ended question that allows the respondent to identify their racial background in any way they wish. You will have to bucket respondents into categories for analysis after the survey is complete.

Gender

Question Wording
Which of the following describes how you think of yourself?

1. Female

2. Male

3. Non-binary (please specify if you wish)

4. Prefer not to answer

Explanation
For this question, the respondent will select one option. If someone selects "Non-binary," an open-text field should be displayed allowing them to specify.

Language

Question Wording
What is the primary language spoken in your home?

1. English

2. Spanish

3. Somali

4. Hmong

5. Amharic

6. Oromo

7. Karen

8. Russian

9. Other (please specify)

10. Prefer not to answer

Explanation
For this question, the respondent will select one option. If someone selects "Other," an open-text field should be displayed allowing them to specify.

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