Virtual Public Engagement
During and Beyond COVID-19

New Jersey Division Office

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Order of Presentation

- Public Involvement Foundation
- FHWA VPI Guidance
- Introduction to EDC-6
- VPI Tools
- Experiences with VPI
Early and Continuous Opportunities

Establish early and continuous public involvement opportunities... 23 CFR 450.210 (a)(1),(viii),(ix) and 450.316 (a)(1),(vi)

Early coordination, public involvement, and project development.

"Early coordination with appropriate agencies and the public aids in determining the type of environmental review document an action requires, the scope of the document, the level of analysis, and related environmental requirements. This involves the exchange of information from the inception of a proposal for action to preparation of the environmental review documents." 23 CFR 771.111(a)(1)

Early and continuing

"For the Federal-aid highway program; (1) Each State must have procedures approved by the FHWA to carry out a public involvement/public hearing program pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 128 and 139 and CEQ regulation. (2) State public involvement/public hearing procedures must provide for:

i. Coordination of public involvement activities and public hearings with the entire NEPA process.

ii. Early and continuing opportunities during project development for the public to be involved in the identification of social, economic and environmental impacts, as well as impacts associated with relocation of individuals, groups, or institutions.

iii. One or more public hearings or the opportunity for hearing(s) to be held by the State highway agency at a convenient time and place for any Federal-aid project which requires significant amounts of right-of-way, substantially changes the layout or functions of connecting roadways or of the facility being improved, has a substantial adverse impact on abutting property, otherwise has a significant social, economic, environmental or other effect, or for which the FHWA determines that a public hearing is in the public interest.

iv. Reasonable notice to the public of either a public hearing or the opportunity for a public hearing. Such notice will indicate the availability of explanatory information. The notice shall also provide information required to comply with public involvement requirements of other laws, Executive orders, and regulations.

v. Explanation at the public hearing of the following information, as appropriate:
Temporary Virtual Public Involvement During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Question #1: Can project sponsors hold virtual public hearings to satisfy public involvement requirements during the project development process?

Answer #1: Yes. In response to the various measures being taken by public health authorities due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, including closures of public meeting venues and social distancing, FHWA will temporarily permit all public involvement activities previously conducted in-person to exclusively use virtual technologies and techniques that fulfill the essential purposes of the in-person public involvement. Consistent with applicable State, local and tribal requirements, continued in-person involvement should be allowed in cases where a suitable physical location is available and the State has determined that such meetings can be safely conducted. This temporary policy includes public meetings conducted as part of project development to comply with the 23 U.S.C. § 139 environmental review process, the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Historic Preservation Act, as well as public hearings conducted to comply with 23 U.S.C. § 128. This guidance does not affect any State, local or tribal requirements that apply to recipients or sub-recipients.

Question #2: Why is the FHWA issuing this guidance?

Answer #2: The FHWA is issuing this guidance to address the unusual and extraordinary circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, including steps taken by public health officials concerning closures of public meeting venues and social distancing. These steps affect FHWA recipients’ and sub-recipients’ ability to provide an in-person setting where decisionmakers and members of the public are physically present in the same location.
Every Day Counts

New Jersey Division Office

EDC Rounds
- EDC-6 (2021-2022)
- EDC-5 (2019-2020)
- EDC-4 (2017-2018)
- EDC-3 (2015-2016)
- EDC-2 (2013-2014)
- EDC-1 (2011-2012)

EDC-6 Innovations (2021-2022)
- EDC-6 Overview Video
- Crowdsourcing for Adhesion Operations
- e-Ticketing and Digital As-Builts
- Next-Generation TIM: Integrating Technology, Data, and Training

Events
- EDC Safety Summit Series
  - Sept. 1: Safe Transportation for Every Pedestrian (STEP)
  - Sept. 8: Data-Driven Safety Analysis (DDSA)
  - Sept. 15: Reducing Rural Roadway Departures (ForRRwD), High Friction
    Surface Treatment and Safety/Edge (SM)
  - Sept. 22: Intersection and Interchange Geometrics
  - Sept. 29: Road Diet
VPI Tools

1. Mobile Applications
2. Project Visualizations
3. Do-It-Yourself Videos
4. Crowdsourcing Tools
5. Virtual Town Halls
6. Mapping Tools
7. All-in-One Tools
8. Digital Tools to Enhance In-Person Events
Experiences with VPI

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Virtual Public Involvement Initiative

Learn About: Virtual Town Halls

What are Virtual Town Halls?

Public meetings are an essential part of the transportation planning and project development process. They provide a forum for stakeholders to learn about projects and investments, ask questions and interact with agency staff, and provide opinions and input on the local or regional transportation network.

With careful planning, face-to-face meetings can bring together diverse groups of stakeholders. They can elicit valuable feedback for staff and build support for transportation projects. However, public meetings require a great deal of time, labor, and funding for design, printing and distribution. What's more, involvement with busy schedules may find it cumbersome to travel to the public meeting venue on a specific date and time.

Virtual Town Halls or virtual public meetings offer stakeholders a way to participate in the planning process, without traveling to a meeting location, such as a school or conference center. Stakeholders may join the meeting on teleconference, or by using video conferencing technologies.
Thank You