

# Public Involvement in the Project Development Process

“Laying the foundation for successful transportation projects”

INDOT Office of Public Involvement



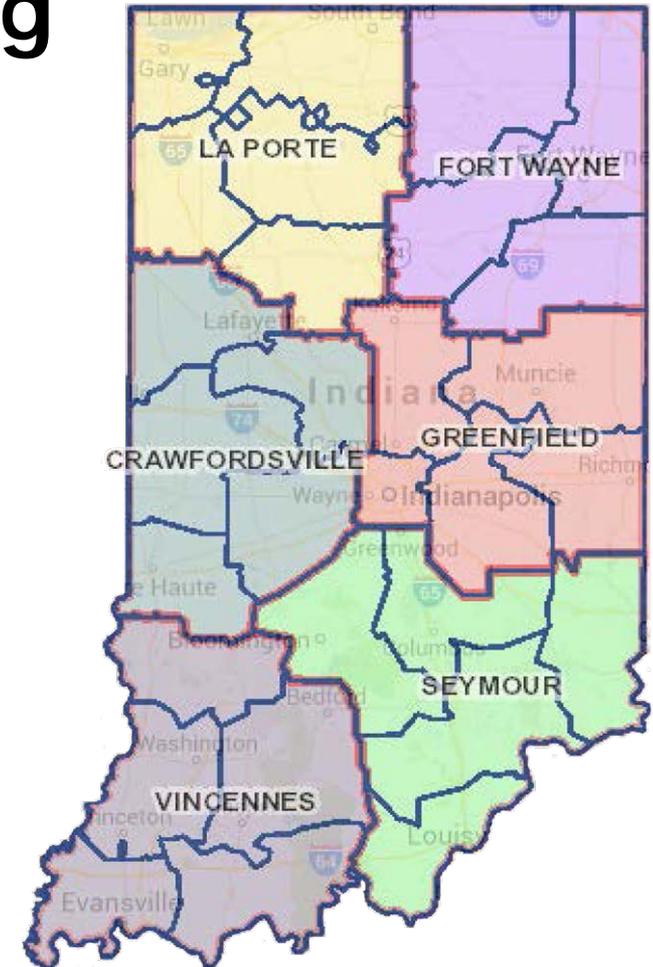
# Public Involvement in Project Development

- The foundation for a successful project starts long before the road ever is built



# The Big Picture

- Planning & Programming
- Project Development
- Design
- Construction
- Operations
- Maintenance



# Planning and Programming

- **Statewide Long Range Transportation (TP)**
- **Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)**
- **Public Involvement**
  - INDOT District Offices
  - Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)
  - Regional / Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs)
  - Local officials, economic development / community leaders
  - Public participation – review and comment period for STIP
  - Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) & Federal Transit Administration (FTA) approval



# Public Involvement

- Every project is unique....is your public involvement approach?
- Public Involvement Plan (PIP) – required for every project
- Varies in scope for each NEPA document classification
  - Categorical Exclusion (CE)
  - Environmental Assessment (EA)
  - Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
- State project or Local Public Agency (LPA) using federal dollars



# Public Involvement

- NEPA acknowledges unique differences of each project, your PIP should as well



# Public Involvement

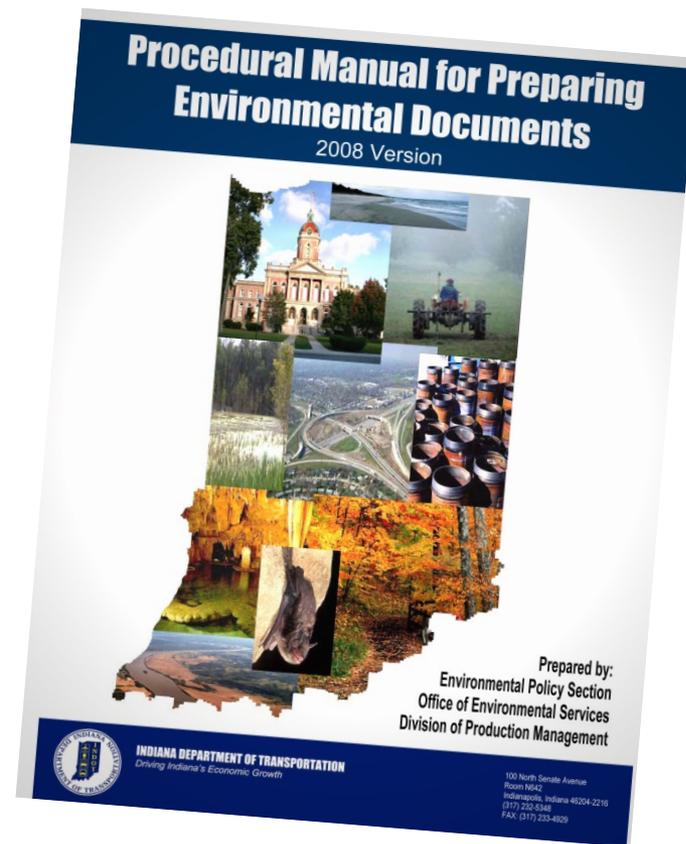
- **Know your project**
- **Determine the appropriate level of public involvement**
- **NEPA resource documents  
INDOT, FHWA, others**
- **Every project is unique**



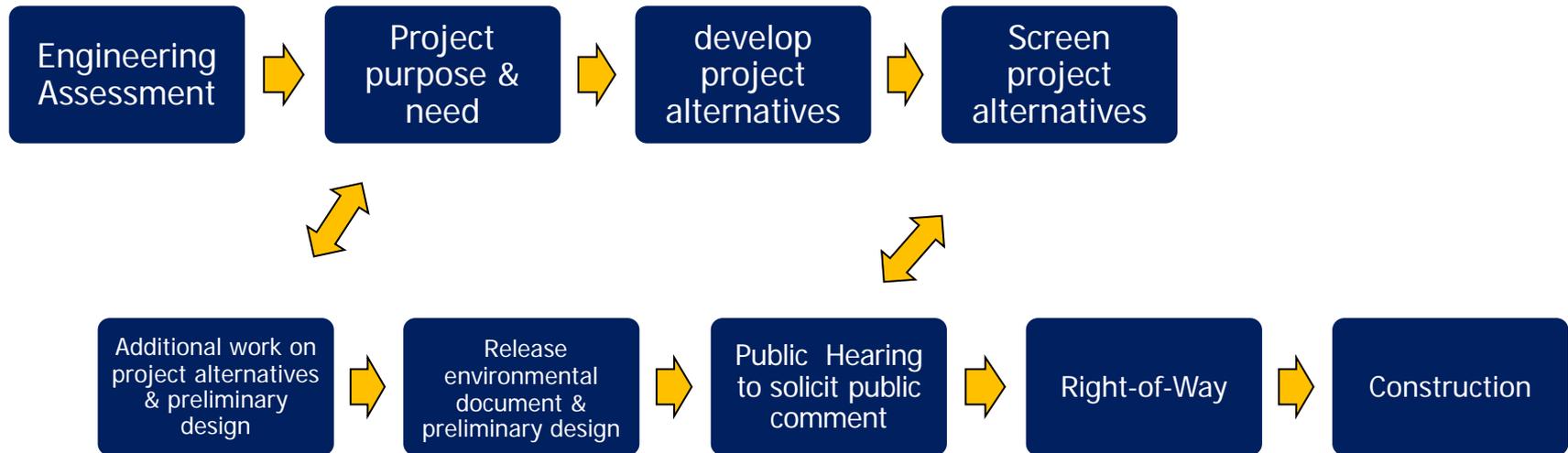
# Resource Documents

<http://www.in.gov/indot/2366.htm>

<http://www.in.gov/indot/2675.htm>



# Project Development Process



# Public Involvement Criteria

- CEs involving a historic bridge automatically require a public hearing
- CEs NOT involving a historic bridge may require public involvement if they meet INDOT PI criteria
  - Proposal requires 0.5 acre or more of permanent right-of-way
  - Proposal substantially changes layout or function of connecting roadways
  - Substantial adverse impact on abutting property
  - Significant social, economic, environmental impact
  - FHWA/INDOT determine if a hearing is in community's best interest
  - Proposal involves plan for a federal highway project to bypass a community...



# Public Involvement for CEs

- For CEs meeting PI criteria, requirements can be satisfied by:
  - Holding a public hearing **OR** via hearings offering
  - Planned Improvement Notice – offering the opportunity to request a public hearing
  - CE document must be conditionally released by District/CO ESM for public involvement
  - Publish a legal notice two times in local paper
  - Ensure copies of CE document are available for public review at local repositories
  - Minimum 15 day notice offers public the opportunity to request hearing or express concerns
  - Concerns can be addressed via public hearing or individually then documented in final CE



# Possible Exemptions for CEs

- Proposal does not involve new permanent right-of-way but rather the acquisition of apparent existing right-of-way
  - Project sponsor believes they already own right-of-way but documentation is missing or incomplete, establish legal documented ownership
- Proposal involves acquisition of donated right-of-way from property
- Additional right-of-way needed for mitigation purposes where original right-of-way impacts in environmental document, where less than 0.5 acre threshold
- Consultation with INDOT Office of Public Involvement and Environmental Services



# Public Involvement for EAs

- Notice of availability of EA and public hearing
  - Publish two notices; first notice must be published at least 15 days prior to hearing date
  - Upon EA document release by INDOT/FHWA, make document available for public review in local repositories
- Hold public hearing – held prior to FHWA FONSI determination
  - Minimum 30-day comment period
  - Format includes a formal presentation, a public comment session during formal proceedings, informal open house prior to and following hearing
  - Prepare an official transcript
  - Public involvement action required if FONSI is issued including additional public notice and FONSI document availability
- If determination of significant impacts, then transition to EIS



# Public Involvement for EISs

- Draft EIS availability/notice of public hearing
  - Publish two notices; first notice must be published at least 15 days prior to hearing date
  - Upon EIS document release by INDOT/FHWA, make document available for public review in local repositories
  - FHWA Indiana provides notice to EPA for publication in Federal Register
  - Maximum 60 day formal comment period
- Hold public hearing after draft EIS release
  - Format includes a formal presentation, a public comment session during formal proceedings, informal open house prior to and following hearing
  - Prepare an official transcript
- Final EIS / ROD
  - Substantive comments addressed in FEIS
  - FHWA Indiana works with EPA to publish in Federal Register
  - Public involvement action required at FEIS / ROD approval



# Public Involvement

- Community Advisory Committee (CAC)
  - FHWA/INDOT determination
  - Provide input on nature and extent of potential environmental impacts; contributes to development of Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS)
  - Could be initiated for CEs & EAs
  - Required for EISs
- Public Information Meetings
  - INDOT/FHWA determination
  - Purpose & Need/Conceptual Solutions, preliminary alternatives
  - Determined as part of overall Public Involvement Plan
  - Reasonable notification measures should be taken: post card, website, media release



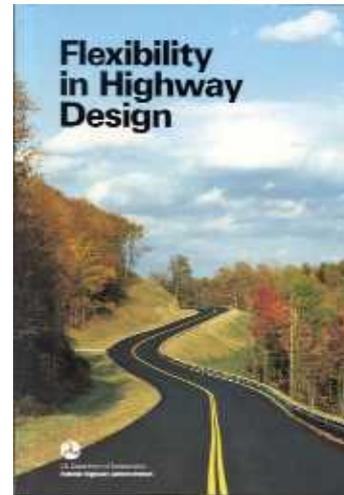
# Public Involvement for EISs

- **Public Involvement Plan**
- **Federal Notice of Intent to initiate an EIS (NOI) – prior to project scoping**
- **Formation of CAC**
  - Scoping
  - Purpose & need
  - Preliminary alternatives
  - Analysis methodologies
  - Alternatives analysis & screening
  - Mitigation
  - Development of CSS



# Environment and Community

- Involve community in identifying design solutions that are sensitive to the context of the community
- Gateways or entryways to communities
  - MSE walls, bridge piers & other surface treatments to reflect significant features of the human or natural environment
  - Overpass grades, clearance heights, etc.



# Public Involvement

- **Project Kick-Off Meeting**
  - Explain Project Development Process (PDP)
  - Generate project interest early
  - Gauge public interest regarding project
- **Project office within normal business hours**
  - Anticipate lengthy project development process
  - Local presence with affected community
  - Display updated mapping
  - Staff with project team members



# Public Involvement

- **Dedicated project website**
  - Engage the public
  - Solicit public input – comment feature
  - Provide updated and timely project information
- **Project telephone hotline, project newsletters**
- **Key stakeholder meetings**
  - Beyond CAC
  - Present to civic groups
  - Use stakeholder engagement to learn about the community



# Be Prepared to Engage the Public

- Anytime you are out, public involvement or engagement can occur



# Public Involvement for LPA Projects

- **LPA projects that utilize federal dollars or require federal action must meet INDOT/FHWA approved public involvement procedure requirements**
  - NEPA classification drives level of public involvement
  - Most LPA projects are CEs including: resurfacing, restoration, safety projects, rehabilitation and reconstruction of existing bridges or other infrastructure
- **INDOT Office of Public Involvement**
  - Resources, guidance, documentation



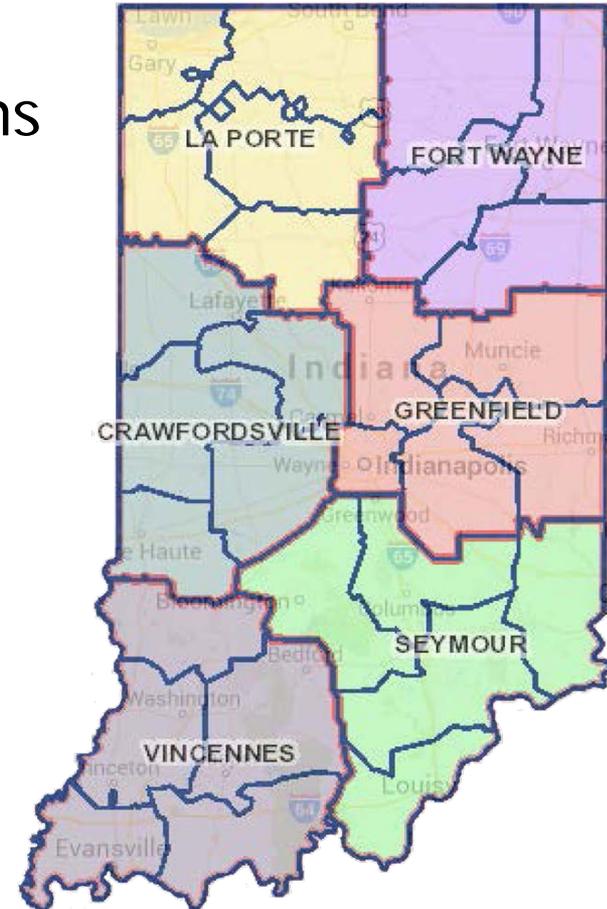
# Project Development

- **Building on your public involvement effort**
  - Key stakeholders meetings – local officials, engineers, surveyors, planners, MPOs/RPOs
  - Impacted property owners – acquisition of right-of-way
  - Utility coordination
  - CSS focused meetings



# Project Development

- **A strong foundation of public involvement can help offset construction challenges**
  - INDOT District Media Relations
  - INDOT District/Central Office Customer Service Centers



# Public Involvement

- A successful transportation project includes public involvement
- Public involvement may occur for Additional Information (AI) documents
- Public involvement for noise mitigation is required



# Office of Public Involvement

- Rickie Clark, INDOT Office of Public Involvement  
(317) 232-6601 [rclark@indot.in.gov](mailto:rclark@indot.in.gov)
- Mary Wright, INDOT Hearings Examiner  
(317) 234-0796 [mwright@indot.in.gov](mailto:mwright@indot.in.gov)
- Indiana Government Center North, Room N642  
100 North Senate Avenue  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204
- <http://www.in.gov/indot/2366.htm>
- INDOT Public Involvement Procedures updated every two years (next update 2014)

