

# Best Practices in Public Involvement



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# Introduction

The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) recognizes the importance of involving the public in the exchange of information when providing transportation facilities and services to best meet Indiana's transportation challenges.

INDOT defines public involvement as 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. INDOT uses this input to help make decisions. By involving the public early in planning transportation projects and throughout the development and implementation of projects, INDOT will deliver a statewide transportation system that meets the needs of, and is supported by, its customers, the citizens of Indiana.

Best Practices in Public Involvement highlights the innovative ways INDOT involves the public during all phases of project development and delivery, and the people who make the engagement possible. By using a variety of methods to engage our customers, INDOT enhances its ability to establish relationships, credibility and consensus throughout the course of the transportation decision-making process.

## **INDOT Mission**

*INDOT will plan, build, maintain and operate a superior transportation system enhancing safety, mobility, and economic growth.*



# Public Hearings and Meetings



**A**lthough public hearings and meetings differ, INDOT has used both to engage a variety of stakeholders in single, project-specific events. Public hearings are formal, federally required meetings. Hearings must be documented, require an official transcript to be produced, and are subject to other specific requirements coordinated through the Office of Public Involvement. Hearings are held

to help with decision making during the project development phase. Conversely, public meetings can be held at any time, for any purpose, and at INDOT's discretion. In general, public meetings and hearings both feature formal presentations, a public comment session, and a project display area where project officials explain details in an informal setting.

## How did they do it?

- Scheduled public hearings and meetings at publicly accessible local venues near project location.
- Published legal notices in local newspaper and made project-related documents available for public viewing.
- Sent invitations to residents and businesses and invited the media to attend.
- Held an internal planning and coordination meeting with project team members to identify roles and responsibilities for the hearing/meeting.
- Prepared presentations and handouts in advance and allowed time for appropriate approval.

## What was the outcome?

- Public hearings and meetings reduced the overall number of inquiries about specific projects. Direct communication with customers also minimized the likelihood of miscommunication about a project.

## How long did it take?

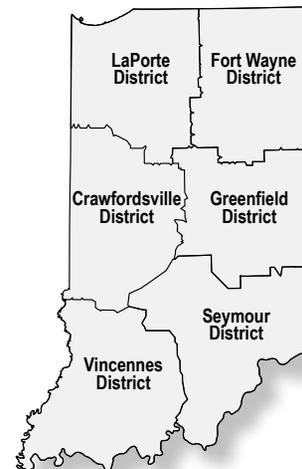
- Public hearings must be advertised 15 days in advance of the hearing date. After the hearing, a two-week comment period is required. Generally, 30 days were necessary to advertise, conduct and allow for the comment period for a public hearing.
- Public meetings are held at INDOT's discretion, but usually follow the same timeline as hearings.

## Why use this best practice going forward?

- Public hearings and meetings typically receive significant attention from the affected communities and provide a great opportunity to share INDOT's story with the media and stakeholder groups.
- Stakeholders talk with officials – such as project managers, designers, and real estate, environmental, and customer service representatives – from all areas of the project in a single setting.



*Attendees of a public hearing in South Bend meet with public officials for the State Road 23 Added Travel Lanes project.*



*Rickie Clark  
Public Involvement Manager*



*Mary Wright  
Public Hearing Officer*

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# Open Houses



INDOT hosts open houses throughout the state to solicit public comment on proposed projects before the projects are programmed and funded. Open houses are a part of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), a federally mandated four-year planning document that lists all projects expected to receive federal funding. Open-house events include a

brief presentation about project ideas, and provide time for stakeholders to have one-on-one conversations with program officials from INDOT. Open houses provide opportunities for local transportation users to offer feedback on project ideas and identify other needs that are not present on project lists.

## How did they do it?

- Established a team, including communications and technical services, to plan the open houses.
- Collaborated with STIP Coordinator to determine timing of STIP document release.
- Secured a location, date and time for the open house.
- Notified stakeholders and media of the open house; also included information on INDOT's website and social media pages.

## What was the outcome?

- Open houses increase the amount of public input and provide ideas and feedback on a variety of transportation needs.

## How long did it take?

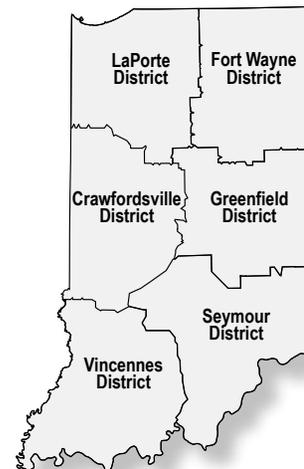
- Open houses took four to six weeks to plan and conduct in order to satisfy document availability requirements.
- Occurs once every four years per federal mandate.

## Why use this best practice going forward?

- Open houses provide an opportunity for stakeholders to talk to INDOT program managers about present and future transportation needs in their communities.
- Promotes STIP document for public review and comment.



*Local residents attend an open house hosted by the Greenfield District.*



*Rickie Clark  
Public Involvement Manager*

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# Community Outreach – Paint the Plow



**P**aint the Plow is a community outreach campaign designed to pair area schools with one of INDOT's 14 local maintenance units in the Fort Wayne District to paint a snow plow blade with artwork designed and painted by students. The painted plows may be displayed at events in each school's community before being put into service in the winter.

Participating schools in 2016 included Angola High School (Angola Unit); DeKalb High School (Waterloo Unit); Fremont High School (Angola Unit); Heartland Career Center (Wabash Unit); Horizon Christian Academy (Fort Wayne Unit); Howe Military (Shipshewana Unit); Lakeland High School (Shipshewana Unit); Mississinewa High School (Gas City Unit); New Haven High School (New Haven Unit); North Miami Junior/Senior High School (Peru Unit); and West Noble High School (Brimfield Unit).

During the 2016 campaign, INDOT had asked the public to choose their favorite snow plow design from 12 Paint the Plow submissions. Designs ranged from colorfully painted schools mascots to a beach sunset mural, painted by students from the aforementioned 11 high schools across the Fort Wayne District.

With a total of 777 votes across three social media platforms – Facebook, Twitter and Instagram – Mississinewa High School won the first Paint the Plow People's Choice award. The plow design celebrated the history of both Gas City and Jonesboro.

This community outreach was such a success that other INDOT districts decided to conduct their own inaugural Paint the Plow campaigns in 2017 while the Fort Wayne District moves into its second round of its campaign.

## How did they do it?

- Proactively identified and created opportunities to promote the agency in a fun and creative way.
- Partnered with local communities through public outreach to raise public's awareness of snow plow operations.
- Assured INDOT participation in community events by providing contest guidelines and parameters for participants.

## What was the outcome?

- The events led to larger public acceptance of the new highway, and helped communities make a positive connection with INDOT.

## How long did it take?

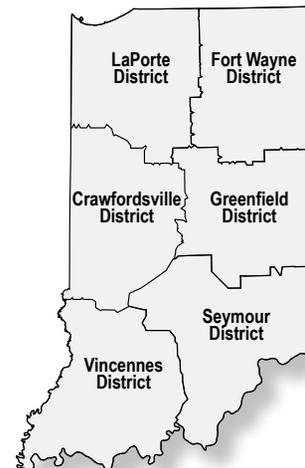
- Seven months from approximately March to September; planning efforts, contest advertisement, plow delivery, pick-up and presentation during community events.

## Why use this best practice going forward?

- Outreach activities promote a sense of partnership and pride between INDOT and local communities.
- Allows INDOT and the public to work together in celebrating local communities.



*DeKalb High School art students paint plenty of shoes on their assigned INDOT plow blade.*



*Mississinewa High School representatives accept INDOT's Paint the Plow People's Choice award.*

# Social Media – Get Plugged In



INDOT has improved its methods for communicating with customers, including Indiana residents, motorists, and the general public. In 2016, INDOT developed and launched a new communications campaign that involved a coordinated, branded and targeted message focused

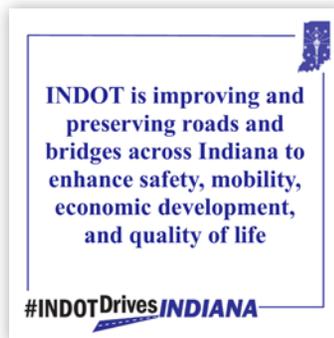
on construction season activities and projects. This plan, branded as #INDOTDrivesIndiana, proactively conveyed multiple relevant messages to target audiences through a variety of tools.

INDOT participates in social networking sites in order to promote activities and events. Our goal is to share ideas and information with as many individuals as possible. The #INDOTDrivesIndiana public awareness campaign helped inform Hoosiers of the more than 770 road and bridge projects of the 2016 construction season. The campaign included an #INDOTDrivesIndiana tagline on social media, including additional taglines of #INDOTDrivesSafety, #INDOTDrivesTheEconomy, #INDOTDrivesYourCommute, #INDOTDrivesQuality and #INDOTDrivesYourCareer.

Also, social media pointed viewers to an interactive online map on the INDOT website that enabled Hoosiers to see which projects were under construction across the state. Additionally, the campaign featured signage – near road construction sites – that included the campaign theme, alerting motorists that improvements were being made and thanking them for being patient.

## How did they do it?

- Created a brand message that illustrates how INDOT drives Indiana.
- Branded offshoot slogans that show how INDOT also drives the economy, quality, safety, commutes and careers.
- Posted 746 social media posts from the start of the program in April 2016 to the end of that calendar year.
- Worked with INDOT's Management Information Systems Division to create an online map.
- Partnered with contractors to install signage near construction sites that included the campaign theme, alerting motorists that improvements were being made and thanking them for being patient.



## What was the outcome?

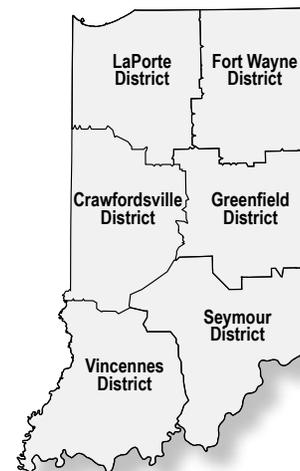
- In 2016, the “impression” – or number of times that users saw posts containing the #INDOTDrivesIndiana tagline – amounted to 8.41 million.
- The campaign helped give drivers the information they needed to avoid backups, plan detour routes, and keep the construction season stress to a minimum.

## How long did it take?

- Three months from January to March to plan the strategy and execute all functions of the campaign, including creating the online map, partnering with contractors on signage, and working with INDOT's sign shop to ensure that signs met Federal Highway Administration specifications.

## Why use this best practice going forward?

- Forge trust between the public and INDOT regarding full disclosure of road and bridge projects underway and planned.



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# Community Crossings



Local Public Agencies (LPAs) face a variety of capital program improvement needs. These needs directly affect quality of life for residents and the ability of cities and towns to attract and retain businesses. INDOT works proactively to assist LPAs in addressing capital needs.

INDOT shares gas tax revenue from the state Motor Vehicle Highway Fund and Local Road and Street Fund with LPAs. INDOT also makes available 25 percent of the federal funds apportioned to it under Congressional Highway Authorization Bills. The program that administers and oversees the use of these funds is called the INDOT LPA Program.

The Community Crossings matching grant fund was established in 2016 to provide matching grants to local units (counties or municipalities) of eligible road and bridge projects. These included resurfacing roads, bridge rehabilitation, road reconstruction, roundabouts, and Americans with Disabilities Act projects in connection with road projects.

## How did they do it?

- INDOT issued a Call for Projects to announce the program and to begin receiving project proposals.
- Grants were a 50-50 match.
- Funds awarded were capped at \$1 million.

## What was the outcome?

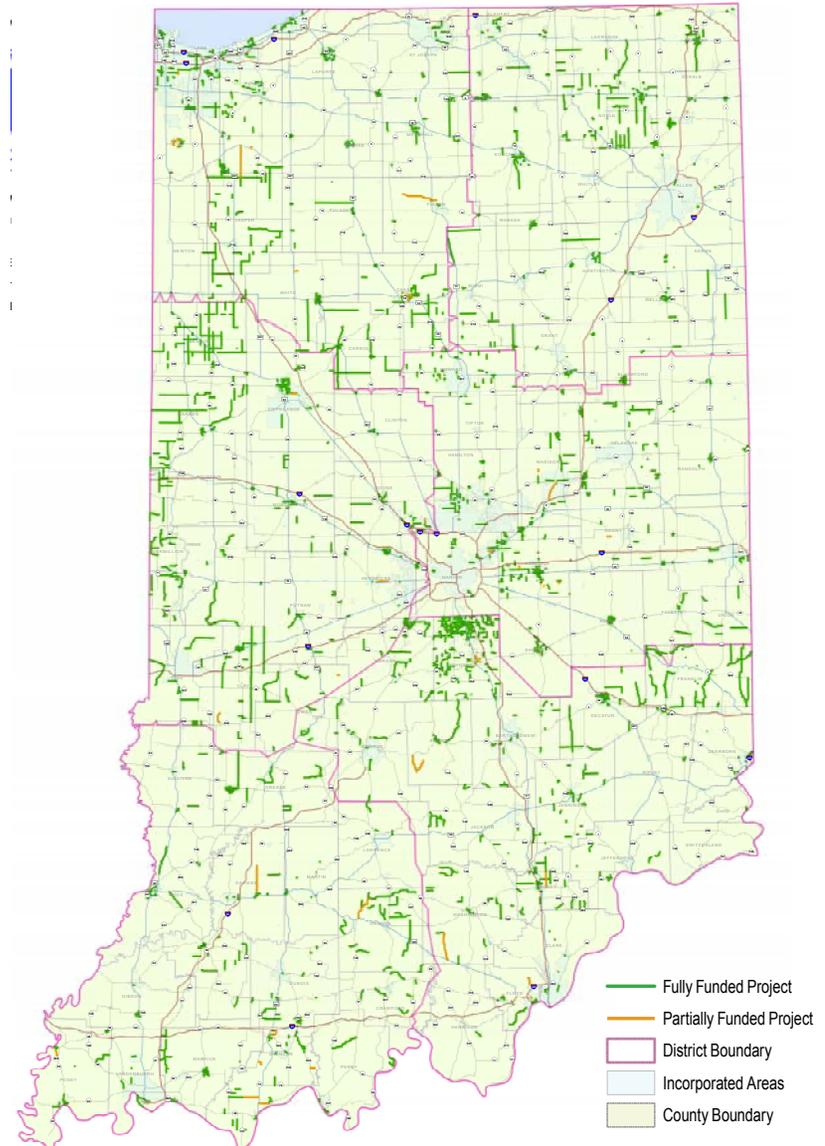
- 1,636 matching grant applications were submitted.
- 317 Indiana cities, towns and counties received grants.
- \$160 million in matching grant funds were distributed.
- Statewide infrastructure investment totaled more than \$300 million.

## How long did it take?

- 60-day period to submit applications.
- 30-day period to award recipients.

## Why use this best practice going forward?

- Enhance and improve Indiana's statewide infrastructure through economic investment.
- Strengthen relationships between INDOT and local communities.



# Brochures and Fliers

A variety of INDOT communications materials, including brochures, guides, fliers, and one-page information sheets, are available for public download and use. These documents are designed to provide motorists, taxpayers, and the public with basic information about INDOT projects, programs and policies.

INDOT's Graphics and Content teams develop and produce a number of creative documents to inform and educate the public. The documents are available on the INDOT website.

- DBE Certification Brochure
- Chip Sealing Brochure
- Crashes Are No Accident Brochure
- FHWA Acquisition Brochure - BLUE
- FHWA Relocation Brochure - GREEN
- Flashing Yellow Arrows Card
- How a Project Becomes a Project Brochure
- INDOT Road Construction Guide
- INDOT Roundabouts Brochure
- Mowing & Vegetation Management Flier
- Noise Barriers Brochure
- Public Involvement Best Practices Booklet
- Public Involvement Policies and Procedures Manual
- Winter Driving Safety Brochure
- Work Zone Safety Awareness Card

## How did they do it?

- Research, development, interviews with program managers and subject experts.

## What was the outcome?

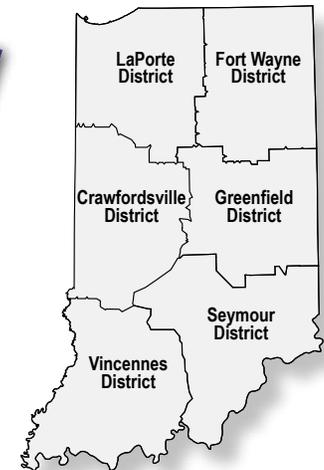
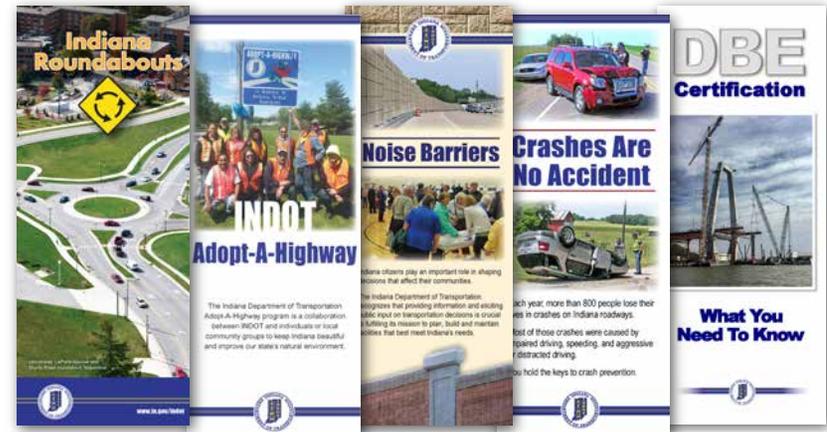
- A more informed public and promotion of INDOT projects, programs and policies also resulted.

## How long did it take?

- On average, the production and development of a product can range from three to six months.

## Why use this best practice going forward?

- This is a fantastic way to promote the agency, its programs and its commitment to serving the citizens of Indiana.



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# Project Websites – FixFor41, Restore 94 and U.S. 50 North Vernon

## FixFor41



FixFor41 is a collaborative construction project between INDOT and the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet that will rehabilitate seven U.S. 41 bridges and the highway pavement between the bridges from near the U.S. 41 interchange with I-69 in Evansville south to the Indiana/Kentucky border. The \$25 million project will begin in the spring of 2017 and

continue through the summer of 2019. Work will be done as part of one ongoing project that will lessen the impact to the motoring public.

The design of the 3.8-mile construction zone (1.4-plus miles in Indiana and 2.3-plus miles in Kentucky) will enable two lanes of traffic in each direction to remain open at all times. By doing this, emergency services, law enforcement and the general public will be minimally impacted. Once the project is finished, the lifespan of the bridges and roadway will be extended by 25 years.

## Restore 94



The Restore I-94 initiative, which will modernize I-94 between the Illinois state line and the Michigan state line during 2017, includes pavement upgrades, bridge rehabilitation, drainage improvements, and traffic and safety enhancements. I-94 traffic volumes are among the highest in the country with a substantial

concentration of heavy truck traffic. It is because of the extremely high volume and the resulting wear-and-tear that I-94 needs more modernization and preventive maintenance.

Construction will require periodic lane closures, and drivers may experience delays as work progresses. However, INDOT is coordinating all projects across the approximately 45-mile corridor to minimize the impact to drivers as much as possible.

## U.S. 50 North Vernon



INDOT's Seymour District developed project websites to improve customer service during the U.S. 50 North Vernon West and East projects, a highway bypass around the city of North Vernon in Jennings County. INDOT estimated that the corridors would take approximately four to six years to plan and build. The project websites provided stakeholders with updated information throughout the process and included project overviews, maps, public meeting information and the latest news releases.

## How did they do it?

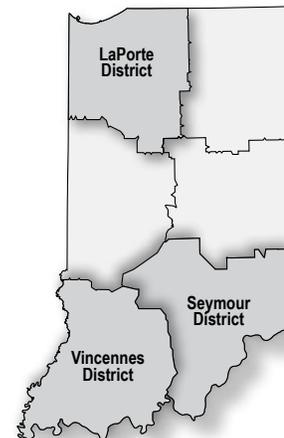
- Identified the need for project websites based on the size, scope and duration of the project.
- Collaborated with INDOT eCommunications and Content teams to create the project websites.
- Coordinated activities with project teams to secure timely and accurate website information and ensure content updates to maximize site effectiveness.

## What was the outcome?

- The websites enhanced public access to project information, increased customer satisfaction and helped gain positive support for projects that will reduce congestion and improve safety and accessibility.

## How long did it take?

- Project websites are inexpensive to create, easy to update and manage, and easily accessible by the public.
- Websites can serve as a repository of public information about project development, planning and construction
- Stakeholders can provide feedback through website contacts.



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# Non-Traditional Meeting Times

The Vincennes District hosted a unique educational event to help Spencer County residents and commuters become familiar with an intersection improvement treatment known as the J-turn on U.S. 231 at State Roads 62 and 68, near the Town of Dale.

Community stakeholders were invited to take a “virtual” drive through each J-turn intersection from the comforts of a local area school.



The people of Spencer County were able to meet with INDOT during a Saturday morning event in June 2016 at Heritage Hills High School in Lincoln City. During the event, residents, commuters and project stakeholders were able to learn more about the J-turn application and how this treatment would change traffic patterns in the area. The event featured an interactive map on the floor of the high school gymnasium, where people could actually walk the new configuration or drive a radio-controlled car around the J-turn.

## How did they do it?

- Identified a time to meet that best met the needs of the local community.
- Scheduled the event at public accessible local venue near the project location.
- Sent invitations to residents, businesses and project stakeholders; also invited the media to attend.
- Held an internal planning and coordination meeting with project team members to identify roles and responsibilities for the event.
- Prepared materials in advance of the event, allowing time for appropriate approvals.

## What was the outcome?

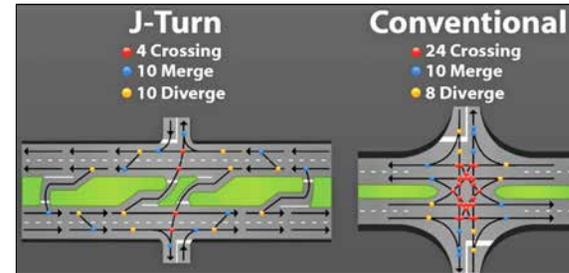
- Enabled INDOT to directly engage community members in an informal setting, educating project stakeholders.

## How long did it take?

- Required approximately two to three weeks to plan, coordinate and implement. This included securing a meeting venue, sending notification to project stakeholders and hosting the event.

## Why use this best practice going forward?

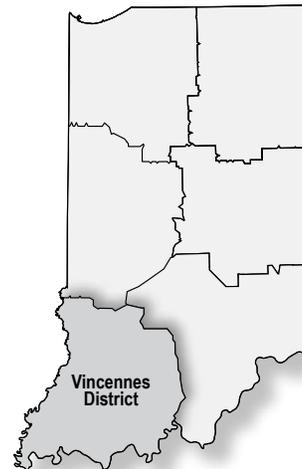
- Hosting a public meeting/educational event during a non-traditional time can be a very positive way to further a public outreach effort.
- Promotes a sense of partnership between INDOT and a local community by exhibiting a willingness to meet at a time and location that best meets the community's needs.



J-Turn intersections enhance safety by preventing direct crossing and left-turn movements.



Spencer County residents attend the J-turn informational event in June 2016.



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# Community Advisory Committees



*Project stakeholders view preliminary plans for localized areas within corridor.*

INDOT has established a special requirement to ensure meaningful public involvement on certain projects. INDOT convenes on an ongoing Community Advisory Committee (CAC) for projects that involve an Environmental Impact Statement, and are optional for projects that involve an Environmental Assessment or Corridor Study. INDOT and the Federal Highway Administration determine when a CAC will be convened.

The CAC is a group of stakeholders, convened by INDOT, who represent different community organizations and meet regularly during the project development and design process of a project and serve as channels of information to and from their friends, neighbors, associates and constituents.



*U.S. 31 stakeholders meet with INDOT to discuss corridor improvements.*

A corridor planning study for U.S. 31 involving Hamilton, Howard, Tipton, Miami, Fulton and Marshall counties utilized a CAC to help solicit input from community stakeholders. The planning study, commenced in February 2017, focused on about 77 miles of U.S. 31 from State Road 38 near Westfield to U.S. 30 near Plymouth. These U.S. 31 sections have six stoplights and 10 flashers. INDOT has contracted with CHA Consulting to study traffic volumes, crash history and land use before recommending a variety of potential improvements, including intersection improvements or controlled-access interchanges. Additional studies will be held to gather stakeholder input before a final study report is published in 2018.

## How did they do it?

- Project management team develops a list of key stakeholders, specifically those who represent a group, organization and/or a constituency within a project area.
- Stakeholders are contacted and invited to participate as members of the CAC.

## What was the outcome?

- Enhanced participation from local communities through CAC representation led to greater data sharing and collection.

## How long did it take?

- Required approximately two to three weeks to plan, coordinate and implement. This includes securing a meeting venue, sending notification to project stakeholders and hosting the event.

## Why use this best practice going forward?

- Projects involving greater levels of impact warrant enhanced stakeholder engagement; having community representatives as CAC members ensures INDOT is aware of issues most important to the community.



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# School Presentations



The Fort Wayne District created work zone awareness programming for first- and second-graders at two Fort Wayne elementary schools. The programming included original characters – Coney the Traffic Cone, Barney the Safety Barrel, and Sammy the Slow Paddle – to help teach about safety. After learning about safety concerns for highway workers and commuters traveling through work zones, the children colored their own Coney the Traffic Cone and, upon completion, received an award ribbon as a prize.



Elementary school students participate in a work zone safety game.



Student artwork at the event results in an INDOT award ribbon.

## How did they do it?

- Created a public outreach strategy geared around an established agency theme.
- Developed a presentation and pilot program, custom-tailored to appeal to the stakeholder group.
- Contacted local area schools, with which INDOT had previous relationships.

## What was the outcome?

- Approximately 300 students took part in the work zone safety awareness presentations. Although the presentations were geared toward school-age children, students were encouraged to talk to their parents and family about what they learned.

## How long did it take?

- The Fort Wayne District prepared six weeks for the program, coordinating schedules with schools at least four weeks in advance.
- The presentation lasted about an hour, including time for questions and answers.

## Why use this best practice going forward?

- School presentations strengthen community support while providing INDOT an opportunity to promote agency programs or initiatives, including pedestrian safety, seatbelts, and construction zone awareness.
- School presentations enable INDOT to distribute informational materials to students, who will show them to parents and guardians.



Fort Wayne District Customer Service group, from left: Toni Mayo, Communications Director; Deb Jent, Clerical Assistant/Radio Operator; Laurel Ryggs, Customer Service Coordinator; and Monic Black Administrative Assistant.

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# Educational Event



The Crawfordsville District created a unique educational event after Lafayette-area residents expressed concerns about being unfamiliar with navigating the roundabout included as part of the new State Road 25 Hoosier Heartland Highway. A one-day "Roundabout School" event, held at an area middle school, featured several different information stations that included technical information, videos, maps and display boards that were used as hands-on learning tools. The highlight of the event was the construction and use of a half-

scale roundabout driving course on the school grounds. Attendees used golf carts to practice maneuvering the roundabout, which was created by adding lane markings, flags, traffic cones and traffic signs to a grass field area at the school.



Attendees practice on the half-scale roundabout driving course, located on school grounds.

## How did they do it?

- Recognized a specific element of the project where an educational component would be vital to public acceptance.
- Established a team in charge of planning the event. Team members included INDOT employees from the Communications and Technical Services Divisions, and consultants from the project.
- Worked with key stakeholders to secure a venue, prepare lists of invitees, provide logistical support and staff the event.

## What was the outcome?

- The event attracted more than 100 attendees. Many participants told INDOT staff that the activities helped them feel more confident about using roundabouts.
- The community stakeholders who attended became proponents of the project and were able to raise awareness to others in their communities.

## How long did it take?

- The Crawfordsville District prepared for the Roundabout School in six weeks.

## Why use this best practice going forward?

- Hands-on activities provide an innovative, fun and creative way to educate the public about a project.
- Encourages engagement and collaboration with local municipalities and key stakeholders. It also galvanizes consensus within a community.



INDOT Roundabout Education Brochure



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# Video



The LaPorte and Fort Wayne districts collaborated on a video to informally explain the chip-seal process. “A Cup of Coffee with the Chip-Seal Skeptic” shows two friends meeting for coffee, after one of the women arrives late, and frustrated, because of chip-seal maintenance. The conversation that unfolds provides information about the benefits of chip sealing roadways, while giving viewers friendly advice on planning ahead and avoiding vehicle damage. The video gave INDOT a new way to highlight a common maintenance activity and explained why the process is a benefit to stakeholders.

## How did they do it?

- Wrote a script to explain a maintenance process in basic, easy-to-understand terms.
- Contacted a local theater to find actors for the video.
- Determined the locations to film the video and included real footage from a local chip-seal project.
- Filmed and edited the video, then distributed through social media and email.

## What was the outcome?

- The video became an additional tool for districts to use for upcoming chip-seal projects, and it was included on social media, press releases and project websites.

## How long did it take?

- The script for the video was written, approved and finalized in about a week. Filming the video took place over two days at two separate locations. It took three additional days to finish editing the footage.
- If actors are needed for the video, allow extra time.

## Why use this best practice going forward?

- Videos can be used exclusively to reach stakeholder groups or as an additional tool to reach a wider audience.
- Informative videos that explain general activities, like the chip-seal process, winter operations and mowing, can be reused and repurposed for multiple projects and audiences.



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# District Offices

To better serve the citizens of Indiana, INDOT maintains six district offices, in Crawfordsville, Fort Wayne, Greenfield, LaPorte, Seymour and Vincennes. Each district office organizes and manages highway construction, maintenance, traffic, development and testing for the specific needs of the communities it serves. Approximately 400 engineers and inspectors work out of these district offices and report daily to construction sites. For rapid response, INDOT also operates subdistrict offices and units that maintain the roads, and remove snow and debris.

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