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

1. Engineering Assessment
2. Project purpose & need
3. Screen project alternatives
4. Additional work on project alternatives & preliminary design
5. Develop project alternatives
6. Public Hearing to solicit public comment
7. Right-of-Way
8. Construction

Flowchart:
- Engineering Assessment → Project purpose & need → Screen project alternatives
- Screen project alternatives → Public Hearing to solicit public comment
- Public Hearing to solicit public comment → Right-of-Way
- Right-of-Way → Construction
- Additional work on project alternatives & preliminary design → Develop project alternatives
- Develop project alternatives → Release environmental document & preliminary design
- Release environmental document & preliminary design → Additional work on project alternatives & preliminary design
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 EI Ss

- 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

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- [http://www.in.gov/indot/2366.htm](http://www.in.gov/indot/2366.htm)
- INDOT Public Involvement Procedures updated every two years (next update 2014)