

Chapter Nineteen

**PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT  
GUIDELINES**

BUREAU OF DESIGN AND ENVIRONMENT MANUAL



**Chapter Nineteen**  
**PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT GUIDELINES**

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## Chapter Nineteen

# PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT GUIDELINES

Pursuant to 23 CFR 771.111, 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 Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations. Chapter 19 outlines IDOT's public involvement/public hearing procedures and fulfills this requirement.

The public involvement process provides for free and open discussions with individuals, organizations, agencies, and other interested parties to encourage early resolution of controversial and non-controversial issues related to the project. The process also ensures that potential adverse economic, social, and environmental effects are fully considered in project development. This should result in final decisions that reflect the best overall public interest in providing a safe, economic, and efficient transportation system with minimal adverse effects.

### 19-1 GENERAL GUIDELINES

#### 19-1.01 Definitions

The following definitions apply to Chapter 19:

1. Context Sensitive Design. Context Sensitive Design is a model for transportation project development. Proposed transportation projects must be planned not only for their physical aspects as a facility serving specific transportation objectives, but also for their effects on the aesthetic, social, economic and environmental values, needs, constraints and opportunities in a larger community setting.
2. Context Sensitive Solutions. Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) is an Illinois law which provides for a collaborative, interdisciplinary, and holistic approach to public involvement for the development of transportation projects. It is both a process and product, characterized by a number of attributes. It involves all stakeholders, including community members, elected officials, interest groups, and affected local, State, and Federal agencies. It puts project needs and both agency and community values on a level playing field and considers all trade-offs in decision making. Often associated with Context Sensitive Design, Context Sensitive Solutions should be a part of all phases of program delivery including long range planning, programming, environmental studies, design, construction, operations, and maintenance.
3. National Environmental Policy Act Process. Signed into law January 1, 1970, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to assess the environmental effects of their proposed actions, provides for public input, and requires that agencies make well-informed decisions. The NEPA process includes development of purpose and need, analysis of alternatives to address the purpose and need, public involvement, interagency coordination, and well-informed decisionmaking in determining the preferred

alternative. NEPA is completed with approval of a Categorical Exclusion (CE), Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), or Record of Decision (ROD).

4. **Public Hearing.** A type of public involvement activity referenced in public law where the public's comments are recorded, transcribed, and sent to the lead agency. A public hearing is a formal opportunity for the public to review proposed plans for transportation projects and provide comments for decision makers to consider in reaching a final decision. Federal regulations include specific requirements for what must occur prior to, during, and after a public hearing is held. Typically, public hearings are held toward the end of Phase I after a preferred alternative has been identified.
5. **Public Involvement Activity.** A public involvement activity is any effort by the Department to engage the public in discussion about a proposed project, for the purpose of providing information to the public and receiving information from the public. Public Involvement activities include, but are not limited to, property owner contact letters, public meetings, and public hearings.
6. **Public Meeting.** A type of public involvement activity where the public can comment or inquire about the nature of the project and its potential impacts. Federal regulations do not include specific requirements for public meetings, such as a transcript of the proceedings. Public meetings are therefore a more flexible public involvement activity than a public hearing.

#### **19-1.02 Acronyms**

<u>3P</u>	Pavement Preservation Project
<u>3R</u>	Project Resurfacing, Restoration, Rehabilitation
<u>CAG</u>	Community Advisory Group
<u>CE</u>	Categorical Exclusion
<u>CEQ</u>	Council on Environmental Quality
<u>CFR</u>	Code of Federal Regulation
<u>CSS</u>	Context Sensitive Solutions
<u>EA</u>	Environmental Assessment
<u>EIS</u>	Environmental Impact Statement
<u>FONSI</u>	Finding of No Significant Impact
<u>FHWA</u>	Federal Highway Administration
<u>ILCS</u>	Illinois Compiled Statutes
<u>NEPA</u>	National Environmental Policy Act
<u>ROD</u>	Record of Decision
<u>PSG</u>	Project Study Group
<u>SIP</u>	Stakeholder Involvement Plan
<u>SIR</u>	State Improvement Report
<u>SMART</u>	Surface Maintenance at the Right Time
<u>U.S.C.</u>	United States Code



## **19-2 LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

### **19-2.01 Federal Requirements**

Pursuant to 23 CFR 771.111, State public involvement/public hearing procedures must provide for one or more public hearings, or the opportunity for hearing(s), to be held by the State highway agency for any Federal-aid project which:

- involves the bypassing of, or going through, any city, town, or village, either incorporated or unincorporated; or
- requires significant amounts of right-of-way; or
- substantially changes the layout or functions of connecting roadways or of the facility being improved; or
- has a substantial adverse impact on abutting property; or
- has a significant social, economic, environmental or other effect; or
- FHWA determines that a public hearing is in the public interest.

The public hearing must be held at a convenient time and place, include reasonable notice to the public, indicate the availability of explanatory information, and provide information required to comply with public involvement requirements of other laws, Executive Orders, and regulations. Federal requirements describing what must be explained at the public hearing are in Section 19-3.04.

The Department must submit to FHWA a transcript (Section 19-3.04(g)) of each public hearing and a certification (Section 19-3.04(h)) that a required hearing was held, or that a hearing opportunity was offered. The transcript must be accompanied by copies of all written comments from the public, both submitted at the public hearing or during an announced period after the public hearing.

### **19-2.02 State Requirements**

In addition to Federal requirements, the State also requires a public hearing for road closures and corridor protection. The State also has requirements for when Context Sensitive Solutions must be implemented on highway projects.

#### **19-2.02(a) Road Closures**

When the Department proposes to permanently close a road to eliminate an at-grade crossing or junction with an Interstate highway or a highway where the authority to control access has been exercised to permit access only at certain public roads, 605 ILCS 5/8-106 requires that a public hearing be held to consider the road closure. Such road closure hearing must be held in

the county where the closure will occur, and must consider local traffic needs and the effect of the closing on other highways in the locality. The preparation of final construction plans shall not begin until road closure hearings have been held. See Chapter 11 for more information on road closures.

Road closure hearings may be held in conjunction with other required hearings. If the discussion of road closures extends the length of the presentation beyond the time limits discussed in this Section, separate hearings may be necessary. Because road closures should be discussed in environmental reports, the district should schedule road closure hearings prior to the preparation of the final report if not combined with other hearings. Changes in proposed road closures may be sufficient grounds for preparing revised or supplemental environmental reports. Public Hearing announcements should be in conformance with Section 19-4.01(c).

### **19-2.02(b) Corridor Protection**

The Illinois Highway Code, 605 ILCS 5/4-510 provides means of protecting the right-of-way for future additions to State highways from future developments through the preparation and filing of a map showing the location and approximate widths of the rights-of-way needed for future additions; see Section 12-6. When the Department intends to invoke this provision, it must hold a public hearing in or near the county or counties where the land to be used is located and must publish notice of the hearing in a newspaper or newspapers of general circulation in the county or counties involved. If a public hearing is held in conjunction with the location and design studies for a project, it can also serve as the hearing required for corridor protection under 605 ILCS 5/4-510. As an alternative, the Department may hold a separate hearing specifically to receive testimony regarding the corridor protection map. For any hearing intended to fulfill the requirements of 605 ILCS 5/4-510, the notice(s) announcing the hearing should indicate that intent; see Section 19-4.01(c).

Not more than ten years after a protected corridor is established and not later than the expiration of each succeeding ten year period, the Department shall hold public hearings to discuss the viability and feasibility of the protected corridor. The Department shall retain the discretion to maintain any protected corridor but shall give due consideration to the information obtained at the public hearing. If the Department in its discretion determines that the construction of the roadway is no longer feasible, the Department shall abolish the protected corridor.

The Land Acquisition Manual describes the procedures and exhibits needed to file a Corridor Protection Map.

### **19-2.02(c) Context Sensitivity**

Pursuant to 605 ILCS 5/4-219, *the Department shall embrace the principles of context sensitive design and context sensitive solutions in the policies and procedures for the planning, design, construction, and operation of its project for new construction, reconstruction, or major expansion of existing transportation facilities.*

Departmental policy D&E-21 provides guidelines for defining the Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) process and its uses. Section 19-5 discusses procedures for implementing CSS for Department projects.

#### **19-2.02(d) Projects not Involving Federal Funds**

For projects not involving the use of Federal funds, the Regional Engineer will generally follow the same public involvement process as that for projects using Federal-aid funds. When State-only funded projects are subject to restricted time constraints, the Regional Engineer may elect to implement the following procedures as appropriate:

1. Where no additional right-of-way will be acquired, make releases of information to one or more news media announcing the initiation of studies and/or plans and the awarding of contracts.
2. Where minor amounts of right-of-way will be acquired, initiate property owner contact from whom right-of-way will be acquired and provide an opportunity to comment on the improvement. A representative of the Regional Engineer will record and document these comments and address them in the Phase I report. In addition, release information to one or more news media on the initiation of studies and/or plans and the award of contracts.
3. Where significant amounts of right-of-way will be acquired or the scope of the project is major in nature, the Regional Engineer will schedule one or two public meetings and an offer to hold a public hearing should be made. Comments received from these public involvement activities will be included in the State Improvement Report (SIR). In addition, release information to one or more news media on the initiation of studies and/or plans and the award of contracts.



### **19-3 LEVELS OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

#### **19-3.01 General**

This Section describes the types of public involvement activities that may be implemented for a project and the procedures for implementing them. Public involvement activities may include property owner contact, public meeting(s), or a public hearing.

An early activity of the project team will be to design and schedule the public involvement activity(ies) for the project. The public involvement should be dynamic and flexible and may include one or more public involvement activities described in this Section, depending on the project size, impacts, complexity, or class of action. The public involvement team should be especially cognizant of any opposition to the project and should develop strategies to address conflict issues early to help minimize disruptions at the meetings/hearings. Strategies may include:

- meeting with opposition groups early to hear and try to alleviate their concerns;
- include those opposed to the project in the advisory group if CSS is being used; and
- use of conflict resolution specialists.

Once completed, each public involvement activity should be documented and included in the project file. For projects using CSS, the Stakeholder Involvement Plan (SIP) provides this documentation.

The following provides a description of the typical levels of public involvement and procedures for each (e.g. property owner contact, public meeting, or public hearing).

#### **19-3.02 Property Owner Contact**

##### **19-3.02(a) General**

Property owners are generally contacted to notify them of the project and the potential impact to their property. Property owner contact is generally suitable when the project involves acquisition of a minimal amount of right-of-way from a small number of property owners (e.g., 10 or fewer, depending on context) for projects such as:

1. 3P projects requiring involving right-of-way or easements.
2. 3R projects requiring minor amounts of right-of-way or easements.

##### **19-3.02(b) Procedures**

The district will contact each property owner from whom property will be acquired and provide them with an opportunity to comment on the project. A district representative can make contact

in-person or via certified mail. The district should document in-person contacts by including a summary of the conversation in a memorandum to the file. If certified mail is used, the letter (Figure 19-3.A) should describe/include:

- reason for the contact,
- scope and schedule of the project,
- reason for the proposed right-of-way,
- exhibit map showing the property affected,
- acquisition procedures,
- policy on public involvement,
- a comment form, Figure 19-3B,
- self-addressed, stamped return envelope,
- other options for submitting comments, and
- where to get more information.

Make a record of any comments from the property owner, whether contacted in person or via certified mail, and inform the owner of any actions taken to resolve any objections or suggested changes. When public involvement requirements are satisfied by this option, the Regional Engineer shall determine what information regarding the project should be released to the media.

When property owners are not readily available (e.g., when the property is the subject to a trust agreement) send a written notice or make an in-person visit to the trust officer or manager of record to request him/her to inform the actual owner of a possible need for the property. Attempt to ascertain the name and address of the owner or power of attorney for comments. Include a time limit of not less than 21 days for response in the request. If response is not received in that time, assume the owner or legal representative is not available or interested in commenting on the project.

For larger projects with many property owners affected, it may be more practical to hold a public meeting rather than to contact owners separately; see Section 19-3.03.

(UNDERLINED PORTIONS VARY WITH PROJECT)

Location Studies

Illinois Route 2 to Illinois Route 3

Job No.: P-91-000-00

Some County

RE: Property Tax Number 12-34-567-890

Month Day, 20xx

Mr. John Doe

123 S. 4th Street

Some Town, IL 60000

Dear Property Owner:

Reason for Contact The purpose of this letter is to notify you that the Illinois Department of Transportation is presently in the preliminary engineering phase of a study for the improvement of Illinois Route 1 from Illinois Route 2 to Illinois Route 3 and to seek your input on the project.

Scheduling This project is one of the projects tentatively included in our Fiscal Year XXXX Program, subject to the availability of funds.

Policy It is the policy of the Illinois Department of Transportation to allow interested or affected persons an opportunity to comment on this project during the early stages of project development. Depending on the impacts generated from this project, other types of public involvement may result when warranted, such as a public meeting or a public hearing. Notices for these types of public involvement will be made available to the public.

Identify Property Affected Based upon a review of the XXXX tax records of Some County, you are indicated to be the owner of the property located in the northeast corner of Illinois Route 1 and Illinois Route 2 as shown on the enclosed aerial photograph.

Describe Project The proposed improvement generally consists of widening, resurfacing, rehabilitation, restoration, intersection channelization and traffic signal modernization. The intersection at Illinois Route 2 will be channelized to provide separate left-turn lanes and the traffic signal will be modernized. The roadway will be widened 4 ft (1.2 m) on both sides and curb and gutter provided. The proposed right-of-way that is to be acquired from your property for this improvement is indicated on the enclosed aerial preliminary plan sheet.

### **SAMPLE PROPERTY OWNER CONTACT LETTER**

**Figure 19-3.A**

(1 of 2)

Reason for acquisition:	This right-of-way acquisition is needed to <u>improve the corner turning radius at Illinois Route 2.</u>
How to Comment:	Included in the packet is a response form to indicate your comments, if any. You may also request further discussions with us, either via the telephone or in an in person meeting. Please indicate the appropriate response and return one copy to us in the enclosed, self-addressed, stamped envelope. We would appreciate receiving any comments you may have by <u>    (date)    </u> .
Acquisition Procedures:	<p>Upon completion of our study, we will proceed with the plan preparation and land acquisition phase. In that phase, a representative of the Department will contact you regarding any necessary acquisition.</p> <p>Please note that your response, or lack thereof, will in no way influence the amount of compensation you will receive for your property if acquired as part of the project.</p>
How to Get More Information:	<p>If, after reviewing this letter, you have any questions or wish to arrange a meeting to discuss this improvement in more detail, please contact <u>(Contact Person as assigned by district)</u> at 312/884-4100.</p> <p>Very truly yours, Regional Engineer or District Program Development Engineer</p>
Exhibit & Self-Addressed Stamped Envelope	Enclosure

**SAMPLE PROPERTY OWNER CONTACT LETTER**

**Figure 19-3.A**  
(2 of 2)



(UNDERLINED PORTIONS VARY WITH PROJECT)

Location Studies

Illinois Route 2 to Illinois Route 3

Job No.: P-91-000-00

Some County

RE: Property Tax Number 12-34-567-890

Month Day, 20xx

Mr. John Doe

123 S. 4th Street

Some Town, IL 60000

Comment Form

Check the appropriate response:

\_\_\_\_\_ I have no comments at this time.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have noted my comments on the back of this page.

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to discuss this further in a telephone conversation.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will call you.

\_\_\_\_\_ Please call me at \_\_\_\_\_ (Telephone Number)  
(Indicate preferred day and time)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to have a personal meeting to discuss this project.  
(Please call (Contact Person) to arrange date, time and location.)

Signature

Blank for

Owner

\_\_\_\_\_

Print Name of Owner

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Owner

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

**Sample Property Owner Contact Comment Form**

**Figure 19-3.B**

**19-3.03 Public Meetings****19-3.03(a) General**

Public meetings are suitable for, but not limited to, more complex projects such as Federal Approved Categorical Exclusions (CE), projects following CSS, projects requiring a public hearing, or an EA/EIS project. These types of projects may be:

1. A small 3R project in an urban area but with several displacements;
2. A large 3R widening and resurfacing project on highway, or a major bridge replacement in a rural area;
3. A 3R project with several unusual circumstances;
4. An add lanes project (i.e., 2 to 4 lanes);
5. A bridge relocation on new alignment;
6. A new intersection; or
7. Several small projects in localized area but proposed for a single construction season.

Public meetings provide an opportunity to assemble a large group at one time to discuss the purpose and status of the project, design, project impacts, alternatives (if any), and critical remaining decisions.

The meeting should be prepared for and conducted following the guidelines in Section 19-4.

**19-3.03(b) Public Meeting Notice**

Prior to the public meeting being held, regardless of format, a notice should be published in a newspaper near where the meeting is to be held, and other announcements should be made on social media, radio, television, and/or websites to encourage as much attendance as possible.

For content to include in the notice; see Section 19-4.01(c)

**19-3.03(c) Public Meeting Formats**

The following are different public meeting formats that may be used depending on the desired goal. Some of the formats may be used in the CSS process as well; see Section 19-5.

**19-3.03(c)1 *Group Briefings***

Group briefings are informal meetings with special interest stakeholders and can be an effective means of both circulating information on a proposed project and gaining valuable input. If a group or organization invites district staff to attend a meeting to make a presentation or

participate in discussions, the district is not subject to compliance with the *Open Meetings Act* for its involvement in the meeting. However, if the district initiates arrangements for meeting with a specific group(s) to discuss project issues, it may need to provide notice of the meeting in accordance with the *Open Meetings Act*. If the district makes staff available for presentations to some groups or organizations, it should be prepared to accept invitations from other groups or organizations if they desire a similar opportunity.

These meetings generally begin with a brief presentation by a member of the project team giving the background and goals of the proposed project, a summary of the work and decisions made to date, and a brief synopsis of the proposed schedule for completing the improvement. After this presentation, the meetings should be “open” for a question-and-answer period.

The following is a list of such stakeholders:

- Service clubs (e.g., Kiwanis, Rotary);
- Units of local government (e.g. city councils and/or county boards);
- Chambers of Commerce;
- Homeowners associations;
- League of women voters;
- Local and regional planning agencies;
- State elected officials in whose district the project is located;
- Environmental organizations;
- Minority organizations;
- Organizations representing persons with a disability; and
- Non-motorized users.

Where there may not be an existing organized group, a neighborhood leader may need to be identified, or meeting arranged by the district. For example, in neighborhoods without homeowners associations, a particular homeowner may agree to act as a leader and arrange for meetings and attendees to discuss the project with representatives of the Department. If this option is not available, the district may arrange a meeting in the neighborhood or community and invite homeowners, business owners, community leaders, etc., in small groups at different times to discuss the project.

This format has been used very effectively to gather data and ascertain community attitudes and values towards transportation projects, acquisition of properties, rerouting of traffic, interruption of services during construction, preservation of archaeological and historic properties, and the extent of concern for certain types of environmental and social impacts. Where a certain interest group may be impacted more severely than others by a project, a special meeting at a mutually acceptable time and place may be effective in gaining its understanding of the complexities of the issues, ascertaining the nature of possible resistance, and determining mitigation procedures which might resolve certain objections. Meetings of this

type tend to diffuse organized opposition, especially when the opposition is based on non-factual data.

As a part of the group briefing format, use small displays and/or handouts to supplement the presentation as they may be used in facilities with limited space. Handouts containing basic project information will be useful for orientation and for future reference by attendees.

#### 19-3.03(c)2 *Open House*

An open house offers the public an opportunity to meet with representatives of the district at a time and place that is reasonably convenient to discuss a proposed project. An open house may use any space that is readily available to the public and in the immediate area of the proposed improvement. Throughout the open house session, appropriate members of the district staff will be available to discuss the project with the public and answer questions.

An open house allows a large group of people to be able to learn about a project and ask questions in a short time. Also, the public can ask questions on a one on one basis, such as determining if there are any impacts to their property.

Section 19-4.02 discusses criteria for location and facilities suitable for an open house.

#### 19-3.03(c)3 *Workshops*

Workshops are meetings where participants are given basic transportation requirements, economic and design constraints, and anticipated social, economic, and environmental impacts all related to a proposed project or project problem, and are then asked to study the problem and suggest a solution. In a workshop format participants are requested to analyze the provided information, identify impacts that may have been overlooked, work with others with whom they may agree or disagree, and offer solutions and explanations on their suggestions.

Workshops provide an opportunity for the public to fully understand the complexities and problems that confront Department personnel during project development. This enhances public understanding and appreciation of Department efforts. Because the public will be analyzing pertinent information, suggesting solutions to problems, and indicating preferences among impacts and tradeoffs, a sense of existing local values and preferred mitigation measures can be gained.

When workshops are announced in the news media, the announcements must clearly explain that those attending the meeting will be expected to participate in study groups. The announcement should also explain that formal comments or testimony will not be taken, but that other opportunities will be offered for that purpose. At the beginning of the meeting, the same information must again be clearly explained to those present.

Although not always controllable, workshop formats are generally more effective if the participants are limited to a number that can be divided into smaller groups of four to eight participants per group, and the number of groups is consistent with available space and manpower.

Because those attending workshops will be expected to participate for two to three hours, they must be scheduled at a time when attendees will have the time available. Weekday evenings or daytimes during weekends are the most effective. Workshop meeting places should have tables and chairs, good lighting, and other facilities appropriate for the work groups. School cafeterias are usually excellent facilities for workshops.

At the beginning of a workshop, the moderator should explain the goals and objectives of the session. If other activities have been scheduled subsequent to the workshop, those should also be announced so the participants will be aware of subsequent opportunities to comment on the project. The moderator should explain the project background to the workshop attendees. This includes an explanation of the project need, the basic constraints under which the project will be designed (economics and design criteria), the impacts that have been recognized to date, and any other information that may be pertinent to the scope of the workshop. This presentation must be concise because most of the available time should be allotted to problem solving and solution development. The opening presentation should generally be thirty minutes or less. Divide the participants into groups of four to eight people. Provide each group with the data and exhibits needed for its work and assign each group a resource person or group leader to answer questions and provide general guidance to the group. The leader may also exercise informal group control, act as group recorder, and report group conclusions. Each group will be expected to provide a recommendation and an explanation.

For workshops or other public involvement activities involving the formation of small working groups, certain practices can be applied to optimize the effectiveness of the working group process:

1. When explaining the purpose and role of the working group, emphasize that the group should function as a “horizontal” organization (i.e., members of equal standing) rather than a hierarchical organization. A horizontal organization will enhance the productivity, creativity, participation, and commitment among the group members.
2. The group must recognize and understand that, to be effective, it must have a common focus and agreement on *what* will be discussed and *how* the discussion will progress. Designation of a group facilitator is essential to accomplishing this objective. (Facilitators may be paid personnel hired by the Department or the project consultant.) The facilitator will serve as a neutral agent in the process who will function to keep the participants focused and on track in working toward agreement on specific issues, rather than allowing the group participants to attempt to address multiple issues simultaneously. He/she will direct the flow of discussion to promote open and balanced participation and will protect individuals and their ideas from personal attacks that can stifle participation. At the outset of the group’s formation, the roles and responsibilities of the facilitator and group members must be made clear so all understand how the group will function.
3. Designate a recorder for the group. Like the facilitator, the recorder will act as a neutral agent and will not judge the comments or suggestions offered by group members. The recorder will write down the main points and ideas expressed by the group in a format

that can be viewed by all group members as discussions proceed (e.g., large sheets of paper on which the ideas and comments can be written). The recording of discussion points in full view of the group serves to focus attention and ensures complete and accurate documentation of the ideas and comments expressed. This “group memory” is important both for the efficiency of group meetings (e.g., it eliminates the need for group members to be preoccupied with the process of recording) and for reporting on the actions of the group.

The seating arrangement can affect small work group functioning. The recommended arrangement has the group members seated in a semicircle facing the facilitator and recorder. This helps to focus the attention of the group on the facilitator and the written record of comments and ideas. It also avoids placing any of the group members in perceived positions of authority (e.g., at the head of a table) relative to other members.

#### 19-3.03(c)4 *Information Exchange (Citizen Working Groups/Advisory Committee)*

The districts may consider establishing an Information Exchange, see Figure Figure 19-3.D, to assist in identifying and focusing concerns and comments from a diverse array of interests. The Information Exchange involves the formation of Citizen Working Groups to analyze and react to project alternatives, impacts, and other project-related issues, and an Advisory Committee to serve as the focal point for receiving comments and recommendations from the Working Groups and to pass them to the Department.

Note: Information Exchanges are commonly used in CSS but are usually referred to as a Community Advisory Group (CAG) instead of a Working Group and Project Study Group (PSG) instead of Advisory Committee; see Section 19-5.

In using this approach, the district should discuss the expectations and rules of the exchanges and should state that this approach is not intended to make any final project decisions. Rather, the exchange will provide a forum for discussion and comment on various project-related issues. The following discussion presents an overview of the key elements of the Information Exchange process:

- Working Groups. In the Information Exchange process, Working Groups form the key mechanism for eliciting discussion and comment on the proposed project. These Groups are formed on the basis of common interests or stakeholders (e.g., public officials, resource and regulatory agencies, public interests, agricultural interests, development interests) and have the following primary objectives:
  - + evaluating alternatives presented by the Department and discussing and commenting on impacts, analysis factors, and evaluation methods;
  - + assessing the relative merits of the alternatives, identifying advantages and disadvantages of the alternatives, and suggesting ways to make the alternatives more acceptable; and

- + informing the Advisory Committee of the Working Groups' evaluations, assessments, concerns, and suggestions.

The issues and interests on a specific project will affect the nature and number of Working Groups that may be appropriate. As the initial step in establishing Working Groups, organizations and other interests likely to see themselves as potentially affected by the project should be identified and contacted to determine their interest in participating. The district may solicit interest through any of the various methods used for public involvement. For public officials or organizations representing specific interests, letters of invitation to those entities may be appropriate. For the public at-large, public meetings may be a more effective method of alerting potentially affected parties and determining interest.

At the organizational meeting for the Working Groups, the Information Exchange process and the objectives of the Working Groups and Advisory Committee can be further explained. In addition, the district can determine the membership in each Working Group, present and adopt Constitutions and Bylaws, and initiate selection of a Group chairperson and vice chairperson to represent the group on the Advisory Committee. Following the initial organizational meeting, the adoption of Constitutions and Bylaws, and the designation of chairpersons, the Working Groups can proceed with their activities and exchange information concerning Working Group and Advisory Committee meetings, project details and schedules, etc., through their representation on the Advisory Committee.

- Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee may include two representatives from each of the Working Groups (the chairperson and vice chairperson of each Group), the Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, the project consultant, and others, as appropriate. The functions of the Advisory Committee include integrating the interests and values of the Working Groups into the planning process and advancing the objectives of the Information Exchange. The objectives of the Advisory Committee include the following:
  - + providing policy direction for the Information Exchange;
  - + evaluating alternatives for the project based on information provided by, but not limited to, public meetings/hearings; deliberations of Working Groups; consultant reports, as appropriate; and FHWA and IDOT inputs;
  - + recommending alternatives for the project; and
  - + If warranted, preparing a report to the Secretary of IDOT detailing the work of the Committee, including its recommendations and conclusions.

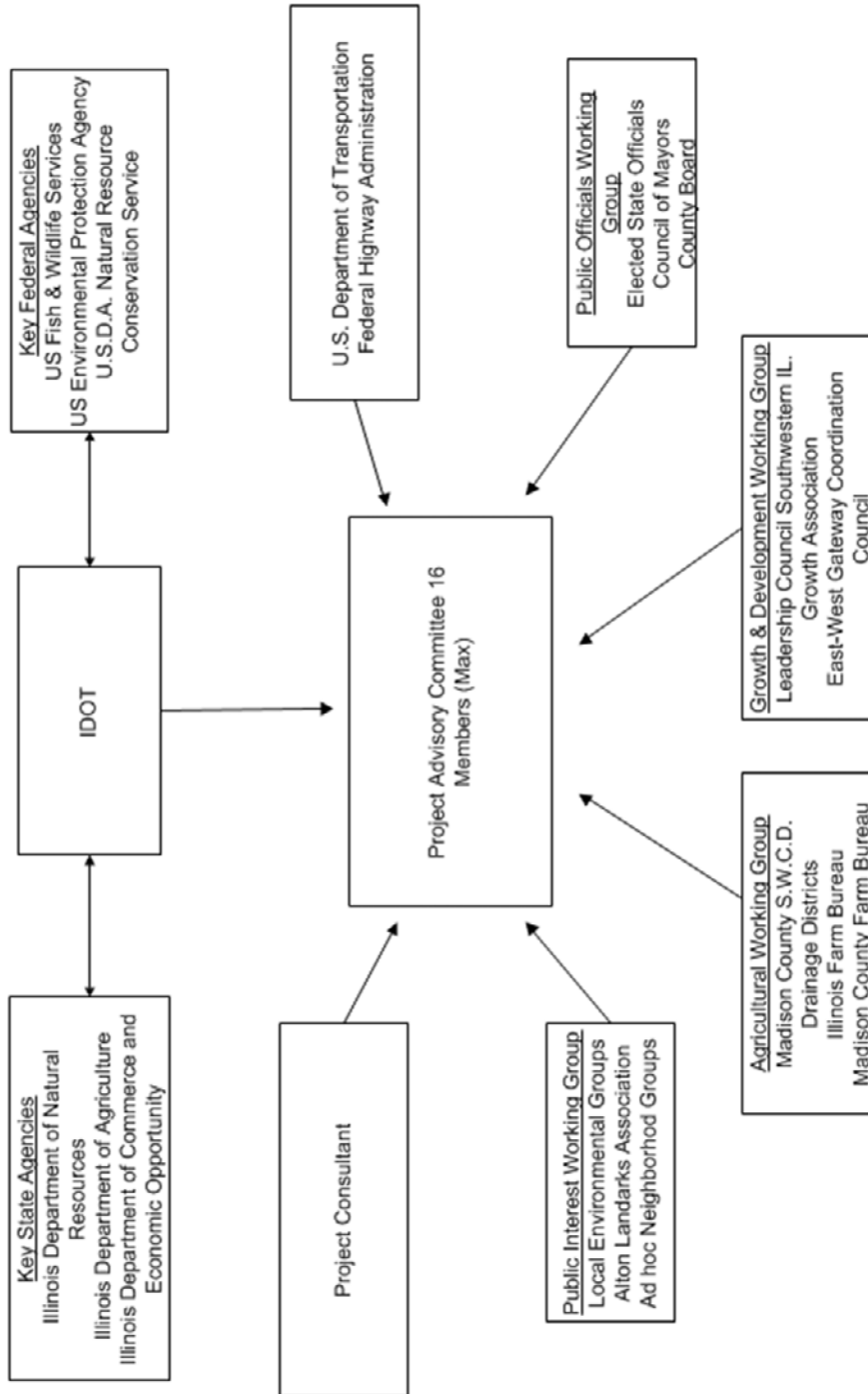
Tasks performed by the Advisory Committee in accomplishing its objectives will include actions such as:

- + evaluating the need for the project;

- + evaluating the social, economic, and environmental impacts of project alternatives;
- + serving as a communication link to the Working Groups and bringing their concerns to the decision makers (i.e., IDOT, FHWA, and public officials);
- + helping to resolve conflicts among various interests;
- + reviewing and making recommendations on the decision making process; and
- + assisting in educating the public about the proposed action and the decision making process.

See AASHTO Practitioner's Handbook 05 *Utilizing Community Advisory Committees for NEPA Studies*, December 2006, for additional guidance concerning the role of Community Advisory Committees.





**EXAMPLE OF INFORMATION EXCHANGE PROCESS**

**Figure 19-3.D**

**19-3.04 Public Hearings****19-3.04(a) General**

Federal requirements for public hearings are broadly defined in Federal regulations; see Section 19-2.01. State requirements are more specific; see Section 19-2.02. In order to have a consistent public hearing process, the Department has developed procedures for when a public hearing is warranted under Federal or State law. The procedures consider the category of action and how it intersects with public hearing requirements.

**19-3.04(b) Procedures****19-3.04(b)1 *Environmental Impact Statement (EISs)***

A public hearing is required for all EISs. The timing is discussed in Section 25-2.19.

**19-3.04(b)2 *Environmental Assessment (EAs)***

A public hearing is required for all EAs. The timing is discussed in Section 24-2.16.

**19-3.04(b)3 *Categorical Exclusions (CEs)***

1. **Federal Approved CEs.** Projects that have one or more potential for unusual circumstances, see Section 23-1.04(b), may approach the threshold of requiring a public hearing. In general, these will be 3R projects where a major amount of right-of-way is required or the function of the highway is altered. Examples of these project actions may include but are not limited to:

- the relocation of an existing marked route from one street to another which did not previously carry marked route traffic, with or without additional right-of-way.
- the changing of a route to a one-way couple which will use a street that did not previously carry marked route traffic, with or without additional right-of-way.
- the reconstruction of an existing marked route with additional through traffic lanes, included because a reasonable alternative would be a bypass or one-way couple.

If the district is unsure about whether or not a Federal approved CE may warrant a public hearing, the district should discuss with FHWA at a district coordination meeting.

2. **State Approved CEs.** Pursuant to CE Agreement, projects on the 23 CFR 771.77(c) and 23 CFR 771.117(d) list may not have potential for unusual circumstances and the likelihood of a State approved CE involving a Federal requirement discussed in Section 19-2.01 is extremely small, especially for SMART or 3P projects.

If the district is unsure about whether or not a State approved CE may warrant a public hearing, the district should discuss with FHWA at the district coordination meeting.

### **19-3.04(c) Public Hearing requirements**

FHWA regulations in 23 CFR 771.111(h)(2)(iii) require the Department to provide a public hearing(s), or the opportunity for hearing(s), for Federal-aid projects as discussed in Section 19-2.01.

The district may either offer to hold a public hearing and determine if there is sufficient interest based on the response, or may hold a public hearing.

When a public hearing will be offered, the offer of the public hearing must be done with proper timing and shall include the language required by Federal regulation; see Section 19-3.04(d).

When a public hearing was offered but not held, certification of the offer shall be submitted to FHWA.

When a public hearing will be held, the following shall be met:

1. The public hearing notice shall include applicable language in Section 19-3.04(e).
2. The format of the public hearing should be appropriate for the project; see Section 19-3.04(f).
3. The items in 23 CFR 771.111(h)(2)(v) shall be explained at the hearing, as appropriate.
4. A transcript and a certification that a public hearing was held shall be submitted to FHWA; see Sections 19-3.04(g) and 19-3.04(h).

### **19-3.04(d) Offer of Public Hearing**

#### **19-3.04(d)1 *Timing***

When the district, in consultation with FHWA, determines that an offer for hearing(s) will be afforded for a project, the requirements shall be satisfied by publishing an offer notice in a local newspaper.

The offer of a public hearing need *not* be announced by a legal notice in the legal notice section of newspapers. Public hearing offers can be announced by use of paid advertisements in newspapers and may be supplemented by radio and TV announcements, posters, the project website, social media, or other means. Legal notices may be used if it is the only means to ensure verbatim publication and specified timing. The size of paid advertisements should be sufficient to attract attention and to contain the information that is necessary.

The district should publish the offer notice at least twice, approximately one week apart. More than two notices may be published if it is considered necessary to provide adequate coverage of

those affected by the project. Publish the notice of the offer in at least one newspaper of general circulation in the vicinity of the project. If a notable segment of the local population is non-English speaking and there is a foreign language paper serving the area, it should also be used to carry the notice. The deadline for requesting a public hearing shall be at least 21 days after the notice first appears in a newspaper.

19-3.04(d)2 *Content*

See Section 19-4.01(c) for content to include in the public hearing offer.

Figure 19-4.B presents an example of a typical offer of a public hearing.

19-3.04(d)3 *Determination of Sufficient Interest*

If there is a request, or requests, to hold a public hearing, then the Regional Engineer will determine if there is sufficient interest to hold a public hearing. If a public hearing is determined to be necessary, follow Section 19.3.04(f) requirements.

If the Regional Engineer determines there is not sufficient interest, then the district shall contact each requestor by certified mail with return receipt and inform them of the lack of sufficient interest in the public hearing and advise the requestor that comments are welcome. If a personal contact is made, the district shall record comments during the contact. If the contact is by certified mail, the district shall include a stamped, self-addressed envelope and a name, telephone number, email, fax number, and telecommunications device for persons with hearing and speech impairments (TTY) number for returning comments. Use the fax number for the Regional Engineer's office and the district's TTY number.

**19-3.04(e) Public Hearing Notice**

When a public hearing is to be held, the district shall publish a notice in a local newspaper, on Department websites, and on other social media.

19-3.04(e)1 *Publishing Frequency*

See Section 19-4.01(d) for publishing public notice frequency.

19-3.04(e)2 *Content*

See Section 19-4.01(c) for content to include in the public hearing notice.

An example of a public hearing notice is shown on Figure 19-4.C.

**19-3.04(f) Public Hearing Formats**19-3.04(f)1 *General*

Public hearings often involve a larger gathering compared to other public involvement activities. When an exceptionally large attendance is expected, it may be desirable to conduct several activities concurrently. If separate rooms are available at the hearing facility, a special room may be used for receiving testimony from persons having prepared statements for the record and who are not interested in attending the entire hearing. After the presentation is complete, comments can be recorded in the main hearing room also making two recorders available for statements. If such a process is used, it should be announced both prior to and at the public hearing and indicate that both recordings will become an official part of the record. Although some duplication of comments may occur, the shortening of the time involved at the public hearing may make the duplication acceptable.

Many of the comments expressed at public hearings concern right-of-way acquisition. The district may address these concerns by establishing a separate room or discussion center staffed with Land Acquisition personnel to dispense general information and to discuss property acquisition procedures, relocation assistance programs, and effects on individual properties. By satisfying property-related questions prior to or during the presentation, this may minimize the number of comments raised during the public hearing. Because Land Acquisition personnel should generally be available throughout the hearing, the separate, integrated use of such personnel is both effective and efficient.

The choice of the public hearing format should fit the project. The three types of format discussed below are the formal public hearing, open house public hearing, and hybrid public hearing.

Regardless of the type of format used and in accordance with 23 CFR 771.111(h)(2)(v), when a public hearing is held, the following information should be explained:

- the project's purpose, need, and consistency with the goals and objectives of any local urban planning;
- the project's alternatives and major design features;
- the social, economic, environmental, and other impacts of the project;
- the relocation assistance program and the right-of-way acquisition process; and
- the Department's procedures for receiving both oral and written statements from the public.

Public hearings generally require considerable time for preparation of displays and electronic presentations. The need for a video presentation and the possible need for outside media services for the development of electronic presentations may require additional lead time. The

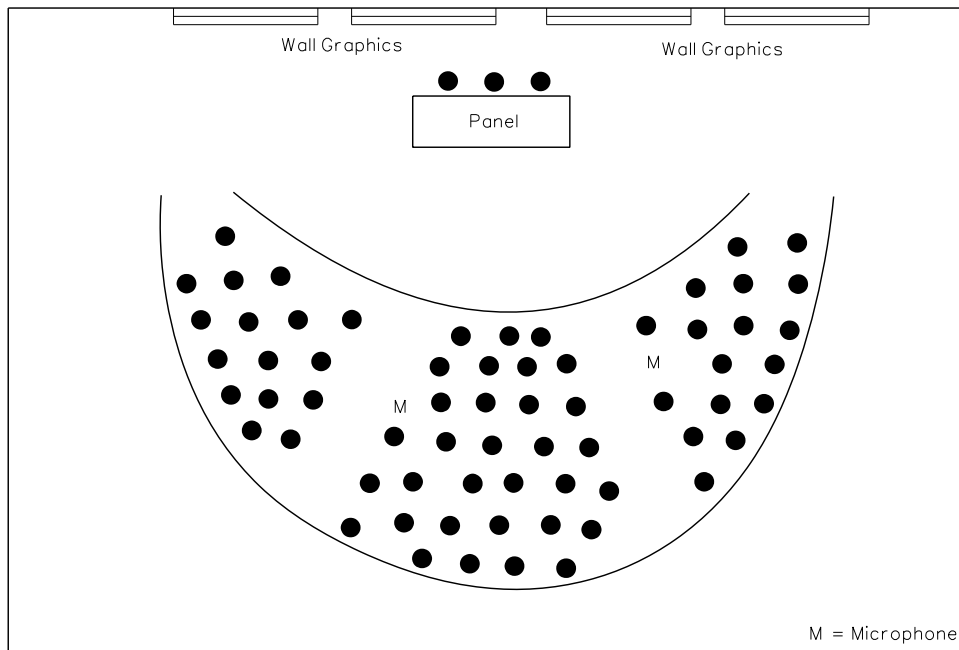
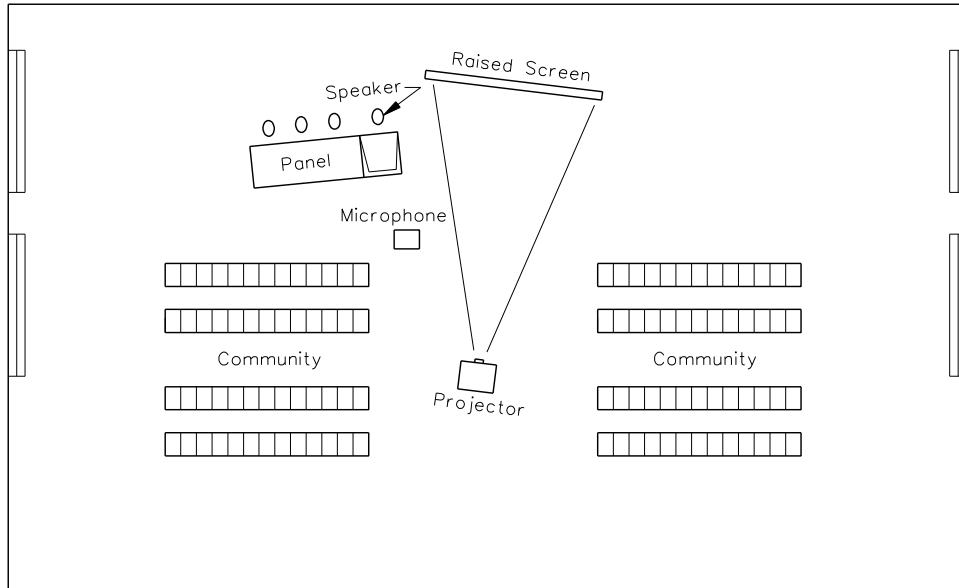
displays for the individual discussions do not necessarily need to be large because they will generally be viewed from relatively short distances. The hearing may include aerial photography with superimposed design and location features, but preliminary plan and profile sheets may also be suitable. Where visual impacts are a major concern, the district may wish to also provide exhibits produced through video imaging, computer imaging, or photomontage, which depict how alternatives will look in the project setting.

#### 19-3.04(f)2 *Formal Public Hearing*

A formal public hearing is where a speaker(s) directly addresses the audience via a presentation and a court reporter is present to transcribe the hearing. After the presentation, members of the audience have an opportunity to address the speaker(s) publicly; see Figure 19-3.E.

This type of format can discourage participation by certain persons or groups that are intimidated by the formality and size or make-up of the audience. Conversely, formal public hearings may attract individuals that are seeking a forum, which often includes press coverage, to present their views on transportation matters or a variety of other topics. As such, the moderator may need to caution attendees occasionally to restrict their comments and statements to the project and may need to suggest a time limit for each commenter to discourage individuals from attempting to monopolize the comment period. Whatever timeframe is utilized (e.g. 5 minutes, 3 minutes, 2 minutes) the moderator must clearly state such timeframe at the beginning of the hearing and impose the same timeframe for each commenter. The notice should also include any time constraints for public testimony during the comment period.

The presentation opening the formal public hearing should normally not exceed 30 minutes and in no case should it exceed 45 minutes. The district staff should carefully develop the discussion and highlight important points because time is limited. See Section 19-4.04 for further information on the development of presentations.



**FORMAL PUBLIC HEARING FORMAT**

**Figure 19-3.G**

### 19-3.04(f)3 *Open House Public Hearings*

The open house public hearing format is an alternative to the formal public hearing format and may also be used wherever a public hearing is required or appropriate. It remains necessary, however, to have appropriate Department representatives present, to provide explanatory project information, to provide for the receipt of oral and written statements, and to prepare a transcript of the proceedings.

The open house public hearing format provides for a continuous flow of visitors over a period of hours in contrast to a formal public hearing that attracts a large crowd at a fixed time. The smaller number of visitors present at any given time at an open house public hearing allows personalized service through authorized IDOT staff and their consultants. The open house hearing format is less intimidating to participants and offers a more workable option for conducting hearings for large audiences.

Open house public hearings generally involve four separate activities:

1. The first is the greeting station. Here, staff members greet the public, advise them about hearing procedures, distribute handouts, obtain names and addresses, and note the opportunity to submit oral and written statements. The handout may include forms for submitting written comments during or after the meeting. While it is encouraged to ask names and addresses and have a sign-in sheet, it is not required.
2. Next, the visitors are directed to a presentation of general information about the project to orient them on the purpose of the project, alternatives under consideration, and the potential impacts. This is best accomplished by electronic means such as a video that can be repeated without variance.
3. The district staff directs the visitors to an area with displays and staff experts for small group or individual discussions on specific questions or concerns. A variety of disciplines should be represented so virtually any question can be addressed. Members of the public are free to remain in this area as long as necessary to obtain the information they desire. Staff members should remind visitors of the opportunity to submit comments at the conclusion of discussions.
4. The final activity is an opportunity to give oral comments to recorders or prepare and submit written comments. After completing their comments, visitors are free to leave. A typical setup for an open house public hearing is shown in Figure 19-3.F.

### 19-3.04(f)4 *Hybrid Public Hearing*

The hybrid public hearing format combines elements of the open house public hearing format with a formal public hearing format. The hybrid public hearing format should be used to the maximum extent practical.

The advantages of the hybrid public hearing format include the ability to engage the public through the open house format while offering a formal opportunity for individuals to express their views in a public forum and also hear the views of their fellow citizens. Additionally, the hybrid



format may protect the project from legal challenges related to the use of the open house format alone.

There are a several methods that the districts may use to allow the public to express their views publicly. The following are some examples for the districts to consider and are encouraged to explore other methods for accomplishing the goal of giving the public a forum to express and hear views from their fellow citizens at a specified time:

- asking questions – The public is given an opportunity to ask questions and the project team gives the answers. One option is for the district to allow the public to ask the questions directly to the project staff, who immediately responds in the public forum. Another option is to collect questions from the public on written cards and have the project staff read the questions and answer them. This allows the project staff to collate similar comments and remove some of the emotion from the question and answer process.
- formal comment with time limit – The public is given an opportunity to express their views publicly. The project team may limit the amount of time each speaker is given if there is a large quantity of speakers. The project team should decide ahead of time and make it clear to the public how comments will be responded to. For example, the project team may choose to respond to each comment after it is made in public, or they may choose to address comments later in writing as part of the comment/response period.
- conversation tables – A variety of tables are setup with each table having a different topic for conversation, with at least one project team member available at each table. For example, topics could include property acquisition, historic properties, natural resources, community resources, etc. Members of the public can sit at the table with a topic they are interested in and engage in conversations with other members of the public and the project team members.

A separate room is also desirable for the formal opportunity for the public to express their views.

### **19-3.04(g) Transcripts**

A court reporter is the preferred means to meet the requirement of having a transcript from the public hearing. If a court reporter is not available, the public hearing shall be recorded using a digital recorder. A transcript shall be made from the digital recording.

To ensure coverage, some districts have used both electronic recorders and court reporters. If a digital recorder is used, a backup recorder should be available in case of malfunction. If an activity is scheduled that may last an extensive period of time, it may be necessary to arrange for more than one court reporter so they may operate in alternating shifts to maintain alertness.

For any public hearings, the transcript will consist of a copy of the handout, the attendance list, all written comments received, a written copy of the narrative from the general information presentation, and a written copy of the verbal comments recorded by the court reporter.

**19-3.04(h) Certification**

In accordance with 23 CFR 771.111(h)(2)(vi), IDOT must certify in writing to FHWA that a public hearing was offered or held. This certification shall include the following, as applicable:

- A letter certifying that a public hearing was held or that a public hearing was offered (but not held).
- If a public hearing was held, include the transcript of the public hearing, along with copies of all written statements received during the hearing and during the public comment period.

Figure 19-3.H is an example letter that may be used to satisfy this requirement. The letter should address the bullet points as appropriate.

FHWA Illinois Division  
3250 Executive Park Drive  
Springfield, Illinois 62703

<insert project Information>

### **Public Hearing Certification**

This letter certifies the following to be true:

The opportunity for a public hearing was offered and the offer was published on <insert date> in the <insert newspaper's name>. Based on the public's response there was/was not sufficient interest in the public hearing (*remove previous paragraph if there was no offer*).

OR

The public hearing notice was published on <insert 1<sup>st</sup> publication date> and <insert 2<sup>nd</sup> publication date> > in the <insert newspaper's name>.

A public hearing was held on <insert date.> at <insert location>.

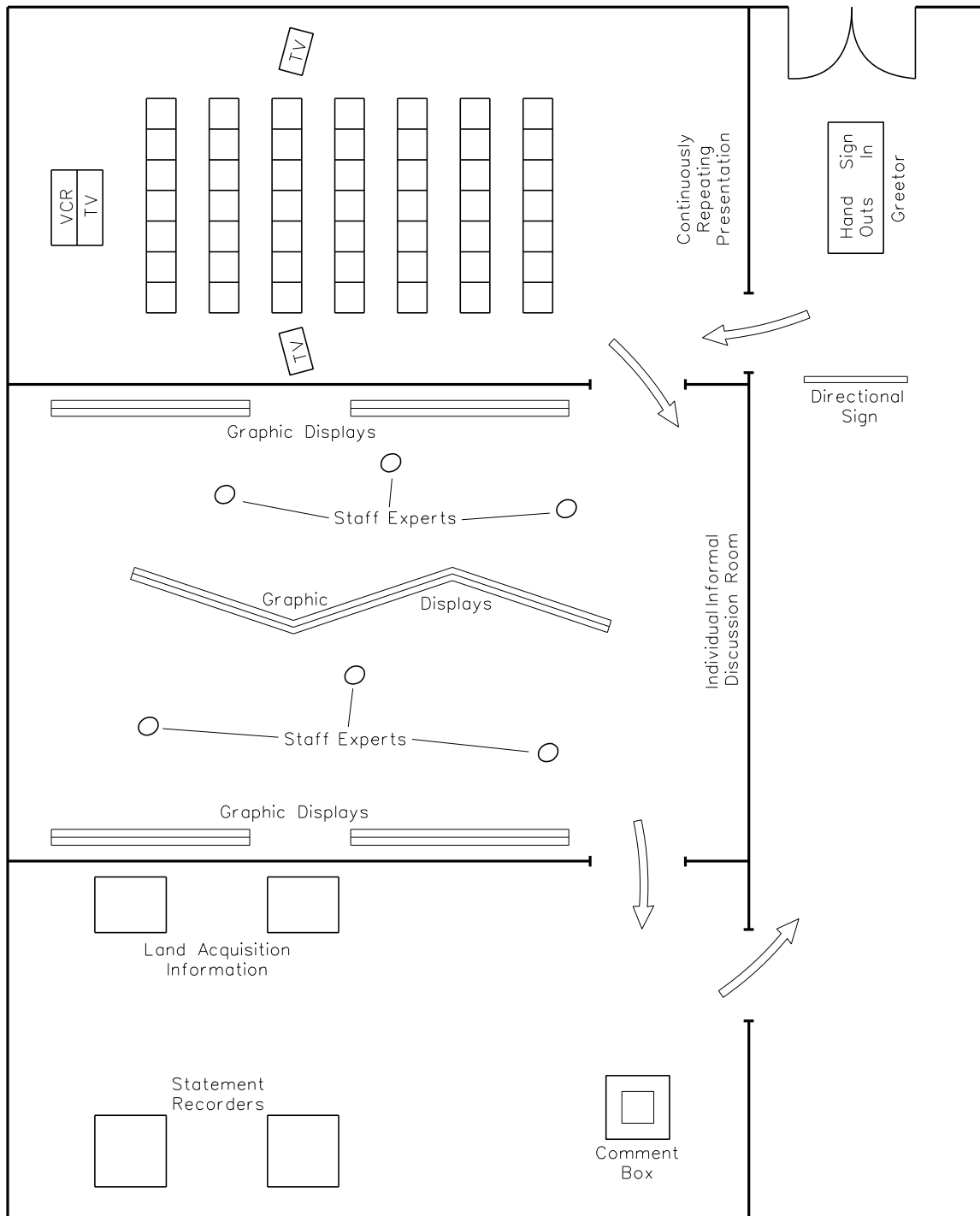
Transcripts of the public hearing and a copy of all written statement from the public hearing and public comment period are attached per 23 CFR 771.111(h)(2)(vi) for FHWA review.

<insert District contact information>

<insert date>

### **Public Hearing Transcript Certification Letter Example**

#### **Figure 19-3.H**



**OPEN HOUSE PUBLIC HEARING FORMAT**

**Figure 19-3.1**

**19-3.05 Public Engagement**

The following activities may be useful for gathering additional input from the public, or providing information to the public, but do not involve face-to-face interactions like public meetings or hearings. These activities are not intended to replace other public involvement activities but may be used to increase public awareness of projects and upcoming meetings/hearings. This section presents a list of ideas that may be utilized. The district can best determine what types of public engagement works for their stakeholders:

- social media (facebook, twitter, etc.);
- newsletters, brochures, and handouts;
- television and radio ads;
- electronic signs; or
- internet sites.



## **19-4 PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING THE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITY**

This section discusses the overall process for planning and implementing the public involvement activity, whether it is a public meeting or a public hearing. The district must carefully prepare and develop the public involvement activity not only to attract and hold the public's attention but also to create a comfortable atmosphere for discussion of highway projects.

### **19-4.01 Stakeholder Engagement**

After the type of public involvement activity has been determined, the district must decide to whom (stakeholders), when, and how the information will be transmitted to the public to make sure interested individuals and organizations are aware of the opportunity to provide input on the project.

#### **19-4.01(a) Stakeholder Identification**

The district must determine which groups or sectors will be contacted and what means or media are most appropriate. When identifying groups to be notified, consider several general categories:

- those who live in the geographic area of the project.
- groups who are known to be or are likely to be affected by property acquisition.
- potential users of the facility.
- commuters who will likely be concerned with the effect of alternative routing both during and after project construction.
- owners of businesses along a route who may be concerned about ingress/egress.
- resource and regulatory agencies that may have an action or authority over the proposed project.

Other groups may be singled out for attention because of special communication needs. This sector could include ethnic neighborhoods, low-income neighborhoods, elderly people, non-English speaking individuals, and persons with disabilities.

#### **19-4.01(b) Notification of Involvement Activities**

Once the proper recipients of project information and interaction have been identified, the next action is to determine the most appropriate means of announcing the involvement activity. It is not necessary to publish legal notices of upcoming activities, although it is the most defensible method for documenting public notice, particularly when it is a public hearing. Paid advertisements in newspapers and on radio and television are acceptable and frequently more

effective. Where local news media are reluctant to carry such advertisements, a legal notice may be one means of ensuring verbatim publication and specified timing. For an announcement in a newspaper to be effective, it must be strategically located and of sufficient size to attract attention. It may also be necessary to advertise notices in more than one newspaper or on more than one radio or TV station to provide adequate coverage.

In predominantly ethnic or non-English speaking neighborhoods, it may be appropriate to publish a notice in a foreign language newspaper. Newsletters of various clubs and organizations may also provide an effective means of notifying specific groups. A local chapter of a State or national association, a church, the Chamber of Commerce, or a service club may publish periodic newsletters and may be agreeable to including announcements of upcoming public involvement activities free of charge. Translations of notices and project documents should be made available when large numbers of non-English speaking residents will be affected by the project.

It may be appropriate to place posters or to distribute handouts or pamphlets on street corners in neighborhoods that are likely to be affected. Announcements of upcoming activities may be mailed to anyone on established mailing lists or to anyone who has shown an interest in the project or in highway projects in general. If low-income and/or minority populations will be affected by the proposed project, special efforts to announce public involvement activities may be necessary. In accordance with the Executive Order 12898 "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations," and the the public involvement process must be thorough and fully inclusive. It may be necessary to distribute pamphlets or project notices door to door for residents or place notices in churches or other community centers.

Appearances on radio and TV talk shows are also effective in many communities. Copies of all notices announcing upcoming public involvement activities shall be kept in the project file. A copy should also be forwarded to the Department's Office of Communications for their use.

Public involvement activities should be advertised via the news media, posters, mailing lists, or other media as needed. General announcements are not normally required with presentations to specific groups and other activities which the general public is not expected to attend; instead, a group requesting a presentation will arrange for attendance. When the district initiates the presentation, it will arrange for attendance through appropriate invitations. There may be occasions where the group involved will release the results of these meetings to the media. Clubs or other special interest groups may have a standard practice of issuing a news release summarizing the activities and programs that occur at their meetings. Occasionally, the district may announce the results of certain non-public activities. For example, the results of opinion polls or questionnaires may be of interest to the general public and appropriate for general release.

However, pursuant to 23 CFR 771.111(h)(iv) notices for public hearings have specific requirements addressed in the following section.



**19-4.01(c) Public Notice Content**19-4.01(c)1 *General Content*

In general, the notice should:

- discuss the date, time and location of the meeting/hearing,
- discuss the purpose of the meeting/hearing and the format to be used,
  - + if an open house format will be used, the notice should specifically state this and mention both the features of the open house and that all information and presentations will be available throughout the time period specified.
  - + if a hybrid format will be used, the notice should state this and specifically describe that all information and presentations will be available throughout the time period specified and that a formal opportunity will be offered to publicly express views at a specific time.
  - + if a formal format will be used, the notice should specifically state this and give the time that the formal presentation will be made and that an opportunity to provide comments on the project will occur following the presentation.
- include a description of the proposed improvement,
- state that all interested persons (i.e., stakeholders) are invited to attend and participate and should also state that district personnel will be present to receive input, provide information, and answer questions,
- include project website, if available,
- the time limit available to submit a request,
- information concerning the preparation and availability of EIS, EA, or CE, if applicable,
- include a map showing the location of the improvement, if feasible,
- discuss applicable laws, regulations, or executive orders for specific issues that may be involved with the project; see Section 19-4.01(c)2,
- explain that the location is accessible to person with disabilities; however individuals in need of special accommodations or assistance should contact the department at least 5 days before the meeting,
- include contact information:
  - + fax, email, phone (including TTY) for the Regional Engineer in the body of the notice.

- + a contact person and telephone number from the Office of Communications in the upper right-hand corner.

#### 19-4.01(c)2 *Public Notice Legal Content*

Whether it is an offer of a public hearing, or a notice of a public meeting/hearing, pursuant to 23 CFR 771.111(h)(2)(iv) the notice will indicate the availability of explanatory information and provide information required to comply with public involvement requirements of other laws, Executive Orders, and regulations. Example legal language for some specific issues which may be involved in the project is included below:

- EA/EIS:

This offer/hearing will provide an opportunity for the public to provide comments on the proposed EA/EIS and provide comments regarding potential impacts to the resources discussed below. IDOT is requesting these comments to assist in the project decision making and consultation with resource agencies.

- + Corridor Protection (if applicable, see Section 19-2.02(b)):

This hearing will afford an opportunity to provide input on the location and approximate widths of right-of-way needed for certain future additions to the highway system in accordance with the Illinois Highway Code, 605 ILCS 5/4 510..

- + Relocations:

When individuals or businesses will be relocated due to a Federally funded project, state that right-of-way acquisition and relocation assistance information will be available as required by the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Regulations for Federal and Federally-Assisted Programs, 49 CFR 24.

- + Section 106:

List known historic resources that may be affected by the proposed project and the historic resources protection process, pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

- + Parks, Recreation Areas, and Refuges (Section 4(f) de minimis impact):

The proposed project would involve use of land from the city park. Approximately two out of forty acres included in the park would be converted for highway use. The two acres would be taken from the northeast edge and would not affect the park's activities, features, or attributes that make the property eligible for Section 4(f) protection. Through publication of this notice, the Department is requesting the public's views on the proposed use of parkland, and on FHWA's intent to make a Section 4(f) de minimus determination.

- + Floodplains (Executive Order 11988 Floodplain Management):

In accordance with the Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management, the environmental document (EA or EIS) describes impacts to the floodplain. The comment period on the environmental document (EA or EIS) is the opportunity for early public review of the proposal for action in the floodplains. The proposed project will impact X acres of floodplain (describe floodplain and location). Accordingly, IDOT is providing the public an opportunity to comment on the potential floodplain impacts.

A statement concerning permits for construction in a regulated floodway is required for District One projects that are outside of Chicago. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources – Division of Water Resources Management (IDNR-DWRM) has delegated authority to IDOT to issue permits under the IDNR- DWRM (17 Ill. Admin.. Code 3708) rules for floodway construction in Northeastern Illinois for certain projects like bridge and culvert replacements. Example, *One alternative under consideration involves a potentially significant encroachment on the Salt Creek flood plain. The Department will process a Permit for Construction in a Regulated Floodway for the replacement of the bridge over Salt Creek.*

+ Project Level Conformity Analysis (Pariculate Matter (PM)<sub>2.5</sub> Hot Spot):

Pursuant to 40 CFR 93.105(e), IDOT and FHWA are seeking public comments on the project level hot spot analysis for PM<sub>2.5</sub>. In compliance with air quality conformity requirements, a quantitative hot spot analysis has been prepared for this project and is included in the environmental document (EA/EIS) and is available for public review and comment.

#### **19-4.01(d) Public Notice Publishing Frequency**

Each public involvement activity will be subject to a minimum of two notices to the public. More than two notices may be published if a special effort is needed to ensure an adequate public response or if there is considerable public interest in the project. However, the number of days prior to a public hearing are different for EISs versus EAs and CEs.

- The first notice of a public hearing on a project requiring an EA or a CE shall be published at least 15 days in advance of the public meeting or public hearing.
- The first notice of a public hearing on a project requiring an EIS shall be published at least 30 days in advance of the hearing.
- In all cases, the second notice shall be published 3 to 7 days before the activity. If notices in addition to the two required notices are beneficial, they may be scheduled up to 2 months ahead or during the week preceding the involvement activity.

The unique circumstances surrounding a particular project may affect the timing of notices. If a project requiring an EA or a CE is known to be controversial or the subject of organized opposition, the district should consider extending the minimum 15-day public hearing notice timing to 30 days.

**19-4.01(e) Public Notice Examples**

The following page has an example for each of the following:

- Public Meeting Notice, Figure 19-4.A
- Public Hearing Offer, Figure 19-4.B
- Public Hearing Notice, Figure 19-4.C

*<insert contact name(s) and number(s)  
for the Office of Communications>*

**Public Meeting**

Scheduled by

Illinois Department of Transportation

For Improvement of US Route 52 near Central City

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) announced today a public meeting has been scheduled for September 22, 2017 from 7:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. in the Central City High School Gymnasium for the purpose of discussing the improvement of US Route 52 from its intersection with Main Street east to the corporate limits of Central City. All persons interested in this project are invited to attend the meeting.

The meeting will be conducted on an informal basis with project displays and other other information available for viewing. IDOT representatives will also be available to explain the project, answer individual questions and record comments offered by those in attendance.

One alternative under consideration involves a potentially significant encroachment on the Salt Creek flood plain. Preliminary reports, including an environmental assessment and an engineering analysis with drawings, maps, and aerial photography, will be available for inspection and viewing during the entire time the IDOT representatives are present. This same material currently is available for review and inspection at the district office.

This meeting will also serve to involve and obtain the views of the public about potential project impacts to: (see Section 19-3.04(e) & insert as appropriate).

The location of the meeting is accessible to persons with disabilities. If special accommodations or assistance are needed, please contact the individual listed below by September 17, 2017.

For more information, contact George Robertson, Regional Engineer, 1200 East Main Street, Richland, Illinois 62673, telephone 416/343-6420, fax 416/343-6414, TTY 217/524-4875.

**PUBLIC MEETING NOTICE EXAMPLE**

**Figure 19-4.A**

*<insert contact name(s) and number(s)  
for the Office of Communications>*

**Public Hearing Offer**  
by  
Illinois Department of Transportation  
concerning  
Improvement of US Route 52 near Central City

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) is proposing to improve US Route 52 from its intersection with Illinois Route 1 to its intersection with Main Street in Central City. The project will consist of reconstructing the existing two-lane pavement to provide four lanes, two in each direction, separated by a 14-foot painted median. The project will include the signalization of the intersections of US Route 52 and Illinois Route 1 and US Route 52 and Main Street. Curb and gutter and underground drainage will be provided as a part of this project. Alternatives under consideration have potentially significant impacts to Moore's Slough, approximately 0.5 miles east of Illinois Route 1. IDOT has prepared an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the project in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and this public hearing is being held to address requirements of 23 U.S.C. 128 and 139, and the Council on Environmental Quality regulations.

This meeting will also serve to involve and obtain the views of the public about potential project impacts to: (see Section 19-4.01(c)(2)).

Any interested person who believes a public hearing should be held for this project may request that a hearing be held by contacting George Robertson, Regional Engineer, 1200 East Main Street, Richland, Illinois 62673, telephone 416/343-6420, fax 416/343-6414, TTY 217/524-4875. To be considered, requests must be received by September 23, 2017. A hearing will be held if the public demonstrates sufficient interest.

Maps, drawings, aerial photography, the Environmental Assessment and other information are available for viewing and inspection by the general public in the district office at the above address. If additional information is desired, contact the Regional Engineer.

**PUBLIC HEARING OFFER EXAMPLE**

**Figure 19-4.B**

*<insert contact name(s) and number(s)  
for the Office of Communications>*

### **Public Hearing**

Scheduled by Illinois Department of Transportation  
For Improvement of US Route 52 near Central City

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) announced today an open house public hearing has been scheduled for 7:00 P.M. on September 22, 2017 in the Central City High School Gymnasium Central City, Illinois for the purpose of discussing the improvement of US Route 52. The project limits are from the intersection with Main Street east to the corporate limits of Central City. The project will consist of reconstructing the existing two-lane pavement to provide four lanes, two in each direction, separated by a 14-foot painted median. The project will include the signalization of the intersections of US Route 52 and Illinois Route 1 and US Route 52 and Main Street. Curb and gutter and underground drainage will be provided as a part of this project. IDOT has prepared an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the project in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and this public hearing is being held to address requirements of 23 U.S.C. 128 and 139, and the Council on Environmental Quality regulations.

All persons interested in this project are invited to attend the meeting to express their views and comment on the project. This hearing will also serve to involve and obtain the views of the public about potential project impacts to: (see Section 19-4.01(c)(2)).

Beginning at 7:00 P.M. a brief presentation on the status of the project, the proposals under consideration, and the decisions to be made. Representatives of the IDOT will be available from 6:00 P.M. until the presentation and also after the presentation to discuss the project. An opportunity will be made available for participants to comment on the project and these verbatim comments will be made part of the public record. The presentation will address topics such as the need for the project, the design alternatives under consideration, right-of-way acquisition and relocation assistance, and the tentative construction schedule.

Project documents, including an environmental impact statement and an engineering analysis with drawings, maps, and aerial photography, will be available for inspection and viewing during the entire time the IDOT representatives are present. This same material currently is available for review and inspection at the district office at Richland.

The location of the hearing is accessible to persons with disabilities. If special accommodations or assistance are needed, please contact the individual listed below by September 17, 2017.

For more information, contact George Robertson, Regional Engineer, 1200 East Main Street, Richland, Illinois 62673, telephone 416/343-6420, fax 416/343-6414, TTY 217/524-4875.

### **PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE EXAMPLE**

#### **FIGURE 19-4.C**

**19-4.02 Location and Facility Selection**

A critical aspect of planning the public involvement activity is the selection of an appropriate location(s) and facility(ies). Several criteria must be considered.

**19-4.02(a) Number of Locations**

The number of locations should be based on the geographic area affected by the project, the availability of adequate transportation for those affected, and reasonable travel distances for the public expected to attend the involvement activities. In rural areas, it may be necessary to hold public involvement activity in each county traversed by the project.

In urban areas, the determination of needs is more difficult. In low-income neighborhoods, many persons depend upon public transportation. Accordingly, it may be a burden for these individuals to attend involvement activities outside of their immediate neighborhood. Residents of racial minority or ethnic neighborhoods may be reluctant to travel outside their neighborhood, especially to another racial or ethnic neighborhood. Where minority or ethnic neighborhoods are of considerable size, it may be appropriate to hold individual involvement activities in each affected neighborhood. Where neighborhoods are relatively small and without apparent mobility problems, it is usually appropriate to hold one involvement activity for multiple neighborhoods.

**19-4.02(b) Selection of Facility**

When selecting the facility(ies) where public involvement activities will occur, consider the following:

- During their normal activities, do residents of the area affected by the project normally travel the distances that will be required to attend the public involvement activity?
- Is transportation available to those interested for travel to the facility during the time the involvement activity is scheduled?
- Are there any social impediments that could affect travel to the area or neighborhood scheduled for the involvement activity?

Other criteria that should be considered when selecting a facility for a public involvement activity are listed below. Most are self-explanatory; however, the discussion of individual formats in Section 19-3 offers some insight into the application of these criteria:

- size and capacity,
- availability of the facility and/or equipment,
- comfort,
- cost,
- parking,
- accessibility for persons with disabilities, and
- acceptability to all segments of the public.



Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires all of the programs and services provided by the Department be accessible to all individuals. As a result, potential public involvement sites must be reviewed to ensure they meet accessibility standards.

#### **19-4.02(c) Examples of Suitable Locations**

##### Presentations for Groups:

- organization's regular meeting place,
- community or civic center,
- schools,
- churches,
- restaurant,
- motel or hotel meeting rooms,
- private company meeting rooms or offices, and
- district office.

##### Open House:

- school gymnasium or cafeteria,
- hotel/motel conference room,
- church meeting room
- storefront building,
- courthouse rotunda,
- central area of shopping mall,
- civic center,
- Chamber of Commerce meeting room,
- City Council chambers,
- judicial courtroom, and
- district office.

##### Workshops:

- school cafeteria or classroom,
- church meeting room,
- hotel or motel meeting rooms,
- restaurant (during off-peak hours),
- civic center, and
- service club meeting hall.

##### Public Meetings and Public Hearings:

- schools (gymnasium, auditorium, cafeteria, or classroom);
- church meeting room;
- civic center;

- City Council chambers;
- judicial courtroom;
- service club or other social club meeting hall; and
- any meeting hall generally used by the public.

#### **19-4.02(d) Inspecting the Site**

Before district personnel begin the preparation of exhibits and presentations, inspect the selected meeting site. A rough drawing of the shape of the room(s), noting the approximate dimensions may be helpful. Note other features such as stage location, projection room, light switches, electrical plug-ins, public address (PA) equipment (mixing console, microphones, microphone jacks, cables, and speakers), entrances, and emergency exits. The person(s) conducting the inspection of the meeting site should also note whether there are other rooms available for possible use for recording public statements or in answering individuals' questions concerning right-of-way, relocation, acquisition, etc.

The person(s) conducting the inspection should examine any equipment that the facility will provide to ensure that it is in good working order and that district personnel are familiar with its operation. PA equipment and projectors should be provided special attention. At the time of the site visit, if practical, discuss with the facility manager arrangements for setting up tables and chairs and for bringing equipment to the meeting room on the day(s) of the involvement activity.

When conducting the site inspection, the district representative(s) also should evaluate whether signs will be needed outside or inside the meeting facility to direct participants to the involvement activity.

#### **19-4.02(e) Preparing the Meeting Site**

When all personnel have reached the site and have set up the equipment supplied by the district, make a final check to ensure that all equipment, especially any furnished at the site, is operational (such as the PA equipment for the sound quality and function). Set up a table at each entrance that will be used for access into the meeting room. The table(s) should be used for registering attendees and for distributing printed materials. Assign personnel to each table to handle the registration and to direct attention to the available handout materials. Entrances not used for the meeting should be locked and signed (but be mindful of emergency evacuation procedures). Place other signing, as determined necessary, at the meeting location. Set up displays as previously planned and orient them with North in the same direction in each. As applicable, the district may have security personnel at the meeting site, before, during, and after the meeting.

#### **19-4.03 Preparations at the District**

During the course of developing a public involvement program, the district generally will have gained some insights on the profile of the potential audience. The knowledge of which sectors

of the public are likely to attend, what they are likely to expect, and their likely positions may be helpful in selecting a format for the involvement activity that will be most effective.

The notices of upcoming public involvement activities will instruct persons with a disability needing special accommodations to contact the district by telephone, in writing/e-mail, fax, or by TTY to advise of their anticipated attendance and any special needs. If interpreters for hearing-impaired persons or materials for visually impaired individuals have been requested, make every effort to provide the requested services. The district may prepare recordings of printed materials when Braille materials are not available or not acceptable.

If the involvement activity will include a period for questions or informal discussion, the district staff responsible for providing information at the activity should be prepared to respond to anticipated questions. Informal “brainstorming” sessions in advance of the activity may be helpful in generating possible questions that may be asked.

When developing handout materials, in many cases some material from previous involvement activities or previous projects may be usable. For example, information regarding right-of-way and relocation assistance will remain essentially the same. For new materials that will be developed, schedule appropriate lead time for preparation of displays and written materials and for printing handouts. Allow sufficient lead time for printing and other preparation activities whether the work will be performed commercially or by the Aerial Surveys Section or the Print Shop in the central office. Review any activities requiring action outside the district to determine the proper lead time for completion.

The district may prepare the photo-ready copy for notices of public involvement activities. After the notices have been sent to the newspapers, the district should ensure that the notices appear in the papers at the specified time.

All personnel who will be expected to participate in the involvement activity should be familiar with the format, schedule, objectives, and any applicable time constraints for their participation. This includes the moderator, if one will be used, who may or may not be an IDOT employee.

A checklist is an excellent tool for ensuring that final preparations do not overlook required equipment and supplies such as nametags, laser pointers, projectors, laptops, displays, display stands, and handouts or reminders to involved personnel. Spare equipment and parts such as extra bulbs for projectors, a spare slide screen, extension cords, charging cables, and other equipment can be extremely valuable in keeping the meeting on schedule in the event of equipment failure.

#### **19-4.04 The Presentation**

##### **19-4.04(a) General Considerations**

Public participation and attitudes may depend upon how well the personnel conducting the activity understand and react to the public’s viewpoints and reasons for participation. With the proper approach, both the public and the Department can use the involvement activity to benefit

its interests. A frequently overlooked element that is important to the overall success of the involvement activity is the time required for completion. Normally, an audience will tolerate a two-hour meeting. With this time frame, limiting the presentation portion to 30 minutes (40 minutes on complex projects) provides sufficient time to discuss the basic features of the proposed improvement while recognizing the participants' desire to have questions answered with as little delay as possible.

To conform to the time allotted, carefully prepare and review the presentation to ensure that only necessary information is included. Practice sessions or "dry-runs" are helpful for allowing the presenter to fit the presentation to the scheduled time limits. When more than one person will be involved in the presentation, complete a practice session(s) with all of the presenters prior to the actual presentation at the involvement activity.

Most of the people attending a public involvement activity will not be familiar with the technical language associated with highway projects. Those making presentations should minimize the use of technical terms in their presentations and in their responses to questions. The personnel presenting should convey an attitude of friendliness, understanding, respect, and cooperation to promote a positive atmosphere. If non-English speaking persons are expected, it may be appropriate to provide oral and written information in more than one language. If visually impaired persons will be attending the activity, it may be appropriate to have the information from the handout materials available in Braille or on a recording.

#### **19-4.04(b) Presentation Content**

The following paragraphs discuss the general topics that should be addressed in a presentation and provide some insight on the manner in which the topics should be approached.

##### *19-4.04(b)1 Introduction*

The opening speaker or moderator should first welcome those in attendance and explain the purpose of the activity. The opening remarks are extremely important for they may set the tone for the entire activity. Those in attendance should understand from the explanation of the purpose whether they are providing input into the basic data gathering effort or whether they are involved in providing input on alternatives, environmental impacts, the preferred alternative, etc. The opening speaker should also explain the format to be used. The speaker should describe what is involved in a workshop, a public meeting, or a public hearing, and the method that will be used to record comments.

The moderator should introduce all staff participants and district representatives and describe their role in the program. The public must be made aware that those with the expertise required to address their questions are present. If staff participants will be available for informal questioning after the presentation and formal comment period (if one is being held), the speaker may also indicate where the various experts will be located during the informal discussion period. At this time in the program, remind the audience of handouts, if available, and briefly describe the contents of the handout. If exhibits used in the presentation correspond with

information in the handouts, attendees may use the handouts to their benefit as a presentation supplement.

#### 19-4.04(b)2 *Main Portion*

At this point, the presentation should describe the project and include the following (as appropriate):

- the project's purpose, need, and consistency with the goals and objectives of any local urban planning;
- the project's alternatives, and major design features;
- the social, economic, environmental and other impacts of the project;
- the relocation assistance program and the right-of-way acquisition process; and
- IDOT's procedures for receiving both oral and written statements from the public.

If the purpose of the meeting is to collect data, the description should briefly outline the work that is proposed and then describe the type of information that is desired from the participants. If the project is further advanced and the participants are expected to offer information concerning the development of alternatives, the description should include a discussion of some of the work completed to date. If the involvement activity occurs when the project is in an advanced stage and the purpose is to provide information that will facilitate a choice among alternatives, provide more information to indicate the status of the improvement and the scope of the options or alternatives that remain. It should include descriptions of design features and beneficial and adverse impacts.

Often when describing a project to the participants, it is helpful to use examples of similar design in the immediate area of the proposed project. For example, in describing the type of medians that are under consideration, the speaker should emphasize that the median types being considered are similar to the flush painted median as now exists on Main Street, or a curbed-barrier median as now exists on Broadway. The participants can thereby relate directly to an operational situation with which they are already familiar.

Another topic that should be addressed during the meeting presentation is the tentative schedule for the remaining steps in the project. The public should be apprised of future opportunities to participate in the project's development, when the NEPA process will be completed, when construction will be initiated, and when construction should be completed.

#### 19-4.04(b)3 *Special Considerations*

If noise abatement measures are proposed for the project, they should be briefly discussed. Also, briefly discuss the acquisition of right-of-way and the availability of relocation assistance. If the purpose of the activity is to offer an opportunity to provide input on alternatives that are being considered, then information should also be available which would indicate the approximate right-of-way acquisition and the properties affected. Advise interested property owners of whether they will be affected and to what extent. Explain that individual questions concerning the land acquisition process will be answered by land acquisition personnel during

the informal period. Indicate where the land acquisition personnel will be located during the informal period.

If the project involves use of land subject to Section 4(f), the presentation should describe the nature and extent of the proposed use (e.g., name, location and size of the facility affected, amount of land proposed for use, impacts to the functions of the facility) and proposed measures to minimize harm to the facility resulting from the intended use. The presentation should also seek input regarding the proposed use, its anticipated impacts and the measures for minimizing harm, including the intent of FHWA to make a de minimis determination, if applicable.

If a public hearing is held to satisfy the requirements for a road closure hearing, the discussion should include a statement of need for road closings, the needs of local traffic, and the effect of the closing on other highways in the locality. The discussion should further address access to schools, churches, markets, and trade or community centers. Discuss all anticipated impacts and benefits of various closing options.

#### 19-4.04(b)4 *Closing the Presentation*

The last portion of the presentation should address the procedure that will be used during the formal comment period if included in the meeting. If there are time limitations on speakers or other procedures to be used, the participants should be aware. Remind the audience that Department personnel will be available at discussion centers to answer individual questions after the formal part of the presentation is complete. If any activities are occurring in a separate room, the participants should be reminded of them. Before closing, announce the length of time (e.g., 10 days) that written comments will be included as a part of the hearing transcript or meeting records; however, comments are welcomed at any time during the development of the project. Present the name and address of the person to whom comments should be submitted.

The information described in the preceding paragraphs should be developed to answer as many questions as possible for the participants.

#### **19-4.04(c) Audio-Visual Aids**

##### 19-4.04(c)1 *General*

A major problem in developing public involvement activities is how to convey a large amount of technical data to the public in a manner and language that they can understand and in a relatively short time. The majority of those who attend public hearings are unable to understand the technical language and engineering drawings that are typically used by project team personnel in their studies of a particular project. Audio-visual aids are capable of significantly increasing the ability of the public to understand the information being presented.

Use the following audio-visual aids for public involvement activities as appropriate:

- projector,
- video/DVD,

- audiotape/digital recording,
- large writing pad and tripod,
- fixed exhibits,
- models,
- demonstrations, and
- markerboard.

Several of these aids may be combined for an even more effective presentation. A coordinated video and exhibit show is a good example of an effective combination.

Exhibits should remain as simple as practical, omitting contour lines, curve data, and other technical information that may not have meaning to the majority of those attending the activity. Label the exhibits to indicate the project stage such as preliminary, proposed, or draft and, if applicable, to contain a title such as Alternative 1 of 3. Identification of local landmarks shown on exhibits can be helpful in orienting viewers. Common landmarks include major street intersections, rivers, parks, large buildings, etc. They should be identified with large bold letters and should be readable from a considerable distance.

In the preparation of visual exhibits, the use of colors to depict different alternatives or features of the proposal can be important. If one alternative is shown in a particular color on one exhibit, it should be shown in the same color on all exhibits. This is also preferable when examples such as bar graphs are used for quantitative comparisons. If quantitative comparisons are appropriate, a bar graph is one means of demonstrating such comparisons quickly and simply. In general, all exhibits should be simple and as easy to understand as possible.

Another effective means of communicating with the public is the use of examples of similar existing facilities near the project area. In many cases, such examples will be helpful to the public in visualizing the scope of the project and its effects on them individually or as a community. For instance, instead of using a typical section of a proposed arterial street, an example of a local facility that is familiar to the attendees may be more effective. The familiarity of the attendees with the example facility should lead to a better understanding of how the proposed project will affect access to homes and businesses, the amount of right-of-way that might be required, and the vehicular and pedestrian characteristics of the facility. Usually, examples of this nature are superior to technical drawings in conveying a message to the public.

#### 19-4.04(c)2 *Fixed Exhibits*

Fixed exhibits are defined as large-size drawings, maps, aerial mosaics, etc., that are prepared for use at public involvement activities to display proposed designs and alignments that are under consideration. Fixed exhibits can be very helpful during public involvement activities because some design concepts and alignments are difficult to visualize from a verbal description alone. Some fixed exhibits may serve a dual purpose in that large-scale maps or aerial mosaics are often prepared for normal use by a project team during the course of its study. Although fixed exhibits are often prepared for a specific purpose and used only once, their use may be increased by photographically reproducing them or using plastic overlays so that alternatives can be drawn on the exhibit or overlays during workshop sessions. Smaller exhibits may be enlarged photographically for use as a fixed exhibit at a public hearing.

Fixed exhibits may also be used effectively in combination with other audio-visual aids at public involvement activities. Because slide presentations have a relatively short duration and require a darkened room, fixed exhibits that duplicate slides can be used for discussion following the presentation. Handouts may also contain reduced photocopies of fixed exhibits. Some fixed exhibits may be retained for future use if they display a standard design or feature that might be a consideration in another project. Districts can establish a library of reusable exhibits so that standard design exhibits will not need to be prepared for each involvement activity.

Although fixed exhibits are useful and flexible visual aids, they have some disadvantages when compared to audio-visual aids. They require considerable space for displaying, storing, and transporting. Another limitation is the time and expense often required to prepare a large drawing or display.

#### 19-4.04(c)3 *Presentation Software*

Presentation software (e.g. PowerPoint) may be effective because a large amount of information can be disseminated in a controlled time and repeated as needed.

#### 19-4.04(c)4 *Video*

Video can be a practical alternative for public involvement activity presentations. Such presentations are very effective for repetitive showings of the same information to small groups. Projected videos can be used with an audience size limited only by the size of the facility and screen and the audio capability. This need might commonly occur at open houses and at briefings of small groups such as homeowners or civic organizations. Technical videos may be integrated with other audio-visual aids to demonstrate certain design techniques that may be new or not available in the project area for local familiarity. An example of this is demonstrating the effectiveness of a concrete median barrier compared to a guardrail median barrier via actual crash tests. The district may obtain technical films demonstrating the effectiveness of specific design features from a variety of sources including FHWA and TRB.

#### 19-4.04(c)5 *Miscellaneous Audio-Visual Aids*

There are other audio-visual aids that are not as common as those which have been described. Many of these are more applicable to serving special needs that do not commonly occur. The use of models, for example, may not be appropriate on most projects; however, they may be appropriate to demonstrate complicated interchanges or complex urban joint development projects. Demonstrations for use at a public involvement activity are also generally reserved for a special situation. The district may use a demonstration to explain the effectiveness of a specific design feature such as a noise barrier.

Another visual-aid technique is the use of a large writing pad mounted on an easel and drawn on with felt tip markers. The usefulness of this technique is limited by the ability of the speaker or an aide to draw and sketch as the presentation is being made.

A large writing pad and felt tip markers may be used to record spoken comments. This is in addition to recording comments by a court reporter or electronic recorder (e.g., tape, digital).



This ensures the speaker that his comment is received and interpreted correctly. Large writing pads are also effective at workshop sessions to record comments, interests, suggested alternatives, etc. The working groups usually prioritize these, and they can become a significant source of input for district decision making.

Audiotape and other electronic recording media are another aid that may be used to present information to the public and control precisely the length and content of a talk. These media are useful in the preparation of standard presentations that are repeated, such as those concerning right-of-way acquisition and relocation assistance and the Federal-State relationship.

#### **19-4.05 Post-Activity Follow-Up**

Those who attend a public involvement activity are normally interested in the results of the input provided. This includes the follow-up to questions for which answers were not available at the time of the activity. The public may determine the success or failure of a public involvement activity based on the actions taken after the activity. Therefore, follow-up is a significant action to minimize opposition and create a positive relationship with the public.

The appropriate type of follow-up will partially depend on the public's attitude at the public involvement activity. If the public has been generally supportive of the proposed project, it is probably not necessary to initiate a large-scale follow-up. It may suffice to write individual letters to those who asked questions which were not answered and to release information to the news media on any changes that were made as a result of the input.

If the public attending the activity was generally opposed to the project, a more extensive follow-up is appropriate. In this case, write those individuals who had questions that were not answered and provide the information requested or explain the results of the investigation. Issue a news release that notes some of the major comments made at the activity and the Department's reaction to these comments. The release should also include a discussion on any changes resulting from the activity. For projects of major scope where a mailing list has been developed and where public involvement activities may span a long period of time, a newsletter might be developed and mailed to those on the mailing list and to those who attended the activity. Local radio and TV talk shows may also be used to disseminate information following a public involvement activity of major scope and impact.

Project revisions are often made after public involvement activities. If project revisions are substantial, the project shall be discussed with BDE and FHWA to determine if additional public involvement activities are needed.

#### **19-4.06 Mailing Lists**

Each district should develop and maintain mailing lists for distributing information. A general mailing list should include agencies, organizations, and appropriate individuals that are generally interested in being advised of all highway projects scheduled within the district. The general list consists primarily of Federal, State, and local agencies usually interfacing with the

Department on highway projects; entities such as major industries, environmental groups, and local transportation operators; and individuals, including elected officials, who have requested and have a need for project information. To serve the intended purposes, those included in the general list should be sent copies of announcements of public involvement activities and other general information as appropriate. Confirm names and addresses periodically to keep lists current and to determine whether the parties are still interested in receiving project information.

In addition to a general mailing list, the district should develop specific lists for individual projects. These project-specific lists include the general mailing list and any additional persons or groups that are interested in specific highway projects. Individuals and organizations may be added to the list when requests are received for information on a specific project or on the basis of attendance lists that are maintained as part of involvement activities. These lists may be used to distribute information on the resolution of certain problems discovered during involvement activities. The project-specific mailing lists may be retained for use with other planned projects in a particular area, or they may be discarded following completion of the project for which they were developed.

#### **19-4.07 General Releases of Information**

Releases of information to the news media can be a very effective tool for minimizing adverse public reaction during both the daily operations of the Department and the development of proposals and final plans for specific projects. Maximize effectiveness by writing the release in layman's terms and avoid using jargon and technical terms as much as possible. Releases of information involving the routine operations of the district may be at the discretion of the Regional Engineer. Releases of information on activities which are controversial or in which the Secretary has shown an interest, such as major freeway projects, should be coordinated with the Office of Communications. That Office also may initiate releases of information in response to inquiries from the news media or to address a demonstrated public interest. It may also release information concerning involvement activities for projects of statewide interest when advised of their scheduling. All releases of information should include, in the upper right-hand corner, a fax number, a TTY number, and the name and telephone number of the person the media may call for additional information.

#### **19-4.08 Records and Reports**

##### **19-4.08(a) Public Comments**

The district must record all comments received by the Department on a given highway improvement and enter these in the project file. Encourage all commentators to put their comments in writing and include their name and address. This relieves Department personnel from the responsibility of interpreting the meaning of the commentator's spoken word in recording their input. Consider providing a Comment Form that commenters may complete and return. Include on the form the date by which the form should be returned.

Record comments when they are received, whether or not they were received as a part of an involvement activity. For example, if an individual visits or calls the district and comments on a project, record that comment and include it in the project files. All comments received should be addressed.

For public hearings, all public comments shall be documented either by a court reporter or, if a court reporter is not available, a digital recording that is transcribed and a transcript produced; see Section 19-3.04(g).

#### **19-4.08(b) Reports**

All comments must become a part of the project files and the Phase I report or NEPA document. For a public hearing, the transcript from the hearing is sent to FHWA; see Section 19-3.04(g). In either case, the report/document should also contain a response to each of the comments included in the summary or the transcript. If a comment is addressed in the body of the report, it is not necessary to repeat that information under "Responses." Refer to the applicable page number of the report.

#### **19-4.08(c) Responses**

The district should acknowledge in writing all written comments received from the public, including individuals, private organizations, or government agencies. The acknowledgment should thank them for their input and provide a response to their questions or comments. If an answer will not be available for some time, acknowledge receipt of the comment with an indication that a final response will be forwarded at a later date. Verbal comments should also be acknowledged and responded to when the name and address of the commenter is available.

To reduce the workload of responding to comments after a scheduled public involvement activity, consider forwarding copies of the summary of comments and responses prepared for inclusion in the Phase I report, along with a letter thanking them for their participation, to all who attended the activity. Separate responses need not be prepared. This summary of comments and responses could also be incorporated into a newsletter.

The district should acknowledge and respond to comments received from other governmental agencies. These responses are likely to eliminate the repetition of those comments in subsequent formal contacts, such as through the circulation of environmental documents. For local agencies, the formal responses serve as resolution documentation, which can also aid in the transition by new local administrations.



## 19-5 CONTEXT SENSITIVE SOLUTIONS

### 19-5.01 The Stakeholder Involvement Process

Once a project has been scoped and included in the Department's Proposed Highway Improvement Program, the Regional Engineer will determine if it is to be developed using the principles of Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS). This decision shall be based on the preliminary scope of the project and if it falls under the types of projects 605 ILCS 5/4-219 specifies to embrace CSS, which includes new construction, reconstruction, or major expansion of existing transportation facilities.

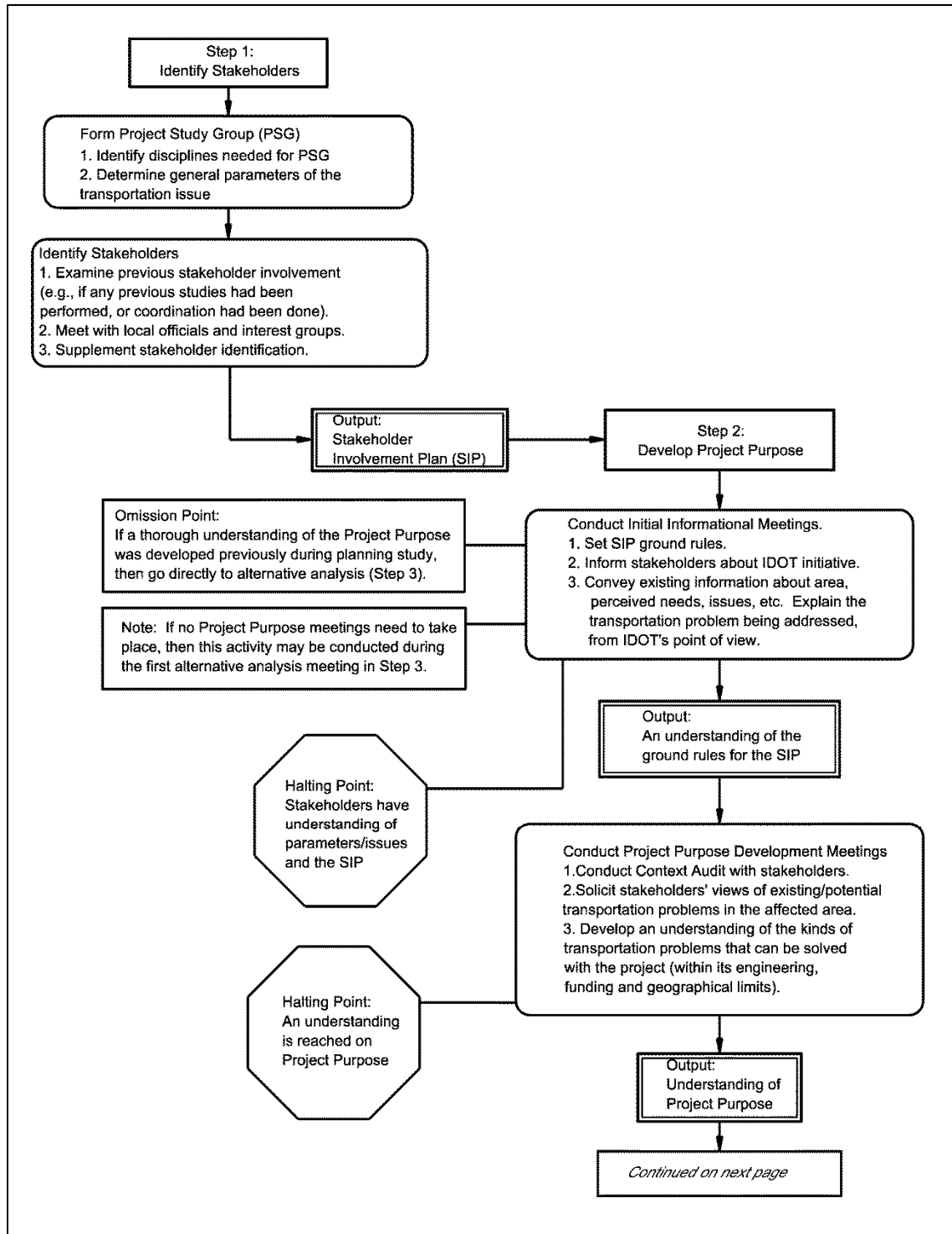
For projects that meet CSS criteria, the districts shall confirm the decision to use CSS, or the decision not to use CSS, by a memorandum to that effect signed by the Regional Engineer. The signed memorandum shall be placed in the project file. This will document compliance of the project with the terms of 605 ILCS 5/4-219. Further, any decision regarding the CSS status for a project shall be discussed at a district coordination meeting and documented.

All CSS projects must use the stakeholder involvement process for public involvement; see Figure 19-5.A. At the discretion of the Regional Engineer, this process and the CSS approach may also be used for any State highway improvement.

The stakeholder involvement process will facilitate effective identification and understanding of the concerns and values of all stakeholders (i.e., persons and entities that have a stake in the outcome of a highway project, see Figure 19-5.B, as an integral part of the project development process. It includes a formal written plan, the Stakeholder Involvement Plan (SIP), see Figure 19-5.C, which explains how stakeholder input and comments will be obtained. Public hearings may be required, depending on the project.

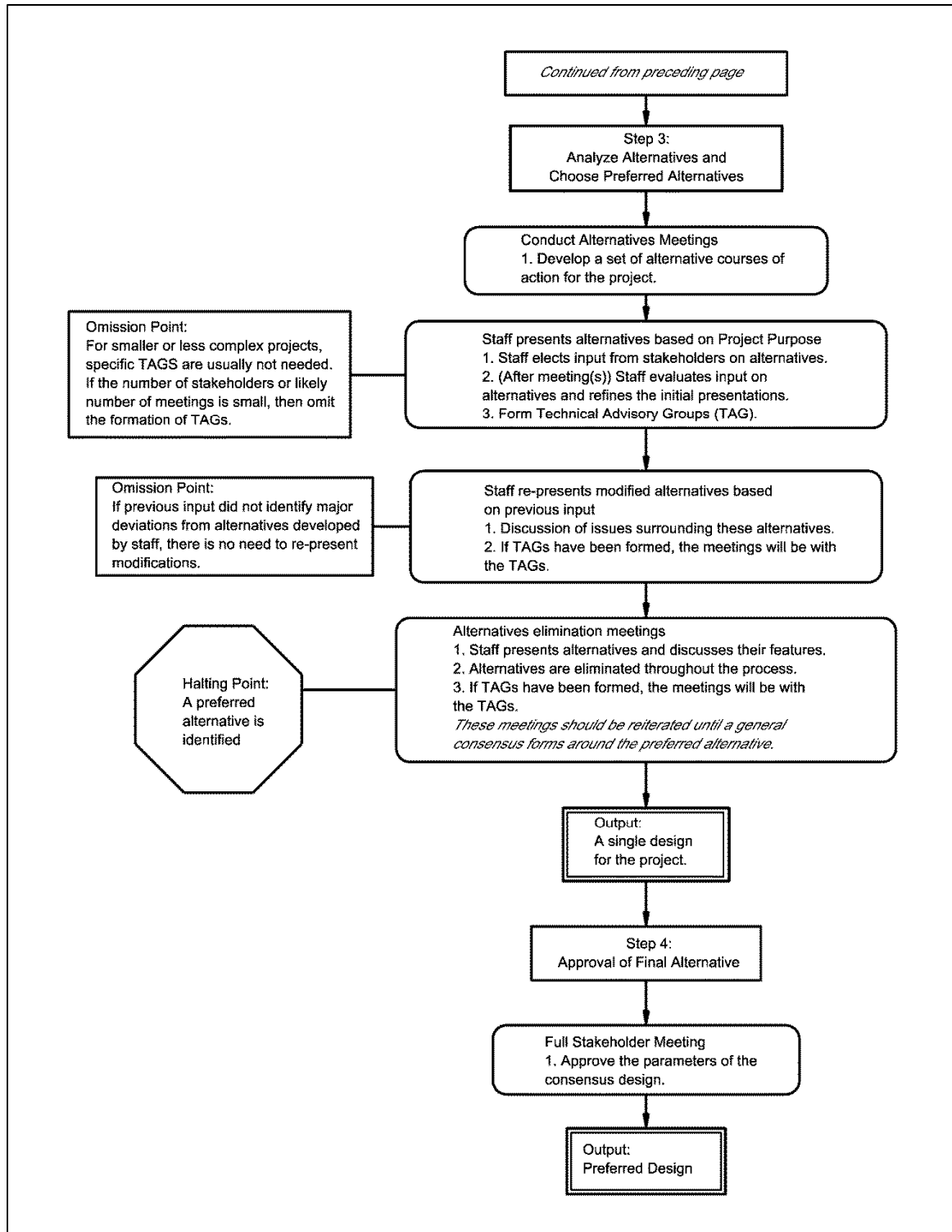
The purpose of the stakeholder involvement process is to promote a proactive and responsive CSS approach that seeks the input of the full range of concerned stakeholders early and often and provides for appropriate consideration of stakeholder input at key points in the project decision making process (e.g., project purpose, range of alternatives, selection of a preferred alternative).

The involvement and coordination activities associated with the environmental process are an integral part of the stakeholder involvement process. The district should schedule stakeholder involvement process activities to coordinate with and accommodate the key milestones in the environmental process and, as applicable, the concurrence points for the NEPA/404 merger process; described in Section 22-4. For projects subject to the NEPA/404 merger process, consideration of the outcomes of the concurrence point meetings with the environmental regulatory and resource agencies should be a part of the iterative processes for achieving stakeholder consensus on project purpose and need, range of alternatives, and the preferred alternative.



**STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT PROCESS**

**Figure 19-5.A**  
(1 of 2)



**STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT PROCESS**

**Figure 19-5.A**  
(2 of 2)

The most serviceable definition of consensus is when a majority of the stakeholders agree on a particular issue, while the dissenting remainder of stakeholders agrees its input has been heard and duly considered and that the process as a whole was fair.

The stakeholder involvement process is flexible and modular and should be designed to fit the size and complexity of each project. The stakeholder involvement process includes the complementary concepts of “omission points” and “halting points.” The “omission points” show where and why certain activities may be omitted from the process for a particular project. The “halting points” show under what conditions certain activities can be considered completed. Decisions made for each of these points may be found in a particular SIP, where certain activities are excluded as being unnecessary while others are continued until a result is reached. The Project Study Group should tailor the stakeholder involvement process to meet the needs of a particular project and its stakeholders.

#### **19-5.01(a) Stakeholder Identification and Development of the Stakeholder Involvement Plan (SIP) (Step 1)**

##### *19-5.01(a)1 Project Study Group*

Once a project is designated for CSS, a Project Study Group (PSG) should be formed. In addition to appropriate district and consultant staff, the group may include representatives from other offices/entities, including, but not limited to, the following:

- FHWA,
- Office of Planning and Programming (OP&P),
- Bureau of Design and Environment (BDE), and
- Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs).

If the project is likely to involve bicycle and pedestrian issues, the district’s bicycle and pedestrian coordinator also should be a part of the PSG.

Once the preliminary engineering study is started, other disciplines can be added to the PSG, or consulted as necessary to respond to issues involved with the project and to promote identification and evaluation of the full range of possible project options. The disciplines to be included or consulted should be determined early in the process and should be reflected in the SIP.

The PSG should research correspondence and other information leading to the initiation of the project and start making a list of stakeholders (e.g., individuals, organizations, agencies, that are on record as supporting or opposing a proposed transportation improvement project or issue). This initial stakeholder list should expand as the preliminary engineering study proceeds, and can grow into a contacts list for specific issues or projects; see Section 19-4.06.

For EIS projects, the PSG will identify entities to be invited to become Participating Agencies in accordance with 23 U.S.C. 139. For EIS and EA projects, the PSG should identify Cooperating



Agencies and Section 106 consulting parties. The PSG should coordinate with FHWA to identify the appropriate Tribal governments to include in project coordination.

Each district should maintain such a contacts list of concerned citizens, public officials, organizations, agencies, and others who want to be involved or informed on transportation issues in their areas. The district should determine from this list the possible stakeholders that may desire to be involved in helping the Department proceed with a preliminary engineering study on the transportation issue and should add those names to the list of stakeholders for the project. The stakeholder list will be expanded as information is gathered from contacts or meetings with local officials, chambers of commerce, planning commissions, affected property owners, environmental resource agencies, the motoring public, special interest groups, etc.

#### 19-5.01(a)2 *Community Advisory Group (CAG)*

Unless previous records or contact lists already exist, the best way to identify many of the stakeholders for a particular project is to meet with the elected officials and agency representatives for the project area. The PSG can ask these officials and representatives about the groups and types of people likely to be interested and/or affected, and ask them to identify any organizations through which these stakeholders can be contacted. For larger and more complex projects, it is suggested that other sources of stakeholder information (e.g., neighborhood and business organizations, environmental and preservation interest groups, transportation and growth management groups) be consulted to supplement the information received from elected officials and agency representatives.

Figure 19-5.B lists various types of stakeholders. Not all of these types will necessarily be affected on any specific project, and a particular group of stakeholders may belong in more than one category. This listing is intended to aid the PSG in formulating potential stakeholder contact lists. It is not meant to be an exhaustive checklist that must be followed in strict order.

Although State and Federal Resource Agencies may be identified as stakeholders on any project, if it is known that the project will be subject to the NEPA/404 Merger Process (see Section 22-4), the Resource Agencies shall be considered stakeholders and involved in the process early on. Once the stakeholders are identified a CAG can be formed. The CAG will served to provide input to PSG on the content of the SIP.

#### 19-5.01(a)3 *Development of the Stakeholder Involvement Plan*

After a preliminary list of stakeholders is compiled, the PSG will develop a Stakeholder Involvement Plan (SIP), see Figure 19-5.C, that identifies who the stakeholders are, how they are going to be reached, and a tentative schedule of meetings. The SIP does not need to be extremely detailed and can be modified as the process develops. The plan does not need to be time or date driven, but could be linked to milestones or decision points that occur throughout the course of a study. The SIP should also contain the tentative ground rules under which the stakeholder involvement process will be conducted. An example outline of a SIP is included for reference.

For projects subject to 23 U.S.C. 139, primarily EISs, the CSS study group must develop a draft Coordination Plan for working with Participating Agencies in development of the environmental document. The district should contact BDE for examples of the Coordination Plan. The CSS study group should integrate the Coordination Plan requirements within the SIP to provide a single document that addresses both the SIP and Coordination Plan requirements. FHWA and the Department, as joint lead agencies, must agree upon the content of this plan before it is distributed to external stakeholders, including participating agencies.

After FHWA publishes a Notice of Intent in the Federal Register, see Section 25-2.01(e), the Department and FHWA initiate external coordination activities. FHWA invites appropriate Federal agencies to be Participating Agencies or Cooperating Agencies. FHWA invites Tribal governments to become Participating Agencies and Section 106 consulting parties. FHWA also invites State agencies that have jurisdiction by law or special expertise to be Cooperating Agencies. The Department invites State and local agencies to be Participating Agencies, as applicable. The Department sends invitations to potential Section 106 consulting parties asking them to participate in the process. See Chapter 25 for sample agency invitation letters. The invitations to Federal, State, and local agencies will include a copy of the draft SIP and will request comments. The request for comments on the SIP will be revisited as new stakeholders are identified throughout project development.

<b>Geographic Interests</b>	<b>Transportation Professionals</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjacent property owners</li> <li>+ Residential</li> <li>+ Commercial</li> <li>+ Industrial</li> <li>+ Institutional: education, religious, government, non-profit</li> <li>• Adjacent property renters</li> <li>+ Residential</li> <li>+ Commercial</li> <li>+ Industrial</li> <li>+ Institutional</li> <li>• Transportation Service Providers</li> <li>+ Public Transportation Agencies</li> <li>+ Airports</li> <li>+ Marine Ports</li> <li>• Neighborhood Organizations</li> <li>+ Homeowners Associations</li> <li>+ Local Interest Groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional Transportation Professionals</li> <li>+ Metropolitan Planning Organization</li> <li>+ transportation planners</li> <li>+ Council of Government Planners</li> <li>+ Transportation Management Associations</li> </ul>
<b>Project Area Public Service Providers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State Transportation Professionals</li> <li>+ State DOT Highway designers</li> <li>+ Traffic Engineers</li> <li>+ Environmental Planners</li> <li>• Federal Transportation Professionals</li> <li>+ Federal Highway Administration</li> <li>+ Federal Transit Administration</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post Offices</li> <li>• Emergency Services</li> <li>• Schools</li> <li>• Drainage Districts</li> <li>• Utility Companies</li> </ul>	<b>Interest Groups</b>
<b>Local and Regional Officials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facility users</li> <li>+ Commuters</li> <li>+ Truckers</li> <li>+ Business Customers</li> <li>+ Major Regional Employers</li> <li>+ Tourists</li> <li>• Transportation Interest Groups</li> <li>+ Highway/Transit</li> <li>+ Bicycle/Pedestrian</li> <li>• Business Organizations</li> <li>+ Local and Regional Chambers of Commerce</li> <li>+ Economic Development Agencies</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local jurisdiction elected and appointed officials</li> <li>+ Mayors</li> <li>+ Aldermen/City Council</li> <li>+ County Board Members</li> <li>+ County Commissioners</li> <li>+ Township Boards</li> <li>+ Planning Commissions</li> <li>• Local jurisdiction transportation or technical professionals</li> <li>+ Public Safety Officials</li> <li>+ Public Works Directors</li> <li>+ Traffic Engineers</li> <li>+ Planning Directors</li> <li>• Permitting Agencies</li> <li>+ Corps of Engineers</li> <li>+ US Environmental Protection Agency</li> <li>+ Ill. Environmental Protection Agency</li> <li>+ Coast Guard</li> <li>+ US Fish and Wildlife Service</li> <li>+ Ill. Department of Natural Resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Industry Associations</li> <li>• Environmental Interest Groups</li> <li>• Cultural</li> <li>• Historic Preservation and Scenic</li> <li>+ Conservation Groups</li> <li>• Growth Management Interest Groups</li> <li>+ Local advocates for underserved communities</li> <li>+ Low income facility users</li> <li>+ racial and ethnic minority advocacy groups</li> <li>+ Local advocacy groups for people with disabilities</li> </ul>

## STAKEHOLDER TYPES

Figure19-5.B

Typical Stakeholder Involvement Plan (SIP) Content Outline

A. Cover Page

This typically has a graphic, project name, and who prepared the SIP.

B. Table of Contents

C. Introduction

This section discusses the project background, project limits, and other relevant introductory language.

D. Goals and Objectives

This section discusses the goals and objectives of the SIP. Example goals are as follows:

- Identify all stakeholders of the project, and ensure their opportunity for meaningful input into the project's development from beginning to end.
- Determine project context, with stakeholder input and concurrence.
- Identify transportation problems that can and should be solved by the project, with stakeholder input and concurrence.
- Identify reasonable alternative solutions to solve identified transportation problems, with stakeholder input and concurrence.
- Choose a preferred alternative solution to identified transportation problems for the project, with stakeholder input and concurrence.
- Treat all involved parties with respect and dignity, in a transparent manner and in a way that ensures their input was duly heard and considered.

E. Project Study Group (PSG) and Community Advisory Group (CAG)

This section describes who was included in the PSG and should list the CAG (person's name and the group they represent), Cooperating Agencies (CAs), Participating Agencies (PAs), and Section 106 consulting parties.

F. Public Involvement Plan Activities

This section will include a summary of all the public involvement activities for the project (i.e. workshops, informational meetings, public hearings, etc.)

G. Tentative Schedule

This section described the tentative schedule. The following is an example schedule:

- The first meeting with all stakeholders will include gaining stakeholder consensus on the ground rules of the SIP including descriptions of roles, a description of the IDOT project development process and an introduction to the stakeholders of the preliminary project concept. Further, the project study group must explain the role the requirements of the

**SIP Content Outline**

**Figure 19-5.C**

(1 of 2)

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) will play in the development of the project. Finally, the PSG will conduct a context audit with the stakeholders to determine characteristics contributing to the project's context. The format for this meeting, like all stakeholder meetings for this SIP, will be in a workshop format to facilitate collaboration. It should precede definition of preliminary purpose & need, and its target date will tentatively be August 2018.

- The second stakeholder meeting will draw upon the completed context audit, and will have as its goal the development of a comprehensive statement of the transportation problem to be solved by the project. The statement must be realistic under the constraints placed by engineering considerations, available funding and geographic limitations. The statement must also represent a consensus view. This meeting should also precede definition of preliminary purpose & need, and its target date is January 2019.
- The third meeting with all stakeholders is to define several possible alternatives for further consideration, and is complete once consensus is reached. It should take place after preliminary purpose & need and determination of reasonable alternatives. Its target date is June 2019.
- The fourth stakeholder meeting has the goal of attaining consensus on a preferred alternative for the project. It should be held after in-depth analysis of reasonable alternatives and before a recommended alignment is chosen. Its target date is January 2020.
- The fifth and final stakeholder meeting is intended to formally approve the final preferred alternative, and should precede official design approval. There should be a formal and comprehensive statement outlining the purpose of the project, its scope specific design elements of the final alternative. The target date for this meeting is June 2020.

#### H. Appendices

The appendices typically include the Project Study Group (e.g. table showing the names, affiliated organization, and contact information), a list of stakeholders, revision dates to the SIP, etc.

**19-5.01(b) Developing Project Problem Statement (Step 2)**

The first general contact with stakeholders serves to introduce the transportation issues to be resolved to the public, exchange information, and identify concerns. This contact starts the process of coordinating with the public so they can begin to understand that their involvement is vital to the development of the project.

The contact should commence with an initial public meeting of the PSG with the stakeholders to explain the ground rules under which the SIP will be conducted. The following questions must be addressed by explicit ground rules, and agreed upon by the stakeholders:

- what is the code of conduct for the group?
- what are the purpose and goals of the process?
- what will be the method of decision making?
- what are the accountabilities of the participants?
- how is consensus defined?
- how will transparency of the process be ensured?

Once SIP ground rules are established and accepted by the stakeholders, the PSG should present its vision of the transportation problem or problems to be solved and the preliminary proposed solutions resulting from the scoping process. It is also helpful at that time to explain departmental procedures for choosing and developing projects to stakeholders.

For projects subject to 23 U.S.C. 139, primarily EISs, the Department and FHWA collaborate with Participating Agencies on the methodologies and level of detail planned for analyzing environmental effects of project alternatives. (FHWA and the Department may agree to revisit methodologies and level of detail when new information warrants doing so. If this occurs, FHWA and the Department will re-coordinate with Participating Agencies for their input.) FHWA and the Department will finalize the SIP after receiving input from Participating and Cooperating Agencies and the public.

**Halting Point:** This activity is finished when the stakeholders understand and agree with the stakeholder involvement process ground rules and understand the Department's preliminary definition of the transportation problems and solutions for the project.

Next, the PSG should undertake an effort to complete a Community Context Audit Form, see Figure 19-5.D, for the project in concert with the stakeholders. These audits are intended to help identify various characteristics that define the context of each project. This will aid in defining the project purpose or the transportation problem to be addressed. The audit is designed to consider not only the area's history and heritage, but environmental conditions and community goals.



**Illinois Department  
of Transportation**

**Community Context Audit Form**

**Purpose:**

The Community Context Audit form is intended to be a guide to identify various community characteristics that make each transportation project location unique to its residents, its businesses and the public in general. This information will help to define the purpose and need of the proposed transportation improvements based upon community goals and local plans for future development. The audit is designed to take into account the community's history or heritage, present conditions and anticipated conditions. As you complete this audit, please consider the interaction of persons and groups within your community when considering factors such as mobility and access (vehicular, non-vehicular and transit modes), safety, local and regional economics, aesthetics and overall quality of life.

PROJECT INFORMATION		
Key Route:	PPS No.:	
F.A. Route:	Marked Route:	County:
Section:	Project Length:	
Job Number:	Contract No.:	Program No.:
Limits:		
Municipalities:		
General Description of Existing Facility:		
Need for Proposed Improvement:		
Design Policies Used: <input type="checkbox"/> New Construction <input type="checkbox"/> Reconstruction <input type="checkbox"/> 3R <input type="checkbox"/> Other		
General Description of Proposed Improvement:		
Estimated Program Cost:	(in FY          Dollars)	Fund Type:
Construction Cost:	ROW Cost:	
Utility Relocation Cost:	Consultant P.E. Cost:	

**Contact Person:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone #:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Individual Completing Context Audit Form:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**COMMUNITY CONTEXT AUDIT FORM**

**Figure 19-5.D**  
(1 of 6)



**Illinois Department  
of Transportation**

**Community Context Audit Form**

**Section 1: Community Characteristics/ Land Use**

Please conduct a visual assessment in the field and attach a project location map. If appropriate, include a photo index for the project area. If appropriate gather public opinions and concerns about the proposed project. Consider community needs as the basis for this assessment. Assess the community characteristics and indicate the community's perception of importance for each characteristic currently and based upon known / planned future conditions.

Community Characteristics	Presence		Importance		
	Yes	No	High	Med.	Low
Is this place an established city center?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is this place a multi-modal transportation center?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is this place a commercial center?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is this place a residential center?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is this place a mixed residential /commercial center?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is this place an industrial center?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is this place a rural/agricultural area? Comments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there important cultural features or identifiers which convey information about the community within the project area? If yes, list:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there social/community features or identifiers within the project area? If yes, list:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there important architectural features within the project area? If yes, list:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there important natural features within the project area? If yes, list:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is this place of historical significance to the community? If yes, list:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Overall assessment of community characteristics and setting:**

Urban ..     Suburban ..     Rural

(Please note, this is not the identification of a functional classification. This is an assessment of the community based upon physical characteristics noted above.)

**COMMUNITY CONTEXT AUDIT FORM**

**Figure 19-5.D**  
(2 of 6)





**Illinois Department  
of Transportation**

**Community Context Audit Form**

**Section 2: Infrastructure Assessment**

Assess the project or study area for the presence and adequacy of the following infrastructure items. If present (a yes response) and in poor condition, please make notation and provide any other relevant comments in space provided for each item. If not present (a no response), indicate in the comment section if the item needs further evaluation. Indicate the level of importance each item may have to the community currently and based upon known / planned future conditions.

Infrastructure	Presence		Importance		
	Yes	No	High	Med.	Low
Sidewalks Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ADA Compliance Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bicycle Lanes/Paths/Facilities Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
On-street Parking Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transit Connections Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transit Shelters Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Street Lighting Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pedestrian Lighting Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pedestrian Crossings Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Signals (Traffic, Directional & Pedestrian) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Crosswalks Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Other Comments:**

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**COMMUNITY CONTEXT AUDIT FORM**

**Figure 19-5.D**  
(3 of 6)



**Illinois Department  
of Transportation**

**Community Context Audit Form**

**Section 3: Neighborhood Culture, Aesthetics and Street Amenities**

Assess the study area for the following amenities and cultural, aesthetic and comfort factors. If present (a yes response) and items are in poor condition, please make notation and provide any other relevant comments in the space provided for each item. If not present (a no response), indicate in the comment section if the item requires further evaluation. Indicate the level of importance each item may have to the neighborhood currently and based upon known / planned future conditions.

Resource	Presence		Importance		
	Yes	No	High	Med.	Low
Neighborhood Parks /Open Space /Civic Areas Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Benches Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trash Containers Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Street Trees Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Landscaping Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wayfinding Signage Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community Safety Issues Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Traffic Safety Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Please list any seasonal events affected by proposed improvements at this location.**

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**Overall Comments:**

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**COMMUNITY CONTEXT AUDIT FORM**

**Figure 19-5.D**  
(4 of 6)

	<b>Illinois Department of Transportation</b>	<b>Community Context Audit Form</b>			
<p><b>Section 4: Economic Development</b></p> <p>Assess the project or study area for the following community development indicators. Indicate the level of importance for each indicator currently and based upon known / planned future conditions.</p>					
Resource	Presence		Importance		
	Yes	No	High	Med.	Low
Has this area been identified for new development? If yes, describe the proposed or planned development.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are visitors attracted to this area? If yes, indicate why?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the local economy supported by historic, natural, cultural and entertainment resources?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the roadway serve as a commuter corridor?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the roadway serve as a gateway?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do stakeholders include business or other advocacy groups? (in addition to public agencies and residential associations)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is limiting sprawl a regional concern applicable to this place?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is redevelopment underway or planned for this place? If yes, how does the proposed transportation project impact redevelopment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>Other Comments:</b></p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>					

**COMMUNITY CONTEXT AUDIT FORM**

**Figure 19-5.D**  
(5 of 6)



**Illinois Department  
of Transportation**

**Community Context Audit Form**

**Section 5: Community Planning**

Assess the proposed project in context to local planning initiatives. Please provide the following information and documentation related to the project or study area.

	Yes	No
Does the municipality, county or regional planning authority have a comprehensive plan? If yes, indicate the date of the plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is this project generally consistent with the municipality's comprehensive plan? If yes, indicate how.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there any special studies associated with this project? If yes, please indicate the name of study or studies and attach copies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the municipality adopted a growth management plan or designated growth area? If yes, is this project located within the designated growth area.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does this project have regional significance? If so, explain.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there other scheduled or planned projects that may tie into this project or impact this project? If yes, please indicate the project name(s) and type of project(s).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify planning and project development partners for this project:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Other Comments:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**COMMUNITY CONTEXT AUDIT FORM**

**Figure 19-5.D**

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Context audit meetings can be large and include all stakeholders or can be conducted as multiple smaller meetings if the project is large in scale and affects a great many stakeholders of varied interests or affects many communities. It is often helpful to conduct these smaller meetings with groups of stakeholders that have common interests, for example, based on geography or specific issues. The smaller meetings should be informal in nature, designed to learn about each group's issues. At the end of a multi-meeting process, it is recommended that a full public meeting be held to compile and complete the overarching context audit for the project.

This audit process should be simple and should deal with broad, problem-defining issues. Staffing at the meetings should be adequate for stakeholders to have their questions answered in a timely fashion. For larger projects, communications consultants may be involved in this type of outreach instead of, or in addition to, Department staff.

After the context audit is completed, the PSG should meet with the stakeholders to develop a clear statement of the transportation problem(s) to be solved by the project. This can occur at a context audit meeting, or may require a meeting or meetings subsequent to the context audit meeting on projects with a more complex context. The PSG should seek input on current transportation problems in the area the stakeholders believe need to be solved, and how the project, as preliminarily proposed, might help alleviate them. If stakeholder solutions are suggested that are technically or financially infeasible, the PSG should determine the underlying problems the suggestions were attempting to solve, and whether or not there is a feasible way to address them within the project's anticipated scope.

Translate the input into a clear problem statement, which should, and can be, solved by the project. The PSG should ensure the stakeholders understand that this statement is of perceived transportation problems, not of the preferred project scope of work. Care must be taken to make the statement realistic within the limits imposed by engineering considerations, available funding, and the logical termini, see Section 11-3.02, of the project. Once a clear problem statement is completed, it must be accepted by consensus of the stakeholders.

IDOT and FHWA develop the Purpose and Need based on many factors and relevant planning/transportation data. The PSG should ensure that the stakeholders understand that the problem statement is a *contributing factor* to the Purpose and Need. Further, Federal and State Resource Agencies (e.g., US Environmental Protection Agency, US Army Corps of Engineers) must concur in the Purpose and Need for projects subject to the NEPA/404 Merger process. For EIS projects, Participating Agencies and the public must be afforded an opportunity for involvement in defining the Purpose and Need.

**Omission Point:** The PSG should ensure that the stakeholders understand that these issues will be revisited on projects during formal development of Purpose and Need under the NEPA process, if applicable. Further, Federal Resource Agencies (e.g., US Environmental Protection Agency, US Army Corps of Engineers) must concur in the Purpose and Need for projects subject to the NEPA/404 Merger process. For EIS projects, Participating Agencies and the public must be afforded an opportunity for involvement in defining the Purpose

and Need. Purpose and Need also should be revisited for EIS projects subject to 23 U.S.C. 139 that requires that Participating Agencies and the public be afforded an opportunity for involvement in defining the Purpose and Need. It would be prudent to hold a meeting to verify that all stakeholders agree with the revised Purpose and Need.

**Halting Point:** This Step is finished when both the Department and the stakeholders arrive at an understanding as to the purpose of the project. If the project is subject to the NEPA/404 Merger Process, this will include concurrence on the Purpose and Need from the Resource Agencies. For projects subject to 23 U.S.C. 139, this will include having afforded Participating Agencies and the public an opportunity for involvement in defining the Purpose and Need. This step can also be concluded if the consensus is to not proceed with the project.

Developing the project purpose is the first, fundamental step in the overall project development process. Central to this concept is the understanding by all stakeholders that a transportation problem has been identified, and the Department is committing resources to address that problem. At the onset, outreach focuses on understanding community viewpoints on the nature of transportation issues associated with the identified problem. Outreach should also focus on finding out the specific values associated with the local context.

The point of this outreach is to assure congruence between the Department's assessment of the problem(s) to be addressed and those recognized by the community. If these views are different, it can become very difficult for stakeholders to agree to make trade-offs during the planning and design process. The absence of general endorsement of the problem's definition at this point is a strong indication that the process is not ready to proceed to the next step. A clear understanding between stakeholders and the Department regarding a transportation need, including what transportation issues and problems are to be addressed, is needed for progress toward solving the transportation problem.

### **19-5.01(c) Defining Alternatives (Step 3)**

The intent of this step is to develop project alternatives or options and to ask for input into the development process for the preliminary study alternatives. The Purpose and Need that was developed in Step 2 for the project and the concerns identified from Step 2, are the driving force for the identification of the alternatives or options, and should be considered during this process. For EIS projects, Participating Agencies and the public must be afforded an opportunity for involvement in defining the range of alternatives.

On larger and more complex projects (e.g., new construction, major reconstruction), this is usually the appropriate time to form one or more "technical advisory groups" (TAGs). These groups are composed of stakeholders who volunteer to be in ongoing contact with the PSG, over and above the full public meetings that take place, and will work on analyzing alternatives generated. Several groups could be created and could each be responsible for analyzing the alternatives according to a particular subject matter (e.g., economic development, aesthetics). In some situations, consultant staff may assume these responsibilities, overseen by the PSG.

For smaller and less complex projects, a single group that handles all relevant subjects could be convened instead.

**Omission Point:** For smaller and/or less complex projects on which the number of stakeholders or the likely number of meetings is small, the formation of TAGs can be omitted.

Staff should approach stakeholder suggestions from the standpoint of determining what problems and issues are being addressed. If suggested proposals are either technically or financially infeasible (or both), explain this plainly and respectfully. Staff should work with stakeholders to determine the underlying issues and should try to identify alternative solutions that would address the concerns within the engineering and budgetary constraints. Input obtained from these meetings generally will result in revisions to the alternatives being considered at this time. Ideally, the range of alternatives retained for further study will be narrowed at this point in the process, based on the comments received, the results of preliminary surveys, and the design analyses conducted to date.

**Halting Point:** Once a reasonable range of alternatives have been developed and all issues that are reasonably related to the project have been identified, the process can move on to the environmental documentation and review stage. The alternatives and their respective environmental impacts will be made available for public and agency review through the environmental process.

**Omission Point:** The process can proceed directly to the environmental documentation and review stage if, at the initial meeting(s), stakeholders did not identify any significant differences or issues omitted from previously developed alternatives.

For all but the smallest or least complex projects, several meetings for analyzing alternatives are likely to be necessary. The purpose of follow-up “alternative analysis” meetings is to present the refined alternatives generated from the first round of meetings and to begin to reduce the number of alternatives carried forward. Concerns from previous meetings, along with any current conflict resolution results, are discussed. If concerns cannot be incorporated, staff must indicate why and attempt to offer solutions that address the issues underlying these concerns.

TAGs, if formed, would continue their analysis and help make the presentation at the full meeting(s). In fact, subsequent alternative analysis meetings are best conducted with the TAGs themselves. This saves time, space, budget, and is consistent with the purpose for which the TAGs were created. At this stage, full public meetings should only happen if a new issue emerges, or an issue not previously considered relevant becomes important.

For large or complex projects, there may be a need for several rounds of meetings for refining and reducing the number of alternatives; whereas, if the project is simple, elimination of alternatives can occur in one meeting. On larger projects, consultant staff can assume these responsibilities, under the supervision of the PSG.

**Halting Point:** Meetings are reiterated until a preferred alternative is reached. If a preferred alternative is being identified during a corridor or feasibility study, and the project is later subject to NEPA compliance, the preferred alternative identification process will be revisited if or when the NEPA process is initiated for the project. Further, Federal Resource Agencies (e.g., US Environmental Protection Agency, US Army Corps of Engineers) must concur in the alternatives to be carried forward for further analysis and the preferred alternative on projects subject to the NEPA/404 Merger process. For EIS projects, Participating Agencies and the public must be afforded an opportunity for involvement in defining the range of alternatives.

#### **19-5.01(d) Preferred Alternative (Step 4)**

This is the last stakeholder involvement activity during initial design/NEPA and its intent is to reach consensus with the public. In order to reach this point, all reasonable concerns should have been addressed and all conflicts resolved.

The purpose of this activity is to formalize the agreed-upon consensus for the project scope. The watchwords should be “no outstanding issues” and “no surprises.” Staff should carefully determine whether issues remain unresolved or unidentified. If so, more rounds of alternative definition, analysis, and selection should be conducted before a public hearing.

A good goal to work toward throughout the entire SIP is the creation of a consensus document outlining the following:

- the purpose of the project,
- project scope, and
- design elements that each stakeholder group and the Department feel comfortable approving at this end-point.

If staff does not feel that the process has reached such a point, address all outstanding issues before scheduling the final meeting. If a corridor study is conducted and a corridor is chosen, the preferred alternative within that corridor will be selected through the NEPA process, if applicable. The decisions made in the corridor study process will be carried forward into the NEPA document to explain why the corridor was selected and others were eliminated. Resource Agencies (e.g., US Environmental Protection Agency, US Army Corps of Engineers) must concur in the preferred alternative on projects subject to the NEPA/404 Merger process.

#### *19-5.01(d)1 Documentation of the Stakeholder Involvement Process for CSS Projects*

A critical element to the success of the CSS stakeholder involvement process is documentation. The PSG should clearly note and explain all major decisions made during the stakeholder involvement process. This includes all choices made from the selection of stakeholders, the definition of stakeholder involvement process ground rules, other parameters of the stakeholder



involvement process (e.g., type and frequency of meetings), the selection of alternatives to be studied, and the selection of the preferred alternative. Any exceptions to established departmental design criteria must be clearly and completely justified. Any design features requiring special treatment during Phase II, construction, or maintenance during the project's design life should be noted and passed on to the entities responsible for those. Include this documentation in the project file for future reference.

#### 19-5.01(d)2 *Stakeholder Involvement in Phase II and beyond*

There may be instances where changes to design features are proposed subsequent to Phase I Engineering and the stakeholder involvement process as outlined above. The changes can occur during Phase II Project Development, construction, or operation of the project. In the case where the change represents a major departure from the design resulting from the stakeholder involvement process, the PSG is required to meet again with the stakeholders to discuss and obtain consensus on the changes to be made. Any original design features, as well as any other commitments made during Phase I, will be contained in the project's commitment file; see Section 4-3.07.

There may also be occasions where the PSG will be required to approach the stakeholders on new issues that arise during Phase II Engineering, construction, or operation of the project. The issues will generally relate to decisions including, but not limited to, architectural design features, landscaping, aesthetics, management of traffic, maintenance of access, or public health. Stakeholder consensus must be obtained on such issues before any such feature is included in the project.

### **19-5.02 Implementing the Stakeholder Involvement Process**

The activities outlined above should lead to greater integration of stakeholder ideas and opinions into project development. These activities should be aimed at providing stakeholders, most of whom are not going to be transportation or engineering professionals, with a good understanding of the issues, limitations, and purpose of the project being considered. Districts should not feel that the process outlined above is a rigid checklist of activities that must be followed to the letter; rather, they should use their judgment in applying the steps in the framework to determine how best to contact and engage stakeholders.

The following are additional considerations that can guide the planning of a constructive stakeholder involvement process:

#### **19-5.02(a) Choosing an Approach**

For most of the stakeholder involvement activities detailed above, the "open house" format of meeting is generally considered to be the most conducive towards public understanding and input. However, specific involvement activities may utilize a number of other formats in providing information to and receiving input from stakeholders. Section 19-3.03 discusses other type of Public Meeting formats that may be utilized.

**19-5.02(b) Follow-up**

There are many types of meetings and activities that can be used to help plan for or follow-up on large-scale stakeholder meetings. It is important to reach a wide variety of stakeholders during the planning and design process and to create an atmosphere that encourages the free and open exchange of information. Section 19-4.05 provides further details on several of these techniques.

For the meeting activities described in the preceding section, prompt and open follow-up on issues raised during these meetings is necessary. The appropriate type of follow-up will partially depend on public or stakeholder attitudes at the public involvement activity. If the public has been generally supportive of the material presented at the meeting, it is probably not necessary to initiate a large-scale follow-up. It may suffice to write individual letters to those who asked questions that were not answered and to release information to the news media, via project newsletters, or through updates on the project website for any changes that were made as a result of stakeholder input.

A greater amount of follow-up is required when a particular meeting has not resolved the issues to a reasonable degree. If there was opposition or a lack of understanding regarding what the Department is trying to accomplish with the project, a more extensive follow-up program is appropriate. In this case, additional follow-up stakeholder meetings are an effective means of achieving better stakeholder understanding of issues at hand. These meetings can range from large-scale community briefings to one-on-one discussions with a particular stakeholder.

**19-5.02(c) Working Towards Stakeholder Understanding.**

“Project Purpose” discussions involving the community should focus on providing the community with background on known traffic safety problems or congestion/operational problems, traffic forecasts, and their anticipated effect on future traffic conditions. These help explain the Department’s perspective on problems and needs, and set the stage for discussions about potential solutions. District staff should take advantage of any and all methods and opportunities to interact with the local citizens, public officials, and any other identified stakeholders. Efforts should focus on gathering data, developing a rapport and good working relationship with the local community, and obtaining a sense of what solutions to the identified transportation needs are in the context of the involved community.

**19-5.02(c)1 *Consensus Building Efforts***

It should be noted that more than one of the meeting types listed above may need to be used and may require repetition, depending on the following:

- the number of stakeholders or stakeholder groups involved,
- the scope of the problems and issues discussed, and
- the positions and views of the stakeholders on the various issues.

Keep in mind the “halting points” outlined in the SIP flowchart, Figure 19-5.A, if a consensus resolution of these issues has not been achieved, then further meetings are probably necessary. Department staff and elected officials involved in project development may find this frustrating or time consuming. However, problems and issues raised by stakeholders do not go away if left unaddressed. Often, relatively minor problems can become major impediments to progress if ignored or left unattended.

Throughout the SIP, project development staff should seek out activists and other participants with differing viewpoints from the team members, and engage in good faith discussions with them. An important component of conflict resolution is full disclosure of all information and discussions needed to manage and resolve conflicting values of stakeholders. When parties disagree, it is sometimes due to a misunderstanding or lack of information. It is important that both sides disclose relevant information to resolve or at least manage conflict between competing values.

An essential component of the stakeholder involvement process is the concept of “consensus.” The stakeholder involvement process seeks consensus on all decisions driving the project development process, and allows for multiple iterations of each step in order to achieve it. However, there may be occasions when consensus on one or more issues is impossible. Further, there may be occasions when the consensus decision of stakeholders is infeasible on engineering, environmental, funding, operational, safety, or other grounds.

If consensus is impossible or infeasible, the PSG must take the issue back to the Regional Engineer, and confer with FHWA, as necessary, to determine how to proceed with the project. Ultimately, the Department, acting in accordance with applicable State and Federal requirements, is responsible for project development decisions on State highway improvement projects.

#### 19-5.02(c)2 *Stakeholder Understanding of the Alternative Solutions.*

The Context Sensitive Solutions approach varies as to how the Department handles this step. In one approach, the district can develop a range of alternatives that meet identified needs and that consider identified concerns. These alternatives are then reviewed in a public outreach process. New alternatives or variations on the original alternatives can be suggested by the stakeholders and should be analyzed and addressed by the district.

In a different approach, alternatives can be developed during the various stakeholder meetings and activities. Alternatives developed in this manner are refined and analyzed by district staff and presented broadly for public review and comment. This approach often fits best in situations involving a new facility, a significant change in the nature of a facility, or where a variety of configurations are possible for the project.

The PSG considers the issues involved, along with the time and resources available, in order to make a choice about the proper approach to use.

Stakeholders can be involved in the screening and evaluation of alternatives in many ways. The results of the district’s analyses are shared broadly with the stakeholders for review and

comment. Stakeholders can also be involved in conducting screening and evaluation. For example, stakeholders can be asked to conduct an exercise where they rate project criteria and then weigh alternatives. Technological tools are available for conducting this kind of interactive analysis. Using such tools can give both the PSG and the stakeholders a much clearer view of everyone's preferences.

One of the issues in soliciting stakeholder input as it pertains to technical issues is how to convey a large amount of technical data to the public in a manner and language they can understand, and in a relatively short period of time. The majority of citizens involved in these processes do not have the time to become conversant in the technical language and engineering concepts that are typically used by team personnel in studies of particular issues. Visualization aids, especially newer computer-assisted visual renderings, can significantly improve public understanding, enabling stakeholders to quickly analyze the information being presented. As a result, the use of effective visualization techniques can be a major asset to the successful implementation of public involvement activities.

19-5.02(c)3 *Stakeholder Understanding of the Recommendation.*

If clear communication with stakeholders has occurred during the alternatives analysis stage, stakeholder understanding of the benefits and impacts of various transportation solutions should clear the way to a consensus option. Results of effective stakeholder involvement may include agreement that further study is needed, support for a solution or approach, revision of design right-of-way or construction details, or even the delay, postponement, or cancellation of the project. A true measure of the success of a SIP, regardless of the solution implemented, is the degree the community at large, and each stakeholder, can feel a sense of involvement and ownership of the recommended solution.