Chapter Nineteen

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT GUIDELINES

BUREAU OF DESIGN AND ENVIRONMENT MANUAL

Chapter Nineteen
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT GUIDELINES

Table of Contents

Section **Page**

19-1 REQUIREMENTS FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMS 19-1.1

19-1.01 Federal Law 19-1.1
19-1.02 Definition and Application 19-1.2
19-1.03 FHWA Environmental Regulations 19-1.3
19-1.04 Significant Right-of-Way 19-1.4

19-1.04(a) Quantity 19-1.4
19-1.04(b) Number of Owners 19-1.4
19-1.04(c) Usage 19-1.5

19-1.05 Changes in the Layout or Function 19-1.5
19-1.06 Social, Economic, and Environmental Effects 19-1.6
19-1.07 General Public Interest 19-1.7
19-1.08 Road Closures 19-1.7
19-1.09 Corridor Protection 19-1.8
19-1.10 Accessibility 19-1.8

19-2 DESIGNING PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMS 19-2.1

19-2.01 Scheduling the Program 19-2.1

19-2.01(a) The Stakeholder Involvement Process for Use with Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) 19-2.2
19-2.01(b) Implementing the Stakeholder Involvement Process for CSS Projects 19-2.28
19-2.01(c) Separate Corridor and Design Phases 19-2.33
19-2.01(d) Combined Corridor and Design Phases 19-2.35
19-2.01(e) Projects Not Involving Federal-Aid Funds 19-2.39

19-2.02 Format Options 19-2.40

19-2.02(a) General 19-2.40
19-2.02(b) Group Briefings 19-2.40
19-2.02(c) Open House 19-2.41
19-2.02(d) Workshops 19-2.43
19-2.02(e) Informational Meetings 19-2.45
19-2.02(f) Information Exchange (Citizen Working Groups/Advisory Committee) 19-2.46
19-2.02(g) Formal Public Hearings 19-2.48
19-2.02(h) Open House Public Hearings 19-2.52
19-2.02(i) Non-Meeting Activities 19-2.55
19-2.02(j) Combining Activities 19-2.56

19-2.03 Locating Involvement Activities 19-2.58

19-2.03(a) Number of Locations 19-2.59
19-2.03(b) Selection of Facilities 19-2.59
19-2.03(c) Examples of Suitable Locations 19-2.60

19-2.04 Examples of Suitable Involvement Programs for Project Types 19-2.61

19-3 NOTIFYING THE PUBLIC 19-3.1

19-3.01 Announcements of Involvement Activities 19-3.1

19-3.01(a) Timing and Number 19-3.1
19-3.01(b) Distribution 19-3.2
19-3.01(c) Content 19-3.3
19-3.01(d) Offer of Public Hearing 19-3.5

19-3.02 Mailing Lists 19-3.11
19-3.03 General Releases of Information 19-3.11

19-4 PLANNING THE MEETING 19-4.1

19-4.01 Pre-Meeting Activities 19-4.1

19-4.01(a) Inspecting the Site 19-4.1
19-4.01(b) Preparations at the District 19-4.1

19-4.02 Preparing the Meeting Site 19-4.3
19-4.03 The Presentation 19-4.3

19-4.03(a) General Requirements 19-4.3
19-4.03(b) Content 19-4.3

19-4.04 Audio-Visual Aids 19-4.6

19-4.04(a) General 19-4.6
19-4.04(b) Fixed Exhibits 19-4.7
19-4.04(c) Slides 19-4.8
19-4.04(d) Video 19-4.9
19-4.04(e) Miscellaneous Audio-Visual Aids 19-4.9
19-4.04(f) Combinations of Audio-Visual Aids 19-4.10

19-4.05 Post Activity Follow-Up 19-4.10

19-5 RECORDS AND REPORTS 19-5.1

19-5.01 Public Comments 19-5.1
19-5.02 Transcripts 19-5.1
19-5.03 Reports 19-5.2
19-5.04 Responses 19-5.2
19-5.05 Certification 19-5.2

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

Chapter Nineteen
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT GUIDELINES

The procedures in Chapter 19 are intended to provide a full opportunity for effective public participation and consideration of highway location and design proposals. In general, they provide for free and open discussion on project alternatives to encourage early resolution on controversial issues. The procedures also reflect coordination with other public agencies, private organizations, and individuals. The public involvement process 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 safe, economic, and efficient transportation with minimal adverse effects.

Chapter 19 applies to the development of all highway projects initiated by the Illinois Department of Transportation.

19-1 REQUIREMENTS FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMS

19-1.01 Federal Law

Section 128 of Title 23 of the United States Code specifically requires:

> *Any State highway department which submits plans for a Federal-aid highway project involving the bypassing of, or going through, any city, town, or village, either incorporated or unincorporated, shall certify to the Secretary that it has had public hearings, or has afforded the opportunity for such hearings, and has considered the economic and social effects of such a location, its impact on the environment, and its consistency with the goals and objectives of such urban planning as has been promulgated by the community. Any State highway department which submits plans for an Interstate System project shall certify to the Secretary that it has had public hearings at a convenient location, or has afforded the opportunity for such hearings, for the purpose of enabling persons in rural areas through or contiguous to whose property the highway will pass to express any objections they may have to the proposed location of such highway. Such certification shall be accompanied by a report that indicates the consideration given to the economic, social, environmental, and other effects of the plan or highway location or design and various alternatives which were raised during the hearing or which were otherwise considered.*

Federal law thus requires that public hearings be held or offered under certain circumstances, whether or not the public displays an interest in the project.

19-1.02 Definition and Application

For the Division of Highways to determine when a public hearing or an offer for a public hearing is required to comply with the first part of Title 23 USC, Section 128 the Division must define what is meant by the *bypassing of or going through any city, town, or village*. The Department interprets the phrase to denote three characteristics of projects to which it will apply:

- large size and major effect,
- involvement of long-distance through traffic, and
- involvement of population centers or concentrations of people.

Projects that pass through or bypass communities involve a considerable amount of traffic which is not local but which is passing through the area. This is typical of routes with classifications of trunk highway or major highway (i.e., arterials) and perhaps, in some cases, area service roads when small towns or villages are involved. These projects generally involve the choice of different corridors or locations for the improvement. The Department interprets that lesser projects were not intended for inclusion. Because the reference is to projects that affect cities, towns, and villages, the law seems to be concerned with a project's effect on a community as a whole. The concern for populated areas is further emphasized by the requirement to comply or coordinate with urban planning.

For the purpose of determining the need for the holding or offering of a public hearing on projects proposed by the Division of Highways, 23 USC, Section 128 is defined to mean that a public hearing shall be held or offered on all projects that involve the relocation of marked route (State highway system) traffic through or around any city, town, or village. This is interpreted as requiring the holding or offering of a public hearing on projects such as:

- a new bypass around a community,
- a new marked route going through a community,
- 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),
- changing 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), and
- the reconstruction of an existing marked route with additional through traffic lanes through town (included because a reasonable alternative would be a bypass or one-way couple).

Projects such as the following will not require the holding or offering of a public hearing as a result of 23 USC 128:

- upgrading an existing marked route to current design criteria for 20-year traffic including the acquisition of additional right-of-way, but not including additional through traffic lanes;

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

- intersection improvements including signals, throat widening, adding turn lanes, and other channelization;
- widening less than a one-lane width and resurfacing, with or without additional right-of-way;
- changing from open ditches to closed drainage; and/or
- projects in rural areas which do not pass through or bypass a city, town, or village.

Department policy is to provide all interested persons an opportunity to become acquainted with highway proposals of concern to them and to express their views at those stages of a proposed development when the flexibility to respond to those views still exists. Accordingly, the Illinois DOT may require public involvement activities in addition to the holding or offering of public hearings on Federal-aid projects. Also, the Department requires other public involvement activities on Federal-aid projects which require additional right-of-way, even though Federal law does not require the holding or offering of a public hearing.

19-1.03 FHWA Environmental Regulations

FHWA regulations require that each State must have procedures approved by the FHWA to carry out a public involvement/public hearing program pursuant to 23 USC 128, 23 USC 139 and the *CEQ Regulations*. Chapter 19 of the *BDE Manual* describes the public involvement/public hearing program for IDOT projects. Approval of the program by the FHWA is implied by the approval of the use of the *BDE Manual* by the FHWA.

In accordance with the FHWA regulations in 23 CFR 771, “Environmental Impact and Related Procedures,” the Department will hold one or more public hearings or offer the opportunity for hearing(s) to be held at a convenient time and place for any Federal-aid project which:

- requires significant amounts of right-of-way (see Section 19-1.04);
- substantially changes the layout or functions of connecting roadways or of the facility being improved (see Section 19-1.05); or
- has a substantial adverse impact on abutting property, otherwise has a significant social, economic, environmental or other effect, or for which FHWA determines that a public hearing is in the public interest (see Section 19-1.06).

In accordance with 23 CFR 771.111, if a public hearing is held, the following information should be explained at the hearing:

- 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.

The following sections provide further guidance on the application of these criteria. If the district determines that the application of these criteria does not indicate sufficient impacts or changes to warrant a public hearing, consider the need for other forms of public involvement and provide opportunities as appropriate (see Section 19-2).

The district shall document in the project file the basis for its decision to not hold a public hearing for projects that meet the criteria to require a public hearing. Conversely, the decision to hold one or more public hearings for a project shall also be similarly documented in the project file. Further, any decision regarding the holding or not holding of a public hearing for a project shall be discussed and documented at a district coordination meeting.

19-1.04 Significant Right-of-Way

When a project is planned for new location, it will involve a significant amount of right-of-way and have considerable impact on the area in which it is located. For those projects that basically use the existing alignment with minor relocations or require additional strips of right-of-way, the district must consider several factors in determining whether or not the impacts to the public are significant. When it is determined to be significant, a public hearing must be held or offered.

19-1.04(a) Quantity

The first factor to consider is the quantity of land to be acquired. The significance of the quantity will vary depending upon the character of the surrounding land. In rural areas, the acquisition of 10 to 20 acres (4 to 8 hectares) for a project several miles (kilometers) in length may be insignificant. In urbanized areas, takings involving less than one acre (one-half hectare) might be significant if high-cost properties will be affected. In suburban areas each location must be evaluated separately considering the density of population, the remaining open space available, and the impact on improvements that might be located on any of the properties affected.

19-1.04(b) Number of Owners

There is no specific number of affected property owners for which a public hearing is required; however, the number does affect the scope of work required for involvement activities. As a minimum, the district must contact individual property owners from whom land will be acquired during the project development stage. At some point, it is more practical to hold one meeting rather than to separately contact all of the property owners involved.

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

19-1.04(c) Usage

The use of the property to be acquired can result in a significant impact even if the number of owners is small. If a property proposed for acquisition is used as a recreational area or a wildlife refuge, or if it is part of a historic site, it may be protected by Federal law. The acquisition of such protected properties requires specific procedures (see Chapter 26) that are designed to protect and preserve the character and use of these properties. Other effects that might be considered significant are takings that will impact improvements on the property. A typical example is the taking of storage tanks or pumps from service stations at intersections. Although the property taking might be minimal, the impact on the business, and perhaps the neighborhood, may be considered significant. Other situations might involve water supplies or power supplies feeding particular communities or neighborhoods, or small takings along a street that might affect a neighborhood or community commercial area.

19-1.05 Changes in the Layout or Function

Projects that change the layout of a facility or the layout of the roads and streets that connect to it could have considerable impact upon abutting properties and users of the facility. Generally, changes in layout will involve the acquisition of additional right-of-way, and the district should consider the factors discussed in Section 19-1.04. Another factor includes adverse travel and service to abutting properties, which usually result in considerable public interest. The development of a public involvement program is warranted to address these impacts and, if substantial changes will occur, a public hearing must be held or offered.

Changes in the function of a street or highway, especially when not accompanied by the acquisition of additional right-of-way, result in more subtle impacts to abutting property owners and other citizens. These impacts may be more difficult to recognize and, whether real or perceived, may create considerable public interest in a particular highway project. The district should carefully consider this when determining the need for a public involvement program or public hearing.

There are several changes that are sufficient to cause a change in the function of a facility or connecting roads and streets. These changes do not necessarily require the acquisition of additional right-of-way, but they alter the character of use such as changing from local access to through traffic. The following is a list of typical actions that are considered changes in function:

- changing from two lanes to four or more lanes,
- changing from no median or a flush median to a raised median,
- changing to a one-way couple that involves a street not previously carrying through traffic,
- changing access control,
- addition of a tall median barrier restricting pedestrian crossings,
- fencing the right-of-way line, and
- removal of on-street parking.

The reverse of these actions also constitutes a change in the function.

Changes in the function may result in a number of impacts that create considerable controversy or public interest. The following lists typical impacts that may result from the changes in the function of a facility or its connecting roads and streets:

- change in traffic volume;
- change in the type and character of traffic (e.g., volume of trucks, local or through traffic, low- or high-speed traffic);
- change in commercial or residential development affecting the neighborhood character;
- change in property values;
- change in pedestrian accessibility; and
- change in travel patterns or distance.

19-1.06 Social, Economic, and Environmental Effects

Any project that will cause a substantial change in the social, economic, or environmental setting in which the project is located could be considered sufficient cause for designing and implementing a public involvement program. In determining whether or not a hearing is warranted consider the following factors:

1. The effect on regional and community growth of the area including general plans, proposed land use, total transportation requirements, and the status of the planning process.

2. The conservation and preservation of natural resources (e.g., wetlands, floodplains, natural areas, threatened and endangered species and their habitat) and our national heritage including park and recreational facilities, wildlife and waterfowl areas, historic and natural landmarks, prime farmland, and the ecology of the project area.

3. The effect on local government and public facilities and services including religious, health, and educational facilities, public utilities, fire protection and other emergency services, and local transportation facilities.

4. Community cohesion including residential and neighborhood character and stability, highway impacts on minority, low-income, and other specific groups and interests, and effects on tax base and property values.

5. Displacement of people, businesses, and farms including relocation assistance, and the business and economic climate of the area including employment gains and losses and access to work locations.

6. Air, noise, and water pollution including consistency with approved air quality implementation plans, noise abatement criteria, and water quality standards.

7. Aesthetic and other values including visual quality (e.g., “view of the road” and “view from the road”) and the joint development and multiple use of space.

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

The district should consider the impact of construction activities including detours and road closures and the resultant impact after completion of the improvement.

If adverse impacts, which are considered significant, occur in any of these categories, a public hearing must be held or offered. For additional guidance on evaluating impacts, see Part III of the *BDE Manual*, the *BDE Community Impact Assessment Manual,* and the *IDOT Highway Traffic Noise Assessment Manual*.

19-1.07 General Public Interest

Public interest in a project or program of projects can be sufficient to warrant the development of a public involvement program, including a public hearing not otherwise warranted under Sections 19-1.04, 19-1.05, or 19-1.06. This is more likely to occur when a program of projects is involved. Although individual projects may not be critical, the program as a whole may cause cumulative impacts sufficient to warrant a separate involvement program. Significant program impacts generally relate to communities as a whole with effects across the spectrum of social, economic, and environmental character. A program of projects in this case may include several projects in and/or near a single urban area or within a single county and need not encompass the entire district.

When a program or series of projects will be initiated in a general locality, much of the controversy or antagonism can be averted by providing some advance notice and a public forum for the citizenry to receive information about the projects and to comment where appropriate. An effective public involvement program can consolidate overall public support and contribute significantly to the early completion of projects with the additional benefit of a positive attitude towards the Department.

19-1.08 Road Closures

When the Department proposes to 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 (Illinois Compiled Statutes) requires that a public hearing be held to consider the road closure. Such a road closure hearing must be held in the county where the closing is situated and must consider the needs of local traffic 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 will extend 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. Hearing announcements should be in conformance with Section 19-3.01.

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

19-1.09 Corridor Protection

Section 4-510 of the *Illinois Highway Code* (605 ILCS 5/4-510) provides a 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 will be 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 19-3.01(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.

19-1.10 Accessibility

Executive Order #5 (1979) requires all meetings or conferences conducted by Departments under the jurisdiction of the Governor to be held in a public or private place that is accessible to persons with a disability consistent with the Accessibility Standards prepared by the Capital Development Board unless there are compelling reasons dictating otherwise. The Order further requires that notices advise persons with a disability to promptly inform those responsible for conducting the meeting or conference of their anticipated attendance. Upon notification, meeting organizers shall provide qualified interpreter services for the hearing-impaired and shall make essential materials available in a form usable by the visually impaired as needed.

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

19-2 DESIGNING PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMS

In accordance with 23 CFR 771.111(h)(2)(vi), anytime a public hearing is held, the Department must submit to FHWA a transcript of the public hearing and a certification that a required hearing or hearing opportunity was offered. Along with the transcript, the Department must provide copies of all written statements from the public, both submitted at the public hearing or during an announced period after the public hearing. 23 CFR 771.111 provides that each State must have procedures approved by FHWA to implement a public involvement/public hearing program pursuant to 23 USC 128 (public hearing provisions of the Highway Code) and 40 CFR 1500 through 1508 (CEQ Regulations). States have latitude in designing their public involvement programs provided they meet the requirements of 23 CFR 771.111.

Because Federal requirements do not specify the exact number, format, or timing of the public hearings for all highway projects, the States may determine the need for public hearings and their format based on their approved public involvement procedures. Other public involvement activities may be used where hearings are not specifically required by law or in addition to public hearings. This *Manual* does not provide a fixed format or schedule of public involvement activities because a tailored approach is recommended to fit each project and achieve maximum effectiveness. An early activity of the location team will likely be to design and schedule a public involvement program for the project. The program should be prepared in writing and made a part of the project file. The program may range from personal contacts with affected property owners to a series of formal public hearings. For an individual project, it may involve any one format or combination of formats as discussed in Section 19-2.02. The location team may design other formats when special measures are needed to meet a specific situation and to elicit the greatest response from the public. A public involvement program should be dynamic and flexible. Following the completion of each activity, the district should study the results to determine if the original assessment of the needs is accurate and whether the remaining portions of the program will adequately address those needs. When a change is proposed, revise the written program in the project file accordingly.

19-2.01 <u>Scheduling the Program</u>

Public involvement activities may begin shortly after the initiation of the Corridor Study and continue through the Corridor and Design Study to near the completion of the Design Study Report and through the *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA) compliance process. The activities may be to gather information from the public, inform the public, confirm the accuracy of information, and determine public reaction. Some formats will require the use of a meeting place in the vicinity of the improvement. Because an inappropriate meeting can have a significant adverse effect on public involvement activities, the district must make available adequate space and meeting facilities for accommodating the public. Facilities of the size necessary to accommodate public involvement activities for highway projects usually are in such demand that making a reservation well in advance of the scheduled use is recommended. Accordingly, the location team must develop a proposed schedule for both the Corridor and Design Study and determine tentative dates for conducting public involvement activities. The team should check with the facility operator to determine how early the hall should be scheduled to ensure its availability.

19-2.01(a) The Stakeholder Involvement Process for Use with Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS)

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 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, that is new construction, reconstruction, or major expansion of existing transportation facilities.

For projects which 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. 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 19-2.B) as an integral part of the project development process. It includes a formal written plan, the Stakeholder Involvement Plan (SIP) (see Figure 19-2.C), explaining how stakeholders input and comments will be obtained. Formal hearings may be included as a component of the involvement process as necessary and appropriate for particular projects.

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 that 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. 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.

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 model (see Figure 19-2.A) 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

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

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. Project study groups should tailor the stakeholder involvement process to meet the needs of a particular project and its stakeholders.

Step 1: Stakeholder Identification and Development of the SIP

Once a project is designated for CSS, a project study group 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,
- Bureau of Design and Environment, and
- Metropolitan Planning Organizations.

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 project study group.

Once the preliminary engineering study is started, other disciplines can be added to the project study group, 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.

For projects involving preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement, which are subject to the requirements of 23 USC 139 "Efficient Environmental Reviews for Project Decision-Making," at approximately the same time the district forms the project study group, BDE sends a signed Project Initiation Letter (see Chapter 25 for example) to FHWA.

The project study group 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 improvement to address the transportation 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 19-3.02.

For EIS projects, the project study group will identify entities to be invited to become Participating Agencies in accordance with 23 USC 139. For EIS and EA projects, the project study group should identify Cooperating Agencies and Section 106 consulting parties. The project study group 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.

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 project study group 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 19-2.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 project study group 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.

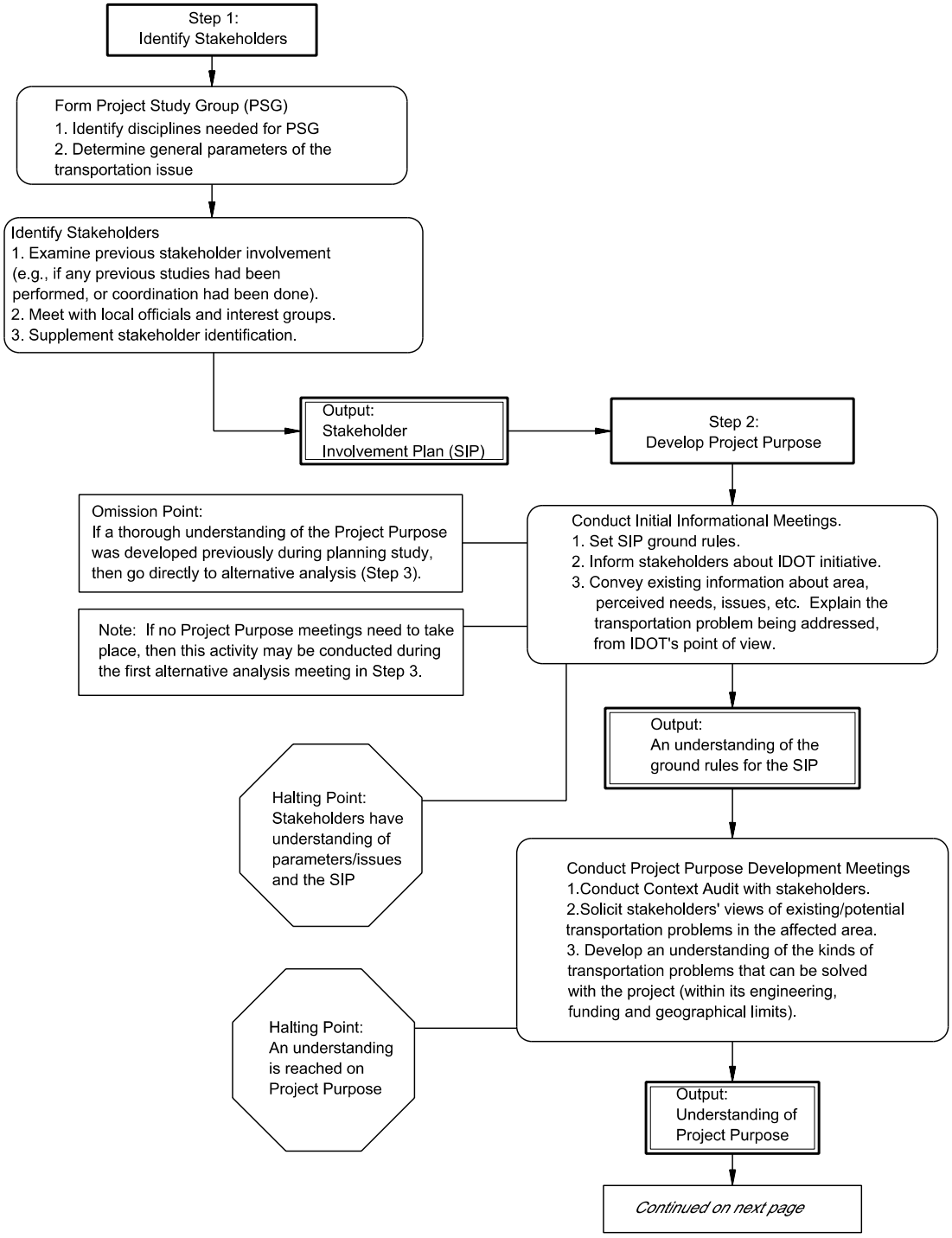
After a preliminary list of stakeholders is compiled, the project study group will develop an SIP that identifies who the stakeholders are, how they are going to be reached, and a tentative schedule of meetings. The SIP does not need to be extremely detailed and can be modified as the process develops. 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 SIP (see Figure 19-2.C) is included for reference.

For projects subject to 23 USC 139, 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.

For projects subject to 23 USC 139, after FHWA publishes a Notice of Intent in the *Federal Register*, 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

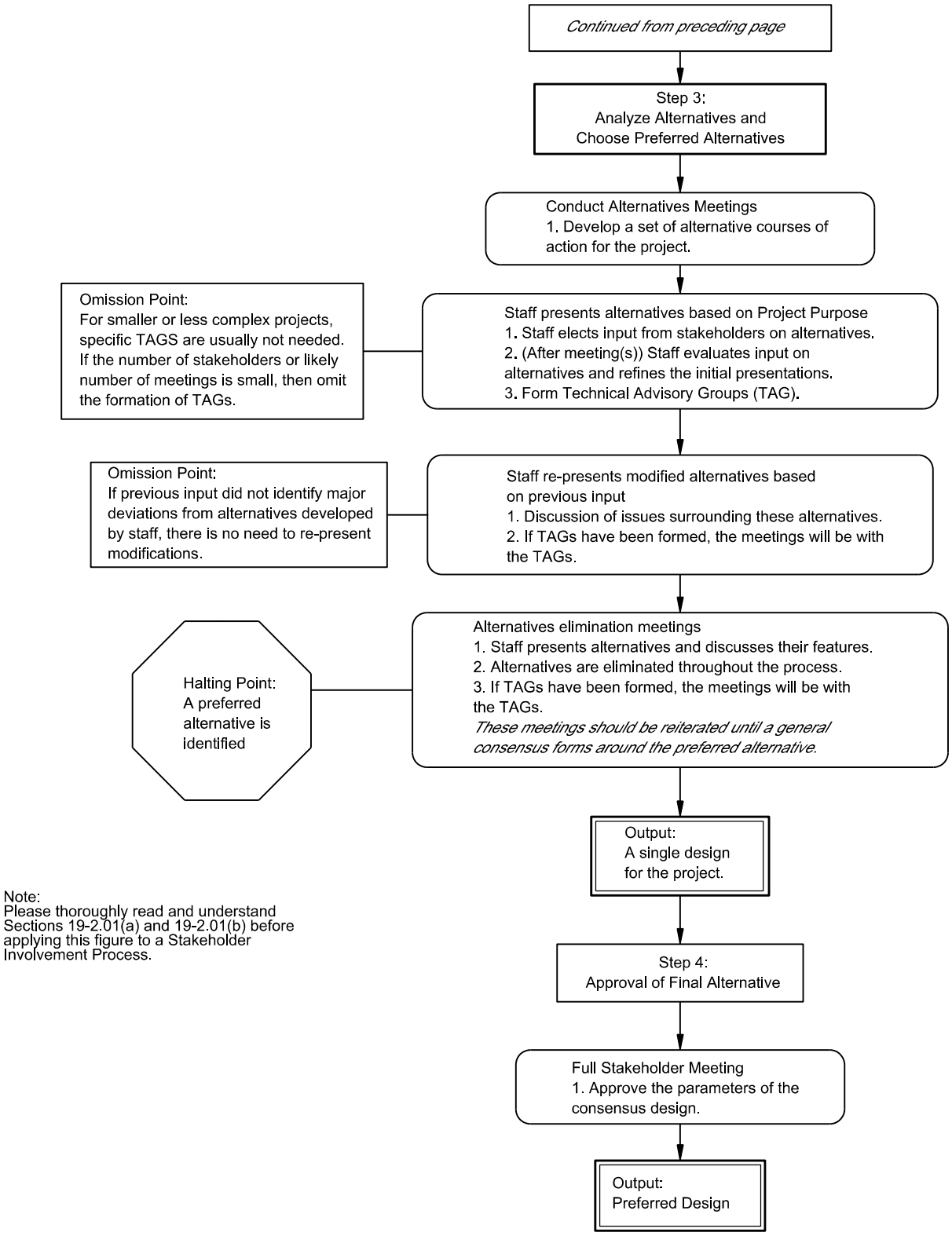
HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

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.



STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT PROCESS
Figure 19-2.A

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED



STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT PROCESS
Figure 19-2.A
(Continued)

Geographic Interests

- Adjacent Property Owners
  - Residential
  - Commercial
  - Industrial
  - Institutional: education, religious
  - Government, non-profit
- Adjacent property renters
  - Residential
  - Commercial
  - Industrial
  - Institutional
- Transportation Service Providers
  - Public Transportation Agencies
  - Airports
  - Marine Ports
- Neighborhood Organizations
  - Homeowners Associations
  - Local Interest Groups

Local and Regional Officials

- Local jurisdictions elected and appointed officials
  - Mayors
  - Alderman/City Council
  - County Board Members
  - County Commissioners
  - Township Boards
  - Planning Commissions
- Local jurisdiction transportation or technical professionals
  - Public Safety Officials
  - Public Works Directors
  - Traffic Engineers
  - Planning Directors
- Permitting Agencies
  - Corps of Engineers
  - US Environmental Protection Agency
  - Ill. Environmental Protection Agency
  - Coast Guard
  - US Fish and Wildlife Service
  - Ill. Department of Natural Resources

Transportation Professionals

- Regional Transformational Professionals
  - Metropolitan Planning Organization transportation planners
  - Council of Government Planners
  - Transportation Management Associations
- State Transportation Professionals
  - State DOT Highway Designers
  - Traffic Engineers
  - Environmental Planners
- Federal Transportation Professionals
  - Federal Highway Administration
  - Federal Transit Administration

Interest Groups

- Facility Users
  - Commuters
  - Truckers
  - Business Customers
  - Major Regional Employers
  - Tourists
- Transportation Interest Groups
  - Highway/Transit
  - Bicycle/Pedestrian
- Business Organizations
  - Local and Regional Chambers of Commerce
  - Economic Development Agencies
  - Industry Associations
- Environmental Interest Groups
- Cultural
  - Tribes (with interest in that county)
  - Historic Preservation and Scenic Conservation Groups
- Growth Management Interest Groups
- Local advocates for underserved communities
  - low income facility users,
  - racial &ethnic minority advocacy groups
  - Local advocacy groups for people with disabilities

STAKEHOLDER TYPES

Figure 19-2.B

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT PLAN (SIP)
ILLINOIS ROUTE 999 STUDY
SILVER DOLLAR CITY ROAD TO GRINDERS SWITCH BLACKTOP

INTRODUCTION

The section of Illinois Route 999 through the Village of Hooterville has been studied and debated for many years. The existing route runs through downtown Hooterville, and serves as its Main Street. It carries 40,000 ADT with 30% trucks on two narrow 10 feet wide lanes. It is the location of a perennial high accident location segment on IL999 and has become a serious bottleneck for traffic between the burgeoning towns of Pixley and Crabwell Corners on either side of Hooterville. There are considerable impediments to widening IL999 through town, including an historic district, adjacent 4(f) properties, parking concerns and minimal building setbacks. There is also much opposition to a bypass of Hooterville, particularly from the business interests in town. There are also resource issues which greatly complicate any possible bypass route, including extensive high-quality wetlands, Indian mounds and other historic and archaeological resources and identified threatened and endangered species habitats. The preliminary scope, schedule and budget of the project assumes some sort of bypass of Hooterville, but this scope is open to revision based on input from stakeholders.

Given the potential for controversy, the likelihood for resource impacts and the nature of any probable improvement, Deputy Director / Region 9 Engineer Mike Agnew opted to designate this project to use the principles of Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) for its development upon its inclusion into the Department's Proposed Highway Improvement Program in April of 2000.

CSS is a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach that involves all stakeholders to develop a facility that fits into its surroundings and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic and environmental resources while maintaining safety and mobility. A Stakeholder Involvement Plan (SIP) is critical to the success of CSS principles on a project. The SIP, by its very nature, is a work in progress and thus subject to revision anytime events warrant.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- 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 which 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.

EXAMPLE STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT PLAN

Figure 19-2.C

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT PLAN (SIP)
ILLINOIS ROUTE 999 STUDY
SILVER DOLLAR CITY ROAD TO GRINDERS SWITCH BLACKTOP

PROJECT STUDY GROUP (PSG)

A PSG was formed for this project upon its inclusion in the Multi-Year Program. The PSG is the multi-disciplinary team which will develop the project for the district. The disciplines within the PSG will depend on the context of the project. The membership of the PSG is not static, but can and will evolve as the understanding of the projects context does. From the initial scoping of the project and its apparent context components, the following persons were assigned to the PSG.

PROJECT STUDY GROUP			
NAME	POSITION	ADDRESS	PHONE
Bill Albright	IDOT Project Engineer	123 First Street Lone Waddie, IL 99999	888/555-0000
Steve Allen	IDOT Environmental Studies Supervisor	123 First Street Lone Waddie, IL 99999	888/555-0000
Tammy Allison	IDOT Landscape Architect	123 First Street Lone Waddie, IL 99999	888/555-0000
Allan Andrews	IDOT Bike &Ped Coordinator	123 First Street Lone Waddie, IL 99999	888/555-0000
Janette Blazier	IDOT Archaeologist	2300 S. Dirksen Parkway Springfield, Il 62764	217/785-0000
Kevin Brown	IDOT Biological Specialist	2300 S. Dirksen Parkway Springfield, Il 62764	217/785-0000
Tom Carroll	IDOT Historic Specialist	2300 S. Dirksen Parkway Springfield, Il 62764	217/785-0000
Dan Cheek	IDOT Wetland Specialist	2300 S. Dirksen Parkway Springfield, Il 62764	217/785-0000
Edwina Cole	IDOT Geometrics Engineer	123 First Street Lone Waddie, IL 99999	888/555-0000
Rene Echevaria	IDOT Construction Field Engineer	123 First Street Lone Waddie, IL 99999	888/555-0000
Rajiv Kumar	IDOT Maintenance Field Engineer	123 First Street Lone Waddie, IL 99999	888/555-0000
Bert Collazo	Consultant Project Manager	XYZ, LLC 123 Infinity Avenue Milagro, IL 88888	888/555-9999

EXAMPLE STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT PLAN

Figure 19-2.C
(Continued)

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT PLAN (SIP)
ILLINOIS ROUTE 999 STUDY
SILVER DOLLAR CITY ROAD TO GRINDERS SWITCH BLACKTOP

PROJECT STUDY GROUP, CONTINUED

PROJECT STUDY GROUP			
NAME	POSITION	ADDRESS	PHONE
Brandon Parks	Consultant Environmental Lead	XYZ, LLC 123Infinity Avenue Milagro, IL 88888	888/555-9999
Doug Delaney	Consultant Engineering Lead	XYZ, LLC 123 Infinity Avenue Milagro, IL 88888	888/555-9999
Lisa Khosrow	IDOT Land Acq. Condemnation Engineer	123 First Street Lone Waddie, IL 99999	888/555-0000
Jeff Fleming	Illinois DNR Wildlife Specialist	1 Natural Resources Way Springfield, Il 62702	217/782-0000
Charles Graves	Army Corps of Engineers Wetland Specialist	123 Second Street Red Rock, IL 98989	999/555-0000
Lori Kirby	FHWA Transportation Engineer	3250 Executive Park Drive Springfield, Illinois 62703	217/555-9999

EXAMPLE STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT PLAN

Figure 19-2.C
(Continued)

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT PLAN (SIP)
ILLINOIS ROUTE 999 STUDY
SILVER DOLLAR CITY ROAD TO GRINDERS SWITCH BLACKTOP

STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION

The Project Study Group (PSG) first examined the district's list of concerned citizens, public officials, organizations, agencies to begin to compile a preliminary list of project stakeholders. Next, the PSG contacted the following local elected officials and agency representatives:

NAME	AFFILIATION	ADDRESS	PHONE
Floyd Smoot	State Senator	16 Eminence Drive Pixley, IL 62994	888/555-1234
Homer Bedlow	State Representative	23 Longbranch Lane Crabwell Corners, IL 62995	888/555-2345
Oliver Wendell Douglas	Mayor of Hooterville	1 Municipal Boulevard Hooterville, IL 62996	888/555-3456
Charlie Pratt	Hooter County Executive	32 Waterworks Drive Hooterville, IL 62996	888/555-4567
Alf Monroe	Greater Hooterville Regional Planning Commission	34 Planning Way Hooterville, IL 62996	888/555-5678

Between these sources and research of correspondence pertaining to the project from the past, the following list of stakeholders was developed by the PSG, in addition to the public officials named above:

STAKEHOLDERS			
NAME	AFFILIATION	ADDRESS	PHONE
Sam Drucker	Hooterville Chamber of Commerce	1 Main Street Hooterville, IL 62996	888/555-6789
Eustis Haney	The Bottoms Neighborhood Association	123 Flood Plain Drive Hooterville, IL 62996	888/555-7890
Alan Longmire	The Heights Historic District	333 Bluff Circle Hooterville, IL 62996	888/555-8901
Lisa Douglas	Hooterville Center for Independent Living	222 Second Avenue Hooterville, IL 62996	888/555-9012
Newt Kiley	Friends of the Slough	321 Star Route Hooterville, IL 62996	888/555-0123

EXAMPLE STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT PLAN

Figure 19-2.C
(Continued)

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT PLAN (SIP)
ILLINOIS ROUTE 999 STUDY
SILVER DOLLAR CITY ROAD TO GRINDERS SWITCH BLACKTOP

STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION, CONTINUED

STAKEHOLDERS			
NAME	AFFILIATION	ADDRESS	PHONE
Ken Marsh	Hooter County Wheelpeople	Wright Brothers Circle Hooterville, IL 62996	888/555-9876
Hank Kimball	Citizen	44 Main Street Hooterville, IL 62996	888/555-8765
Joe Carson	Small Business Owner	981 Main Street Hooterville, IL 62996	888/555-7654
Fred Ziffel	Hooterville Senior Citizens	333Main Street Hooterville, IL 62996	888/555-6543
Kate Bradley	Hooter County Engineer	400 County Highway 1 Hooterville, IL 62996	888/555-5432
Roy Settle	Spindletop Oil Company	804 Rockefeller Lane Hooterville, IL 62996	888/555-4321
Andre Torbett	Hooterville Tourism Council	5 Main Street Hooterville, IL 62996	888/555-3210
Michael Tursen	Hooterville Public Schools	456 Reading Road Hooterville, IL 62996	888/555-2109
Judy Steele	Lick Skillet Township Supervisor	509 Boogie Blacktop Hooterville, IL 62996	888/555-1098
Richard Black Dog	Mound Builders Tribal Repatriation Association	999 Rain-In-the-Face Road Bone Hill, IL 61999	618/555-0123
Derrick Tibbs	Protectors of the Embarras Longnose Sucker	Rural Route 1 Level Pebble, IL 62499	618/555-3210
Edwin Quinn	Illinois SHPO	1 Old State Capitol Springfield, IL 62701	217/785-9999
Dave Ruller	Muddy Branch Township Supervisor	666 Shaman Court Crabwell Corners, IL 62995	888/555-0987
Nancy Sanchez	La Raza of Hooter County	77 Zapata Lane Hooterville, IL 62996	888/555-9898
Leigh Ann Tribble	Illinois Road Users	4300 Comanche Drive Springfield, IL 62711	217/555-2222

EXAMPLE STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT PLAN

Figure 19-2.C
(Continued)

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT PLAN (SIP)
ILLINOIS ROUTE 999 STUDY
SILVER DOLLAR CITY ROAD TO GRINDERS SWITCH BLACKTOP

STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFCATION, CONTINUED

STAKEHOLDERS			
NAME	AFFILIATION	ADDRESS	PHONE
Nathan Vaughn	US Fish & Wildlife Service	1499 Bradfordton Road Springfield, IL 62711	217/555-3333
Eb Dawson	Citizen	Rural Route 99 Hooterville, IL 62996	888/555-8787
Arnold Ziffel	Artist	441 Main Street Hooterville, IL 62996	888/555-7878

Initial stakeholder identification was completed in June of 2000.

TENTATIVE GROUND RULES FOR THE STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

The PSG must establish ground rules under which the SIP will operate. These will be established tentatively with the initiation of the SIP, but must be agreed to by the stakeholders. As such, they are not immutable. Following are the tentative rules:

- The purpose of the SIP is to gather and duly consider input on the project from all stakeholders, in order to produce the best solutions to any problems identified by the process.
- All input from all participants in the process is valued and considered.
- The role of the stakeholders is to advise the PSG, which will make the ultimate decisions on this project. A consensus of stakeholder concurrence on project choices is sought, but the ultimate decisions remain in the hands of the PSG and the State of Illinois.
- All participants must come to the process with an open mind and participate openly and honestly.
- Consensus is defined as a majority of the stakeholders in agreement, with the minority agreeing that their input was duly considered.
- The PSG will make all final decisions, with the goal of seeking stakeholder consensus thereon.
- All participants in the process must treat each other with respect and dignity.
- The list of stakeholders is subject to revision at any time events warrant.
- Minutes of all stakeholder contacts will be maintained by the PSG, with the content subject to stakeholder concurrence.
- The project must progress at a reasonable pace, based on the original project schedule.

EXAMPLE STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT PLAN

Figure 19-2.C
(Continued)

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT PLAN (SIP)
ILLINOIS ROUTE 999 STUDY
SILVER DOLLAR CITY ROAD TO GRINDERS SWITCH BLACKTOP

TENTATIVE GROUND RULES FOR THE STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT PROCESS, CONTINUED

- All decisions made by the State of Illinois must be arrived at in a clear and transparent manner and stakeholders should agree their input has been duly considered.
- Members of the media are welcome in all stakeholder meetings, but must remain in the role of observers, not participants in the process.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF INVOLVEMENTS

- 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 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 2000.
- 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 2001
- 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 2001.
- 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 2002.
- 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 2002.

EXAMPLE STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT PLAN

Figure 19-2.C
(Continued)

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT PLAN (SIP)
ILLINOIS ROUTE 999 STUDY
SILVER DOLLAR CITY ROAD TO GRINDERS SWITCH BLACKTOP

OTHER METHODS OF CONTACT

The PSG will also use the following methods to keep stakeholders regularly informed about the project:

- A newsletter will be published and mailed quarterly to all identified stakeholders and any others expressing the desire to receive it. It will contain the most up-to-date information regarding the project.
- A website (www.dot.il.gov/hoot) will be established to disseminate information on the project on the internet. It will include text, photos and illustrations. It will also allow opportunities for immediate feedback from both the stakeholders and the general public. It will be updated as new information becomes available.
- A toll free number (800/555-HOOT) will be established for those without access to a computer, or without access to the internet, or who simply prefer to use the telephone. The number will contain summaries of project activities and decisions, to be updated as activities indicate. There will also be voicemail capability to garner feedback and collect questions for later disposition.

CHANGES TO STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM

This SIP is only tentative. All parts, including the stakeholder list, are fluid. It is subject to change any time events or individuals warrant.

EXAMPLE STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT PLAN

Figure 19-2.C
(Continued)

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

Step 2: Developing Project Problem Statement

The first general contact with stakeholders is to introduce the transportation issues to be resolved to the public, exchange information, and identify issues. 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 a large initial informational meeting of the project study group 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 project study group 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 USC 139, 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 project study group should undertake an effort to complete a context audit 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. Figure 19-2.D provides a sample Context Audit Form.

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: ☐ New Construction ☐ Reconstruction ☐ 3R ☐ 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 19-2.D

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

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?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Is this place a multi-modal transportation center?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Is this place a commercial center?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Is this place a residential center?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Is this place a mixed residential /commercial center?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Is this place an industrial center?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Is this place a rural/agricultural area? Comments	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Are there important cultural features or identifiers which convey information about the community within the project area? If yes, list:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Are there social/community features or identifiers within the project area? If yes, list:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Are there important architectural features within the project area? If yes, list:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Are there important natural features within the project area? If yes, list:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Is this place of historical significance to the community? If yes, list:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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 19-2.D
(Continued)

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:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
ADA Compliance Comments:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Bicycle Lanes/Paths/Facilities Comments:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
On-street Parking Comments:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Transit Connections Comments:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Transit Shelters Comments:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Street Lighting Comments:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Pedestrian Lighting Comments:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Pedestrian Crossings Comments:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Signals (Traffic. Directional & Pedestrian) Comments:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Crosswalks Comments:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Other Comments:

_____

_____

_____

COMMUNITY CONTEXT AUDIT FORM

Figure 19-2.D
(Continued)

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

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:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Benches Comments:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Trash Containers Comments:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Street Trees Comments:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Landscaping Comments:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Wayfinding Signage Comments:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Community Safety Issues Comments:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Traffic Safety Comments:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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

_____

_____

_____

Overall Comments:

_____

_____

_____

COMMUNITY CONTEXT AUDIT FORM

Figure 19-2.D
(Continued)

Illinois Department of Transportation

Community Context Audit Form

Section 4: Economic Development

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.

Resource	Presence		Importance		
	Yes	No	High	Med.	Low
Has this area been identified for new development? If yes, describe the proposed or planned development.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Are visitors attracted to this area? If yes, indicate why?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Is the local economy supported by historic, natural, cultural and entertainment resources?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Does the roadway serve as a commuter corridor?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Does the roadway serve as a gateway?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Do stakeholders include business or other advocacy groups? (in addition to public agencies and residential associations)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Is limiting sprawl a regional concern applicable to this place?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Is redevelopment underway or planned for this place? If yes, how does the proposed transportation project impact redevelopment?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Other Comments:

_____

_____

_____

COMMUNITY CONTEXT AUDIT FORM

Figure 19-2.D
(Continued)

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

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.	☐	☐
Is this project generally consistent with the municipality's comprehensive plan? If yes, indicate how.	☐	☐
Are there any special studies associated with this project? If yes, please indicate the name of study or studies and attach copies.	☐	☐
Has the municipality adopted a growth management plan or designated growth area? If yes, is this project located within the designated growth area.	☐	☐
Does this project have regional significance? If so, explain.	☐	☐
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).	☐	☐
Identify planning and project development partners for this project:	☐	☐
	☐	☐

Other Comments:

_____

_____

_____

COMMUNITY CONTEXT AUDIT FORM

Figure 19-2.D
(Continued)

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 project study group 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 project study group 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 project study group should determine what 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 statement of the transportation problems, which should, and can be, solved by the project. The project study group 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.

The project study group should ensure that the stakeholders understand that these issues will be revisited on projects during formal development of Purpose and Need under the *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA) process, if applicable. 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 project study group 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

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

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 USC 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 USC 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.

Step 3: Defining Alternatives

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 for the project that was developed in Step 2, is the driving force for the identification of the alternatives or options and concerns identified from Step 2, 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 project study group, over and above the full public meetings that take place, and will work on analyzing alternatives generated. For larger and more complex projects, 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). 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.

On larger and more complex projects, consultant staff may assume these responsibilities, overseen by the project study group.

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.

After the environmental documentation has been made available for public and agency review, the alternatives elimination stage can begin, giving appropriate consideration to comments received.

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.

Technical advisory groups, 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 technical advisory groups themselves. This saves time, space, budget, and is consistent with the purpose for which the technical advisory groups were created. At this

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

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 project study group.

> **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.

Step 4: Preferred Alternative

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, deal with 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.

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 project study group 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.

2. Stakeholder Involvement Subsequent to Phase I Project Development on CSS Projects. 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 project study group 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 4-2.07.

There may also be occasions where the project study group 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.

19-2.01(b) Implementing the Stakeholder Involvement Process for CSS Projects

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.

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

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

1. 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.

   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. The following are brief descriptions of several stakeholder involvement techniques that can be used to achieve this end (Section 19-2.02 provides further details on several of these techniques):

   a. Group Briefings. These are informal meetings with stakeholders and are effective for circulating information on various issues and gaining valuable input.

   b. Open Houses. These are held in the immediate area of the project and provide an informal setting for the public to meet and interact with Department representatives on project issues in a format that offers considerable flexibility for interested persons to attend when it fits their schedule.

   c. Workshops. These are meetings where participants are given basic transportation requirements and various constraints related to a 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 other participants, and offer solutions and explanations for their suggestions.

   d. Information Meetings. These meetings are informal public gatherings that blend the opportunity for individual discussions, as occurs at open houses, with more structured group interaction through project presentations and question-and-answer sessions.

   e. Advisory Committees. These committees identify key stakeholders and organize them into a community resource council as an advisory group to the study team. They provide input and response and serve to focus the views, concerns, and values of the communities.

   f. Technical Advisory Groups. These groups are a specific and structured form of the advisory committee. They are assembled to review specific planning and design materials and advise the study team at key milestones, before the information is finalized.

g. Elected Official Meetings. These meetings serve to brief the elected officials on the issues at hand and solicit input from them. Elected officials represent a variety of constituents and, therefore, provide a unique perspective into the issues or problems being discussed.

h. Interest Group Meetings. These meetings target a wide variety of groups (e.g., service clubs, city councils, county boards, chambers of commerce, homeowners associations, local and regional planning agencies, farm bureaus, State officials, environmental organizations, minority organizations). Each of these groups provides a unique perspective into the issues being discussed (e.g., access, loss of property, job creation, impacts to environmental resources, economic development).

i. Focus Groups. Focus groups are a tool to gauge public opinion. They provide for small group discussion with professional leadership that is intended to solicit sample opinions on a single topic involving a few specific questions. The emphasis is on gathering perspectives, insights, and opinions of participants through conversation and interaction.

j. Public Opinion Surveys. These surveys can be used to scientifically gauge public opinion, once the focus groups have identified the major issues, and a range of opinions and solutions to transportation issues has been solicited.

k. Charrettes. These meetings resolve a specific problem or an issue. Within a specified time limit, participants work together intensely to reach resolution. A leader brings out all points of view from the various stakeholders and participants.

l. Speakers (or Listeners) Bureaus. Groups of specially trained representatives who can speak about a process or a program. They can be community people or Department staff. They meet with public and private organizations and provide information, listen to concerns, answer questions, and seek continued participation and input.

m. Newsletters. Newsletters can be issued regularly throughout the project development process to announce new developments, upcoming public involvement opportunities, and the results of involvement activities.

n. Information Hotlines and Websites. These are used to provide a way for interested citizens to gain information from the study team, get questions answered, and provide input and feedback.

It must be made clear that none of the above activities are intended to immediately produce final decisions. Rather, they will provide a forum for discussion and comment on various project-related issues to assist the Department and other decision-makers. Final decisions will be made during the final acceptance hearing (Step 4). Throughout the process, maintain stakeholder

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

mailing lists to include all citizens who have had a contact with the study team, whether by attending a meeting, calling in, leaving a comment on-line, or sending in a letter.

o. Follow-up. 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 stakeholders 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.

2. 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.

a. 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 19-2.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 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 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 project study group 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.

b. 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 project study group considers the issues involved, along with the time and resources available, in order to make a choice about the proper approach to use.

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

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 project study group 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.

c. 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.

19-2.01(c) Separate Corridor and Design Phases

Projects that involve both a corridor phase and a NEPA phase must have, for each phase, at least one public involvement activity that is open to the general public and advertised via local media in advance. If the project bypasses or passes through any city, town, or village, at least one of the involvement activities must be a public hearing with a transcript. (The "open house" public hearing format, which includes preparation of a written record of comments received and views expressed, may be used to satisfy this requirement.) The scope of projects with separate corridor and NEPA phases will often require more than the minimum number of public involvement activities.

The district may schedule public involvement activities to aid in:

- defining project purpose and need;
- developing alternatives;
- confirming interpretations of previous inputs;
- taking official testimony and comments;
- gathering data on the makeup of neighborhoods, community values, and concerns; and
- obtaining the general public reaction to the project.

Certain information may be more accurate and useful if gained from personal individual contacts without the involvement of larger groups of people. Informal formats are probably most suited to gathering data because they eliminate speaking before large groups and other intimidating characteristics of larger, more formal gatherings.

As the location team begins to develop project alternatives, it may be useful to gain public input on the trade-offs that must be made in choosing among alternatives. This may be obtained through conversations with individuals or small groups. Workshops are also effective in obtaining public input on trade-offs. They must, however, be conducted by experienced, knowledgeable leaders with appropriate materials available so that participants fully understand the project goals and the problems to be addressed.

If a public hearing will be held during the NEPA stage, it is not necessary to do so at the corridor stage. There are occasions, however, when it is beneficial to the Department to have a public hearing with a transcript so that all comments and input can be recorded and addressed officially. The district should consider public hearings when there is significant controversy, organized opposition, or the possibility of legal action. Some members of the public may believe they have not had an adequate opportunity to comment or their comments were not given serious consideration if they are not recorded as a part of a transcript at a public hearing. In these cases, the holding of a public hearing and the recording of testimony may satisfy a certain segment of the public's need to be recognized.

Subsequent to a decision on corridor selection and prior to initiating the Design Study, it may be appropriate to schedule some public involvement activity to announce the results of the Corridor Study and to explain the activities that will follow during the Design Study. This is especially true if there has been significant public involvement and interest in the Corridor Study.

During the Design Study, the district should involve the public during the collection of data, the development of alternatives, and following final recommendation and decisions. For projects subject to 23 USC 139 "Efficient Environmental Reviews for Project Decision-making," the Department and FHWA are required to afford Participating Agencies and the public an opportunity for involvement in defining the projects' purpose and need and range of alternatives.

Depending upon the size of the project, only one activity may be necessary at each stage, or multiple activities may be necessary to adequately cover the study area. The project scope and the extent of public interest will determine the need for multiple meetings or other activities during a particular stage of the Study development and the frequency of public involvement. To comply with Section 128 of Title 23 of the *US Cod*e, a public hearing must be held or offered during the design phase if one was not held during the corridor phase if the project passes

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

through or bypasses a city, town, or village. However, if sufficient need for a public hearing existed during the corridor stage, that same need will likely exist at the design stage and a second hearing will be required. If the project covers an extensive geographical area so that one hearing will not be convenient for all persons affected, more than one hearing will be required at the design stage.

19-2.01(d) Combined Corridor and Design Phases

Federal-aid projects that involve only a single, combined corridor and design phase may have a wide range in scope and may vary from minor safety improvements requiring no additional right-of-way (Project Report) to the reconstruction of an existing rural roadway or an existing urban street to meet full functional class standards (Combined Corridor and Design Study). For appropriate study types, see Chapter 11. When projects have a large scope and involve additional right-of-way throughout the project length, are known to be controversial, involve significant impacts, or are the subject of organized opposition, the district should conduct a public involvement program with more than the minimum number of activities, including a public hearing(s) or offering the opportunity for a hearing, if necessary, in accordance with Section 19-1.03. For projects subject to 23 USC 139, the district must ensure that the public involvement program satisfies the requirement for affording the public an opportunity for involvement in determining the projects' purpose and need and range of alternatives.

If the project meets the criteria discussed in Sections 19-1.01, 19-1.02, or 19-1.03, the district must include the holding or offering of at least one public hearing in the program. On all other Combined Corridor and Design Study Federal-aid projects, several options for obtaining public involvement are available. On those projects that require no additional right-of-way, the Regional Engineer shall determine what information shall be released to the news media in the area to inform the public of the project. For those projects that involve additional right-of-way, the Regional Engineer will have the following options available:

1. Contacts with Individual Property Owners. This option is generally suitable when the project involves acquisition of minimal right-of-way from a small number of property owners (e.g., 10 or fewer). Under this option, the district will contact each property owner from which right-of-way will be acquired and provide them with an opportunity to comment on the project. A representative of the district can make a personal contact or the district may contact owners via certified mail with return receipt. Document personal contacts in a memorandum to the file. If certified mail is used, the letter should describe:

    - the reason for the contact,
    - policy on public involvement,
    - property affected,
    - scope of project,
    - reason for the ROW,
    - scheduling of the project,
    - how to comment,
    - options for commenting,
    - where to get more information, and
    - acquisition procedures.

There should also be a signature blank for the owner. See Figure 19-2.E for a sample letter. The district should send two copies of the letter (one original and one copy) by certified mail with return receipt requested, with an exhibit showing the property and the proposed taking, and a self-addressed stamped envelope for returning comments. Make a record of any comments from the property owner (whether contacted in person or by 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.

2. Involvement Activity Open to the Public. This option is generally suitable when the project involves acquisition of more than minor amounts of right-of-way, involves the taking of improvements on affected properties, or involves known controversy, organized opposition, or potentially significant impacts. Under this option, the district will (a) schedule and hold an involvement activity open to the public and advertised in advance, and/or (b) publish an official offering of a public hearing. At scheduled activities as in (a), a transcript will not be prepared; however, a district representative will record comments from those attending the meeting. If a public hearing offer is published as in (b), a public hearing will be held if sufficient interest is demonstrated. If sufficient interest is not demonstrated, each requester will be contacted, informed of the lack of interest, and offered an opportunity to comment. Any comments received are made part of the project record and include a response in the Report. The district should release information to the news media concerning design approval and contract award.

3. Public Hearing or Public Hearing Offer. This option is appropriate when the Regional Engineer determines the project involves sufficient public interest or organized opposition to warrant a public hearing.

When a project involves the use of temporary easements, this should be considered minor rights-of-way for the purposes of deciding whether Option 1 or Option 2 described above is more suitable. This involvement should establish good public relations with property owners and provide them with an opportunity for project input that could reveal information resulting in a reconsideration of design features.

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

(UNDERLINED PORTIONS VARY WITH PROJECT)

Location Studies
Illinois Route 1
Illinois Route 2 to Illinois Route 3
Job No.: P-91-000-00
Some County

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

Month 1, xxxx

Mr. John Doe
123 S. 4th Street
Some Town, IL 60000

Dear Sir:

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.
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 Department of Transportation to provide all interested persons an opportunity to become acquainted with highway proposals of concern to them and to express their views at those stages of a proposed project when the flexibility to respond to those views still exists. When a proposed project would have major impacts on the surrounding areas, or where large amounts of right-of-way would be acquired, a public meeting or a public hearing will generally be held. When a project would not involve these conditions, our current practice is to contact each affected property owner directly.
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 LETTER

Figure 19-2.E

Reason for ROW	This right-of-way acquisition is needed to improve the corner turning radius at Illinois Route 2.
How to Comment	At the end of this letter is an area where you can indicate your comments, if any. You may also request further discussions with us, either via the telephone or in a personal 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 ___(*date*)___.
Acquisition Procedures	Upon completion of our study, a report will be prepared describing the proposed work and submitted to our Springfield office for approval. After approval is received, 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. 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.
How to Get More Information	If, after reviewing this letter, you have any questions or wish to arrange a meeting to discuss this improvement in more detail, please contact (Contact Person as assigned by District) at 312/884-4100.
	Very truly yours, Regional Engineer or District Program Development Engineer
Exhibit & Self-Addressed Stamped Envelope	Enclosure
Options for Commenting	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	_____ Signature of Owner _____ Date

SAMPLE LETTER

Figure 19-2.E
(Continued)

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

Where property owners are not readily available (e.g., when the property is the subject of a trust agreement), use the following process to attempt to notify the owner. Direct a written notice or personal visit to the trust officer, or manager of record, to request him/her to inform the actual owner of a possible need for his 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 a response is not received in that time, assume the owner or legal representative is not available or interested in commenting on the project.

If a project does not require the acquisition of right-of-way, does not substantially change the layout or function of the facility or connecting roads or streets, does not have a significant adverse impact on abutting property, or does not otherwise have a significant social, economic, environmental, or other effect, then a public hearing is not required and other formal public involvement activities may not be necessary. However, the district must release information to the media announcing the initiation of such a project and the letting of any contracts. As discussed in Section 19-1.07, where a group or series of such projects might be located within a community or limited geographic area, schedule a public involvement activity to address cumulative effects of the group or series as a whole.

19-2.01(e) Projects Not Involving Federal-Aid Funds

For projects not involving the use of Federal-aid 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, contact all property owners 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 number of property owners is such as to preclude individual contacts, the Regional Engineer will hold an activity open to the general public and announced in advance (see Section 19-3.01). Record comments received from these public involvement activities 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.

19-2.02 Format Options

19-2.02(a) General

Public involvement activities may utilize a number of formats in providing information to the public and receiving public input. By varying the format, the public may be involved individually in an informal atmosphere, in mock studies where participants may develop tradeoffs between various impacts, in listening to formal presentations of information, and in making comments for the record at a public hearing. Some of the formats provide for more than one of these relationships. The district should select the format for an activity according to the situation. Many prefer an individual contact that will not require speaking before large groups. When there is organized opposition, a verbatim transcript may be necessary to accurately record comments received and information given. The following provides a description of several acceptable formats with some guidance on the appropriate selection.

19-2.02(b) Group Briefings

Informal meetings with special interest groups, service clubs, and neighborhood associations can be a very effective means of circulating factual information on a proposed project and gaining valuable input. Such meetings might be similar in format to those used during the data collection stage when members of the location team conduct interviews in the community to gain information on current planning of government and businesses and community values in sensitive social and environmental areas. These meetings generally begin with a brief presentation by a member of the location 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. This type of interaction will often eliminate undesirable speculation, provide considerable insight into the concerns of the community and the types of issues that must be addressed to minimize opposition and controversy, and provide a forum for gaining community support. Because these types of meetings will generally be attended by a relatively small number (12 to 15 persons), a personal relationship can be established with those in attendance and the level of intimidation usually associated with larger groups will be eliminated.

The location team should react to or arrange for invitations from groups such as:

- service clubs (e.g., Kiwanis, Rotary);
- city councils;
- County Boards;
- Chambers of Commerce;
- homeowners associations;
- League of Women Voters;
- local and regional planning agencies;
- State officials in whose district the project is located;
- environmental organizations;
- minority organizations;

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

- 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 the district may arrange the meeting. For example, in neighborhoods without homeowners associations, a particular homeowner may agree to act as a leader and arrange for meetings and attendants to discuss the project with representatives of the Department. If this option is unavailable, the district may arrange a meeting in the neighborhood or community and invite homeowners, businessmen, 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 its 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.

The *Open Meetings Act* (5 ILCS 120/1 et seq) provides that a “meeting” of a “public body,” as defined in the *Act*, must be open to the public unless it is covered by exceptions detailed in the *Act*. The *Open Meetings Act* also stipulates public notice requirements for meetings of a “public body.” 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*. Districts should contact the Office of IDOT Chief Counsel for guidance when questions arise on applicability of the *Open Meetings Act* to specific situations. 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.

As a part of the group briefing format, use small displays and/or handouts to supplement the presentation. Displays must be relatively small and portable because 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.

19-2.02(c) 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 has a number of advantages in specific cases:

- It provides an informal setting that allows for responding to individual questions that may not be of general interest.
- It is responsive to the public at the grass roots level and does not depend upon assessments of public opinion by elected officials or other recognized leaders.
- Due to the hours of operation, an open house is available at convenient times for those who are interested.
- The absence of possible pressure or intimidation from groups or neighbors tends to motivate individual participation.
- An open house is effective for obtaining information where there are no established leaders or officials in the affected neighborhood or community.

An open house can make use of a wider range of public meeting facilities than those activities that involve larger groups. It can take advantage of a conference room in a courthouse or other government buildings or the mall area of a shopping center. Where there are available storefront buildings in commercial areas or shopping centers, the district can make arrangements to utilize these facilities for a short duration. School facilities might also be used, particularly on weekends. For increased mobility and flexibility, a van or trailer placed in one or more locations near the project may also serve as an excellent facility for an open house.

Districts should schedule the hours of operation for an open house to allow convenient access by interested parties. In some cases, a time period covering the afternoon and early evening (e.g., from 1:00 PM to 6:00 PM) may be sufficient and, in others, a longer period (e.g., from 10:00 AM to 10:00 PM) may be appropriate. If a heavy turnout is expected, it may be appropriate to schedule the open house for more than one day or even at several different locations. It might also be appropriate to schedule and announce that certain Department experts will be available for questions at specific periods. Shorter time periods may be appropriate for smaller, non-controversial projects; however, at least a part of a shorter schedule should cover a non-working time period (i.e., after 5:00 PM).

Prepare displays and handouts for use during an open house. Displays in general do not need to be large because they normally will be viewed from relative short distances. Plan and profile sheets and aerial photography with superimposed design and location features are suitable for open house displays. Because presentations are not normally made, handouts may include a brief status report on the project and a tentative schedule for further involvement activities and completion of the project. Handouts are effective and allow individuals to later reaffirm the information gained.

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

An open house is generally accompanied by notices published in the paper and releases of information to the other media announcing the opportunity to discuss the project with Department personnel, to ask questions, and to submit comments. The notice should specify the time and place of the open house and all open houses if there will be more than one. If certain Department experts will be available only at limited times, the notice should specify that information. Publish notices in accordance with Section 19-3.

19-2.02(d) 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 experience the complexities and problems that confront Department personnel during project development. As such, this enhances public understanding and appreciation of the Department effort. Because the public will be analyzing pertinent information and 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 which can be divided into smaller groups of from four to eight per group, and the number of groups is consistent with available space and manpower.

Because those attending workshops will be expected to participate for 2½ – 3 hours, they must be scheduled at a time when attendants will have the time available. Weekday evenings or daytimes during weekends are most effective. Workshop meeting places should have tables and chairs, good lighting, and other facilities appropriate for the work groups. School cafeterias usually offer 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 for the workshop. 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 30 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.

Workshops should be announced in accordance with Section 19-3.

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 key 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 with felt-tip markers). 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.

4. 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.

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

19-2.02(e) Informational Meetings

Informational meetings are informal public gatherings that blend the individual discussions of open houses with the group interaction of public hearings. They include an informal, individual discussion period characteristic of an open house, a formalized presentation, a group question-and-answer period and, if questions still remain, another informal discussion period. Generally, a transcript of the meeting is not recorded, but notes of the comments and questions are made.

Informational meetings provide an opportunity to assemble a large group at one time to discuss the status of the project, the decisions made to date, the options yet to be decided, and the criteria considered critical for the remaining decisions. Informational meetings involve only the limited time commitment of a single evening; however, they approximate the informality and personal communication traits of all-day open houses. The limited time commitment may, however, result in some members of the public being reluctant to make comments due to the presence of other members of the community.

In preparing for an informational meeting, the district should make arrangements for a meeting room with sufficient space for the anticipated audience size. Staff all unlocked entrances so handouts can be distributed and an attendance sheet signed for records and future contacts. If large, the room may require amplified speaking equipment for satisfactory acoustics. The room should also contain space for discussion centers.

The presentation should explain the format of the meeting and introduce experts available for questions in specific areas. When relocations are necessary, Land Acquisition representatives should always be available to discuss relocation assistance and property acquisition procedures. The discussion of the project itself should include:

- the reason for project initiation;
- the constraints in the area of economics and design limitations;
- the advantages and impacts of each alternative, including environmental impacts;
- any decision or conclusions reached, remaining decisions, and options to be made by technical staff;
- a tentative schedule for project completion; and
- an explanation of the information or input expected from the public as a result of this meeting.

Although there are no required legal statements, one of the discussion centers should address land acquisition.

The presentation may use displays, slides, or other visuals, or it may use a coordinated slide-tape, videotape, or DVD program. The presentation should not generally exceed 30 minutes but in no case should the presentation exceed 45 minutes. (See Section 19-4.03 for additional information.)

If the displays will be used during the presentation, they should be visible from all positions in the room. If slides are used, the screen should be sufficiently large, and it should be positioned for good visibility. Videotape/DVD presentations may require multiple monitors for proper visibility. Handouts are effective and, if they contain maps or drawings, may be used during individual discussions. If duplicates of major displays and slides (such as alternative alignments or typical sections) are contained in handouts, attendees can make notes during the presentation and use them for future reference. Supply the discussion centers with suitable drawings and exhibits to reduce dependence on those used for the presentation. Each discussion group should have a resource person to answer questions and provide information, and a recorder should be available to note the questions and comments received. These notes will be used later to analyze the results of the meeting.

Generally, the announcements and notices for an informational meeting will be in accordance with Section 19-3.

19-2.02(f) Information Exchange (Citizen Working Groups/Advisory Committee)

For complex projects, districts may consider establishing an “Information Exchange” 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 passing them to decision-makers.

In using this approach, the district must make clear, through formal Constitutions and Bylaws, that the Working Groups and Advisory Committee are not intended to make any final project decisions. Rather, they will provide a forum for discussion and comment on various project-related issues to assist the Department and other decision-makers. The following discussion presents an overview of the key elements of the Information Exchange process:

1. 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 (e.g., public officials, 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 Groups’ evaluations, assessments, concerns, and suggestions.

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

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, informational meetings (or some form of public notice) may be a more effective method of alerting potentially affected parties and determining interest.

The notification should include the name and address of the contact person to whom responses will be directed and should also explain the purpose of establishing the Working Group(s) and how they will function as a part of the Information Exchange. The notice should indicate that, after obtaining an indication of the level of interest, an organizational meeting will be scheduled to provide more detail on the Information Exchange process and to formalize the working groups.

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.

2. Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee will 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, and the project consultant, as appropriate. The functions of the Advisory Committee include integrating the interests and values of the Working Groups into the planning process, advancing the objectives of the Information Exchange, and managing the overall process. 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 DOT inputs;
- recommending alternatives for the project; and
- preparing a formal report to the Secretary of IDOT detailing the work of the Committee and 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.

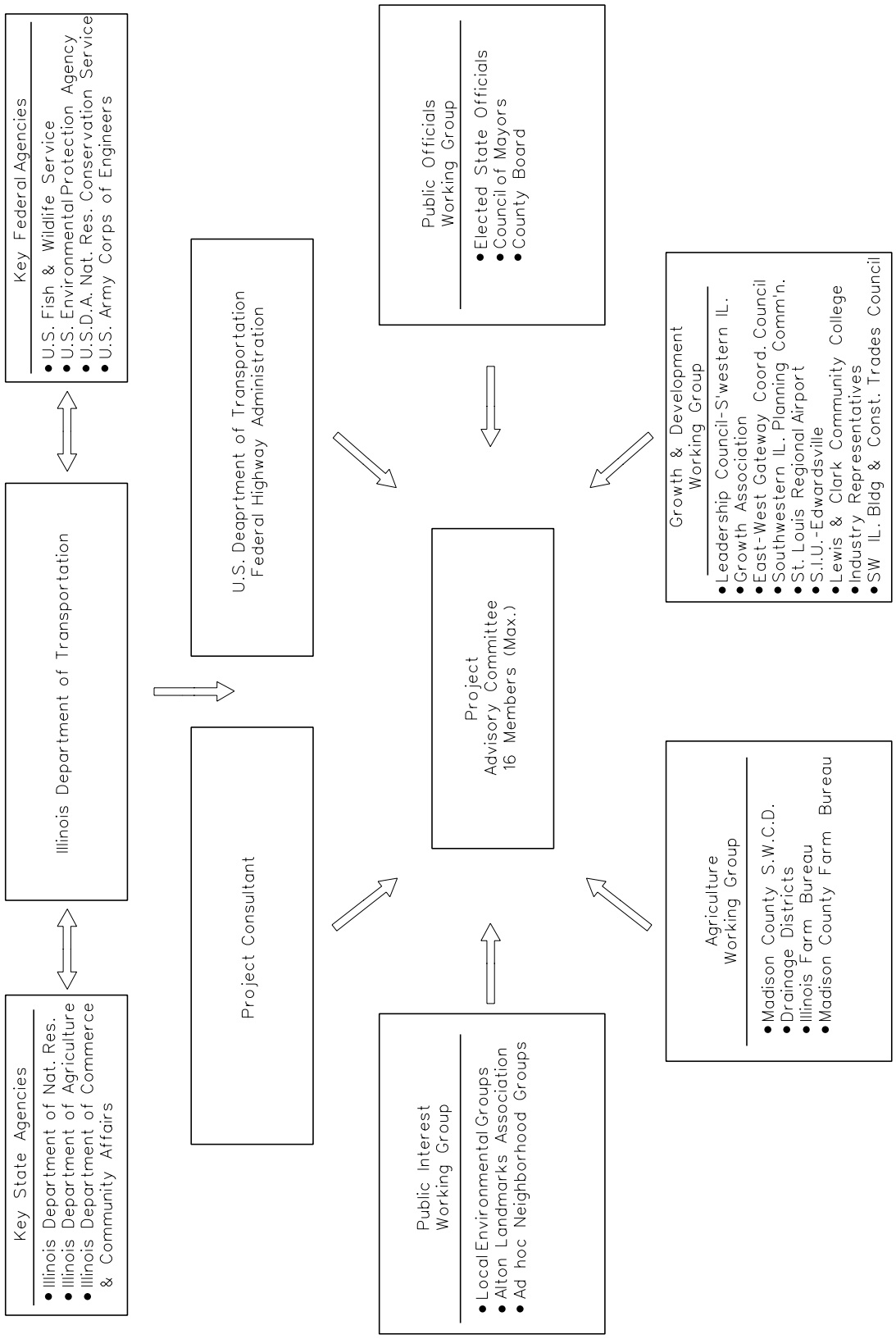
Figure 19-2.F illustrates an example structure for the Information Exchange process. BDE can provide interested districts more detailed information upon request on implementation of the Information Exchange concept on IDOT projects.

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

19-2.02(g) Formal Public Hearings

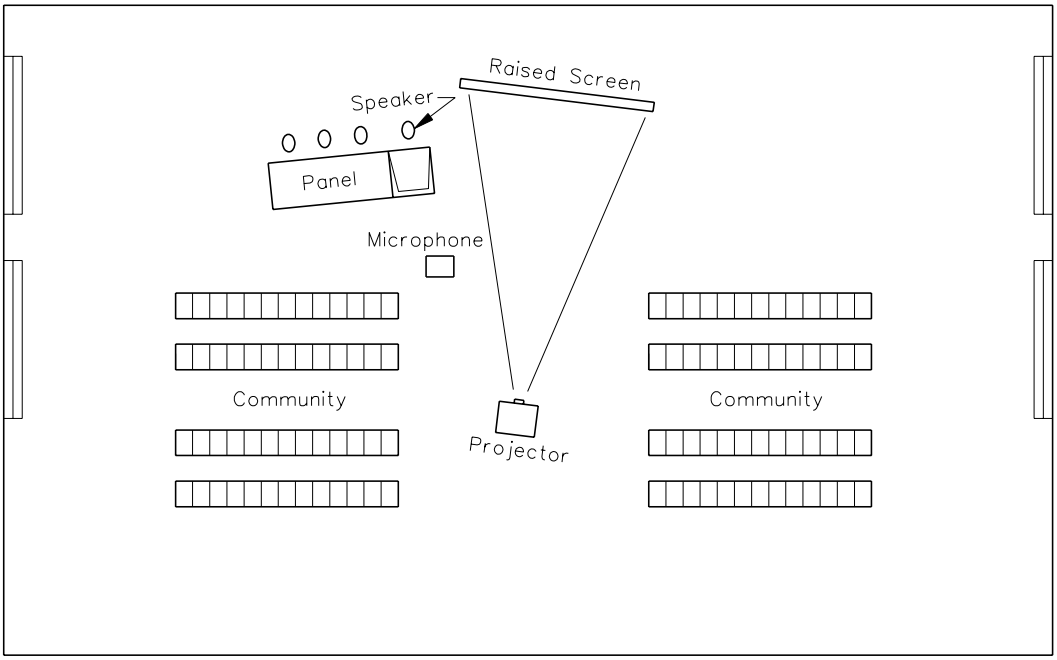
Formal public hearings are proceedings conducted by appropriate officials of the Illinois Department of Transportation in the more traditional public hearing format to inform the public of proposed projects or programs, to explain the options under consideration, and to receive and document public reaction. This format generally has a speaker(s) addressing a large audience. Members of the audience in turn have an opportunity to address the speaker(s). Because of the size of the audience, the program must be structured allowing for very little informal exchange of information (see Figure 19-2.G). The US Code requires that, if a public hearing is held, a transcript of the proceedings must be recorded. This transcript can be advantageous because it eliminates conjecture and interpretation. Recording the proceedings may be by court reporter or electronic means. A variety of governmental agencies have extensively used the formal public hearing format, and the public is generally familiar with the process and the role expected of them.

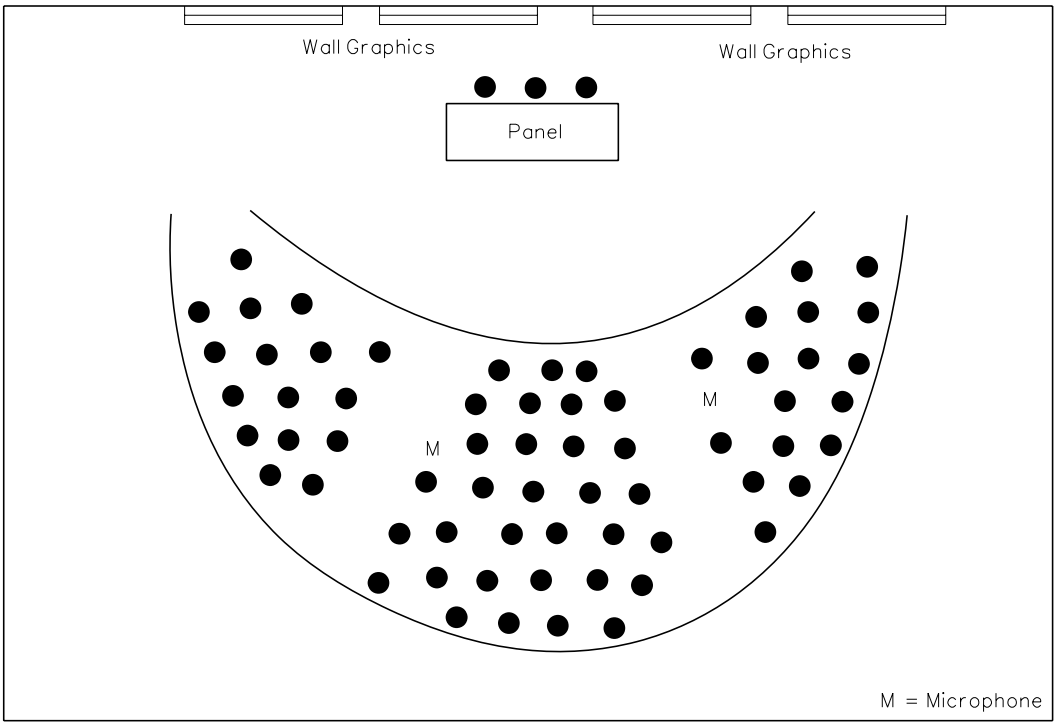
HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED



EXAMPLE OF IMFORMATION EXCHANGE PROCESS

Figure 19-2.F





FORMAL PUBLIC HEARING FORMAT

Figure 19-2.G

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

In accordance with 23 CFR 771.111, if a public hearing is held, the following information should be explained at the hearing:

- 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.

Formal public hearings can discourage participation by certain persons or groups that are intimidated by the formality and size and/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 and a variety of other topics. As such, the moderator may need to caution attendants occasionally to restrict their comments and statements to the project and may need to suggest a time limit for each commenter (e.g., five minutes) to discourage individuals from attempting to monopolize the comment period.

Formal public hearings generally require considerable time for preparation of displays and presentations. This often results in costs greater than those for other public involvement activities. When a hearing is held to comply with Federal requirements, the expenses are necessary to ensure that the project will qualify for Federal-aid. Otherwise, the need for a public hearing should be determined considering project impacts, project controversy, available lead time, and cost effectiveness.

Public hearings often involve a larger gathering than other public involvement activities. To ensure the availability of a facility of adequate size and equipment in a suitable location, public hearings should be scheduled well in advance. Occasionally, the availability of a desired facility may influence the scheduling of a hearing. If a single public hearing is proposed, generally, it should be in the evening when the majority of the public is available. If a series of public hearings is proposed, then hearings may be held at various times during the day and at various locations throughout the project area.

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 only address important points (see Section 19-4.03(b)) because time is limited. Type and follow the text carefully, so the time limit is not exceeded and to ensure that the required statements are included. The presentation may use a variety of formats including live talks, live talks with exhibits, videotape, DVD, slide-tape combinations, or segments involving a variety of presentations. See Section 19-4 for further information on the development of presentations.

Considering the size of the meeting room(s) and the audience to be accommodated, the district staff should size and position displays for good visibility throughout the room. If slides are used, the screen should be sufficiently large so that the printing on the slides is legible from the back of the room. Handouts are considered an effective tool for distributing information to the public. To coordinate information presented at the public hearing with handouts, exhibits in the handouts should be similar to those displayed at the hearing.

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. 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 questions asked 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.

Announcements and notices for a formal public hearing should be according to Section 19-3.

19-2.02(h) Open House Public Hearings

The open house public hearing format is an alternative to the formal public hearing format and may 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 staff discussions with individuals. Most of the advantages described in Section 19-2.02(c) for open houses are also applicable to open house public hearings. Surveys of participants in public activities for IDOT highway projects have indicated that the open house public hearing format is generally viewed more favorably than the more formal, traditional format. The open house hearing format is less intimidating to participants and offers a more workable option for conducting hearings for very large audiences. FHWA has recognized the benefits of this format and encourages its use as an effective public involvement method that meets the hearing requirements of the US Code.

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

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.

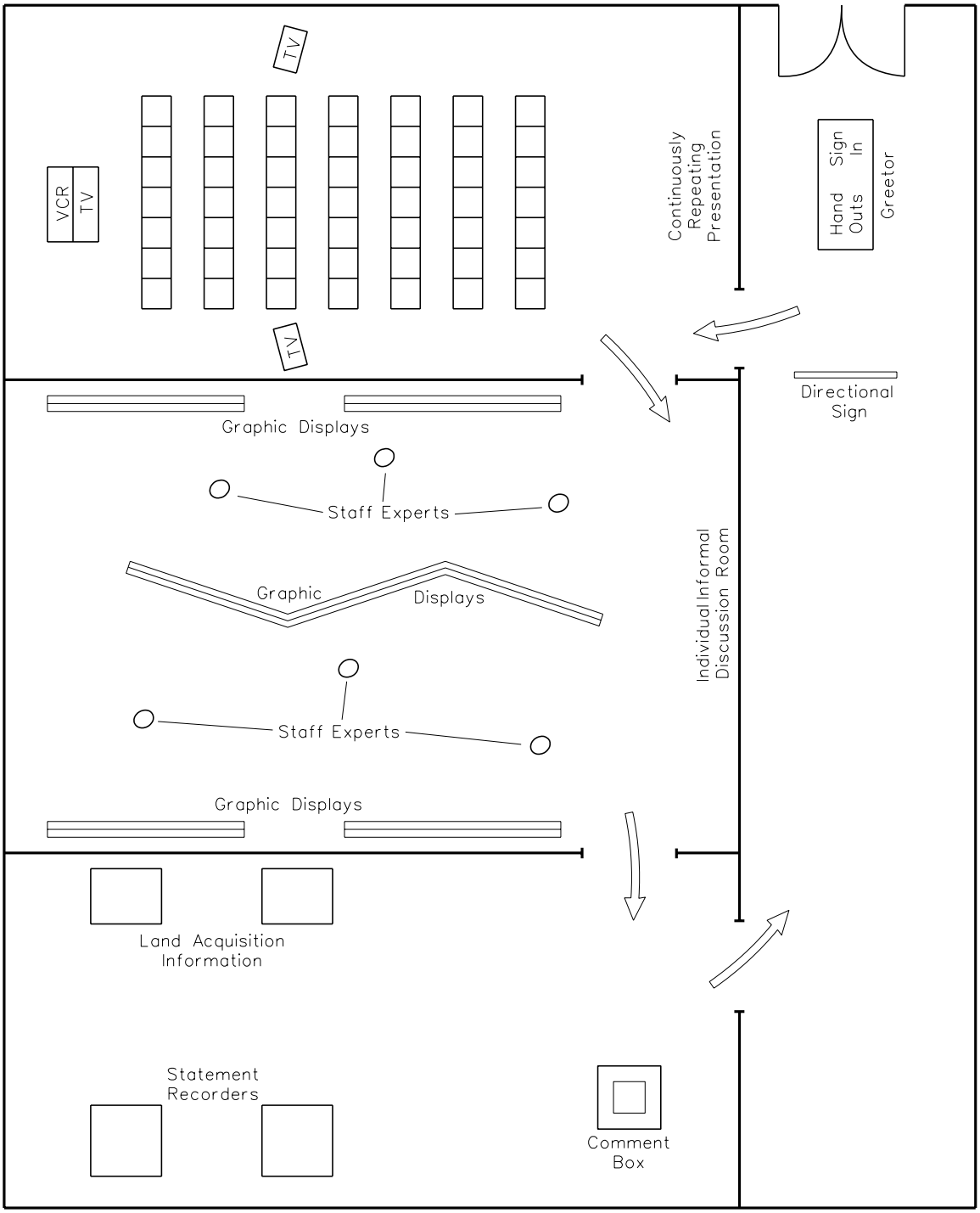
2. Next, the visitors are directed to a presentation of general information about the project to orient them on the purpose of the project, alternatives under consideration, and the project features. This is best accomplished by electronic means such as slide/tape or videotape/DVD presentations that can be repeated without variance.

3. After receiving a general orientation, the district staff directs the visitors to an area with graphic 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 19-2.H.

Open house public hearings generally require considerable time for preparation of displays and electronic presentations. The need for slides and/or videotapes/DVDs 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.

The district should investigate and reserve meeting facilities early to ensure the availability of a suitable room arrangement. Open house public hearing formats need a controlled entrance so greeters can effectively guide attendees. A separate room is desirable for the orientation presentation so the sound does not interfere with the individual discussions. If a separate room is not available, screening is helpful. Preferably, the orientation room will be near the entrance and before the discussion area to encourage a natural flow in the proper sequence. In the discussion area, staff members should be clearly identified and should initiate discussions with attendees. The district may wish to identify and staff a fixed location for providing special expertise on matters such as land acquisition. If space is available, locate recorders for oral statements in a separate room or screened area to reduce interference from the other activities.



OPEN HOUSE PUBLIC HEARING FORMAT

Figure 19-2.H

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

Announcements and notices for open house public hearings should be according to Section 19-3. Because the general public may not be familiar with the open house format, certain features should be described in the notice. The notice should specifically state the open house format will be used and all information and presentations will be available throughout the time period specified.

19-2.02(i) Non-Meeting Activities

Preceding subjects have addressed various public involvement activity formats that require interaction or meetings between district personnel and the public. This discussion will address those activities that do not require such actions. Non-meeting activities are not intended to replace meeting-type activities but are intended to supplement or bring attention to other meeting-type involvement activities. This *Manual* presents only a general discussion; detailed procedures may be obtained from other sources:

1. Opinion Polls. Opinion polls contact people in their homes or places of business and request information from them on specific topics. The polls may consist of mailing a questionnaire, telephone contacts, or personal interviews. They may seek out or address specific groups such as those living in a specific geographic area, those who work in a specific area, or those who belong to certain organizations. Mail-type polls may result in a response as high as 65%-80% with proper administration; however, such polls rely on the public's initiative to complete a questionnaire, their interpretations of the questions, and their ability to express their own views. Contacts such as those made by telephone or personal interview result in a greater response and information that is more valuable and usable. Telephone poles are more expensive than mail, and personal interviews are more expensive than telephone poles. Contact BDE for more information on the use and administration of polls.

2. Newsletters. For complex projects or programs of projects, it may be appropriate to prepare a periodic newsletter to inform the public of the progress of the project or program. Newsletters can be distributed to all residents in a given geographical area so they have the opportunity to be aware of the project. A newsletter can also stipulate the name and address of persons to contact for additional information. If a separate newsletter is not practical, place articles in the newsletters of other organizations and agencies. BDE has on file newsletters that have been prepared for various IDOT highway projects. Districts interested in obtaining copies should contact BDE.

3. Brochures and Handouts. Information printed as brochures or pamphlets can be distributed widely throughout a community affected by a proposed project. These publications may be used to distribute information or bring attention to other public involvement activities that may have public interest. The brochures may include opinion polls or questionnaires to be returned to the district. Brochures and handouts may be distributed in public places (e.g., stores, public buildings, civic centers) or throughout specific work areas or neighborhoods. They may be directed toward specific groups such as those using bus stations, parking lots, or shopping centers.

4. Television and Radio Appearances. Many urban areas have radio or television stations that offer public service announcements or public interest programs as part of their regular programming. Where this service is available and desired, appearances on these shows can be an extremely effective forum for discussing a proposed project in the area served by the stations. Discussions on the show may serve as a vehicle for dissemination of information or as an interest builder for future involvement activities in the area.

5. Cable T.V. Cable T.V. companies normally set aside one channel for public service. The availability of using this service may vary among companies. Options may range from entering an announcement on public hearing activities to the presentation of a video on the proposed project. Reruns of public hearing presentations may also be offered on such channels in some locations.

6. Toll-Free Telephone. This activity may be used in conjunction with any or all of the other activities. Announcements to the public for upcoming involvement activities may include a statement concerning the availability of a toll-free telephone number to call. Personnel staffing the toll-free number should be generally familiar with the project. If a question is raised which cannot be answered immediately, make provisions for return calls with answers.

7. Signs and Billboards. Signs can be placed on project right-of-way announcing scheduled public involvement activities. It is one means of notifying highway users who are not from the immediate area. Exercise care to avoid unnecessary visual clutter and to ensure removal immediately following completion of the activity. Signs may be more effective in rural areas due to reduced competition from other signs.

8. Internet Sites. Districts may wish to include project-related announcements on the IDOT Internet Site or may want to consider developing dedicated websites to publicize information for specific projects. Procedures for including district information on the IDOT website are available at http://idotweb/resources.asp.

19-2.02(j) Combining Activities

The preceding subjects have discussed the use of various public involvement formats as a single activity. By combining certain activities, the individual advantages may be compounded for maximum benefit. This discussion will offer suggestions for maximizing the effectiveness of involvement activities by combining different formats. The suggestions are not intended to be exclusive but rather to serve as examples and stimulate ideas. Other potentially effective combinations may be incorporated into public involvement programs:

1. Open House with Periodic Presentations. The format of an open house inherently requires repetition of information to satisfy basic inquiries on the project. Announcements of an open house may include a statement that a brief presentation of general information will be made at periodic intervals such as on the hour or the half-

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

hour. These presentations should not be longer than 5 or 10 minutes. An effective option is to record this presentation or use a repeating videotape, DVD, or movie.

Presentations may be limited to coverage of specific topics such as right-of-way acquisition or environmental impacts. Appropriate district staff must be present to discuss the topic in depth. Individuals interested in more detail on specific topics can then attend at specific times. Notices of the open house should specify topics and times.

2. Recording Comments at Activities Which Are Not Public Hearings. It may be advantageous to provide a verbatim record of some or all input at public involvement activities for subsequent reference to questions raised, information disseminated, or comments received. This process will also ensure those making statements that their comments will be recorded as given. Verbatim recordings may intimidate some persons that might wish to provide comments. The district staff may provide an alternative means of documenting comments in addition to the verbatim recordings to accommodate these individuals.

3. Spontaneous Workshops. When open houses, group presentations, or informational meetings are scheduled, certain attendees or groups may wish to engage in some form of problem-solving activity. If space, appropriate materials, and expertise for resource leaders are available, a spontaneous workshop may be initiated. Make a record of findings and conclusions for further evaluation. The district staff can serve as a resource and discussion leader and record the comments and proposals that are made for future use by the location team.

4. Formal Public Hearing with Informal Sessions. In conjunction with scheduling a formal public hearing, the notice may state that district staff will be available for a period of time before and after the formal hearing to answer individual questions and discuss the proposed project. In this manner, individual questions that may be raised during the hearing and placed on the record can be answered individually, thereby shortening the length of the hearing and the transcript. Also, the advantages of offering an informal, personal contact activity with a formal public hearing format can be combined into a single session.

5. Combination of Meeting and Non-Meeting Activities. Meeting-type activities can use public gatherings advantageously by distributing questionnaires in addition to or as part of the regular handout. Questionnaires distributed at public meetings can be explained to recipients and usually have a higher percentage of return than those received through the mail. The information obtained at the meeting should simplify completion and serve as a stimulus for follow-through.

   Including in the handout a form for submitting comments can encourage written comments. The form should have appropriate data for identifying the project, space for comments, and blanks for the name and address of the person submitting the comments. The Regional Engineer's name and address should be printed on the back. Include instructions for folding the sheet into thirds, taping it shut, and mailing. Department experience has demonstrated that this format is very effective.

6. Radio and TV Opinion Polls. Use of radio and TV to conduct opinion polls through hot-line telephones often is an excellent means of generating interest, increasing attendance at public involvement activities, and obtaining useful information.

19-2.03 Locating Involvement Activities

A critical aspect of designing a public involvement program is the selection of appropriate locations and facilities for accommodating the involvement activities. The district staff should consider several criteria in the location and selection of facilities for involvement activities; however, the standards vary for different activity formats. These criteria are:

- size,
- availability of equipment,
- location,
- accessibility to aged and persons with a disability,
- comfort,
- availability,
- cost, and
- acceptability to all segments of the public.

Two of these criteria must be met for all involvement activities regardless of format — availability and accessibility to the aged and persons with a disability. The standards for the remaining criteria vary according to the size and duration of individual activities and the makeup of the entire involvement program. For example, open houses do not normally require a large meeting room, nor do they require surroundings that are especially comfortable because the attendance period is relatively short. Acceptability to ethnic groups is not critical for a given activity if the involvement program, as a whole, provides an equal opportunity for input through activities in other locations. Succeeding subjects will address the application of the criteria to specific formats.

Executive Order #5 (1979) requires that meetings or conferences be held in a public or private place that is accessible to persons with a disability in a manner consistent with the Accessibility Standards prepared by the Capital Development Board (CDB). Inspect potential sites to determine if they meet CDB standards. A site evaluation form is available from the Department of Human Services to aid in the inspection. A site that fully complies must be used unless there are compelling reasons to the contrary, such as inadequate capacity, ethnic objections, and/or unacceptable geographic location. If a fully accessible site that meets other mandatory criteria is not available, one which meets the other mandatory criteria and which most nearly complies with the Accessibility Standards should be used. Factors such as comfort, minimum cost, and availability of audio-visual aids or equipment may be compromised when persons with a disability are expected to attend and fully accessible sites with such features are not available. Information on potential meeting sites in specific geographic areas is available from the Department of Human Services field offices.

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

19-2.03(a) Number of Locations

The district will select the number of locations 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 is adequate to hold a public hearing or other 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.

Before confirming facility locations for public involvement activities, the following three questions should be satisfied:

1. 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?

2. Is transportation available to those interested for travel to the facility during the time the involvement activity is scheduled?

3. Are there any social impediments that could affect travel to the area or neighborhood scheduled for the involvement activity?

19-2.03(b) Selection of Facilities

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 19-2.02 offers some insight into the application of these criteria:

- size and capacity,
- equipment,
- comfort,
- cost,
- accessibility, and
- parking.

19-2.03(c) Examples of Suitable Locations

Presentations for Groups:

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

Open House:

- van,
- trailer,
- 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.

Informal Meetings and Public Hearings:

- schools (gymnasium, auditorium, cafeteria, or classroom);
- church meeting room;
- civic center;
- City Council chambers;
- judicial courtroom;

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

- service club or other social club meeting hall; and
- any meeting hall generally used by the public.

19-2.04 Examples of Suitable Involvement Programs for Project Types

1. Resurfacing:

   - news releases announcing inclusion in program and award of contracts.

2. Widening and Resurfacing:

   Conditions:

   - rural or urban currently carrying State route marking,
   - some minor additional right-of-way required, and
   - no public hearing or offer required.

   Program:

   - open house or informational meeting when feasible alternatives determined, and
   - news releases announcing inclusion in annual program and award of contract.

3. 3R Project on State Route or Major Bridge Replacement in Rural Area:

   Conditions:

   - generally follows existing alignment with limited relocations to correct substandard conditions,
   - right-of-way required throughout improvement or significant amounts at relocations,
   - no significant environmental impacts,
   - no apparent controversy,
   - no additional through lanes, and
   - may involve runaround or marked route detour.

   Program:

   - open house or informational meeting when feasible alternatives determined, and
   - news releases at inclusion in annual program, beginning of study, and award of contracts.

4. Program of Small Projects, in Localized Area, Proposed for Single Construction Season

Conditions:

- including resurfacing, railroad crossing improvement, traffic signals; and
- lighting, intersection improvement (no right-of-way).

Program:

- open house or informational meeting or radio/TV talk show, and
- news release of inclusion in program and award of contract.

These projects may be discussed at an involvement activity warranted for a single project. If so, the activity notices should so indicate.

5. Upgrading to Four or More Lanes by Adding Through Lanes In Rural Area

Conditions:

- no requirement to hold or offer hearing,
- additional ROW required,
- possible environmental impacts,
- change in function, and
- some relocation to meet standards or avoid developments.

Program:

- open house or informational meeting near end of data collection to check adequacy of other data and add information on local values (may require more than one if improvement traverses significant portions of more than one county);

- group presentations to special interest groups or others who show an interest in progress of project;

- open house or informational meeting to describe work completed to date, explain options to public, and receive public comment (may require more than one meeting if improvement crosses significant portions of more than one county); and

- news releases to announce initiation of study, results of public involvement activities, inclusion in annual program, and advertising and award of contract.

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

6. Upgrading to Four or More Lanes by Adding Through Lanes or Establishing One-Way Couple In Urban Area

Conditions:

- public hearing to be held or offered,
- right-of-way may or may not be required,
- possible environmental impacts,
- change in function and layout,
- may use streets not carrying marked State route traffic, and
- bypass may be option in smaller communities.

Program:

- open house or information meeting near end of data collection to check adequacy of other data and add information on community values (may require more than one);

- group presentations to city council, chamber of commerce, neighborhood associations as requested, service or social clubs as requested, any other special interest group requesting presentation; and

- workshops will be useful in developing alternative alignments, designs, and mitigating features when there is organized opposition and/or significant controversy. Workshops should specifically include members of all opposition groups and other interested individuals.

If significant issues remain unresolved:

- hold formal public hearing with informal sessions before and after or open house public hearing to get overall public reaction to unresolved issues.

If significant issues basically resolved:

- hold informational meeting or open house to explain project options and obtain public reaction and offer public hearing.

7. Major New Facilities such as Interstate or Freeway in Rural or Urban Area

Conditions:

- requires the holding or offering of a public hearing,
- involves significant environmental impacts, and
- involves significant additional land acquisition.

Program:

- Complex projects may require separate Corridor and Design Studies; however, public hearings are not necessarily required during both Studies.

- Open houses or informational meetings held during data collection phase to obtain information on community values and affirm adequacy of other data.

- Group presentations to:

  + City Councils of communities involved,
  + county boards of supervisors,
  + elected State officials representing an affected region,
  + neighborhood or community associations,
  + chambers of commerce,
  + special interest groups,
  + service or social clubs, and
  + other groups as requested.

  (Presentations are recommended for local public officials whether or not requested. Other groups may be scheduled for presentations at their initiative or district initiative).

- Workshops, open houses, or informational meetings are recommended during the development of alternative designs, alignments, and mitigation features. Workshops are often effective in developing compromises among the various factions opposing or favoring the improvement. An “Information Exchange” (see Section 19-2.02(f)) also can be an effective way of focusing discussion and comment among diverse interests.

- An open house or informational meeting should be held after development of study alternatives and a public hearing offered or a public hearing (formal or open house) held to obtain public reaction to final options.

- Use of radio/TV talk shows may be helpful in developing interest in involvement activities and informing segment of public not likely to attend meetings.

- Newsletters may be effective when the project scope is sufficiently large to require multi-year study. Newsletters may also be used to announce the result of involvement activities.

News releases should be issued regularly during the duration of a Study to announce new developments, upcoming involvement opportunities, and the results of involvement activities. Each of the above activities may require more than one repetition depending upon the size and impact of the project and the scope of the opposition and controversy. The makeup of the Study area may influence the number of involvement activities. The above program should be repeated at the Corridor and Design Study phases if both are required.

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

19-3 NOTIFYING THE PUBLIC

Section 19-2 discusses criteria for the development of a public involvement program for a given project. After the makeup of the program has been determined, the district must decide how to transmit information to the public so it will be aware of the opportunities for involvement in project development. In preparing an announcement for a public involvement activity, decisions can be facilitated by addressing the following questions:

- Who should be contacted?
- How often should they be contacted?
- When should they be contacted relative to the timing of the activity?
- What activities should they be informed about?
- What information should be released about the improvement and the activity?
- How large a geographic area should be covered by the distribution of the announcement?

The following sections discuss these topics.

19-3.01 Announcements of Involvement Activities

Generally, activities to which the public is invited (e.g., open houses, workshops, informational meetings, public hearings, open phone lines) 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.

19-3.01(a) Timing and Number

Each public involvement activity will be the subject of 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.

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. The first notice of a public hearing on a project requiring an

Environmental Assessment/FONSI or a Categorical Exclusion, and the first notice for all other public involvement activities, shall be published at least 15 days in advance of the hearing/activity. 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 will be beneficial, they may be scheduled up to two months ahead or during the week preceding the involvement activity.

Another announcement which should be used where available is a listing of the activity in a community calendar or other similar service in news media that lists activities and meetings of general interest that occur on that day or the following day. Some newspapers have notices of important events to occur on that day on the front page. Community calendars or public service announcements are fairly common in both electronic and print news media, are generally free, and should be used where available.

The unique circumstances surrounding a particular project may affect the timing of notices. If a project requiring an Environmental Assessment/FONSI or a Categorical Exclusion 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. Extension of the timing for the notice is not necessary on these projects if an informational meeting, or other mechanism that will assist the public in obtaining project information and preparing for the hearing, precedes the hearing.

19-3.01(b) Distribution

Before steps are taken to notify the public, 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 and may be affected are one category. Another category is groups who are known to be or are likely to be directly affected by property acquisition. Potential users of the facility are another interested group. If a route is heavily used by commuters, these users likely will be concerned with the effect of alternative routing both during and after project construction. Owners of businesses along a route may be concerned about accessibility. Other groups may be singled out for attention because of special communication needs. This sector could include ethnic neighborhoods, low-income neighborhoods, the aged, non-English speaking individuals, and persons with a disability.

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. Paid advertisements in newspapers and on radio and television are acceptable and frequently more effective. The Office of Communications is available and should be contacted for aid in the preparation of photo-ready displays to reduce the costs of using paid advertisements. Where local news media are reluctant to carry such advertisements, a legal notice may be one means of ensuring verbatim publication and specified timing. 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.

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

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 will 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 Executive Order 12898 "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations," and the ensuing USDOT Order, 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 Office of Communications in the central office of the Department of Transportation.

19-3.01(c) Content

For an announcement in a newspaper to be effective, it must be strategically located and of sufficient size to attract attention. The announcement should state the type of activity, the purpose of the activity, and the time and location. It should state that all interested persons are invited to attend and participate and should also state that district personnel will be present to receive input, provide information, and answer questions. The announcement must include a description of the proposed improvement and a reference to any encroachments into base flood plains, impacts on wetlands or Section 4(f) properties, and possible road closures. If noise abatement measures are being investigated for potential implementation as a part of the proposed project, the notice also should include a statement to that effect. If the activity is a public hearing and is intended to meet the requirements of Section 4-510 of the *Illinois Highway Code* (605 ILCS 5/4-510) on corridor preservation (see Section 19-1.09), the announcement should indicate that the hearing will afford an opportunity to provide testimony on a map showing the location and approximate widths of right-of-way needed for certain future additions to the highway system in accordance with the cited section of the *Highway Code*.

On District One projects outside of the City of Chicago, notices must also indicate that the Division of Highways will process a permit for construction in a regulated floodway whenever such permits are required for the project. The announcement must indicate that EISs or

Environmental Assessments and engineering reports will be available for inspection at the activity and prior to the activity at the District.

When individuals or businesses will be relocated, the notice must state that right-of-way acquisition and relocation assistance information will be available. It should further indicate the name, address, and telephone number of the person to contact to obtain additional information. Show the fax number for the Regional Engineer's office and the district's telecommunications device for the deaf (TTY) number in the upper right-hand corner of the announcement.

Where possible and economically feasible, a map should be included to further define the area affected by the project. Identify a contact person and telephone number for the news media in the upper right-hand corner. This may or may not be the same person listed in the body of the notice for the public to call.

Announcements of upcoming activities also must contain information on accessibility for persons with a disability. The wording will vary depending on whether the meeting place is:

- fully accessible in compliance with Capital Development Board (CDB) standards,
- partially accessible but not in full compliance, or
- not accessible.

The following applies:

1. When the meeting site fully complies with CDB Accessibility Standards, the meeting notice should contain a statement similar to the following:

   This meeting will be accessible to persons with a disability in compliance with current Accessibility Standards prepared by the Capital Development Board. Persons with a disability planning to attend and needing special accommodations should contact the person listed in this Notice by (date 5 days prior to meeting). The contact may be by telephone, in writing, by fax or by telecommunications device for the deaf (TTY).

2. When the meeting site contains wheelchair access to the meeting room but does not fully comply with CDB Accessibility Standards (because of inadequate rest room facilities, inadequate number of designated accessible parking spaces, etc.), the notice should contain a statement similar to the following:

   Persons with a disability planning to attend this meeting should contact the person listed in this Notice by (date 5 days prior to meeting) to advise of planned attendance. The contact may be by telephone, in writing, by fax or by telecommunications device for the deaf (TTY). If special accommodations are needed, the contact person should be informed at the time of contact. The meeting room is accessible to persons with a disability.

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

When notified that a person with a disability plans to attend the meeting, the district should advise that person of the meeting site's general areas of noncompliance with the Accessibility Standards. The person should also be informed that a suitable, fully accessible site was not available.

3. When suitable facilities that allow access to the meeting room for persons with a disability are not available, the notice of the activity should contain a statement similar to the following:

> *Persons with a disability desiring to participate in this activity should contact the person listed in this Notice by (date 5 days prior to meeting) to make arrangements for participating. The contact may be by telephone, in writing, by fax or by telecommunications device for the deaf (TTY).*

When contacted, the district should advise the person with a disability that fully accessible facilities suitable for this activity were unavailable in this geographic area. The person with a disability can then be offered alternatives for involvement in the development of the project. These alternatives may include the following:

- A representative(s) of the district may come to the person's home or place of business to discuss the project.
- A mutually acceptable accessible facility may be selected for a meeting.
- Arrangements may be made to lift or convey the person with a disability to the meeting room. (This may not be possible in some instances.)

Other options mutually acceptable to the person with a disability and the district may be used.

Figure 19-3.A presents an example of an announcement of an upcoming activity.

19-3.01(d) Offer of Public Hearing

FHWA regulations in 23 CFR 772.111(h)(2)(iii) require State public involvement/public hearing procedures to provide for one or more public hearings or the opportunity for hearing(s) for Federal-aid projects that involve certain specified factors affecting the public interest (e.g., significant amounts of right-of-way; significant social, economic, environmental or other effect). When the district, in consultation with FHWA, determines that an opportunity for hearing(s) will be afforded for a project, the requirements in 23 CFR 7723.111(h)(2)(iii) may be satisfied by publishing a notice in a newspaper offering an opportunity to request the Department of Transportation to hold a public hearing. The district should publish the notice of the offer 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 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 announcing the offer first appears in a newspaper.

The offer should also contain the following language:

> *This meeting will also serve to involve and obtain the views of the public for purposes of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. Information will be available on known historic resources that may be affected by the proposed project and the historic resources protection process. IDOT requests comments by the public on effects to historic resources to assist in consultation with the Illinois State Historic Preservation Officer.*

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

Fax: 416/343-6414
TTY: 217/524-4875
Media Contact: David Hall
Ph.: 416/343-6437

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

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) announced today an informational meeting has been scheduled for 7:00 P.M. on September 22, 2009 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. Persons with a disability planning to attend this meeting should contact the individual listed below by September 17, 2009, to advise of their planned attendance. The contact may be by telephone, in writing, by fax, or by telecommunications device for the deaf (TTY). If special accommodations are needed, the contact person should be informed at the time of contact. The meeting room is accessible to persons with a disability.

The meeting will be conducted on an informal basis. A brief presentation on the status of the project, the proposals under consideration, and the decisions to be made will begin at 7:00 P.M. Representatives of the IDOT will be available from 6:00 P.M. until the presentation and also after the presentation to discuss the project. The IDOT representatives will answer individual questions and record comments offered by those in attendance. Verbatim comments will not be recorded. 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. One alternative under consideration involves a potentially significant encroachment on the Salt Creek flood plain. The Division of Highways will process a Permit For Construction in a Regulated Floodway for the replacement of the bridge over Salt Creek. *(A statement concerning permits for construction in a regulated floodway is required only for District One projects outside of Chicago.)* 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 at Richland.

This meeting will also serve to involve and obtain the views of the public about potential impacts to cultural resources, in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. Information will be available on known historic properties that may be affected by the proposed project. IDOT requests comments by the public on effects to historic resources and to assist in consultation with the Illinois State Historic Preservation Officer.

The proposed project would involve use of land from the City Park. Approximately 2 out of 40 acres included in the park would be converted for highway use. The 2 acres would be taken from the northeast edge and would not affect the park's attributes. Through publication of this notice, the Department is requesting the public's views on the proposed use of parkland.

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.

ANNOUNCEMENT EXAMPLE

Figure 19-3.A

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, 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. Contact the Office of Communications for aid in the preparation of photo-ready display advertisements to reduce the cost of using paid advertisements. Public hearing offers should normally contain the following information:

- Proposal and project description, including a reference to significant encroachments in flood plains and significant impacts on wetlands.
- Information concerning the preparation and availability of EIS's and EA's.
- An invitation to the public to request a hearing.
- The name and address where requests should be sent.
- The time limit available to submit a request.
- An announcement that data are available for viewing and inspection including the name, address, telephone number, fax number, and TTY number that should be contacted for arranging to view that information and to obtain other information desired.
- A map showing the location of the improvement.
- A contact person and telephone number for the news media in the upper right-hand corner.

Figure 19-3.B presents an example of a typical offer of a public hearing.

The public hearing notice should state that a public hearing will be held if sufficient interest is demonstrated. The Regional Engineer shall make the determination of sufficiency. If sufficient interest is not demonstrated, each requestor shall be contacted by a district representative or by certified mail with return receipt and informed of the lack of sufficient interest. The district shall also advise the requestor that comments are welcome. If a personal contact is made, record comments during the contact. If the contact is by certified mail, include a stamped, self-addressed envelope and a name, telephone number, fax number, and telecommunications device for the deaf (TTY) number for returning comments. Use the fax number for the Regional Engineer's office and the district's TTY number. Address any comments received in the Corridor, Design, or Combined Study Report.

Figure 19-3.C presents an example of a public hearing announcement.

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

Fax: 416/343-6414
TTY: 217/524-4875
Media Contact: David Hall
Ph.: 416/343-6437

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

The Illinois Department of Transportation 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 (4.3-m) 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 (0.8 km) east of Illinois Route 1. An Environmental Assessment has been prepared for this project.

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, 1998. A hearing will be held if the public demonstrates sufficient interest.

This hearing will provide an opportunity for the public to provide comments about potential impacts to cultural resources, in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended and to assist in consultation with the Illinois State Historic Preservation Officer.

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 19-3.B

Fax: 416/343-6414
TTY: 217/524-4875
Media Contact: David Hall
Ph.: 416/343-6437

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 a public hearing has been scheduled for 7:00 P.M. on September 22, 2009 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. 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. and 139, and the Council on Environmental Quality regulations.

All persons interested in this project are invited to attend the meeting. Persons with a disability planning to attend this meeting should contact the individual listed below by September 17, 2009, to advise of their planned attendance. The contact may be by telephone, in writing, by fax, or by telecommunications device for the deaf (TTY). If special accommodations are needed, the contact person should be informed at the time of contact. The meeting room is accessible to persons with a disability.

A brief presentation on the status of the project, the proposals under consideration, and the decisions to be made will begin at 7:00 P.M. Representatives of the IDOT will be available from 6:00 P.M. until the presentation and also after the presentation to discuss the project. The IDOT representatives will answer individual questions and record comments offered by those in attendance. Verbatim comments will not be recorded. 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. One alternative under consideration involves a potentially significant encroachment on the Salt Creek flood plain. The Division of Highways will process a Permit for Construction in a Regulated Floodway for the replacement of the bridge over Salt Creek. *(A statement concerning permits for construction in a regulated floodway is required only for District One projects outside of Chicago.)* 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.

This hearing will provide an opportunity for the public to provide comments about potential impacts to cultural resources, in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended and to assist in consultation with the Illinois State Historic Preservation Officer.

propertiesThe proposed project would involve use of land from the City Park. Approximately 2 out of 40 acres included in the park would be converted for highway use. The 2 acres would be taken from the northeast edge and would not affect the park's attributes. Through publication of this notice, the Department is requesting the public's views on the proposed use of parkland.

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
FIGURE 19-3.C

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

19-3.02 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.

19-3.03 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.

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

19-4 PLANNING THE MEETING

This Section will discuss the process for planning an individual activity, whether it is an open house, an informational meeting, or a public hearing. The planning activities have been divided into four subsections — Pre-Meeting Activities, Preparation of the Meeting Site, the Presentation, and Post-Meeting Follow-up.

The district must carefully prepare and develop public involvement activities not only to attract and hold the public's attention but also to create a pleasant atmosphere for discussion of highway projects.

19-4.01 Pre-Meeting Activities

Suggested criteria for selecting a site for an involvement activity and the kinds of materials and equipment that may be necessary have been previously described. The following information provides additional guidance on the meeting preparation once the meeting site has been selected and the timing of the activity has been set.

19-4.01(a) 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 stages, projection rooms, light switches, electrical plug-ins, microphone jacks, entrances, and 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, and acquisition. This inspection may be combined with the accessibility inspection discussed in Section 19-2.03.

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. Public address systems and slide 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.

19-4.01(b) 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, by fax, or by TTY to advise of their anticipated attendance and any special needs. The district contact person should be prepared to answer questions regarding the accessibility of the meeting site and should complete a Request for Accommodation form (available from the Department of Human Services) for each contact with a disabled individual. If interpreters for hearing-impaired persons or materials for visually impaired individuals have been requested, make every effort to provide the requested services. The Department of Human Services has produced a Directory of Sign Language Interpreters that contains a partial listing of interpreters in Illinois. Additional information on interpreters and Brailling sources is available from the central and field offices of the Department of Human Services. The district may prepare recordings of printed materials when Braille materials are unavailable or not acceptable.

If the involvement activity will include a period for questions or informal discussion, the persons 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 Printing and Duplicating Section 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 or may request assistance from the Office of Communications or the Aerial Surveys Section. 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 employee of the Department of Transportation. Presentations for the involvement activity should be prepared in accordance with Section 19-2.03.

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

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

19-4.02 Preparing the Meeting Site

When all personnel have reached the site and 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. 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 attendants 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. Place other signing, as determined necessary in accordance with Section 19-4.01 at the meeting location. Set up displays as previously planned and orient them with North in the same direction in each.

19-4.03 The Presentation

19-4.03(a) General Requirements

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 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 at the involvement activity should minimize the use of technical terms in their presentations and in their responses to questions. The personnel conducting the involvement activity should convey an attitude of friendliness, understanding, respect, and cooperation to promote a positive atmosphere for the involvement activity. 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.

19-4.03(b) Content

Presentations for public involvement activities should follow basically the same outline and address the same general topics. The selected approach may vary somewhat, and the exact

nature of the data presented may vary from activity to activity depending upon the anticipated participants. 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.

The opening speaker or moderator should first welcome those in attendance and explain the purpose of the activity. The welcome should be sincere and friendly. 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 choosing between alternatives. The opening speaker should also explain the format to be used. The speaker can describe what is involved in a workshop, an informational 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, attendants may use the handouts as a presentation supplement to their benefit.

At this point, the presentation should describe the project and include the following:

- 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.

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

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 development, when the Design Study Report will be completed, when construction will be initiated, and when construction should be completed. If construction is not scheduled during the current fiscal year, explain that priorities may vary with future funding levels, crash experience, required maintenance effort, and changes in traffic volumes.

If noise abatement measures are proposed for the project, they should be briefly discussed. Another subject that should be briefly discussed is the acquisition of right-of-way and the availability of relocation assistance. If the purpose of the activity is to offer choices among alternatives, then information should also be available which would indicate the approximate right-of-way takings and the properties affected. Advise interested property owners of whether they will be affected and to what extent. Explain that individual questions concerning the acquisition process and land acquisition personnel will answer the availability and limitations of relocation assistance during the informal period. Indicate where the land acquisition personnel will be located during the informal period. Discussions of land acquisition processes that involve more than a statement of availability should be brief and in proportion to the overall time limit of 30 minutes.

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.

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.

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 that written

comments received within 10 days 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. Informal pre-meetings or brainstorming sessions as described in Section 19-4.01(b) may also aid the presenters in determining what information and topics should be included in their talk.

19-4.04 Audio-Visual Aids

19-4.04(a) 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 location 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 at a public involvement activity. As a result, the use of effective audio-visual materials and techniques can be a major asset to the successful implementation of public involvement activities.

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

- overhead projector,
- slides,
- motion pictures,
- videotape/DVD,
- audiotape/digital recording,
- large writing pad and tripod,
- fixed exhibits,
- models,
- demonstrations, and
- chalkboard.

Several of these aids may be combined for an even more effective presentation. A coordinated slide and audiotape 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.

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

In the preparation of visual exhibits, the use of colors to depict different alternatives or features of the proposal can be important. The colors themselves can elicit emotional responses from the participants. A general rule is to refrain from using strong, bright colors. Bright red, pink, yellow, green, and similar colors appear objectionable and should be avoided where possible. Colors that appear more satisfactory are medium blue, medium to dark green, golden yellow, and light brown. 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.

BDE has capabilities for video imaging, computer-imaging, and photomontage. These technologies can be used to produce perspective views of the project setting with project alternatives superimposed to show how they will appear if constructed. These techniques are helpful in explaining how an alternative may alter the project setting and are especially useful in responding to concerns about potential visual quality impacts. Districts may contact BDE to request assistance in producing video-image, computer-image, or photomontage exhibits.

19-4.04(b) 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 location 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) Slides

Slides offer many advantages for use in a public involvement activity. They can be used to display almost any subject and require little equipment and minimal experience to prepare. This permits some experimentation and innovation by the preparers of the slide presentation. The number of slides that can be used at a presentation is controlled only by the time available, which may allow hundreds of slides during a single presentation at a public involvement activity. These presentations are very effective because of the large amount of information that can be disseminated and because of their ability to attract and maintain audience attention.

Slides of actual locations along the proposed project allow meeting attendees to orient themselves to familiar surroundings while the presenter describes the proposed work at each of the locations displayed. They also demonstrate that district staff has been to the project site and are aware of existing conditions.

Slides are a natural medium for standard presentations such as right-of-way acquisition and relocation assistance, Federal-State relationship, etc. The district can prepare the presentation once and use this repeatedly at appropriate public involvement activities. Standard presentations can be made more sophisticated by the addition of audio and/or video.

Slides should be simple so the information they display can be quickly absorbed and understood by viewers. A general rule is that slides should be displayed on the screen no less than six seconds nor more than ten. Constant change creates motion that maintains audience attention, which can be created by using a building-block technique with one basic slide. An example of this is the presentation of a list of items. The first slide shows the title and Item #1. The second slide shows the title and Item #1 with Item #2 added in a contrasting color. The third slide shows the title and Items #1 and #2, with Item #2 now being the same color as the title and Item #1, with a third item now in contrasting color. This technique effectively presents a list of information while emphasizing each item as it is added. Lettering on slides should be sufficiently large to be read by the naked eye while holding the slide to a light. If it cannot be read without magnification, it will probably be too small for use in the presentation. Experience demonstrates that slides are easiest to understand when they contain no more than six lines of writing per slide. Slides composed solely of written messages are also more effective if they use light or white letters on a black background.

When a slide presentation will be part of a public involvement activity, ensure in advance that the appropriate equipment and facilities are available so the program will not be unnecessarily interrupted. Check items such as compatibility of the equipment, number and size of screens,

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

and availability of back-up projectors and account for these prior to the meeting. Also, include extension cords, spare bulbs, etc., to minimize the adverse effect of any equipment failures.

19-4.04(d) Video

Video can be a practical alternative for public involvement activity presentations; although it will usually take more time produce than other audio-visual means. When using monitors for display, video is somewhat limited in transmitting information to large groups because of the size of monitors. Such presentations are however, 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(e) Miscellaneous Audio-Visual Aids

There are other audio-visual aids that are not as common as those which have been discussed. 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.

Overhead projectors may be used effectively, and they offer many of the advantages provided with slides. They do, however, require constant manipulation by the speaker or an aide, which can detract from his/her effectiveness. Overhead projectors, however, offer the advantages of allowing the speaker to write on the display during the presentation. This may be useful at workshops or informal small group meetings when the speaker may be reacting to input. The use of overhead projectors requires a relatively small investment. Personnel with limited experience can prepare transparencies and other displays at a reasonable cost.

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. When recording a presentation, it is important to select a skilled narrator with experience in voice delivery and inflection.

19-4.04(f) Combinations of Audio-Visual Aids

Many audio-visual aids are more effective when combined with each other during a single program. For example, a speaker may use slides, make a reference to a slide-tape presentation on relocation assistance, return to a live talk with slides, break for a movie demonstrating the effectiveness of a design feature, return again to a live talk, request input from the public, and use a large writing pad to record comments. The variety of using more than one audio-visual aid will keep the audience attentive and provide a maximum amount of information.

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.

In many cases, project revisions are often made after public involvement activities. Because these changes are indicative to the public of the value of its input, the district can improve relationships with the public by informing it of project revisions.

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED

19-5 RECORDS AND REPORTS

19-5.01 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 commentors may complete and return. Include on the form the date by which the form should be returned.

Not all comments must be recorded verbatim. There will not be a transcript of most informal involvement activities, and the district representatives therefore must ensure that all non-written comments are properly noted and recorded. The recording of comments may use small pocket recorders (e.g., tape, digital), or each representative may carry a note pad and record comments during his conversations with the public. Two-person teams may be formed — one to interact with the public and one to record comments. Take notes during the receipt of comments to ensure that none are overlooked. Attempt to obtain the name and address of those persons offering comments so that a response can be forwarded at a later time.

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.

19-5.02 Transcripts

A transcript is required for all formal and open house public hearings. Transcripts may also be useful for other meetings and activities, especially if critical discussion or input is anticipated. This might include meetings with local government officials, organized opposition, or officials of agencies likely to be impacted by the project. These transcripts are easily recorded using one of the small compact recorders available. In this manner, important meetings can be recorded exactly and there is no summary or interpretation to be questioned.

Obtain transcripts by electronic recorders (e.g., tape, digital) or Certified Shorthand Reporters. To ensure coverage, some districts have used both electronic recorders and shorthand reporters. If a tape recorder is used, a backup recorder should be available in case of malfunction. Operate both recorders with staggered starting times so that no input is lost while the tapes are being changed. If an activity is scheduled that may last an extensive period of time, it may be necessary to arrange for more than one Certified Shorthand Reporter so they may operate in alternating shifts to maintain alertness.

For open house 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 official recorder.

19-5.03 Reports

All comments must eventually become a part of the project files and the Phase I report. If a transcript of a public involvement activity is available, it should be included in the Phase I report package and provided to FHWA with the environmental documents. It must be included for public hearings. If a transcript is not available, prepare a summary of the substantive comments that have been received from the public and include this in the report. In either case, the report 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.

19-5.04 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, forward copies of the summary of comments and responses prepared for inclusion in the Phase I report, 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. Contacts with these agencies indicate that they repeat comments previously given because they have received no indication that their comments were received or addressed by the Department.

19-5.05 Certification

In accordance with 23 CFR 771.111, certification shall be provided by the Districts to the FHWA that states a public hearing was held or, if not held but required, the opportunity for a public hearing was offered. The certification shall assure the FHWA that the District has considered the economic and social effects of the project, its impacts on the environment, and its consistency with the planning goals and objectives of the affected communities. If a public hearing was held, submit the certification with the transcript of the public hearing. If a public hearing was not held, submit the certification at the completion of the NEPA process. A copy of the certification shall be placed in the project file.

HARD COPIES UNCONTROLLED