

Oregon Department of Transportation

**PROJECT DELIVERY
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT RESOURCE GUIDE**



Produced by

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ODOT Project Delivery PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT RESOURCE GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

PREFACE

Successful delivery of Oregon Department of Transportation projects depends on our ability to work effectively with the public. We demonstrate accountability to those we serve by developing and using fair and effective decision-making processes and communication strategies.

The better we understand and address the needs and ideas of those who could be affected by project decisions, the better we can contribute to the ODOT Mission: *To provide a safe, efficient transportation system that supports economic opportunity and livable communities for Oregonians.*

ODOT is committed to involving the public—individuals, governments, and other organizations—in project work and decisions that directly and indirectly affect them. This is demonstrated through:

Our Values: We work with the appropriate customers, stakeholders, and partners to find efficient, effective, and innovative solutions

Our Goals: Improve Oregon's livability and economic prosperity

Our Strategies: Engage the public, other state agencies, local governments, businesses and community leaders in solving transportation problems

The interests surrounding transportation projects are often widely varied, complex—even opposing—and consensus can be very difficult to achieve. This guide provides some general resources for anyone who has a role in ODOT project delivery and whose work requires involving stakeholders in decision-making in both project development and construction, and allows flexibility to tailor involvement to meet specific project and community needs.

The process of informing and educating the public as well as soliciting input, listening and responding to what citizens and customers have to say about our project decisions can be a complicated, challenging, and often intimidating process for all involved. And at other times the process can be relatively straightforward, requiring only basic common sense. In any case when done well, it can also be a rewarding and meaningful experience that leads to better decisions and greater mutual trust.

While no specific public involvement formula can be used to support the development and construction of every project, there are some basic principles and practices that you can apply to most that can address these challenges, help create confidence and trust for all, and improve the chances of a successful outcome. Read on....

PURPOSE

As the demands on Oregon's transportation system continue to change and grow, so do the implications for project decision-making, stakeholder and community interests, and environmental impacts. These dynamics result in ever-changing expectations on how to effectively and appropriately involve both internal and external stakeholders, and reinforce the need for effective public involvement planning on every project.

This guide is intended to help project development and construction teams organize and implement public involvement strategies that will lead to balanced, and context-sensitive and sustainable transportation decisions. Keep in mind this resource guide is a starting point. Quality projects require strong commitment and action from all individuals involved, whether they are ODOT staff, construction contractors or consultants, local jurisdictions, elected officials, citizens or tribal members.

This guide addresses public involvement and its basic principles as it is applied to project development and construction of *STIP projects*. This guidance *does not necessarily apply* to [planning](#) or maintenance projects, although the principles and approaches described here can be used in many situations. As used in the guide, "delivery" signifies the entire lifecycle of ODOT projects, a process that stretches from inception to realization—from "cradle to grave"—and isn't limited to the construction phase of a project.

This guide covers the "what," "why," "when" and "how" to successfully plan and implement public involvement activities that will add overall value to your project. It also provides guidance and a template for developing a public involvement plan, along with helpful resources to make the most of the activities we undertake. These materials are arranged in three sections:

Section 1: What is Public Involvement?

Section 2: Why is Public Involvement Important?

Section 3: How do you conduct Public Involvement?

Appendix A: Tools and Resources

Appendix B: Federal and State Public Involvement Policies and Regulations

This guide, combined with the advice, guidance and support of public affairs professionals and the leadership of area managers should provide the necessary tools and resources for a successful public involvement process.

Project Delivery [Operational Notice](#) 12 spells out the responsibilities of each member of a project team (applying to both project development and construction). Details about federal and state regulations, requirements and policies are provided in [Appendix B](#).

WHAT IS PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN PROJECT DELIVERY?

Public involvement for ODOT project delivery includes any interactions we have with those who may be interested in or affected by a project decision. This includes any activity in which we strive to inform, educate, reach out to, gather input from, engage, and/or collaborate with individuals and organizations regarding project decisions.

The *public* includes all members of the Oregon community as a whole, including individual stakeholders, travelers, property and business owners, local/state/federal governments, and tribal nations.

Stakeholders include any individual or organization with direct interest, involvement, or investment in ODOT project decision-making. Stakeholders are both internal ODOT (employee) and external to ODOT (not an employee). For example, a district maintenance employee may be an internal stakeholder to a project, and thus a stakeholder we want to involve in the project.

Successful public involvement for an ODOT project means we create a common understanding with the public that:

1. There is a need or opportunity - one that must be addressed
2. We have the right team and it is our responsibility to address the need or opportunity
3. Our approach in addressing the need or opportunity is reasonable, sensible, and responsible
4. We do listen and we do care

Further, effective public involvement during project development and construction:

- Actively engages stakeholders in the project decision-making process at the appropriate times, where diverse opinions are expected and welcomed
- Builds trust and credibility
- Accounts for the political climate and potential public issues and impacts

- Promotes the goals and expectations shared by the public and decision-makers about the project and project decisions
- Can be conducted using a variety of techniques and tools
- Meets the process-needs of all participants: they have a say in how they participate
- Provides all affected individuals a voice in decisions about actions that may affect their lives
- Communicates to participants if and how their input affected decisions
- Provides essential information to reach the best solutions for project decisions
- Effectively communicates and clearly illustrates the reasons for recommended courses of action in a way that stakeholders can understand
- Can happen as readily and with the same importance during the construction phase as it does in the project development phase

Any project that does not address—or is perceived not to address—a serious need or opportunity is at risk. Public involvement efforts should support a message that demonstrates how a particular problem that the project is intended to address can significantly impact someone’s quality of life.

Consensus is often difficult, at times even impossible, to achieve on certain project decisions. In such cases, it is our responsibility to make sure we are doing our best by:

- Using a good decision-making process to reach appropriate and effective proposals
- Listening effectively and being responsive to input and potential impacts
- Effectively communicating our proposed actions in an understandable way to those affected

ODOT PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

Projects may or may not warrant a highly structured public involvement process - as you will learn in this guide, it really depends on the project scope, complexity, sponsorship, required approvals, range of stakeholders, and other factors. [Project Delivery Operational Notice #12 \(PD-12\)](#) spells out the responsibilities and expectations for those involved on a project.

Those leading or managing project development or construction retain responsibility for the success of the project, including the public involvement plan and effort. However, there are many resources available to assist with this aspect; [Appendix A](#) provides tools and resources in greater detail, including a section on what to do when plans and communications go awry.

WHY IS PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IMPORTANT?

O DOT wants to develop and construct projects which provide a safe, efficient transportation system that supports economic opportunity and livable communities for Oregonians. The people who travel on, live and work near, or are affected one way or another by the part of the system we need to work on, often have valuable problem-solving insights or critical interests that we need to understand and address. They can even be invaluable in helping us make informed decisions and communicate to others important messages about the project purpose, needs, priorities, and solutions. The public also wants us to spend their tax dollars wisely, and it is important for us to communicate that we are doing so, and how.

In the face of diverse views and interests it can be difficult and even unrealistic to achieve consensus, but timely engagement with the public offers considerable benefits for everyone. It leads to better project delivery as a result of our taking into account a wide range of views, thereby increasing the legitimacy, integrity and quality of decisions.

A big part of our job at ODOT, as a large and visible state agency, is to establish trust and credibility with the public. Every project requires a careful balancing of confidence and ownership in our work with listening to all our stakeholders, remaining open to ideas, being flexible, understanding, caring, and being accountable to the public we serve.

Project leaders and managers want to complete projects on time and within budget. Experience shows us that getting critical information and establishing best solutions in a timely way contribute best to achieving these goals. We can make better decisions by doing public involvement planning, integrating public involvement activities into the project development and construction processes, and documenting these activities.

So, the bottom line: We cannot afford to leave the public out of our project decision-making; it is essential to success.

Benefits of public involvement

A well-planned and well-implemented public involvement effort can yield substantial benefits, such as:

- Improving the legitimacy of project development and construction decisions in the eyes of those affected by them, making it more likely that the decisions can be implemented effectively (now and in the future).
- Enhancing mutual trust and understanding, thus paving the way for smoother interactions on the next project.
- By involving diverse stakeholders in the assessment of needs, and identifying troublesome issues early, public involvement can promote broader “ownership.” Although many projects have some negative effects, stakeholders are often more accepting when they recognize a need being addressed, participate in developing/understanding the solution, and understand the constraints and trade-offs.
- Making context-sensitive decisions that better reflect community values, which is part of our mission.
- Decision makers who understand the concerns of the public can be more sensitive to those concerns in the decision making process, leading to more efficient implementation.
- Enhancing agency credibility and engagement. Transportation stakeholders develop a better understanding of agency operations, and agency officials have a better understanding of public thinking.
- We do not have a monopoly on good ideas. Effective public involvement will generate new ideas and perspectives, benefiting current and future projects.
- Reducing the risk of litigation, and avoid revisiting decisions which can significantly reduce costs.

Achieving these results depends on proper planning and employing practices that address the specific issues and context of each project. The remaining sections of this guide will help provide some valuable resources.

HOW DO YOU CONDUCT PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT?

You start by developing a Public Involvement Plan (samples are provided in [Appendix A](#)). A plan must be prepared for each ODOT project to establish the appropriate level and sequence of public involvement activities. Plans are developed at the start of project development and maintained through completion of construction. They evolve and are tailored to the appropriate level of effort needed, based on the context of the project (e.g. scope, complexity, potential impacts and risks, level of interest, etc.) Each plan includes:

- A summary of any related public involvement prior to the start of project development (or of previous project phases).
- A listing of stakeholders and their key issues/concerns, previous commitments made to them, and a method for ongoing updates to the listing.
- Specific strategies for assessing priorities and addressing individual issues, concerns, commitments, and/or policies etc.
- Description of how public involvement activities will be coordinated with other project management efforts and processes (e.g., Transportation Management Plans, project schedules, etc.).
- Planned activities and tasks with corresponding team member roles, responsibilities, and timeframes (e.g., information gathering, outreach, information sharing/education, coordination, assessments, collaboration/engagement, documentation, post project evaluation of plan/lessons learned, etc.).

The plan may only be a page long, or it may be many pages, depending on the nature, location, complexity, and needs of the project.

[Operational Notice](#) PD-12 outlines basic expectations concerning roles and responsibilities for project delivery public involvement. Whoever has been assigned to oversee a project— this could be a Project Leader, Project Manager, Local Agency Liaison, or Environmental Project Manager—is ultimately responsible for initiating the

public involvement plan, documenting public involvement activities and maintaining the documents in the project file.

Begin developing, writing and implementing the plan with stakeholder interests and the desired project outcomes in mind. Articulate what the goals and objectives of the plan are for the given project, and how success will be measured. Your plans and decisions should focus on establishing and maintaining an understanding with the public that:

1. There is a need or opportunity - one that must be addressed.
2. ODOT has assembled the right team, and it is our responsibility to address the need or opportunity.
3. Our approach in addressing the need or opportunity is reasonable, sensible, and responsible.
4. We do listen and we do care.

Include in your planning how these points will be sustained and measured. For example, it's important to track progress with the plan, such as when specific commitments are made (e.g., who made it, to whom it was made, why, as well as the information the decision was based upon) and transitions occur between project development and construction. That way, if a decision needs to be revisited, it will be easier to know who to talk to and what has changed.

Although assignments can vary from project to project, it is typical for leaders and managers to collaborate with the public involvement or public affairs staff or consultants, the area manager (or other project sponsors), and key project team members when drafting and implementing public involvement plans.

For your Public Involvement Plan to be effective, it must be coordinated with the project's various technical and decision-making milestones in and across project development and construction.

Early attention to stakeholder needs provides the information necessary to develop an appropriate and effective Public Involvement Plan and schedule. The earlier you start, the better. For example, involving key stakeholders during scope development helps the project leader or manager gather information that is critical to a project's success. Certainly there may be some guess work and lack of specifics in the beginning, but understand that the plan can be refined as the project development process evolves. Early public involvement efforts during scoping may also help determine who will be most desirable to have supporting the project, or help with criteria on consultant selection for public involvement services, for good timing with project start-up. (See Scoping Questions in [Appendix A](#))

Remember that a Public Involvement Plan is a living and evolving document, and will change over time as discovery is made, or as issues and concerns change. For a long

process, built-in formal reviews and updates to the plan are a good idea. Bear in mind that the review may or may not result in revisions, and that the timing of the review may need to be based on achievement of a milestone rather than a specific date.

Specific Tips as the Plan is Developed

There is no single formula that can be universally applied to achieve the “right” process and techniques for the plan. There is, however, some advice to remember:

Personal interaction is often the most effective form of involvement. For example, a series of one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders can be effective in identifying concerns, issues, needs, level of interest, potential impacts, follow-up expectations, ideas and other forms of assistance toward the project, even including what involvement and decision-making techniques to use.

Go to where people are, rather than asking them to come to you. People meet and gather in everyday community ways, such as community associations, libraries, school-based and parent advisory groups, and coffee shops. It is often easier to reach people in their habitual settings than trying to attract them to ODOT sponsored public events.

Engage a variety of senses: develop pictures, maps, models. If people can feel, sense, touch, see and hear (experience) what you are working on, they can better understand, and respond with meaningful input.

The more conflict, the greater the need for interactive techniques. For example, if two different stakeholders are directly opposed on an approach or solution, they can be encouraged to set aside positions and personalities and focus on clarification of facts surrounding the problem, issues and desired outcomes.

Public involvement processes should be oriented toward common ground. Between people’s worst fears and greatest hopes, there is some common agreement; even among the most diverse and conflicting views.

Public involvement processes should be safe for the participants. Particularly when the issues are controversial and when there is considerable conflict, people need opportunities to become involved where they feel *safe* to express their views and opinions.

People need good information to be effective participants. This means full disclosure of understandable information on the issues, ideas and perspectives of the project and asking participants what information they think they need. Also, it’s our job to explain things in common terms and language and avoid using ODOT jargon or including hidden assumptions about ODOT values and issues that others don’t understand.

Use techniques specific to the needs of the project. The techniques used should fit the type, size, and complexity of the project, as well the diversity, complexity and polarity of interests. The techniques chosen should fit the available resources, support better solutions, lower total costs and timely completion. Using too many or the wrong techniques on a project may increase risk.

Public involvement should remain flexible. As public involvement processes unfold, there will inevitably be changes in who wants or needs to participate, the information that becomes available, and the perspectives on the issues. Keeping the process flexible allows responsiveness to these changes.

Look for opportunities to include stakeholder ideas in the project. It sends a clear message that we are listening and care about their concerns.

Public involvement processes need to reflect ODOT responsibility and ownership of the project. That is, the public involvement process should not surrender our charge for making project decisions. The effort should be about improving the quality of decisions made, not deferring ownership.

Mistakes That Can Put a Project at Risk

Using the "Decide-Announce-Defend" Decision-Making Process

Choosing, or appearing to have chosen, a project alternative before completing the supporting studies and/or consulting stakeholders significantly increases the chances that one or more of those stakeholders will not agree with your project solutions.

Succumbing to the technical fallacy

Projects are rarely stopped because of technical deficiencies. Some form of public opposition is usually the reason. Often, both public agencies and private proponents assume that technical soundness is enough to assure good decisions and timely project implementation.

Underestimating Stakeholder Veto Power

There is always the possibility that a small minority of stakeholders (even just one person) may find a way to stop or seriously delay a project. However, the risk can be managed if we recognize this potential, take it seriously and address it in an appropriate way, such as avoiding the above two mistakes.

SIX STEPS TO AN EFFECTIVE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

The following section describes how to best plan and execute public involvement for ODOT projects. Simply put, these steps are:

1. Identify stakeholders and their key issues/concerns
2. Establish objectives
3. Determine level of public involvement
4. Select the public involvement activities
5. Implement
6. Evaluate and incorporate

1. IDENTIFY STAKEHOLDERS AND THEIR KEY ISSUES/CONCERNS

Identifying those who would likely be affected by a project, and what their interests are, is the first step in determining the range of public involvement activities needed. This early stakeholder “scoping” helps:

- Gauge levels of interest from various stakeholders (both internal and external)
- Identify potential focus areas for goals and objectives (e.g., controversies)
- Identify social, economic, cultural and other environmental concerns
- Identify those individuals needed and available to support the effort

It’s also important to research and summarize any related public involvement activities which might have taken place prior to the start of the project. What is ODOT’s history in this area? What other public involvement efforts coincide or overlap with those of this project? What commitments have been made to this community? Within ODOT?

While stakeholders can include owners of property adjacent to the project, they also include many other interests, such as users of the system, representatives from ODOT or other jurisdictions, business owners, public and private transportation service providers, other government agencies, and special interest groups.

The suggested template for an ODOT Public Involvement Plan in [Appendix A](#) includes a helpful list of potential stakeholders for consideration. Keep in mind that every project is unique: You may identify only a few potential stakeholders from the list or find there are stakeholders not listed who should be engaged. Potential stakeholders may include:

- Adjacent property owners (residential, commercial, industrial, institutional—educational, religious, government, non-profit)
- Adjacent property renters (residential, commercial, industrial, institutional)

- Transportation facility users (commuters, truckers, business customers, tourists, major regional employers)
- Local elected and appointed officials (city council, county commissions, planning commissions)
- Natural resource and/or regulatory agency staff, such as the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife or the Army Corp of Engineers.
- Local jurisdiction professionals, such as city managers, county finance managers, public works directors, traffic engineers, planning directors
- Regional professionals, such as Metropolitan Planning Organization transportation staff
- ODOT professionals, such as district maintenance managers and staff, traffic operations staff, headquarters environmental staff, transportation planners, construction staff (during project development) and project development staff (during construction), etc.
- Federal transportation staff (Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration)
- Transportation service providers (transit, airports, railways, marine ports)
- Neighborhood organizations
- *Underserved* groups who may be impacted, such as minorities, low-income, or those with *limited English proficiency* (LEP).
- Business organizations (local and regional Chambers of Commerce, economic development agencies, industry associations)
- Special interest groups (bicycle, pedestrian, recreation, health & wellness, environmental, historic preservation, scenic conservation, aeronautics, land use)
- Tribal Nations
- The news media

In all cases, aim to be inclusive: Ensure that everyone who may have an interest in or may be affected by the outcome has an opportunity to be involved. In many cases it's important that specific stakeholders— such as those who might be opposed or who have special knowledge—actually be sought out for inclusion.

Also consider those with specialized needs or disadvantages, such as people with low income, older adults, people with disabilities, and those with special language or communication needs. These types of potential stakeholders may be dispersed and/or feel helpless in their ability to influence public decisions, thus the appropriate outreach must be tailored to the circumstances at hand. (See [ODOT's Title VI Program](#).)

Identifying stakeholders can be a challenge. Knowledge of local customs and influences can be critical. Community leaders are not always the elected or appointed officials, so it's important to research previous related public involvement. ODOT staff familiar with the project area can relate its history and current transportation needs and help you identify potential issues, the groups likely to be affected, and key contacts. Those same staff members may also be internal project stakeholders.

Keep in mind that no matter how thorough you are in stakeholder identification at the beginning of a project, the list will evolve. As more detailed information becomes available, previously uninterested parties may become stakeholders.

Go beyond simply listing likely stakeholders and delve into what their issues might be, what they might be able to contribute, and how they might best be involved. Go beyond individual stakeholders and into understanding community attitudes about the nature of transportation problems or issues associated with a project, such as those concerning safety, mobility, land use, land development and environmental values. Some concerns or issues might seem irrelevant or trivial at first; strive to maintain an open mind and listen carefully to what is being said. At any time, a concern or issue may escalate from trivial to critical.

This first step in Public Involvement planning will contribute to your understanding of the project's constraints and opportunities, and will inform the subsequent steps. Public involvement planning will help you avoid creating unreasonable expectations with a community and boost your understanding of organizational support, statutory requirements (like public hearings,) or other expectations within ODOT.

Some concerns may already be known by the project team; others are revealed once stakeholders are contacted. As relationships develop and the project advances, new issues may come to light. Timely discovery of stakeholder concerns and beliefs is important; early is usually better, but gaining a complete understanding may take much time and effort, even as the project transitions from development to construction.

Essential to completing this step is estimating how much work is required to develop the Public Involvement Plan, over and above the actual public involvement activities. Each project will be different, and it will be an iterative and evolving process.

2. ESTABLISH OBJECTIVES

The next step is to use the knowledge you've gained to establish public involvement objectives. The Public Involvement Plan's objectives should not be confused with nor should they duplicate the project objectives. Rather, they must specify how they will support the desired project outcomes.

As mentioned early in this section, the Public Involvement Plan's objectives should be oriented around creating and maintaining a common understanding with the public that:

1. There is a need or opportunity – one that must be addressed.
2. We have the right team and it is our responsibility to address the need or opportunity.
3. Our approach in addressing the need or opportunity is reasonable, sensible, and responsible.
4. We do listen; we do care.

Communicating and maintaining these points throughout the life of the project will substantially increase your chances of project success.

A project's public involvement objectives and the techniques used can change as the work progresses and as more information is gathered. The Public Involvement Plan must be revisited and revised as necessary at key milestones, most notably in the transition between project development and construction.

3. DETERMINE THE LEVEL OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

As you gather the information in previous steps and understand the project area better and better, you are developing an understanding of your project's context, to which your Public Involvement Plan must be tailored.

The project's context is a reflection of community and stakeholder values, needs and interests and fosters an awareness of the social, cultural, political, economic, physical, timing, technical and historic attributes of the project area. You must also consider not only the corridor perspective, but that of the state and even the national system. Identifying project context also sets the stage for establishing environmental analysis of the project.

To help you deal with all the possibilities and variables you face, ODOT has developed a *Tier Assessment Tool*. The tool outlines a matrix of contextual possibilities, ranging from the simplest situation with few concerns or impacts to the most visible and complex projects, and suggests appropriate levels of effort. It can guide you in determining the activities and resources needed for most situations. It is up to those planning the public involvement effort to determine into which tier a project falls.

Tier 1 Project Characteristics

Technical:

- Typical uncomplicated repair or maintenance project (e.g., *1R*)
- No detours or major closures (Traffic Management Plan)

Contextual:

- Project influence area unpopulated
- Programmatic permit - No environmental, ROW, access impacts
- No Environment Justice issues
- No historic elements or facilities

Local:

No distinguishing project-specific issues identified

Tier 2 Project Characteristics

Technical:

- Complex repair, preservation, replacement or modernization scope of work
- Minor detour or closures; interchange or access impacts (Traffic Management Plan)

Contextual:

- Project influence area - rural or sparsely populated community with some residences, businesses, schools, etc.
- Programmatic permit - No *significant* environmental, ROW, access impacts
- No Environment Justice issues
- No historic elements or facilities

Local:

Project-specific issues identified that require some targeted or special outreach and input activities

Tier 3 Project Characteristics

Technical:

- Highly complex repair, safety, replacement or modernization scope of work
- Major detour and/or closures, interchange/ access impacts, safety issue (Traffic Management Plan)

Contextual:

- Project influence area within a highly populated or urban setting
- Non-programmatic permit - Substantial environmental, ROW, access impacts
- Environment Justice issues exist
- Historic elements or facilities

Local:

Significant project-specific issues identified that require a comprehensive public involvement plan with targeted or special outreach and input activities.

Tier 2 and Tier 1 public involvement efforts typically require a simpler scope; complex Tier 3 projects involve a more comprehensive scope and effort.

This assessment provides basic guidance in determining specific public involvement outreach needs and target internal and external audiences for the assessed project. A complete listing of the tasks recommended for each tier level is outlined on the Tier Assessment Tool in [Appendix A](#).

4. SELECT PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

The next step is to decide which public involvement activities you will use. These are simply tools that fit the assessment you completed above; there are a variety to choose from and you can select the combination most appropriate for your project and objectives. As outlined in previous steps, your understanding of the stakeholders, their issues and interests, the plan objectives, the project's context and constraints, and the level of complexity and potential impact, will all guide your selection of public involvement activities.

Consult [Appendix A](#) for the public involvement strategies and techniques that fit your project best. Remember to revisit your Public Involvement Plan at each stage, including transitions from project development to construction, to update it and adjust activities to the current needs. Consider your timing (who to involve and when); early involvement creates a sense of partnership and ownership of the issues, problems and outcomes. Typically, the earlier issues are identified, the more flexibility there is to address them. As a project progresses and decisions are made, flexibility is reduced.

Questions to consider when choosing public involvement activities and techniques:

- How does the activity tie to the tier assessment and the Public Involvement Plan objectives?
- When should the activity be done (one-time or repeating)?
- Where will public involvement activity take place?
- Who will run the activity?
- What publicity is needed?
- What information should be given to stakeholders?
- How will the activity be coordinated with other project management efforts and process (e.g., Transportation Management Plans, project schedules, Design Acceptance)
- How will success be measured for each activity?

Ask for help: Each ODOT region has knowledgeable public and community affairs staff skilled at assessing communications and outreach needs and techniques. You can find contact information at: <http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/involvement.shtml>

5. IMPLEMENT

Once you've chosen your public involvement activities and techniques, you need to decide how they'll be carried out. This is a dynamic step, during which you will be responding to changes as they happen; in this step we demonstrate our commitment to the public involvement process and objectives.

With good planning, you can be prepared for even unforeseen issues and address them appropriately. Flexibility and ongoing modifications to the plan carry you successfully through this step. As transitions occur between project development and construction, ensure there is good information flow, stakeholder relationships are maintained, commitments are kept, and staff is budgeted

A good way to aid implementation of your Public Involvement Plan is to develop a table or schedule (using Microsoft Project or Excel), which lists the planned activities and tasks with corresponding team member roles, responsibilities, and timeframes. It should be set so that it can be posted and updated to team members as progress is made.

As the public involvement activities take place, be sure to provide stakeholders with ongoing feedback opportunities. This reassures them that their views and concerns are being heard and considered. It's also important to provide timely and accurate follow-up after a decision has been made on an issue. The level of trust and cooperation between the organization and the community is likely to increase through these interactions.

Also let stakeholders know what the next steps are, for example, when and how they will learn the outcomes from any activity or event. If the information or outcomes are delayed, keep participants informed about progress. The task schedule is an effective way to ensure timely follow-up, and to meet expectations and keep involvement commitments.

Your task schedule should address when and how feedback and follow-up will be made (including FHWA expectations and NEPA requirements as applicable). Depending on the nature of the activities, feedback might be offered at regular intervals, or within a pre-determined period after each engagement.

A range of feedback and follow-up techniques should be considered, because some methods will work better for some participants and situations, others may even overlap. Some techniques, to consider are:

- Establish and maintain an interactive Web page, providing surveys/polling, and two-way communication.
- Send e-mail or letter updates and/or establish a *ListServe* for interested parties
- Provide summary reports of meetings/workshops
- Acknowledge written submissions (written and/or verbal)

- Provide telephone hotlines
- Provide for post-meeting or activities critiques (written and/or verbal)
- Hold meetings to relay findings following surveys/polls
- Offer discussion/issues papers
- Publish newsletters
- Use a dedicated community involvement project email group
- Use informal communications
- Use existing technology, like Tripcheck, as well as new and evolving interactive Web communication tools such as Twitter, particularly when providing “real-time” information is important.

Consider the needs of the participants. For example, should information be available in different languages or different forms of media (paper or electronic)? Aim to provide information, interaction and feedback in various ways to maximize accessibility.

6. EVALUATE AND INCORPORATE

Evaluation is an integral part of the Public Involvement Plan. Too often, evaluation is ignored or begun too late to help improve the process. Here’s how to “work smarter”:

- Involve stakeholders in designing and conducting the evaluation, not only in gaining their input, but also as a further way of partnering with them and creating a transparent process.
- Monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the public involvement activities throughout the life of the project, and make revisions as needed.
- Keep the effort simple, as evaluation should be about finding out if the public involvement effort was a useful thing to do, what it achieved, how it could have been done better and what might be done next.
- Schedule time in project meetings—especially during post-project and post-milestone evaluations—to discuss how the public involvement process worked, what lessons were learned. Capture commitments made and how to best track them.

And finally, if there are any significant tools, techniques or strategies that can be “globalized” for the agency to use, use this step to plan how they can be shared, tracked and evaluated.

APPENDIX A

TEMPLATES AND TOOLS

[Project Tier Assessment Tool](#)

Public Involvement Plan (under development)

[Assessing Public Interest and Concern Tool](#)

[Public Involvement Spectrum, Techniques and Activities](#)

[Project Info Paper/Sheet Template 1](#)

[Project Info Paper/Sheet Template 2](#)

[Fact Sheet Template](#)

[News Release Template](#)

[Newsletter Template](#)

SAMPLES AND EXAMPLES

[Scoping Document](#)

Public Involvement/Communications Plan - [Simple Project \(Tier 1\)](#)

Public Involvement/Communications Plan - [Complex Project \(Tier 3\)](#)

[Property Owner Access Change Notification Letter](#)

Press Releases

- [OR 99E/Pacific Hwy](#)
- [Van Buren Bridge](#)

Brochures

- [Millport Slough](#)
- [US26: Volmer Creek And Johnson Creek Bridges](#)
- [Newton-99W](#)

Public Information Sheet

- [Hwy 99E](#)
- [Van Buren Bridge](#)
- [I-5 Santiam Over Crossing](#)

Open House Information Sheet:

- [Van Buren Bridge](#)
- [Open House Notice: Lincoln City](#)

Notice of FHWA Record of Decision: [Spencer Creek](#)

[Typical PE and CE Budgets for Public Involvement](#)

RESOURCES

[SAFETEA-LU Website](#)

[Title VI Overview](#)

[Communications Division Contacts](#)

[FHWA's How to Engage Low-Literacy and Limited English-Proficiency Populations](#)

Other states' Public Involvement guides:

- [Colorado NEPA 2008](#)
- [Idaho Guidebook](#)
- [OH Public involvement handbook](#)
- [TN Chapter 7 Public Involvement](#)
- [WY Public Involvement handbook](#)
- [Michigan DOT Guide for Stakeholder Engagement](#)

APPENDIX B

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

The work performed by ODOT staff must be consistent with the concerns of the people we serve. Providing effective means for citizen input and participation is the way we make sure that we understand those concerns and ensure they are reflected in the agencies policies and practices.

A statewide perspective

Governor Kulongoski has identified six key principles as priorities for state government. One of the principles is government efficiency and accountability. The Governor states that "State government must be a responsible steward of the public's money. This means we must work in a cooperative and coordinated manner with our partners in the private sector and with local government - counties, cities, and special districts." Governor Kulongoski's goal is to rebuild the trust of Oregonians in their state government and to ensure state agencies uphold their commitment to use taxpayer dollars to enhance the quality of life for all Oregonians. This means a commitment to continuous review and improvement, and it means making government communications and actions transparent, understandable and accessible.

Oregon's [planning law](#) applies not only to local governments and special districts but also to state agencies. The law strongly emphasizes coordination and citizen participation. Goal 1 of the Oregon Statewide Planning law is citizen participation. The goal emphasizes participation of citizens in all phases of the planning process. The components of the goal are:

- Provide for widespread citizen participation;
- Assure effective two-way communication with citizens;
- Provide the opportunity for citizens to be involved in all phases of the planning process;
- Assure that technical information is available in an understandable form;
- Assure that citizens will receive a response from policy-makers; and
- Ensure funding for the citizen participation program.

From a statewide perspective public involvement is a key element of implementing statewide initiatives.

ODOT's perspective

ODOT is committed to involving the public—individuals, governments, and other organizations—in planning and decision-making efforts that may affect them. This commitment is an outgrowth both of ODOT's responsibility as a public agency to be accountable to those we serve and the recognition that better communication can lead to better decisions. Understanding and addressing the needs and ideas of those affected, enhance our ability to achieve our [mission](#).

The following are summaries of specific policies and regulations which affect public involvement practices for ODOT project delivery.

THE OREGON TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The [Oregon Transportation Plan](#) (OTP) is the statewide, long-range multimodal plan that guides development and investment in Oregon's transportation system for the next 25 years. The OTP recognizes that in order to preserve our standard of living and to continue to improve our economy, we need to change the way we make decisions about managing and funding transportation. The OTP's policies and implementation strategies respond to the challenges facing Oregon's transportation system.

Underlying the strategies are five fundamental principles:

- Accessibility and mobility,
- Economic development,
- Equity,
- Safety, and
- Sustainability.

There are seven goals of the OTP that support the five fundamental principles. The seventh goal is to pursue coordination, communication and cooperation between transportation users, providers and those most affected by transportation activities to align interests, remove barriers and bring innovative solutions so the transportation system functions as one system:

Policy 7.3 (Public Involvement and Consultation) It is the policy of the State of Oregon to involve Oregonians to the fullest practical extent in transportation planning and implementation in order to deliver a transportation system that meets the diverse needs of the state.

Strategy 7.3.1 *In all phases of decision-making, provide affected Oregonians early, open, continuous, and meaningful opportunity to influence decisions about proposed transportation activities.*

Strategy 7.3.4 *Coordinate public outreach activities among local, regional and state agencies as appropriate.*

Strategy 7.4.1 *Provide equal access to public information and decision-making about transportation planning, financing, construction, operations and maintenance activities.*

CONTEXT SENSITIVE & SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS (CS³)

In order to achieve the seven OTP goals ODOT is adopting the context sensitive and sustainable solutions (CS³) approach into the project delivery system. CS³ provides a unique perspective to transportation engineering in Oregon. The inspiration for CS³ is derived by combining two innovative concepts emerging within the transportation industry: Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) and Sustainability. It fosters workforce development; reflects communities' cultural and aesthetic interests; maintains mobility and safety; ensures sound stewardship of the natural environment; and promotes cost-effectiveness. Early, effective and continuous public involvement is the cornerstone of successful CS³.

The CS³ approach has six goals:

1. Maintain or improve traffic mobility and safety; keep traffic moving.
2. Employ innovative, efficient, and cost effective delivery practices that result in quality projects.
3. Stimulate Oregon's economy and develop its workforce.
4. Build projects that are environmentally responsible and encourage the conservation and protection of natural resources.
5. Develop transportation solutions that are sensitive to community and social values.
6. Capitalize on innovative funding opportunities that support a viable transportation system today and for future generations.

The desired result of the CS³ is an improved state transportation infrastructure that reduces transit-based limitations on trade and economic progress while instilling a socially and environmentally responsible culture of sustainability.

Based on this over arching initiatives, ODOT believes that by engaging the public through public involvement we will:

- Improve the quality of ODOT decisions and promote informed consent;
- Increase the ease of constructing a project, helping to minimize the cost and delay of implementing a project or program;
- Help ODOT maintain credibility and legitimacy;

- Improve our ability to anticipate stakeholder concerns and attitudes; and
- Provide ODOT with better educated stakeholders who not only understand transportation issues, but also know how ODOT makes decisions and why.

Public involvement is most effective when our programs are:

- *Accessible* - broad based, visible, and providing stakeholders with the information they need in order to participate effectively.
- *Continuous* - early and throughout decision making to implementation.
- *Responsive* - genuinely considering public concerns and ideas and communicating how that information affected the decisions.
- *Responsible* - communicating parameters, such as budgetary constraints and what can be influenced, and documenting the public involvement process.

Further details about federal, state and Oregon Transportation Commission policies are provided below.

FEDERAL LAWS

[Title VI of the Civil Rights Act Of 1964](#)

“No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” (See also [ODOT’s Title VI Program](#).)

[Federal Aid Highway Act of 1973](#) added sex as a prohibited basis of discrimination.

[Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987](#) expanded coverage of Title VI to include all of an agency’s programs and activities, regardless of funding source
Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice (February 11, 1994) added low-income populations to prohibited basis of discrimination

FEDERAL REGULATIONS & POLICIES

[National Environmental Policy Act \(NEPA\) Coordination](#)

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is our basic national charter for protection of the environment. NEPA establishes policy, sets goals, and provides means for carrying out the policy and contains "action-forcing" provisions to ensure that federal agencies act according to the letter and spirit of the Act. The NEPA regulations inform federal agencies what they must do to comply with NEPA procedures and achieve the goals of the Act.

ODOT's [NEPA](#) Process page and [NEPA Do's and Don'ts](#) document includes guidance on public involvement coordination.

OREGON TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT POLICY:

The [Oregon Transportation Commission](#) and the Oregon Department of Transportation have established [policy](#) that ensures meaningful involvement of the public in important decisions by providing early, open, continuous, and effective public participation in and access to key planning and [project](#) decision-making processes.

Many sections and units within ODOT such as Project Delivery...conduct public involvement and/or public outreach using processes unique to their needs. Those sections and units will continue to refine specific procedures building on these core requirements.

ODOT OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS

The [ODOT Office of Civil Rights](#) oversees compliance with a number of regulations and programs, such as the Title VI, Disadvantaged Business Enterprise, Emerging Small Business, Workforce Development and Labor Compliance programs. Public involvement efforts must be aligned with the agency's goals and commitments in each of these arenas. Visit www.oregon.gov/ODOT/CS/CIVILRIGHTS for information and contacts.

ODOT OPERATIONAL NOTICE 12 (PD-12)

Project Delivery [Operational Notice](#) 12 establishes expectations for public involvement in both project development and construction.