

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTION PLAN (PIAP)
Rt. 295 & 42/I-76 DIRECT CONNECTION PROJECT – CAMDEN COUNTY

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT UPDATE – FEBRUARY, 2016

Over the course of the project, there have been several Public Involvement meetings including Local Officials Briefings (LOB's), Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings, and Public Information Centers (PIC).

Meetings have continued with various groups potentially impacted by the Direct Connection Project such as New St. Mary's Cemetery and the Camden Diocese, Bellmawr Park Mutual Housing Corporation's Board, Bellmawr Park Mutual Housing Corporation's potentially impacted residents, the U.S. Post Office and other neighborhood groups. In the past, we have met with representatives from the Bellmawr Board of Education, Bellmawr Baseball, Mt. Ephraim Senior Housing and St. Joachim Parish (formerly known as Annunciation Church).

Now that construction is underway, the website is updated with the project's progress as well as anticipated construction activities for the following six months.

INTRODUCTION

A comprehensive and proactive Public Involvement Action Plan (PIAP) is a pivotal element to the success of any project. The PIAP is designed to provide outreach that is early and continuing, timely in public notice, broadly disseminated, and responsive to stakeholder needs. Implementation of this plan is a crucial ingredient in gaining support from all key stakeholders. Implementation of a Public Involvement Plan is a dynamic process. This plan has been structured and executed through a phased approach consistent with the project phases, designed to address needs and circumstances as they develop.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT GOALS

Achievement of the PIAP is the fulfillment of the following goals which have been met as follows:

- Provided effective education of the general public about the funding, permitting, design and construction processes and their role within it.
- Established credibility and trust with the communities and highway

users.

- Anticipated potential public reaction to real and perceived issues thereby mitigating the need for remedial action.
- Obtained public input in the development of an Initially Preferred Alternative (IPA) and promote public understanding of the reasons that an IPA was selected.
- Provided clear, concise information in a manner encouraging feedback.
- Provided a convenient, effective mechanism for the general public to offer feedback and recommendations to the Project Team in order to allow for mitigation and resolution of any problems related to project goals and alternatives.
- Met required Federal and State requirements for public comment.
- Completed and distributed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and received approval for the Record of Decision (ROD).
- Provide proper notice during the construction phase of the project and its potential to impact motorists and the surrounding community.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT STRATEGIES & TECHNIQUES

The Project Team intends to achieve the PIAP goals and objectives by enlisting a broadly inclusive variety of interests in the process to review work products and to monitor project progress. The PIAP adopts a variety of techniques and activities to elicit public participation in the decision making process. This is supported by public information that provides technical information in a user-friendly form, fostering an informed and involved general public. The focus is on a “grassroots” effort to partner and work with the residents and highway users as the project progresses through the various phases. The PIAP will be flexible and adaptable to anticipate issues endeavoring to avoid problems (both real and perceived) before they arise.

A) STAKEHOLDER/MAILING LIST

The stakeholder mailing list provides a means to maintain ongoing contact with the community, transfer information through newsletters, project flyers,

newspaper ads/articles, and to invite people to public meetings. An extensive mailing list of over 7,500 residents and businesses has been developed. A database of names and addresses is maintained comprising project area residents, elected officials, state and federal agency representatives, media organizations, business community, and other stakeholders to be used as a mailing list for project related mailings.

Community involvement efforts throughout the project included dating of all groups of mailing lists including the tax records for all three of the project municipalities. The mailing list originally included residents within 200-250' of the project boundaries, all of Bellmawr Park Mutual Housing Corporation as well as people who have made contact through the 295 Direct Connection website regardless of geography. Mailings have been expanded to include all of Mt. Ephraim, Bellmawr from Route 168 to the west and Gloucester City from Route 130 to I-295.

The mailing list is continuously updated and maintained in Dewberry's Mt. Laurel Office. During the construction phases, the geographic boundaries will expand for the outreach effort. Communities in Camden County, such as Runnemede, Barrington, Haddon Heights, and Lawnside; and in Gloucester County; Westville, Deptford, Washington Township and Woodbury are added to the mailing list.

B) INFORMAL & FORMAL BRIEFINGS/COORDINATION MEETINGS

To keep affected communities informed of progress on the project, as well as a method of gaining their input, a series of Local Official Briefings (LOB's) have taken place at appropriate milestones. These briefings are, envisioned to include the local public officials and State or Congressional representatives whose constituents are impacted by the project. To date fifteen LOB's have taken place as well. LOB's will continue to be held through the construction phase as required.

C) COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

An important step in achieving the goal of creating a well-informed and involved public is the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) comprised of community representatives, businesses, and residents of communities within the project area as well as other stakeholders. The Dewberry Team will coordinate with NJDOT to form the CAC and facilitate the committee's activities. Anticipated to meet at critical points throughout the project, the CAC will consist of approximately 40 individuals, including Project Team representatives, elected officials, and other community representatives as well as transportation policy-makers. The Community Advisory Committee (CAC) will concentrate on the

following objectives:

- Assist in the development of a set of project Goals and Objectives that serves the needs of the transportation system and of the local communities.
- Assist in the establishment of Evaluation Criteria for the identified Goals and Objectives.
- Assist in identifying, filtering, and reaching a consensus on identified problems and issues.
- Assist in identifying initial and final alternatives.
- Evaluate the relative effectiveness of proposed alternatives.
- Assist in identifying the preferred alternative.
- Disseminate information to constituents and receive feedback from interested groups and individuals.

The Community Advisory Committee (CAC) will also play a prominent role in setting the direction for other aspects of the outreach effort. For this reason, the Committee will meet on an ongoing basis throughout the project to follow-up on the progress being made, discuss issues raised, and help determine actions to be taken.

To date, there have been nine Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings. During the construction phase, CAC meetings will be held on an as-needed basis.

D) PUBLIC MEETINGS AND HEARINGS

Public meetings are the most direct way in which to engage various segments of the public in a meaningful exchange of information, views and concerns. A variety of techniques will be used at these meetings to engage the public.

The meetings will include displays of information (via boards and slide presentations), informal Q & A, and provide a means for written comments. The attendees will be given instructions as well as questionnaire forms upon entering the meeting and will be assisted by team members located throughout the meeting room. If necessary, this will also enable the team to follow up in writing to the resident and incorporate the information into the Correspondence Log. The format of each meeting will be planned to suit the intended audience and the information to be presented. In all cases, adequate audio equipment will be available to accommodate the size of the audience and the facility. For

example, a meeting which is expected to draw out the concerns of the property owners may be planned as an “Open House”, where Project Team members can interact with residents on a one-to-one basis, and refer to maps and other graphics to explain potential impacts to specific properties.

To date, ten Public Information Centers/Public Hearings have been held. During the construction phase, Public Information Centers are typically held at the beginning of each construction contract and as-needed thereafter.

E) PROJECT PARTNERING SESSIONS

Prior to meeting with members of the general public, it is vital to meet with critical stakeholders. The project’s major stakeholders will include, but not be limited to:

- New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
- Counties/Municipalities
- Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
- New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP)
- United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- Utilities
- Others as appropriate

The main purpose of a partnering session is to develop working relationships, clarify goals for the project, and establish communication protocols.

Early on in the project, three Partnering meetings were held to establish working relationships. During the construction phase, it is unlikely a Partnering Session will be required.

F) PROJECT SPECIFIC WEB SITES

Use of the Internet for disseminating information has become common place. It is an efficient and cost effective method of sharing information. Furthermore, it provides an opportunity for “branding” the project name, thereby giving it an identity and distinguishing it from other projects. This will be discussed further in the “Newsletter” section. The public section will be housed on the NJDOT server and include information on project need, anticipated meetings, newsletters, project graphics, construction photos, contact information for key project representatives list, opportunities to provide input, construction information and other features including a summary of frequently asked questions (FAQ’s). The web site is hosted by NJDOT as a link to the existing department-wide site. The

web site will be updated as required to provide the public with current information.

Other links to this public section can be provided through Delaware River Port Authority (DRPA); Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC); New Jersey Turnpike (NJTP); Delaware Bay Bridge Commission; South Jersey Transportation Authority; Camden and Gloucester County libraries; schools; Camden and Gloucester Counties; Bellmawr; Gloucester City and Mt. Ephraim websites; South Jersey Chamber of Commerce; Alliance for Action; as well as other surrounding communities.

In addition, the Cross County Connection TMA will be supporting the I-295 Direct Connection Project through the dissemination of project information to commuters and the general public. This will be accomplished through a variety of media, including a series of newsletters which will be periodically released as the roadwork transitions from one stage to another. Cross County Connection will also host a project-specific web page with information on upcoming traffic shifts and ramp and/or lane closures, which will be cross-linked with the NJDOT and NJ511 websites. The web page will feature an interactive map and phone 'App' that shows live traffic conditions in and around the project site that commuters can regularly check before commuting through or near the construction zone. The map and website will be updated prior to any major traffic shifts so that commuters can plan their trip accordingly.

G) PROJECT NEWSLETTERS

Newsletters, while not in real time, are nevertheless an effective means to convey information to a broad audience about the project. This medium is particularly useful with a project that has "users" from a variety of locations and distances. It is an excellent medium to "brand" the project with name and identity, as well as making a regular, consistent connection with the communities and the traveling public. Newsletters will be published to coincide with the progress of the technical work, alternative selection and public meetings. The primary goal is to convey technical information in clear and concise terms. The newsletters will be mailed to all the addressees on the project mailing list. Other "construction update" style newsletters will be sent to specific neighborhoods if/when construction activities in these areas warrant a notice to the residents. Electronic versions will be sent to organizations/agencies for posting on their websites and wherever possible enclosure with their newsletter mailings.

In the construction phase, newsletters will be developed on an as-needed basis. Cross County Connection will also be developing newsletters.

I) PROJECT BROCHURE/FLYERS AND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ'S) SHEET

These methods of communicating project information are very effective in both a formal and informal settings and help reinforce the project identity. They are used as handouts in meetings, to public officials or can be placed in public gathering areas or places of business (with prior permission) such as retail stores, pharmacies, doctor's offices, gas stations, convenience stores, supermarkets and diners/restaurants. While random in the audience, it provides a means of communicating to the general public, especially those that do not have access to a computer or are not on the master mailing list. Any of these pieces of information could be included with supplemental mailings. FAQ's would be the current, specific summary of current status and most frequently asked questions. This medium would be updated on a regular basis and could be tailored for a specific group. FAQ's will also be listed on the project website.

J) PUBLIC DISPLAY BOARDS

During the course of the project, presentation boards will be displayed in public venues such as the municipal buildings and libraries of the communities within the project limits.

K) MEDIA OUTREACH; ANNOUNCEMENTS AND MAILINGS

As the project proceeds through the construction phase, opportunities will arise for special interest articles, i.e., regional transportation issues. Editorial boards and journalists assigned to such issues will be contacted at regional newspapers such as the "*Philadelphia Inquirer*" and "*Camden Courier Post*". Press Kits will be provided as well as interviews arranged for the NJDOT Managers or Commissioner level as deemed appropriate and approved by NJDOT. These activities will be arranged through and coordinated by the NJDOT.

Press releases will be written by NJDOT announcing major milestones and meetings.

Other potential sources for publishing project information will be the newsletters of DRPA, Automobile Association of America, South Jersey Chamber of Commerce; NJ Alliance for Action, NJ Business and Industry Association, as well as the "*Philadelphia Inquirer*", "*Camden Courier Post*", "*Bellmawr Bulletin*",

"Camden County Pride" and the *"Gloucester City News"*. The current Newsletter and/or FAQ's may also be included with these mailings.

L) PROJECT SITE TOUR

Tours of the project area were conducted in December, 2001, May, 2003 and November, 2004 in order that critical stakeholders and selected attendees could see the project site first-hand and learn how the project will proceed.