

E | Public Involvement

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Public Involvement

The three basic principles of public involvement are early, continuous, and meaningful involvement. The project team developed and implemented a public involvement plan for the SR 502 Corridor Widening Project that focuses on these principles. The public involvement plan communicates, translates, and provides community feedback to the project team on the public sentiment along each step of achieving the project goals. An important component of this plan is outreach to all interested members of the public, including low-income, minority, and limited English proficient populations. Ultimately, the public involvement activities support the project in developing and maintaining open, honest communication between the affected parties and the project team. This effort ensures that project goals are met or exceeded and that community members feel that they were part of a fair process for the greater good.

The public and agency involvement began early in the process and will continue throughout the project to keep communication lines open, address issues, and give the community the opportunity to participate in the decisions made on the project. A brief summary of the public involvement activities conducted and the general themes of comments raised through this process follows.

Stakeholder interviews

The public involvement effort established its equivalent of a baseline condition for the community through focused meet-and-greet interviews that were conducted with local stakeholders to learn about community interests. Future public involvement activities built on the information gathered during these initial activities.

In October and November 2006 stakeholders were selected to present a cross-section of views and issues regarding the project and project area. The 42 stakeholders interviewed for this project represented local residents, property owners, businesses, and public/government agencies. All interviews were conducted in person and the interview questions were designed to obtain feedback, gather unique or new information, identify community perceptions and issues, and learn as much as possible from people who live near, use, or have a particular interest in the SR 502 corridor.



KEY POINT

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT POPULATIONS

Census data and information from stakeholder interviews gathered early in the project determined that there were no concentrations of minority or low-income populations in the study area. Additionally, some limited English proficient populations (Spanish and Russian) were identified. Therefore, contact information was provided in Spanish and Russian on public outreach materials so that these members of the community could have access to project information.



KEY POINT

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW QUESTION TOPICS

- Transportation
- Safety
- Access
- Corridor intersections
- Growth and land use
- Environmental issues
- Industrial lands
- Other

**KEY POINT**

On July 26, 2009, Washington State Department of Transportation held an open house to share information on several projects, including SR 502, with the Hispanic community. The meeting was held following Spanish mass at a local church. Spanish interpreters were available, and project informational flyers and meeting materials were provided in both Spanish and English. Advertisements for the open house were published in *El Hispanic News* and *Latin News*.

Open houses

Since February 2007, a series of nine open houses were conducted that built on the information gathered during the initial stakeholder interviews and solicited public input on the project purpose and need statement and a variety of alternatives considered for the project.

Exhibit E-1 identifies the date of each open house, the purpose for the open house, the number of community members that signed the attendance sheet, the number of comments received, and the location.

Community forums

Community forums are small group meetings that are held to address and resolve specific issues. The small group format of community forums provides a venue for exchanging information and addressing and resolving the issues in a manner not possible through an open house format. To date, three community forums have been conducted. Exhibit E-2 identifies the date of each community forum and the topic of discussion.

Exhibit E-1: Summary of open houses

Date	Purpose	Number of citizens that signed-In	Comments received	Location
February 22, 2007	Initial project scoping	90	30	Battle Ground High School
March 27, 2007	Review of conceptual alternatives	152	66	Battle Ground High School
May 9, 2007	Review of reduced number of conceptual alternatives	142	31	Battle Ground High School
June 14, 2007	Review of alternatives selected for further study and refinement	173	40	Battle Ground High School
September 26, 2007	Review recommended alternative	85	10	Battle Ground High School
May 20, 2008	Second project scoping; confirm project purpose and need and range of alternatives; explain transition from an environmental assessment process to an environmental impact statement process	82	7	Cherry Grove Friends Church
January 14, 2009	Concurrent with access hearing to review of access plans prior to hearing	114	52	Washington State Department of Transportation Southwest Region Office
June 23, 2009	Concurrent with environmental hearing to share project information and solicit public input on draft environmental impact statement and draft Section 4(f) evaluation	50	8	Washington State Department of Transportation Southwest Region Office
July 26, 2009	Outreach to Hispanic population to share project information	90	None	St. John's Catholic Church

Exhibit E-2: Summary of community forums

Date	Topic
February 20, 2007	Learn more about the background and definition of the project, discuss design possibilities and effects for the Dollars Corner intersection, and participate in a discussion of the scoping process
June 11, 2007	Discuss project issues and design possibilities and effects with State Representative Curtis as well as business owners at Dollars Corner
March 6, 2008	Clark County facilitated discussion of traffic circulation in Dollars Corner and options for future improvements

Environmental hearing

Washington State Department of Transportation hosted a public hearing on June 23, 2009 during the 45-day comment period (June 5, 2009 to July 20, 2009) for the draft environmental impact statement and draft Section 4(f) evaluation to share information about the project. Participants were encouraged to submit written comments or provide oral testimony to the court reporter at the event. The eighth open house was held concurrently with the hearing to provide information and address questions about the draft environmental impact statement and draft Section 4(f) evaluation. Printed copies of the documents were available for review at the hearing, and CD copies were available at no charge.

Access hearing

A public access hearing was held on January 14, 2009. At the access hearing, Washington State Department of Transportation presented the proposed access plans to property owners abutting the project area. The hearing documented testimony from owners whose property will be affected by the widening project. The seventh open house was held concurrently with the access hearing to share information related to access and right of way along the corridor. The open house was designed to help provide information about and address questions that could come up during the access hearing.

Newsletters and postcards

Not everyone with an interest in the project will attend the open houses or community forums; therefore, newsletters and postcards are used as a means for reaching a larger group of citizens. Newsletters and postcards provide an update on the progress and status of the project and provide another method for communicating accurate project information to the public. The newsletters and postcards invite members of the public to submit comments or request information; they include a contact name, mailing address, toll-free phone number, and email address. To date, there have been four newsletters and four postcards mailed.



**KEY POINT****KIOSKS WERE UPDATED ON:**

- February 2007, Advertising open house
- March 2007, Advertising open house
- May 2007, Advertising open house
- June 2007, Advertising open house
- August 2007, General project update
- September 2007, Advertising open house
- December 2007, Summary of 2007 activities
- May 2008, Advertising scoping meeting
- June 2009, Advertising hearing and open house

**KEY POINT****PROJECT WEBSITE**

The project website provides information on the SR 502 Corridor Widening Project. Information on the project's public involvement activities are also posted on the website at:

www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/SR502/Widening/

Kiosks

To ensure that proposed new or modified project strategies received appropriate public input, informational kiosks were developed and placed on display at key milestones during the project. Stand-alone public information boards explained the project, the review processes, upcoming meetings, project status, and gave information about how to provide input. Since February 2007 there have been nine different informational kiosks developed – seven announcing open house meetings and the environmental hearing, one providing a general project update in the fall of 2007, and one summarizing the public involvement activities of 2007. These unstaffed informational kiosks were placed at the following neutral locations: Albertson's (grocery store), Battle Ground City Hall, Battle Ground Community Library, Clark County Fire and Rescue, Cherry Seeds Coffee, First Independent Bank, Fred Meyer (grocery store), and Battle Ground Public Schools.

Website

A project website provides information regarding the proposed widening, process, schedule, public involvement opportunities, and project contact information. Photos and copies of open house exhibits, press releases, and Washington State Department of Transportation quarterly project reports can also be found on the website. The website also provides visitors with ongoing opportunities to submit comments and ask questions through a web-based e-mail form that is submitted directly to the project manager.

Comments received

The following list is a generalized collection of comments received to date and categorized by subject area. This list does not include every public comment, rather themes of comments that have been repeated by multiple individuals throughout the public involvement process. Comments received during the 45-day comment period for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation are documented in Appendix G *Record of Comments*.

General

- General consensus regarding the need for capacity and safety improvements along the SR 502 corridor
- Requests to act as good stewards with the public's money
- Concerns regarding properties to be partially or fully acquired for right of way

On-corridor versus off-corridor alternatives

- Requests to consider both on-corridor and off-corridor alternatives
- Strong support for keeping the alignment along the existing corridor
- Concerns regarding effects from the on-corridor and off-corridor alternatives to Dollars Corner area businesses

Access

- Concerns regarding business and residential access (driveway) locations and removal/consolidation of access points
- Concerns regarding current and future zoning of properties along the SR 502 corridor
- Concerns regarding vehicle turning radii and geometry of relocated accesses (driveways)

Median treatment

- Concerns with median treatment effects to businesses at Dollars Corner and inconvenience of out-of-direction travel associated with the median treatment
- Concerns regarding emergency response time
- Requests for additional breaks in the median treatment to facilitate travel routes to County roads
- Concerns about maneuverability of large vehicles (trucks, school buses, emergency vehicles) following installation of median treatment
- Concerns regarding the safety of u-turns

Engineering

- Concerns regarding new signals and effects to traffic
- Requests for lowering maximum speed to 40 miles per hour

Environmental

- Requests to consider the environmental effects of the on-corridor and off-corridor alternatives

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