
CHAPTER 7

PUBLIC OUTREACH

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the public outreach activities conducted as a part of the SR 99 North Corridor Study. Public input was a critical component of the study and was incorporated into every step of the study process—from identifying transportation problems through developing the study’s final recommendations.

Over the course of the year and half study, public input has been received from six Stakeholder Advisory Committee meetings (composed of representatives from neighborhood councils and business owners along the corridor), two open houses, meetings with over 50 community organizations and businesses, and correspondence with dozens of interested citizens by phone, emails, and letters. These outreach activities and the strategies and tools used to publicize these activities are described in more detail below.

Communication Strategies

To be effective, public outreach efforts were tailored to the needs and concerns of specific constituent groups in a manner conducive to their involvement. The strategies of the SR 99 North public involvement plan were to:

- ◆ Establish the project need in clear and concise terms
- ◆ Obtain public input by engaging in dialogue with the general public, neighborhood groups, business organizations, individual citizens, and elected officials
- ◆ Design customized communications and briefings for representatives of constituent groups so they could better inform their members

Public Outreach Activities

As noted previously, the SR 99 study engaged in a large number of public outreach activities in order to provide an open and ongoing opportunity for public input. Since the SR 99 North Corridor Study had a very limited public involvement budget, publicity for public outreach activities was conducted primarily through the Stakeholder Advisory Committee representatives, the study website, the City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, news releases, and publicizing outreach events through neighborhood newspapers. These activities are described in more detail below.

Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meetings

The Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) was an important component of the SR 99 North Corridor Study. As noted previously, the SAC was composed of representatives from neighborhood councils and business organizations along the corridor as well as transit, pedestrian, and bicycle advocates. SAC members were important “ears” and “eyes” for their business’s or organization’s issues and concerns.

SAC meetings were held at critical points in the SR 99 North Corridor Study—from determining the corridor’s primary safety and congestion problems to developing a draft set of recommendations to address the identified problems. The purpose of each meeting was to review and comment on study progress and discusses SAC members’ issues and concerns. Over the course of the study, the SR 99 study team met six times with a Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC). See Appendix E for a list of SAC members and specific dates of the meetings.

Open House Meetings

Open Houses were also an important component of the study’s public outreach activities. Two open houses were held at the Phinney Ridge Lutheran Church in Seattle on May 9, 2002 and October 24, 2002. The purpose of the first Open House was to present and receive comments on the range of improvement options under consideration for the SR 99 study corridor. The purpose of the second Open House was to present and receive comments on the City’s draft near term improvements and the study’s long term improvement recommendations for the corridor.

Publicity for the open houses was provided through the SAC, local newspapers, postcards, and study newsletters that were mailed to residents and businesses along the corridor. Over one hundred people from Seattle, Shoreline and points north of the City of Seattle attended the May 2002 meeting and over 150 people attended the October 2002 meeting.



Photo 7-1
Participants
in May 2002
Open House

Over 50 Meetings with Business and Community Organizations

The SR 99 North study team met with over 50 community and business organizations concerned about the SR 99 North study corridor. These meetings enabled the SR 99 North study team to better understand the specific needs and concerns of the individual organizations and businesses.

The community and business organizations the study team met with included the following: Ballard Interbay Northend Manufacturing Industrial Council; King County Traffic Safety Coalition; Fremont Neighborhood Council; Uptown/Queen Anne – Uptown Alliance; Aurora Avenue Merchant’s Association; Broadview/Bitter Lake/Haller Lake Community Council; Aurora – Licton Springs Planning Group; Weaving Wallingford, Greenwood/Phinney Community Council, Vulcan Northwest/City Investors, and the Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board. See Appendix E, Table E-2 for a more detailed list of neighborhood and business organizations the SR 99 study team met with.

Business Contacts

Staff from the City of Seattle Department of Transportation made over 50 additional contacts with individual businesses along the study corridor to solicit opinions regarding the study’s preliminary recommendations (See Appendix E, Table E-3 for a complete list of businesses contacted)

Newsletters

Three newsletters were distributed to inform the public of the study’s purpose and progress. The first newsletter was sent to residents and businesses along the corridor. The second and third newsletters were sent to residents and businesses located in zip code areas adjacent to SR 99 North. These newsletters were available at the project open houses, provided in bulk to the Joint Steering Committee members for their targeted distribution, mailed in quantity to libraries serving residents living along the corridor, and mailed to business owners and residences adjacent to the study corridor.

Media Outreach

Information was provided through WSDOT on an ongoing basis to local media. News releases promoting open houses were sent to local print and broadcast media. For a more detailed description of media outreach activities see Appendix E, Table E-4.

Study Website

A study website was developed to provide the public with convenient access to updated project information 24 hours a day. The website was updated regularly and included

down-loadable handouts and visuals for people unable to attend open houses. The SR 99 North website was linked to WSDOT's main project page and was designed to simplify complex technical information for the general public and media. It also provided contact information for people wanting more details about the study and desiring to share their comments and concerns regarding the study.

Public Involvement Database

A project database, listing parties interested in the project and recording all of the public comments received, was developed. Open House attendees and those who had requested to receive information about the project were included in the project database, as were representatives of community and civic organizations, and local media. The database was used to distribute newsletters, open house announcements and other information important to the project. It also was used to track public comments and questions.

Overview of Public Comments Received

Hundreds of public comments were received during the course of the study. The issues and concerns raised by representatives of neighborhood councils, businesses, and members of the general public varied widely and were sometimes contradictory. Three issues were frequently heard at public meetings:

- ◆ Provide safer areas for pedestrians and other non-motorized users
- ◆ Keep people moving on SR 99 North
- ◆ Provide access and parking to businesses along SR 99 North

In addition to these issues, other issues frequently raised dealt with access to Queen Anne, safety on the Aurora Bridge, transit and transit lanes, median treatments, landscaping, and law enforcement. A more detailed survey of public comments received is provided in Appendix F, Table F-1.

Review of Neighborhood Plans

In addition to reviewing public comments received during study outreach activities, the study also reviewed the planning documents of neighborhood groups along the corridor. To the extent feasible, neighborhood recommendations were incorporated into the study's recommendations. See Appendix G, Table G-1 for a list of neighborhood plan recommendations considered.