

**The Iowa Department of Transportation's  
Project Development  
Public Involvement Plan**

**March 2020**



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## **Mission:**

The Iowa Department of Transportation's (DOT) project development public involvement process will have early and on-going public interaction throughout the project development process.

## **Goals:**

- To gather broad public input to be considered during the transportation decision-making process.
- To share information and provide opportunities for Public Involvement (PI) throughout the development process.
- To solicit the participation of individuals and groups who are affected by the proposed project as well as others whose needs may not be addressed by existing transportation systems.
- To build trust and sustainable relationships with citizens, the business community, special interest groups, resource agencies, and other private and governmental agencies.

## **Scope:**

This document outlines how the Iowa DOT will conduct its public involvement process in compliance with federal and state regulations.

1. Public involvement activities will be scheduled to fulfill the Department's PI guidelines, which include:

- Public Hearings (PH) and Public Involvement Meetings (PIM) in accordance with the NEPA process.
- PH(s) and PIM(s) as appropriate to satisfy the intent of the Iowa DOT's Project Development process
- A PI activity whenever a primary highway is closed to traffic, a detour is required, or requires a project acquisition of ROW
- PH(s) or PIM(s) for compliance with Iowa Code chapter 6B.
- Compliance with Civil Rights and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) guidelines.

PI policy is applied to all primary highway projects uniformly without consideration of funding or which jurisdiction (local vs. state) administers the project.

2. Early coordination with resource agencies and the public will be accomplished, as applicable, through one or more of the following:

- Implementation of the Iowa DOT/FHWA and resource agencies "Statewide Implementation Agreement for National Environmental Policy Act and Clean Water Act Section 404 Concurrent NEPA/404 Processes for Highway Projects in Iowa"
- Implementation of the provisions addressing consultation with Native American tribes contained in the "Programmatic Agreement" and "Procedures for Implementation of Section 106 Requirements." Participating agencies are the Iowa Division of FHWA, Iowa State Historic Preservation Officer, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the DOT. In accordance with this agreement and procedures, the DOT's Location and Environment (LEB)-Cultural Resources Section will provide early and continuing information to the Native American tribes with interests in Iowa.

- Early public notification via PIM(s) conducted by the District and/or the LEB-Public Involvement (PI) Section.

3. PH(s) will be conducted for all projects requiring an environmental impact statement (EIS) or environmental assessment (EA) during the review period for the environmental document. The PH will consist of an open forum portion and a formal recorded portion. Other projects will be reviewed and the appropriate PI activity (PIM, property owner contact, media release, etc.) will be conducted.

4. Cooperating Agencies: Early in the project development phase, in accordance with 40CFR 1500-1508, those agencies having jurisdiction (by law) will be extended by the FHWA and LEB, on a project by project basis, an opportunity to be cooperating agencies in the NEPA process. Other state agencies, local agencies and Native American tribes having special expertise with respect to an environmental issue or jurisdiction by law will be considered and may be extended an opportunity to be participating agencies.

5. PI activities and PH(s) will be coordinated as necessary by LEB-PI Section and the District staff, the (PMT), and other Department staff per the project development process manual.

6. The PI process will be tailored to each project and through the development of a formalized Public Involvement Plan (PIP) or application of standard Public Involvement procedures. The District Engineer (DE), Project Manager and the PMT, working with the PI Section, are responsible for developing a PIP, when necessary. The level of detail in this plan will be commensurate with the project needs and individualized to address the unique characteristics and needs of the affected community or region of the state.

Environmental Justice (EJ) concerns, including possible impacts to minority and low-income populations, will be considered throughout the public involvement process and appropriate measures will be taken to include these populations. In addition, Iowa DOT will take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to its programs and activities by persons of limited English proficiency (LEP)

7. To ensure impacts associated with the relocation of individuals, groups, businesses or institutions are addressed, a DOT Right of Way (ROW) representative will develop relocation information during the NEPA process and will, as necessary, be present at PH(s) and PIM(s).

8. PI opportunities for projects requiring acquisition of ROW will be scheduled throughout the development process. Additional opportunities for public input will be scheduled as deemed appropriate by the DE/project manager.

The DOT will provide the property owner notification and PI opportunity required by Iowa Code, Chapter 6B for projects which may require acquisition of agricultural land.

9. The public notice/Notice of Availability (NOA) for a PH will be prepared by the LEB-PI Section. It will be published as a legal notice in the official County newspaper or newspaper of general circulation in the county, or city, prior to the hearing. The notice will include information regarding the availability of the project's NEPA document unless project specifics require that the NOA be published separately. When the 6B process is conducted in conjunction with a hearing, the 6B notice will be included in the legal notice/NOA. Additional publications, or the publishing of a legal notice, could occur based on project need, or as requested by the DE/project manager

10. The public hearing will be held at least 15 calendar days after publication of the NOA for the NEPA document (EA or Draft EIS(DEIS)). The publication of the NOA, and the timing of the hearing date, will also take into consideration the EA, DEIS and 4(f) review periods.

11. The PH(s) and PIM(s) will provide the following information as appropriate:

- 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.
- The DOT's procedures for written or oral statements from the public.
- A copy of the signed NEPA document (EA or DEIS).
- Project exhibits

12. Following the hearing, the PI Section coordinate a response to public comments and prepare a written transcript which will include all proceedings, oral & written statements.

13. A PIM summary booklet will be completed by the PI Section for projects with PIMs.

14. Provided regulatory compliance and the requirements of this document can be achieved, the Department may pursue meeting these requirements through online meetings as appropriate.

This document, when fully executed by the FHWA and DOT, supersedes the December 2010 Project Development Public Involvement Plan and will remain in full effect unless canceled in writing by either party. This document may be amended if regulatory requirements change or if process modifications are warranted. Amendments will be prepared by the DOT, reviewed for sufficiency by FHWA and DOT, executed by both agencies, and distributed within both agencies for attachment hereto.

\_\_\_\_\_ 5/27/2020  
(Date)

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(Date)

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