

## Public Involvement Plan

**PREPARED FOR:** Policy and Technical Advisory Committees

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### 1. Introduction

The public outreach conducted as part of the Gateway Corridor Alternatives Analysis will focus on the goal of selecting a Locally Preferred Alternative for transit improvements along the corridor. It will also support Goal 2 of the Gateway Corridor Commission, which is to “conduct advocacy and outreach activities to promote coordinated transportation planning and investments in the I-94 corridor.

Successful public involvement is about building trust, understanding and consensus. Successful public involvement is necessary to reach a broad consensus on public infrastructure investments. This requires a process that is characterized by technical competence, honesty and integrity, and good listening. These principles will create the framework within which public involvement will occur for the Gateway Corridor Alternatives Analysis (AA).

The fundamental objectives of the Public Involvement Plan are to ensure that the concerns and issues of those with a stake in the Gateway Corridor are identified; that stakeholders are given opportunities to review and comment on findings of the alternatives analysis study; and that stakeholder concerns are reflected in the analysis process. The Public Involvement Plan provides for:

- Early and continuous involvement of stakeholders
- Reasonable availability of technical and other project information
- Collaborative input on alternative transit improvements for the corridor and the criteria against which they will be measured and evaluated
- Open access to the decision-making process

This technical memorandum documents a plan for public outreach during the preparation of the Gateway Corridor Alternatives Analysis, recognizing that public outreach activities may need to change throughout the project as stakeholders and their issues become better known and as the study progresses. The technical memo identifies potentially affected types of stakeholder groups, identifies public engagement and notification methods and techniques, and provides the overall approach for public outreach in the corridor. The document will be modified throughout the process as needed to provide an accurate representation of the public involvement activities that are undertaken during the alternatives analysis phase of project development. This Public Involvement Plan will become a component of the Public Involvement Technical Methodologies Report, as integrated strategies for involving the public are refined for targeted audiences.



A key element of the public involvement process will be working with a Technical Advisory Committee and a Policy Advisory Committee. Both groups are made up of representatives from local communities, state and federal agencies and potentially affected railroads along the Gateway corridor. These groups and their roles and responsibilities are described in the Corridor Coordination Plan.

## 2. Potential Stakeholders

The first step in the Public Involvement Plan will be to identify key stakeholders in the corridor and begin to assemble contact information. This list will build off the lists already created as part of the Gateway Corridor Commission's Strategic Communication Plan. Since the corridor is very large, this effort will need to focus on organizations and groups that can help in reaching a broad spectrum of individuals who live, work, attend school, and recreate in the corridor. The first step will be to contact local communities in the corridor to assist in identifying active business and public groups in each community and identify contacts with those groups. The list of community-based groups includes, but is not limited to Chambers of Commerce and business associations; environmental, transportation and housing advocates; historic preservation organizations; civic organizations; and educational institutions. This list will be expanded as the study progresses.

### 2.1 Corridor Communities

Many local communities are located in the Gateway Corridor. Each community has its own vision for how it will develop in the future, and the role the Gateway Corridor should play in its future. Working with the local communities will be a significant aspect of the Public Involvement Plan. This outreach will include conversations with city/county administrators, community development and/or community planning departments, public works departments, other departments (for example, parks) if directly affected by the corridor, and elected/appointed officials.

#### Minnesota Communities

- Minneapolis
- Saint Paul
- Maplewood
- North Saint Paul
- Oakdale
- Landfall
- Woodbury
- Lake Elmo
- Afton
- Lakeland
- West Lakeland
- Baytown
- Hennepin County
- Ramsey County
- Washington County

#### Wisconsin Communities

- Hudson
- River Falls
- Roberts
- Hammond
- New Richmond
- Baldwin
- Woodville
- Chippewa Falls
- Menomonie
- Eau Claire
- St. Croix County
- Dunn County
- Eau Claire County
- Chippewa County



## **2.2 Business Stakeholders**

Key business stakeholders will be identified in the Gateway Corridor as economic development and transportation are interrelated issues. Business stakeholders will include large commercial property owners and large employers within the corridor such as Travelers' Insurance Companies, Ecolab, Securian Financial, 3M, the Hartford Financial and Andersen Windows. The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, the Wisconsin Department of Commerce, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, county development corporations and Chambers of Commerce and business associations will be contacted to help identify other key business stakeholders.

## **2.3 Institutional Stakeholders**

There are several educational institutions located along the Gateway corridor including the University of Minnesota, Augsburg College, Concordia, Macalester, St. Catherine's, St. Thomas, Metro State University in Saint Paul, the University of Wisconsin system including River Falls, Stout (Menomonie), and Eau Claire, as well as technical colleges. The Public Involvement Plan includes outreach to these key stakeholders and their student bodies and staff.

## **2.4 Public Stakeholders**

The group of public stakeholders will include homeowners, renters, neighborhood associations, students, ethnic and cultural organizations, small business owners/operators, and other groups that represent people who live, work and go to school in the corridor. Key small business representatives will be identified by community development agency staff and local business associations. Commuters and the traveling public are also stakeholders.

## **2.5 Other Stakeholders**

Other stakeholders will be identified in the corridor as appropriate including schools, emergency service providers, media representatives, environmental advocacy groups, etc.

## **3. Potential Issues and Opportunities**

The primary purpose of the public outreach is to understand and respond to potential issues and identify potential opportunities associated with the improvement of transit services in the Gateway corridor. Issues, concerns, opportunities, and constraints that are identified through the public involvement efforts will be documented in a cumulative "issues tracking report" that will identify the issue, the party(ies) for whom the issue is important, and the manner in which the issue was addressed, if appropriate. Potential issues that are likely to arise include:

- Impacts on existing transit riders and potential improvements to transit service
- Coordination with other transit services and changes to existing services
- Highway congestion, delays, and safety
- Local traffic conditions
- Development and redevelopment opportunities and impacts
- Local community land use vision and goals
- Local community transit and transportation needs and goals
- Impacts on trails, sidewalks, and local streets
- Impacts to businesses, both during and after construction
- Property impacts including noise, visual impacts, acquisition, etc.

- Station location, size and design
- Amenities (architectural, landscaping, streetscaping, public art, etc.)
- Pedestrian and bicycle access, convenience and safety
- Wayfinding to/from and within station areas
- Shared freight/commuter rail use (reliability, safety, etc.)
- Environmental impacts (positive and negative)
- Capital, operating and maintenance costs
- Funding (capital, operating and maintenance)
- Decision-making process
- Opportunities for input

## 4. Public Involvement Techniques

A variety of public involvement techniques will be utilized to reach as many people as possible during the Gateway Corridor Alternatives Analysis. As detailed in the Communications Matrix, which is provided at the end of this document, outreach techniques will be targeted to different stakeholders, depending on their information needs.

### 4.1 Project Website

Study content and information will be provided approximately monthly to the managers of the Gateway Corridor project website ([www.thegatewaycorridor.com](http://www.thegatewaycorridor.com)). This information will include task updates and deliverables, Policy Advisory Committee presentations, and public meeting materials and notes. Links to the project website will be provided to the Washington County Regional Railroad Authority, local communities, and other stakeholder organizations in order to expand the project's information reach. Opportunities for providing a means of public input through the project website will be explored with the Gateway Corridor website manager.

### 4.2 Social Media

The use of social media (Facebook and/or Twitter) is currently being explored as a means of extending public outreach through the project website. In addition, all community and university stakeholders will be contacted to request that project information be distributed through both their websites and their social media tools.

### 4.3 Newsletters or Project Updates

Project updates in the form of e-newsletters, printed newsletters and/or website postings will be provided at key points throughout the study to all stakeholders, the media, and the general public. A blast email will be sent to the stakeholders list prepared for the Gateway Corridor Commission's Strategic Communications Plan. This list includes communities, educational institutions, and business associations in the corridor as well as all individuals who are interested in direct updates on the project.

### 4.4 Public Open Houses

Three public open houses will be conducted during the course of the project. Each round will be held in four different locations along the corridor (for a total of twelve open houses). Each open house will be actively advertised and a summary of public comments received will be prepared.

- Public Open House Round #1 – present draft problem statement, goals and objectives, evaluation criteria, draft universe of alternatives and preliminary screening results. The first round of public open houses will be held in St. Paul, Woodbury, Hudson and Eau Claire.
- Public Open House Round #2 – Scoping meeting to present work to date, detailed alternatives and evaluation criteria.
- Public Open House Round #3 – Present evaluation results, the Locally Preferred Alternative, and proposed implementation strategy.’

The format of each public open house may vary, depending on the content to be presented and the input desired from attendees. Optional formats and information-sharing techniques to be considered include formal PowerPoint presentations, open house meetings where staff members are assigned to specific corridor segment areas with board displays, and provision of comment cards so that the attendees can submit their concerns and questions in written form. These details will be developed as preparations are made for each round of public open houses.

Potential locations for the first round of public open houses include St. Paul Union Depot, Woodbury City Hall, St. Croix County Government Center in Hudson, and a location to be determined in Eau Claire. Other locations may also be considered. Locations will be coordinated with local project participants to assure maximum access is provided for corridor residents and business interests.

#### **4.5 Small Group “Listening” Sessions**

Some stakeholders, especially immigrant communities and small businesses, may be more effectively engaged through direct verbal communications. These meetings will be held as a supplement to the public open houses that are described in Section 4.3.

#### **4.6 Special Outreach to Environmental Justice Groups**

A special effort will be made to identify environmental justice groups represented in the corridor and to identify appropriate communications strategies for those particular groups. Small group discussions will be hosted at local venues (churches, schools, community centers, cultural meeting places) to engage these groups. Local neighborhood or cultural group newspaper, radio stations and other communications outlets will be identified. Where needed, the assistance of a bilingual translator and/or cultural leaders will be sought. Local issues, concerns and opportunities which arise from these meetings will be summarized and considered in the study process.

#### **4.7 Presentations**

Project representatives will offer to meet with key stakeholder organizations to provide an in-person opportunity to describe project activities and respond to questions. Scripts and project materials will be prepared for use in these meetings, which may be handled by members of the Technical Advisory Committee or Policy Advisory Committee. Local issues, concerns and opportunities which arise from these meetings will be summarized and considered in the study process.

#### **4.8 Media Relations**

News releases will be prepared as appropriate throughout the course of the AA study to announce public meetings and other important milestones or events. News releases will be



distributed to a comprehensive media list that was prepared as part of the Gateway Corridor Commission's Strategic Communications Plan. All media inquiries will be directed to the WCRRA. The technical team will assist in providing information and answering questions as directed by the WCRRA.

#### **4.9 Issues Tracking Report**

As described above in Section 3, issues, concerns, opportunities and constraints that are identified through the public involvement efforts will be documented in a cumulative "issues tracking report." This documentation technique will provide a means of insuring that there is public input in the study process and that issues raised by stakeholders are addressed as appropriate throughout the alternatives analysis process and beyond. Additionally, a communications log will be used internally by the project team to document all significant discussion with project stakeholders, including the public (outside the forum of public open houses). A significant discussion will be any discussion where key project information is given or received. The communications log will list the people involved in the conversation (name and organization), date, and summary of the conversation. These forms will be compiled for inclusion in a comprehensive internal communications log, their issues aggregated and summarized in relevant project documents.





TABLE 1 – COMMUNICATIONS MATRIX – PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

Tools	Frequency	TARGETED AUDIENCE													
		Residents / Owners	Businesses, employees and customers	Chambers of Commerce	Neighborhood / Business Associations	Colleges, schools and bus services	City and county staff	Elected officials	Commuters and traveling public	Technical Advisory Committee	Policy Advisory Committee	News media	Emergency service providers	Historic Preservation organizations	Environmental agencies
<b>Information Sources</b>															
Project Website	Monthly	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Blast Email	Monthly	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X			
Postcard Notices	As Needed	X	X												
Other Websites	Monthly	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Facebook	TBD														
Twitter	TBD														
<b>Media Relations</b>															
Blast Email	Monthly	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X		
News Releases	As Needed											X			
<b>Collateral Materials</b>															
Newsletters	Bi-Monthly	X	X	X	X					X					
Display Boards	As Needed	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X			X	
PowerPoint	As Needed	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X				
<b>Events/Meetings</b>															
Public Open Houses	Quarterly	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	
Stakeholder Meetings	Periodic	X	X	X		X				X	X				
Individual Meetings	Periodic	X	X			X	X	X		X					X
Presentations	Requested			X	X			X		X				X	