

TH 15 CORRIDOR STUDY

SAINT CLOUD, MN

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN

May 2020



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PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Trunk Highway (TH) 15 is one of the most challenging corridors in the entire state. It exhibits some of the lowest travel time reliability characteristic and highest crash metrics of the entire statewide highway system. Its regional context and connectivity to Interstate 94, US Highway 10, Minnesota Highway 23 and County Highway 75 make it one of the most critical corridors in the St. Cloud area and surrounding region. The high-speed and high-capacity characteristics that make TH 15 corridor such an asset for the motoring public, make this corridor equally as unappealing for alternative modes of travel such as pedestrians and bicycles. The purpose of the TH 15 Corridor Study is to develop realistic solutions to the well-established operational, safety and multimodal challenges currently experienced on TH 15.

PURPOSE OF THE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

The purpose of this public involvement plan is to provide an overview of the project’s target audience, key stakeholders, public involvement strategies, communication methods, and activities as well as a timeline relative to milestones within the project schedule. This public engagement plan will help guide public input and involvement that supports the development of this study and meets the goals of both the APO’s Stakeholder Engagement Plan as well as MnDOT District 3’s Public Engagement Outreach Plan for Long-term Equity.

Goals of Public Engagement

There are three overarching goals of the TH 15 Corridor Study’s public engagement plan.

1. Provide early, accessible and continuous opportunities for public involvement from diverse stakeholders.
2. Provide reasonable public access to technical and policy information used in the development of plans and projects.
3. Provide a reasonable amount of time to review materials and comment prior to adoption of any plan or amendment.

APPROACH

Key Stakeholders Overview

Four key stakeholder groups have been identified, preliminarily, for the TH 15 Corridor Study.

- » **General Public.** The general public may include residents, traveling public, recreational users, and other interested parties. Depending on the user, these key groups may have opinions on alternatives, design, and future corridor impacts. Offering a wide variety of opportunities for the interested groups to be involved is included in the plan and includes in-person meetings and virtual opportunities.
- » **Local Businesses.** In addition to those that live along or travel the highway; the roadway provides access to numerous businesses. Therefore, ensuring owners and employees have the opportunity to provide input, have concerns heard, and be in the know will be an important aspect. Tailored and direct coordination such as listening sessions, public meetings, and virtual opportunities will be needed with business owners and the commercial industry.
- » **Elected Officials.** Special time will be spent with elected officials. During these meetings the team will review project progress, address issues and concerns, and discuss public feedback and opportunities. This format will allow for an open dialogue amongst one another and ensure they are properly equipped with project updates to be able to effectively respond to their constituents.
- » **Jurisdictional Partners.** Agency partners such as MnDOT, the City of Saint Cloud, City of Waite Park, and Stearns County will play a key role in this project. The project’s steering committee will be used to help guide and provide feedback for all public engagement activities throughout the project. This will help achieve the goals of both the

APO’s Stakeholder Engagement Plan as well as MnDOT District 3’s Public Engagement Outreach Plan for Long-term Equity.

Engaging Each Stakeholder Group

The public involvement process for this study will use multiple approaches to engage each of the key stakeholder groups. Within each target audience/key stakeholder we have a primary and secondary approach to outreach. In some instance there is an additional contingency tactic. In addition to these strategies, the study team is prepared to creatively and thoughtfully respond to the situational needs created by COVID-19. We can effectively deliver all engagement activities remotely as necessary.

Table 1: Stakeholder and Engagement Approaches

Audience	Primary	Secondary	Contingency	Methods
General Public	Interactive Open House Events	Virtual Opportunities	Individual Phone or Email Communication	Electronic Communications (emails, social media), Traditional Media
Local Businesses	Face-to-Face Meetings/Listening Sessions	Interactive Open House Events	Virtual Opportunities	Direct Invitation, Electronic Communication
Elected Officials	Listening Sessions	Electronic Communications		Phone Calls to Schedule, Email Follow Up
Jurisdictional Partners	Face-to-Face Meetings	Electronic Communications		Steering Committee Meetings

Public Involvement Activities and Actions

STEERING COMMITTEE

The steering committee will be made up of members from the following jurisdictional partners: St. Cloud APO, MnDOT, City of St. Cloud, City of Waite Park, Stearns County and St. Cloud Metro Bus.

There are five steering committee meetings scheduled at key milestones. Each meeting has a series of activities meant to review technical analysis and solicit feedback from the committee to guide the development of the study.

- » **Steering Committee Meeting #1.** Presentation and review of the Existing Conditions Report; vetting of key issues and opportunities; Vision, Goals, and Objectives Workshop; Future Conditions Brainstorming Workshop; Public Engagement Plan review and stakeholder analysis.
- » **Steering Committee Meeting #2.** Presentation and review of the Future Conditions Report; presentation and review of Corridor Vision Report; Regional Alternatives Brainstorming Workshop; public input meeting #1 preparation.
- » **Steering Committee Meeting #3.** Review of public input meeting #1; presentation and review of the Macro-Level Alternatives Report; Micro-Level Alternatives Brainstorming Workshop.
- » **Steering Committee Meeting #4.** Value Planning Workshop to review, refine, and assess build alternatives; public input meeting #2 preparation.
- » **Steering Committee Meeting #5.** Review of public input meeting #2, presentation and review of the Implementation Plan; presentation and review of Draft Final Report.

STAKEHOLDER ASSESSMENT

A stakeholder assessment will be completed to identify additional groups with an interest in the study. This will be reviewed with the study’s steering committee at their first meeting.

Actions:

- » Utilize previous plans, studies, and the APO's Interested Persons List as a foundation to identify groups.
- » In concert with APO project team, we will lead a round table discussion to verify groups and determine new categories (if any) during the first steering committee meeting.

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

A tracking mechanism will be used to capture demographic/geographical information to ensure diverse stakeholders are involved.

Actions:

- » Create "About You Boards" that participants will fill out at each hosted event.
- » Provide an electronic method to capture the same data online or within electronic surveys.
- » Analyze results to determine gaps in diverse stakeholders and create/implement a plan to engage with the targeted groups.
- » In concert with APO project team, we will confirm the demographic questionnaire during the second steering committee meeting.

DOCUMENT PUBLIC COMMENTS

Documenting public input, comments, and responses ensures the project team can clearly understand public sentiment, opportunities for additional or revised approaches, and assist in the ultimate outcomes in the study. This public engagement plan identifies actions necessary to develop, track, and maintain all public comments.

Actions:

- » Develop a comment disposition matrix so each commenter can see how their comment was handled and what impact it had on the final report. The matrix will be created in a user-friendly platform (excel) to document comments and pinpoint the location the comment is referred to (if feasible). The platform will also track each comment by "themes" and who is responsible for the "comment" – is it an APO, MnDOT or city/county issue.
- » Additionally, at times, more immediate concerns and issues may come up during this process. Therefore, the project team will share issues and concerns (when it merits a response) to ensure they are addressed in a timely and efficient manner.
- » In concert with APO project team, we will confirm the tracking format during a steering committee meeting.

LISTENING SESSIONS

Up to five listening sessions will occur during the timeframe of the project. These meetings will allow for clearer communication with those most directly impacted by the project. These sessions provide an opportunity to listen and learn from specific groups about their concerns, issues and vision for the corridor. Additionally, understanding how they want to be engaged during this process.

Actions:

The following actions will be taken to support listening sessions.

- » Based on the Stakeholder Assessment, KLJ will recommend specific groups to host listening sessions with for APO approval.
- » KLJ will work with the APO to schedule either in-person or virtual meetings.
- » KLJ will provide all materials necessary to APO at least three days before the meeting and provide materials as necessary at the meetings.
- » KLJ will provide meeting summaries in a timely fashion.

The results of the listening sessions, including all comments, materials, and summaries, will be included in the public engagement appendix.

PUBLIC INPUT MEETINGS

Two interactive public input meetings will be hosted.

- » The first meeting will provide a review of the existing and future issues, needs, and opportunities. The meeting will be designed to help engage the public in a meaningful manner that will help identify and articulate transportation values, issues, and concerns through community stories. This meeting will include a formal presentation, issues mapping exercise, and a value profile exercise. The activities will be posted to the project website as well.
- » The second meeting will provide an update on the progress of the project and provide alternative options and prioritization opportunity to the public. This meeting will help shape future transportation investment in the area and set the groundwork for next steps of engagement around transportation concepts that align with a shared vision. This meeting will include a formal presentation, alternatives, and a prioritization exercise. A survey with the alternatives and prioritization questions will be developed and posted to the project website.

Actions:

The following actions will be taken to support the public input meetings.

- » KLJ will work with APO and project partners to secure a location for the event that is within the project area. We anticipate using a publicly available space for the event.
- » KLJ will develop and send postcards to all businesses/residents within an agreed upon radius of the project area. APO will provide addresses in excel format. KLJ has budgeted \$250 per meeting for this activity. This money can be distributed to other activities noted below.
- » KLJ will provide the APO an electronic message (newsletter) to be emailed to its database.
- » KLJ will work with partner jurisdictions to coordinate information with newsletters, town halls, or mayor's messages.
- » KLJ will draft a press release to be published in the local paper. The press release can also be submitted to other local news agencies at the request of the project partners. Legal ads will also be purchased by the APO.
- » KLJ will provide APO a social media posting schedule and any accompanying media to be posted to the APO's social media channels. APO would be responsible for any paid ads or boosted posts coordinated with the public input meetings.
- » KLJ will work with MnDOT to develop and coordinate roadside variable-message signs.
- » KLJ will develop meeting materials that may include a PowerPoint presentation, exhibits, handouts, comment cards, etc. Project partners will review all meeting materials. Materials will follow the project branding.
- » KLJ will facilitate the public input meetings with the assistance of the project team as desired.
- » KLJ will develop a public meeting summary to be submitted to the project team for review.

The results of the public input meetings, including all comments, materials, and summaries, will be included in the public engagement appendix.

KLJ is currently prepared to host two in-person public meetings. However, given COVID-19 constraints and best practices, these meetings may need to be adjusted to follow an online only format. Moving forward, KLJ, the APO, and steering committee will make the determination of the appropriate meeting format and tools.

VISUALIZATIONS

Six static renderings will be developed for the TH 15 corridor. Graphics will show before and after conditions and can be illustrated online using a before/after slider. Specific renderings will be determined during the Implementation phase of the project but can include multiple alternatives, viewpoints, and/or locations.

VIRTUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The APO will establish a project specific web page. Throughout the study process, KLJ will provide the APO with project updates and materials to post, including newsletters/project summaries, presentations with appropriate exhibits, and exercises.

Actions:

KLJ will provide the following updates to APO to post on the project website:

- » Existing Conditions Report, Future Conditions Report, Corridor Vision Report, Macro-Level Alternatives Assessment, Micro-Level Alternatives Assessment, Draft Report. KLJ will provide a one to two week review and comment period depending on the deliverable and other milestones.
- » Two project newsletters.
- » Public Input Meeting #1 notification, meeting materials (including online issues map), and meeting summary.
- » Public Input Meeting #2 notification, meeting materials (including online survey), and meeting summary.
- » Listening session summaries.
- » Visualizations.
- » Final plan submittal.

KLJ will translate materials into appropriate languages, as needed and ensure materials are in plain language and compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The project website will also include an APO contact information to submit comments. KLJ will assist as needed to ensure all comments received are responded to in a timely fashion, logged, and included in a public engagement appendix.

SCHEDULE

The TH 15 corridor study is scheduled to be completed by December 2020. Each of the key milestones are noted in the schedule below. The icons denote a project deliverable.

	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Existing Conditions										
Future Conditions										
Corridor Vision										
Macro-Level Alternatives										
Micro-Level Alternatives										
Final Report										

Public Engagement Schedule Timeline

Each of the public engagement activities are roughly coordinated around the key milestones in the schedule noted above. The following schedule reflects the anticipated frequency and schedule that public involvement activities will be implemented, including project deliverables (public engagement plan, website updates, newsletters, outreach and marketing), listening sessions, and public input meetings. This schedule is subject to change to respond to community schedules and COVID-19 related delays.

	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Public Engagement Plan										
Website Updates										
Media Outreach and Marketing										
Newsletters										
Listening Sessions										
Public Input Meetings										
Visualizations										

APPENDICES

KEY STAKEHOLDER LISTS

This stakeholder list will be completed during the first steering committee meeting.

Organization/Agency	Contact Name, Title	Contact Information	Potential Conflicts/Interest Areas
Jursidictional Partners			
City of Saint Cloud	Steve Foss Matt Glaesman		Increase safety, mobility, improve traffic flow, both now and in the future.
City of Waite Park	Jon Noerenberg		"
Stearns County	Jodi Teich		"
MnDOT District 3	Steve Voss		"
Elected Officials			
City of St. Cloud Mayor	Dave Kleis		
City of St. Cloud: Ward 1	Dave Masters		
City of St. Cloud: Ward 3	Paul Brandmire		
City of St. Cloud: Ward 4	Mike Conway		
City of Waite Park Mayor	Richard Miller		
City of Waite Park Council Members	All 4?		
Stearns County: First District	Tarryl Clark, Commissioner		
Stearns County: Second District	Joe Perske, Commissioner		
Stearns County: Fourth District	Leigh Lenzmeier, Commissioner		
Businesses			
St. Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce			
St. Cloud Area School District 742			
General Public			
Residents, Traveling Public, Recreational Users, Interested Groups			

KEY RESOURCES

It will be important to stay aware of the schedule for community events and meetings in APO as a way to schedule for the open houses or other opportunities to build upon, including listening sessions. Events and meetings unique to APO area include:

SAMPLE

Event/Meeting	Location	Date	Comments
Chamber of Commerce			Event Calendar
Business After Hours	Various	First Thursday of the month	Perfect opportunity to talk about the project, provide updates, etc.
Lunchtime Learning	Various	Meets first Wednesday of the month	Could utilize as one of the listening sessions
NEXT – Chamber’s Emerging Leaders Meeting	Various	Meets second Tuesday of the month	Avenue in to diverse community members
Waite Park Chamber Meeting	Waite Park local business	Meets 3 rd Wednesday of the month at 11:30am	Small group: good for a listening session.
Business Expo	OfficeMax – 2530 West Division Street	July 29 th , 11am – 3pm	Listening and Learning Session
City Council Meetings			
St. Cloud City Council	City Hall	Meets on two Mondays each month at 6:00pm	
City of Waite Park City Council	City Hall, 19 13 th Ave North, Waite Park	Meets on the first and third Mondays of the month at 6:30pm	
Community Events			
Somali Language, Food and Culture Sessions	Nori Cafe and Creamery 510 25 th Avenue North	May 30 th , and April 25 th	Too late for this, but are there others like it?
St. Cloud Pride in the Park	Lake George/Eastman Park	Sept. 19 th	Apply to be a Vendor: \$100 - \$200.
Family Fun Fest – Waite Park	Community Park	June 8 th – 12 th	The Ocean Is Calling (theme) website
St. Cloud Business Showcase	River’s Edge Convention Center	September 3 rd , 4:30 – 7:00pm	
Companion Walk	Wilson Park	September 12 th 9:00am – 1:00pm	