

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT STRATEGIES FOR SHAPING COMMUNITIES

This case study presents examples of how four TCSP projects have applied innovative approaches to public involvement. Drawing on lessons from these and numerous other TCSP projects, it identifies a wide range of techniques that can be applied to engage the public in transportation and community planning.

The Federal Highway Administration's Transportation and Community and System Preservation Pilot Program (TCSP) has funded projects in all 50 states and the District of Columbia that link transportation, community, and system preservation practices. Many of these projects have included innovative public involvement techniques that seek to involve citizens in a meaningful way in shaping the future of their communities. These projects are taking the term "public involvement" far beyond the traditional public hearing format. Through hands-on techniques such as charrettes, design workshops, facilitated discussions, and preference surveys, members of the general public, government staff and elected officials, and developers engage in a dialogue over how the design of their communities and transportation systems could be improved.

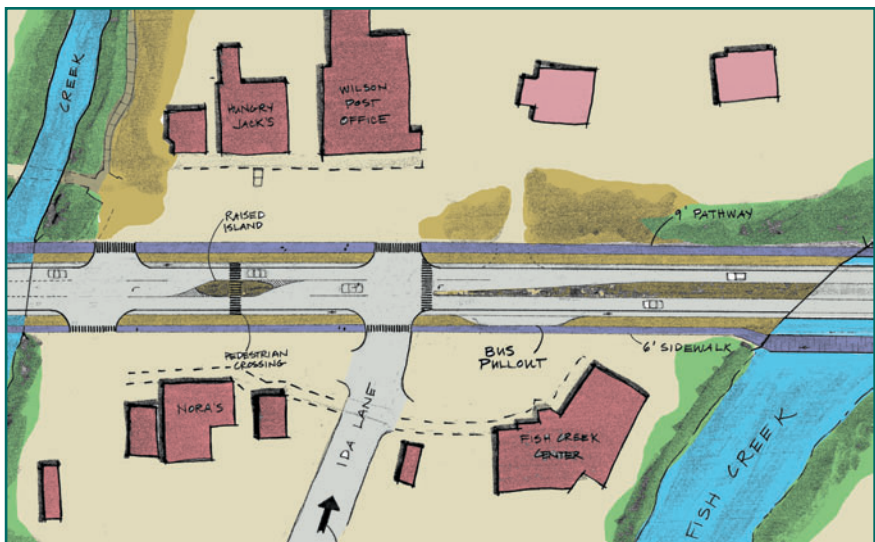
The scale of TCSP projects ranges from the redesign of a suburban shopping mall in Saginaw, Michigan to the development of alternative growth futures for a 10-county region of northern Utah. Yet regardless of whether the subject is a site, corridor, or entire metropolitan area, similar lessons have emerged with respect to public involvement. First, a good public involvement process leads to better plans and projects. If engineers, planners, and developers listen carefully to the people they serve, the resulting plans and projects more closely address the needs and reflect the values of the community. Second, the benefits of a strong public involvement process flow in the opposite direction as well. By engaging in a dialogue with the public, people with technical expertise can help others improve their understanding of the opportunities and constraints faced in planning transportation systems and designing communities.

TCSP projects are supporting other related initiatives to link transportation and community practices and improve public involvement. These initiatives include other Federal-aid projects, context-sensitive design practices increasingly being adopted by State Departments of Transportation (DOTs), the Federal Transit Administration's emphasis on transit-supportive land use for existing transit projects and for new fixed-guideway projects, Brownfields cleanup and redevelopment projects supported by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the community revitalization efforts underway at the Department of Housing and Urban Development, as well as regional and local comprehensive planning efforts throughout the country.

SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT EXAMPLES

The Wilson Charrette

Wilson is an unincorporated community of about 300 residents in Teton County, Wyoming. Located on a mountain pass near the burgeoning Jackson Hole area, it has managed to escape gentrification pressures but not traffic impacts, as commuters increasingly drive State Highway 22 through the town seeking affordable housing in Idaho. A Fiscal Year (FY) 1999 TCSP grant allowed Teton County to fund mixed-use village and highway corridor planning for Wilson. This area was



Preferred corridor design emerging from the Wilson charrette. The roadway includes two 12-foot travel lanes, a 14-foot center left turn lane/median, and two four and a half- to five-foot bike lanes/shoulders. Pedestrian improvements include a paved sidewalk on the south side of the roadway, a crushed-gravel pathway on the north side, crosswalks at the intersection, and a pedestrian bridge over a creek. Shared driveways consolidate business access.

Courtesy Teton County and Charlier Associates.



identified in the county's transportation plan as one of a number of appropriate locations for a "mixed-use village." By focusing development in compact, walkable communities such as Wilson, the county hopes to reduce the transportation investment needs associated with future growth.

The planning effort for Wilson was expanded to consider not just land use, but also the imminent reconstruction of a U.S. Forest Service (USFS) road intersecting the state highway in the town, as well as the longer-term need for reconstruction of the State highway as identified by the Wyoming DOT.

The county chose a short but intensive process to maximize citizen input within the timeframe required for the USFS road reconstruction. The county's planning team first conducted interviews with 17 property owners, local residents, staff of WYDOT, and other stakeholders to identify concerns regarding existing conditions and plans. Then, the team conducted a week-long charrette that included a mix of public presentations, small-group discussions, workshops, and meetings with business owners as well as students. In an iterative process, the planning team presented concepts to the public, obtained feedback, and refined and developed the concepts. The charrette was remarkably well-attended, with evening public workshops averaging 75 participants and with over 130 people participating in total. Topics covered in the charrette included design alternatives for Highway 22 and its intersection with the USFS road; future land use designations; wildlife corridors and wetlands; residential and commercial use typologies; bicycle and pedestrian access; and maintaining affordability.

The results of the charrette included a Corridor Plan for Highway 22, a Community Plan encompassing all of Wilson, and a Mixed-Use Village Plan for the center of Wilson. Public response to the charrette process was overwhelmingly positive, and residents of the community vowed to work together to see that the recommendations included in these plans are implemented. Examples of charrette recommendations include:

- Reduce the Highway 22 cross-section proposed in the USFS road reconstruction plan from five lanes to two lanes with a center left-turn/median lane;
- Include pedestrian walkways and consolidate drive-ways along the State highway corridor;
- Limit the area zoned commercial and allow mixed-use development within this area; and
- Limit the size of commercial buildings and residential lots, discourage lot consolidation, and allow accessory units, to maintain the small-scale character of the community and preserve affordability.

Since the charrette, the county has obtained right-of-way and funding for pedestrian paths for a 1,000-foot section of Highway 22 that will be reconstructed in conjunction with the USFS road reconstruction, a project which is being funded by FHWA. Also, FHWA has changed its plans for the road reconstruction to no longer include a widening of Highway 22 to five lanes. However, WYDOT has expressed some concerns about the proposed median concept, primarily because of increased construction and maintenance costs.

This charrette has been such a positive experience for the community.

– Community member comment
on Wilson Charrette

Anchorage on the Move

An FY 1999 TCSP grant of \$250,000 allowed the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS) to examine its public participation process. Through the Anchorage on the Move project, AMATS worked with Resource Solutions at the University of Alaska Anchorage to find out how AMATS could improve its approach to soliciting public input into transportation planning.

The project started with an effort to compile public frustrations and concerns about the planning process and participation opportunities. This was done through a series of interviews, questionnaires, and public meetings with citizens who have been involved in transportation planning, representatives of stakeholder groups, and other community members. A special effort was made to target underrepresented groups, such as ethnic minorities and the disabled. In a further series of meetings, participants made suggestions for how to improve the public process, and project staff drafted a public participation program for AMATS. Public meetings were marked by a strong reliance on small group discussion formats. These discussions were thoroughly documented and all comments were inventoried in order to determine the issues and concerns of greatest significance. The entire process was designed as an intense, focused effort with frequent meetings occurring over roughly a nine-month period.

The products of the Anchorage on the Move effort include:

- A recommended public participation program, packaged as a toolbox of strategies and techniques for involving the public in transportation planning, and intended for local agency staff;
- "Tip sheets" for people involved in planning and implementing public participation activities; and



- A Citizens Handbook that includes basic area transportation facts and figures, an overview of AMATS and its planning processes, an introduction to transportation funding, public participation opportunities, sources of additional information, and answers to frequently asked questions.

One of the significant findings of the effort was the need for greater emphasis on public education. Opportunities for public input, such as public meetings, already exist. However, people often lack a basic understanding of how the transportation planning process works, what are the key issues, or how and why they should become involved. A fundamental recommendation of the study was that AMATS continually feed information to the public through the mass media, Internet, mailings, and other mechanisms.

“Unless you have public education, you can’t have public involvement.”

– Meg King, Resource Solutions,
University of Alaska Anchorage

To begin to implement the study’s recommendations, AMATS has revised its notification procedures for meetings, providing a tentative agenda at least two weeks in advance, notifying people of action items at least one week before, and posting background information on the Internet. They will be testing additional recommendations in their upcoming Long-Range Transportation Planning and Transportation Improvement Program updates, as well as in planning studies for specific projects. In the future, the Anchorage on the Move project team hopes to be able to design an effective and cross-cutting public education program to complement their public involvement strategies.

Alternative Futures in Lansing

The Lansing, Michigan metropolitan area, population 450,000, spans three counties and 78 local jurisdictions. Assisted by an FY 1999 TCSP grant, the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission (TCRPC) has spearheaded an effort to bring together local government staff, elected officials, and citizens to create a vision for the region’s future. The vision exercise has focused on land use and environmental issues related to development patterns as well as on transportation requirements to serve development. A series of public forums are complemented by a stakeholders’ group, a public opinion survey, a visual preference survey, a local leader survey and briefings, and a quantitative analysis of the impacts of alternative scenarios.

At the initial set of town forums in July 2001, draft regional land use and transportation goals and objectives were presented for public input. In December 2001, a

second round of forums was held for the purpose of discussing alternative land use scenarios and their impacts. Both events, held at four locations throughout the region, were remarkably well-attended: over 400 people participated in the first set of forums and nearly 300 participated in the second set. The organizers attribute much of this success to a well-crafted media plan that resulted in strong media coverage immediately prior to the forums, along with coordinated mailings.



Courtesy, Tri-County Regional Planning Commission.

Citizens participate in a small group discussion at a forum on regional growth in Lansing, Michigan.

In the public forums, about 80 percent of participants preferred a city-centered land use scenario with strong environmental protection measures over a “business-as-usual” development scenario. The support of nearly half of these people, however, was contingent upon making revisions to the scenario compared to the version originally presented to them. The opportunity for citizen review and input led to the crafting of transportation and land use principles that are more broadly acceptable and stand a greater chance of successful implementation.

In an evaluation of the meetings, most people expressed guarded optimism that their concerns had been heard, but had mixed opinions about whether the suggested changes would actually be implemented. TCRPC is committed to adopting a regional transportation/land use vision consistent with public input and to carrying out its recommendations. Implementation, however, will primarily involve working with local jurisdictions and state agencies to obtain changes to land use regulations and funded transportation projects – a multi-year process.

Teenagers Tackle Transportation

With the support of an FY 2000 TCSP grant, planners in St. Lucie County, Florida are engaging teenagers in transportation planning. Concerned that the general public does not understand or have easy access to the transportation planning process, the county is working with the metropolitan planning organization (MPO), school board, and teenagers at the local high school with three primary objectives:



- To educate students about transportation issues so they can participate both now and later in life as adults;
- To use students to bring information to adults in an engaging and non-threatening manner; and
- To involve a constituency dependent upon alternative forms of transportation in identifying and planning for transit, bicycle, and pedestrian needs.



Courtesy Jody Bonei, St. Lucie County Planning Department.

Students in St. Lucie, Florida, produce a video explaining the transportation planning process.

By June of 2002, students produced eight videos covering different aspects of transportation, including careers/roles, transit, greenways/trails, how to survey a community, and how to put together an alternative transportation plan. A journalism class interviewed people from the community about their transportation-related needs and concerns. After completing the videos and interviews, students developed an alternative transportation plan focusing on transit, pedestrian, and bicycle needs and presented this plan to the MPO. The intent is to use it as input for local and State transportation plans. The students also developed a web site and booklets so that the process can be repeated in other school systems.

TECHNIQUES AND LESSONS LEARNED

These projects provide just a few examples of the successes demonstrated by TCSP projects using innovative public involvement methods. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to public involvement; different techniques are suited to different applications. Taken together, however, the projects sponsored by the TCSP program provide a menu of techniques and lessons that others can use to design successful and meaningful public involvement processes for transportation and community planning.

Lesson #1: Make Meetings Accessible

Many of the most effective and engaging public involvement techniques require face-to-face interaction in a

“We are taking our presentation to the community, rather than asking people to come to us.”

– Jim Harvey,
New Orleans Regional
Planning Commission

meeting, forum, or workshop setting. The first challenge is to get people to attend the event. This challenge is reduced if the event is convenient for people in terms of **time, location, and supporting services**. This means holding the event at a location that is within the community and familiar to people, such as a community center, church, or library; holding it in the evening to allow people who work different shifts to attend; and providing supporting services such as food, child care, and translation services in a community with a non-English speaking population. After developing an interactive outreach presentation to engage people in a regional comprehensive planning exercise, the New Orleans Regional Planning Commission took this presentation first to neighborhood association meetings, which typically had about 10 to 15 people in attendance, before speaking to larger groups.

Publicity is a second key to good turnout. Strong media coverage just prior to an event can pique interest as well as educate people about the issues at stake. Reaching people with multiple invitations – e.g., through mailings, newspaper, television, schools, and personal invitations – is much more effective than a single channel of communication. Organizers of the regional growth forums in Lansing attribute much of their successful turnout to a coordinated media plan developed in advance of the public events.

The publicity should make a compelling case for why people should attend. Abstract objectives, such as “help develop a regional plan,” are much less likely to grab peoples’ attention than identifying specific problems to be addressed – such as traffic congestion on a local arterial, loss of farmland, or an abandoned property in need of redevelopment. For example, planners in Saginaw, Michigan used the media to highlight traffic problems in the vicinity of a suburban shopping mall, and explained how people could help redesign the area to reduce traffic congestion, by attending a charrette.

Lesson #2: Make Meetings Engaging

“In 20 years of doing this, I’ve never permitted anything to be done like a traditional hearing... they just don’t work.”

– Paul Hamilton, Tri-County
Regional Planning Commission,
Lansing, Michigan



A good public event should be collaborative rather than confrontational; it should be engaging and fun; and it should provide a learning experience for all involved. A number of techniques can be used individually or in combination to accomplish these objectives in the context of transportation and community planning.

Instead of the traditional two-minute individual comment format, planners Paul Hamilton in Lansing and Charles Trainor in Boise, Idaho prefer an approach in which a presentation is followed by **small group breakout/discussion sessions**, followed by “report-backs” to the larger group. This format engages people in conversation around a specific issue and allows different groups to tackle different issues in some depth. Agencies running meetings in this format have trained their staff to be facilitators, and have also utilized consultants and local volunteers with skills in facilitation.

Design workshops are a variation on the small group approach for situations in which the focus is on transportation or community design elements for a specific area. Participants are given maps, tracing paper, and drawing materials and asked to sketch and/or list things such as existing conditions, improvements needed, and future design concepts. The participants’ sketches and ideas are then refined by design professionals to create a graphical record of the concepts generated in the workshop. Public design workshops have been used in TCSP projects to develop strategies to make a suburban shopping mall in Saginaw, Michigan more pedestrian-friendly and to develop roadway design concepts in the town of Wilson, Wyoming.

In a variation on the design workshop, participants are given colored chips that represent units of different types of development, such as housing, office, retail, mixed-use buildings, and public space. They are asked to arrange the chips on a map of the area being studied. This approach was used to help local residents and business owners design transit-oriented “villages” in Fort Worth, Texas. The Fort Worth workshop was particularly interesting because of its emphasis on fiscal responsibility. Each public investment item was given a price tag, and each group was given a cap on the amount of public money it could spend. Each item was also given a public-private leverage ratio, and door prizes were awarded to groups with the highest leverage.

Planners in Charlottesville, Virginia devised a **game-playing exercise** to engage people in a regional planning initiative workshop. In this exercise, each player selected a different alternative future theme for the area. The themes, named after old television shows, represented overarching descriptions of how the region could look and function in the future. The themes included:

- Grizzly Adams – Preserve open space and ecosystems;
- Green Acres – Maximize rural lifestyles;
- Petticoat Junction – Make light rail visible;
- Price is Right – Let the market be the driver;
- Let’s Make a Deal – Establish equity among jurisdictions; and
- Lost in Space – Maximize technology.

Groups of participants decided what type of land use patterns would maximize their theme, and put colored dots representing urban, suburban, and rural community types on a laminated map. The dots had different values representing their ability to absorb population growth; each group had to reach the same population target in its scenario.

Inviting **children** to participate in a design workshop can help break down barriers between adult participants and can bring a fresh perspective to an event. Both the Saginaw and Wilson charrettes included a session in which children from a local school sketched out their own design ideas for the community. The videos being created in St. Lucie County are being told with a high school student’s perspective and language – and thus are likely to be more accessible to a broader population than if they were created by planners with a more technical language and viewpoint.



Courtesy City of Fort Worth.

Residents of the Evansville-Rosedale neighborhood of Fort Worth, Texas allocate chips corresponding to different land uses in a proposed transit village. Hands-on workshops such as this are one technique for engaging the public in the planning process.

Technology can facilitate both small-group and large-group discussions. One such technology is **electronic voting**. Organizers of the town forums in Lansing used wireless electronic voting devices that were loaned by a local university. These were used to tally poll results on-the-spot and to create statistics and graphs for pre-programmed questions. In addition to providing instantaneous feedback, the voting devices encourage people to express their true opinions (since the votes are anonymous) in cases where they might be reluctant to share opinions which might be unpopular. Facilitators of group discussions also found the voting devices helpful



in screening ideas from participants: a proposal from one participant can be put up to vote, to see whether it has broader merit or is an idea without popular support.

In Anchorage, Alaska, planners used a **graffiti wall**, covered with paper on which people can either write or draw their thoughts, as another way of encouraging people to express themselves without having to make a public statement.

Technology can also help people understand the impacts of alternate choices. **Visual preference surveys** have been applied in Hartford, Lansing, Saginaw, Michigan, and Charlottesville to help people visualize what alternative growth patterns might look like and identify preferred patterns. People are shown design options for similar uses (e.g., suburban stand-alone retail versus mixed use) and asked to choose a preferred option or rate the appeal of a single option on a scale. Visual impact is only one measure of performance for development, but it is an important one that is becoming progressively easier to introduce with the advent of computer graphics technologies. Visual preference surveys have been administered as one component of a broader public event as well as via the Internet.



3-D Rendering of participants' preferred design option for U.S. 460

Courtesy Kentucky Transportation Center.

Visualization techniques also have been applied specifically to help design transportation facilities. An FY 1999 TCSP project in Kentucky explored the use of two-dimensional, three-dimensional, and virtual reality visualization techniques to solicit public involvement on roadway design features. Also as part of this project, a new method for capturing peoples' tastes and design preferences was tested. Developed by the Kentucky Transportation Center, this modeling process, known as Casewise Visual Evaluation (CAVE), allows citizens to clearly express their design preferences regarding a roadway or transportation-oriented development. CAVE can capture preferences for various combinations of design features and also can be applied in as little as a one-hour public meeting. This method allows the engineer, architect, or planner to gather detailed

design input before the design process starts, so that they can better understand the needs of the community and can create initial designs that are likely to be reviewed positively by the community.

These techniques were applied to potential designs for U.S. 460 through the Bluegrass Region of central Kentucky, and tested in a series of three focus groups with local residents. One result of this project was The Visualization Guide, a CD-ROM tool produced for the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) that explains the advantages, disadvantages, and costs of various visualization techniques and software. The KYTC is beginning to utilize visualization and preference analysis techniques as part of a larger effort to redesign its public involvement process.

“Visualization is one tool we are using to integrate context-sensitive design into transportation planning. Our goal is to be able to come to a consensus with the community on how the roadway should look.”

– John Carr,
Kentucky Transportation Cabinet

Quantitative measures of performance such as congestion, emissions, and land development are an important part of any alternatives analysis and help the public understand the benefits and impacts of each alternative. Emerging **geographic information systems (GIS)-based models and visual simulation techniques** are making analytical results more accessible to the public. In San Diego, for example, the PLACE3S model was used to illustrate the economic development potential of each land parcel in the Mid-City neighborhood under different zoning scenarios. Traffic simulation models can illustrate queues associated with different levels of development or roadway designs.

In the not-too-distant future, planners envision that it will be common practice to have computers at public meetings that allow people to test policies and actions on their own. PLACE3S already has been used in community workshops to allow people to analyze different zoning scenarios and compare results in real time. The value of such applications as a learning tool cannot be underestimated. When people have the opportunity to try different policies themselves and visualize the results, they will gain a much greater understanding of the interrelationships among various transportation and land use issues and will be able to support the planning process in a more informed manner.

Lesson #3: Use Complementary Strategies

Public events, while an important component of an



outreach strategy, are only one way of reaching people and soliciting their input. Even with engaging and accessible public meetings, only a limited number of people may participate, and an even smaller number feel comfortable expressing their views in this type of forum. TCSP projects are employing a variety of complementary strategies such as focus groups, interviews, stakeholder committees, opinion surveys, and other creative outreach strategies to solicit broader community input and help shape the plan or project development process.

“We were concerned that just relying on public meetings would only draw on people who usually participate in community activities. We used a combination of focus groups and a quantitative survey to broaden our public outreach.”

– Kirsten Merriman,
City of Burlington, Vermont

Focus groups engage only a small number of people at a time and require a trained facilitator, so they are not a cost-effective method for obtaining large-scale public involvement. However, they can be extremely useful for helping project staff understand the viewpoints of specific stakeholder groups. For example, in Honolulu, Hawaii, city transportation staff held focus groups with eight stakeholder groups – including taxi drivers, hotel operators, and delivery operators – to identify specific concerns with respect to traffic and pedestrian needs in the Waikiki resort area. The Capitol Region Council of Governments held focus groups with developers in the Hartford region to discuss barriers to creating transit-supportive development projects.

Focus groups have also been used in Burlington, Vermont, where separate focus groups were held with seniors, business owners, neighborhood associations, and youth to identify strengths and weaknesses of the project neighborhood. The findings were also used to help shape a public opinion survey.

Focus groups have served as an effective evaluation tool in Saginaw to provide feedback on a visual preference survey; and in Boise, where a focus group was held with local staff and officials who were invited to project meetings but did not attend. One key finding of the Boise session was that staff in some city departments simply had not been informed of the meeting even though staff in other departments had been – leading the project team to conclude that they needed to improve internal communication practices.

Interviews with key stakeholders, such as leaders of local business, neighborhood or advocacy groups or

human service providers, can serve a similar purpose. Planners in Springfield, Massachusetts performed one-on-one interviews with community leaders as one of the first steps in undertaking a master plan for a 75-acre Brownfields site and an adjacent historic neighborhood. In Wilson, Wyoming, a county-led planning team conducted interviews with property owners, local residents, stakeholders, and the state DOT to identify specific concerns that they had as well as opinions about existing plans, in advance of undertaking a public design charrette. Interviews are a good technique to use early in the planning process. Interviews are being used not only to identify needs and concerns but also to identify other groups, leaders, and community members whose participation should be solicited, as well as to obtain feedback on the proposed planning process/approach.

“Our focus group with developers helped us to identify some of the political and economic obstacles to new models of regional development.”

– Linda Osten, Capitol Region
Council of Governments,
Hartford, CT

Another widely-used approach to obtaining ongoing public input is the **stakeholder committee**. The committee is typically used to provide overall direction to the project as well as provide feedback from the viewpoint of different constituencies. TCSP project sponsors have found it important to include a broad base of representation on the committee, including elected officials, community and advocacy groups, business and private sector interests, public agency staff, and other stakeholders. In order to maintain a manageable committee size, committees are often comprised of representatives of different stakeholder groups, rather than unaffiliated individuals, especially for projects of a broad geographic scale. It may be desirable to establish a separate technical committee to oversee the development of a modeling tool or other technique; planners in Charlottesville report losing interest among some members of their advisory committee who were not attracted to the details of model development (a significant focus in the first year of the project). The technical committee should include at least a small number of interested stakeholder representatives who can serve as liaisons to a policy or advisory committee.

The selection of committee members may also vary depending upon the objectives of a project. The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, for example, established its project committee with the objective of using it as an implementation tool. The



focus of the Council’s project was on identifying and implementing regional high-priority greenways and circulation systems, consistent with an adopted regional vision. The Council felt that by establishing a committee that included high-level elected and appointed officials – rather than lower-level agency staff – to identify and prioritize projects, that these stakeholders would take ownership of projects and would be in a better position to advocate for their implementation.

Opinion surveys are another technique to solicit feedback from the community. While opinion surveys at a regional level are typically conducted by telephone, when the focus is on a specific neighborhood, distributing surveys “on the street” can prove to be a successful and more engaging technique. For example, a project team working on revitalizing North Street in Burlington, Vermont distributed surveys using a variety of techniques including door-to-door canvassing, drop boxes at corner stores, a community fair, and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. In doing so, they were able to explain the purpose of the survey to many people and obtained over 400 completed surveys. While not a completely random methodology, it did provide an opportunity for broad community input.



Planners come to the public at a fair in Hartford, Connecticut

Appearances at community events can also help bring planning staff “to the people.” The Capitol Region Council of Governments in Hartford reports strong public response to a mobile display booth on regional growth that it uses at community fairs throughout the region.

Lesson #4: Value Peoples’ Input

Perhaps the most important long-term strategy for maintaining public involvement is to demonstrate to people that their involvement is valuable. Some TCSP projects reported having to work with a public that initially was either skeptical or downright cynical about whether their views would be listened to and whether it would be worth their time to be involved in the process. This can be a problem, for example, in

economically depressed communities – such as Burlington’s Old North End – where revitalization plans have been made in the past but never implemented. Barriers of skepticism and cynicism can be overcome, however, by persistently cultivating relationships and by demonstrating implementation commitments. Furthermore, if people become invested in the development of a plan, they are more likely to support and advocate for its implementation.

“We had to sit through lots of meetings where people had time to vent their angers and frustrations. Now we are past this point and people are ready to roll up their sleeves and talk about implementation.”

– Katie Galluzzo, City Planner,
City of Springfield, Massachusetts

Specific tactics that help people feel that their input is valued include:

- Soliciting input early in the process, not just after the plan or project has largely been decided;
- Changing policies or designs when there is clear public support for such a change;
- Responding to *all* public comments – even if a particular comment cannot be addressed in the plan or design, explaining why it cannot be addressed; and
- Perhaps most importantly, projecting the right attitude: that staff are genuinely interested in learning from people rather than simply soliciting input to fulfill a requirement.

The benefits of a collaborative approach are evident to the private sector as well as to public agencies. According to the Mid-America Council of Governments (MARC) in Kansas City, Missouri, a developer involved in MARC’s Quality Places outreach effort redesigned a proposed development to be responsive to community concerns, gaining the support of the community. The developer, who was proposing a neotraditional neighborhood on the site of a horse farm, held a week-long charrette to which members of the public were invited. The developer responded to the public’s concerns about issues such as preserving the historic character and natural beauty of the area. At the same time, the developer was able to educate the public about why they wanted to incorporate traditional neighborhood design, mixed use, and recreational trails. At the end of the final presentation, the developer received a standing ovation.

CONCLUSIONS

People throughout the country are paying increasing attention to the physical form of their community.



Americans are examining the design of development projects and their interrelationships with transportation systems and public spaces. They are questioning the implications of past and present design practices with respect to their impact on community character, accessibility, economic development, and the natural environment. And they are helping to develop and implement new transportation and land use design practices that preserve the most valuable qualities of their communities, while enhancing access, protecting the environment, and fostering sustainable economic growth.

“Because of our efforts to educate people about transit-supportive development, we are finding that both local planners and developers are more conscious of design issues such as pedestrian access, building setbacks, parking placement, building density, and mixed uses.”

– Marlene Nagel, Mid-America Regional Council, Kansas City, Missouri

Projects funded through the Federal Highway Administration’s TCSP program are demonstrating innovative public involvement techniques to assist communities

in tackling their transportation and design problems. A few examples illustrate specific ways in which a community-driven TCSP process has affected the design and implementation of projects:

- In Wilson, Wyoming, pedestrian walkways and crossings are being incorporated into the redesign of a highway intersection;
- In St. Lucie County, Florida, the alternative transportation plan contributed to increased support by the St. Lucie MPO for a municipal services tax to encourage additional transit investments for the county’s first fixed-route bus system along U.S. 1;
- In San Diego, California, community input led to the redesign of proposed bus access ramps to shorten walking distances and allow for street-fronting retail development.

The results of these and other TCSP projects are clear: a *collaboration* between the designers of a project – engineers, planners, developers – and the general public – including community and stakeholder groups and their representatives – leads to projects that meet the needs of local communities while at the same time reducing the regional impacts of transportation and development.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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See also: TCSP Case Study #4

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See also: TCSP Case Study #3

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See also: TCSP Case Study #5

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cvoz.uky.edu/psa/TCSP/TCSPHome.htm

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See also: TCSP Case Study #1



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION (CONTINUED)

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www.marc.org/cqp.htm

www.marc.org/community/transitsupportivedevelopment.htm

Troy, New York

South Troy Waterfront Redevelopment Project

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(518) 270-4577

Fort Worth, Texas

Corridor Redevelopment and Transit Linkages

Peggy McCook

City of Fort Worth

(817) 871-8008

Houston, Texas

Main Street Corridor Planning and Research Project

City of Houston

Patricia Rincon-Kallman

(713) 837-7858

www.ci.houston.tx.us/pd/

See also: TCSP Case Study #2

Burlington, Vermont

North Street Revitalization Project

City of Burlington

Kirsten Merriman

(802) 865-7144

Charlottesville, Virginia

Eastern Planning Initiative

Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission

Harrison Rue

(434) 979-7310

www.tjpd.com

See also: TCSP Case Study #6

Teton Co., Wyoming

Mapping for a Millenium (The Wilson Charrette)

Theresa DeGroh

Teton County Planning Department

(307) 733-3959

www.tetonwyo.org/plan/

Other Public Involvement Resources

Federal Highway Administration

Office of Environment and Planning

www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/pubinv2.htm

Federal Transit Administration

Office of Planning

www.fta.dot.gov/office/planning/pi.htm

TCSP Program:

FHWA – Office of Planning

400 7th Street SW

Washington, D.C. 20590

www.fhwa.dot.gov/tcsp



U.S. Department
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**Federal Highway
Administration**

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