

APPENDIX I

Public Involvement Procedures

**STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCEDURES**

Public involvement is the process of two-way communication between citizen and government by which transportation agencies and other officials give notice and information to the public and use public input as a factor in decision-making. Since the passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), there has been a federally mandated emphasis on early, proactive, and sustained citizen input into transportation decision-making — with special outreach efforts targeted at traditionally underserved populations. ISTEA’s directive was reinforced by the passage of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) near the end of the decade. The State of Hawaii has developed protocols and guidelines to interpret these mandates. The mission statement of these statewide guidelines for their public involvement program is:

“To proactively seek early and continuing public input and involvement so that HDOT and each of its divisions is responsive and accountable to its stakeholders, communicates with the public, and make the best possible transportation decisions promoting safety and enhancing the quality of life of Hawaii’s citizens.”

The implementation procedures of the State of Hawaii Department of Transportation Public Involvement Policy include a variety of techniques that are divided into four functional areas: (1) informing the public, (2) involving the public in decision making, (3) getting feedback from the public, and (4) using special techniques to enhance participation. The state’s policy does not mandate that each of the techniques discussed below be used, but it encourages the use of the appropriate program of techniques on a case-by-case basis to ensure that each of the first three functional areas are addressed. The fourth functional area is not mandatory.

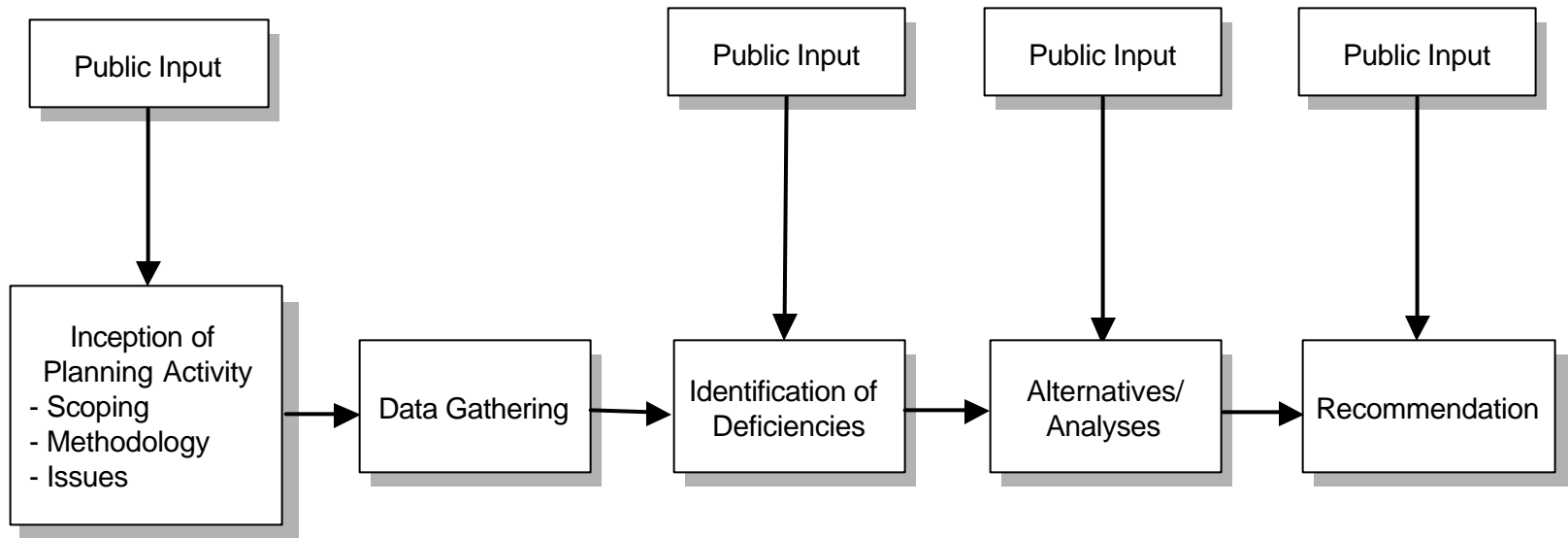
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT INTERFACE WITH PLANNING ACTIVITIES

Figure I-1 provides a graphic illustration of the typical flow of activities needed to satisfy the requirements of the Hawaii transportation planning process. The chart identifies the various activities that must be completed, the inter-relationship of these activities, and the sequence in which they must be conducted.

It can be seen that an essential element of the process is that an appropriate level of public outreach be implemented at each of step so that public input is provided throughout the planning program. It may be necessary to prepare a specific outreach program as part of the planning process.

The Hawaii Statewide Transportation Planning Process does not expect that a rigid flow of activities be established but rather requires that each of the elements be included in the process. The public input activities must be an integral part of the process during the completion of the technical activities and must occur at appropriate times during the process. These must be included in each step of the program to satisfy the requirements of the transportation planning process.

Figure I - 1
Integration of Public Involvement with
Typical Planning Activity Flow



One or more of the techniques described below may be used for each step of the process where public input is recommended. The public outreach program for each project should be specifically designed to respond to each situation.

FUNCTIONAL AREA 1 – INFORMING THE PUBLIC

To be effective, the public involvement program must be properly designed to accommodate individual projects. Each situation dictates the manner in which the outreach program is organized and the techniques that should be used. The approach should include the following.

A. Creating and Using a Core Group

One successful approach used to communicate with the public starts with a core group of participants—people who are likely to have strong interests in the subject—and then broaden the public involvement program based on work with the core group. Although a core group can take several forms, the two most common forms in Hawaii are the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) and the Task Force.

- Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) – The CAC is a representative group of the reasonable cross section of the general public and stakeholders that meets regularly to discuss issues of common concern. The meetings serve as a forum in which the transportation agency and the citizens themselves can express their ideas. The views and comments should be recorded, and a consensus on issues is sought, although it is not required. The role of the CAC is to be advisory. A CAC can be formed for a limited period of time or an extended period. It can even serve as a standing committee.
- Task Force – The task force is a group assigned to a specific task with a time limit to reach a conclusion and resolve a specific issue. Its membership is similar to the CAC with agency staff often assigned to provide technical support. While the CAC acts primarily in an advisory role where consensus is not required, the Task Force is asked to resolve an issue and present a unified voice. Also, while the CAC represents a cross section of all interests, the task force is more focused and the membership consists of individuals and organizational representatives with close ties to the issue or task.

B. Including People who are Underserved by Transportation

The public involvement program must encompass the full range of community interests, especially those of people who are underserved by the system. Groups that have difficulty accessing the transportation system often are unaware of transportation proposals that may affect them. They also may lack experience participating in the public participation process to express their opinions and/or views on issues. This group often includes people with special cultural, racial, or ethnic characteristics; people with disabilities; or groups with low income. The agency must assume responsibility for reaching out and including them in the decision making process.

Techniques to reach the underserved are discussed for ethnic, minority, and low-income groups as well as for American with disabilities.

- Ethnic, minority, and low-income groups – These groups often find participation difficult and are also traditionally underserved by transportation systems. The agency must work to empower these people by defining the type and way in which the public involvement process can be most effective for them. The agency must seek out and consider the needs of the transportation disadvantaged. Potential means of accomplishing this include use of community organizations and their leaders, social service agencies, religious organizations, special interest organizations and agencies, and cultural organizations.
- Americans with Disabilities - The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) requires specific participation activities that can include specifically directed outreach programs, consultations with individuals with disabilities, opportunities for public comment, accessible formats, public hearings, and ongoing efforts to involve the disability community.

C. Providing Information and a Communication System

An effective public involvement program allows people to get information from an agency and give information back to it. The agency must provide attractive, eye-catching materials that convey the appropriate message and offer people effective, easy ways to communicate so that the ideas and concerns of the community are heard and acted on.

The following describes various techniques that can and have been utilized by the various transportation agencies to provide information and establish communications with the public.

- Mailing List – Mailing lists are the staple of most public involvement programs, providing a simple, flexible and fast means of keeping tabs on organizations, residents, media, elected officials, abutters, agency personnel, interest groups, and others. They can reach an audience with announcements of upcoming events, meeting invitations, newsletters, summary reports, and other transportation-related information.
- Public Information Materials – Public information materials should be designed to provide basic information about a process, project or document in a fast, concise, and clear way. They are an essential form of communications in any public involvement process. They are an easy way to update information periodically for both those intimately involved and those who are not actively involved but are curious and interested. This material should be widely distributed and can be graphic, non-technical and non-verbal.
- Public Information Meetings – Public information meetings can take many forms and can be used at various stages of a planning project. The two basic objectives of these meetings would be to provide basic information about the topic and to receive input from those in attendance in the form of direct verbal feedback. At a minimum, these meetings should take place at the outset of the planning process to describe what is to take place and at the end to describe the results. They can also be held at various interim points

depending on the issues to be discussed, the complexity of the issues, and the degree to which public input is sought or needed.

- Key Person Interviews – A key person interview is a one-on-one talk about the subject with an individual recognized or designated as a community leader. A key person might be an opinion leader, a spokesperson for the community or cause, an elected official, the head of an organization, or a representative to local media. They are useful in rapidly getting details on the community and in understanding residents' priorities.
- Briefings – Briefings are information meetings with community groups or leaders. They usually involve issue-focused communications between an agency, project managers, board members or other staff and a specific group or part of the community.
- Video Techniques – Video techniques use recorded visual and oral messages to present information to the public, primarily via tapes or laser disks. An easily understood video is often more useful to some people than reading or hearing about transportation. Because they can replay endlessly, they present the same message each time without variation.
- Telephone Techniques – The telephone technique offers a unique, two-way medium for public involvement. It can be used to obtain information and to give opinions. Calls can be administered by using an auto attendant with tiered recording, an information bureau that uses a staff person to respond to questions, email to respond to computer-based queries, a hotline or voicemail, a fax on demand system, a telephone call in program, an interactive voice response system, or an interactive cable television information system.
- Media Strategies – Media strategies inform residents about projects and programs through newspapers, radio, television and video, posters and variable message signs, mass mailings of brochures or newsletters, and distribution fliers. This technique allows the agency to frame the message rather than allowing the media to do it. It is often incorporated into projects that need public focus, consensus, and understanding.
- Speakers Bureau – Speakers bureaus are groups of specially-trained representatives who can speak about the process or program. They can be community or agency people, and they meet with public and private organizations and groups on behalf of a project, program, or planning activity. They provide information about planning or project activities, listen to people's concerns, answer questions, and seek continued participation and input from the public.

FUNCTIONAL AREA 2 – HAVING FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS

Meetings—formal and informal—are the backbone of a public involvement program. People like, expect, and need firsthand opportunities to discuss agency programs and plans. They provide a time and place for face-to-face contact and help establish two-way communications, giving agencies an opportunity to respond directly to comments and dispel rumors or misinformation.

Because they require time and effort from all participants, meetings must be planned and implemented carefully. Options for types of meetings and formats for their organizations are described below.

A. Determine the Type of Meeting

The type of meetings and its level of formality are normally determined by its purpose in the overall public involvement effort. The scheduling of meetings depends on the topics of information. Sometimes a series of meetings is necessary. Potential types of meetings include the following:

- Public Meetings – Public meetings are designed to present information to the public and obtain informal input from the community. They can be held throughout the planning process and can be tailored to specific issues or groups. Anyone can attend, as either an individual or a representative of a specific interest. They are designed to disseminate information and achieve a basic level of community input from a wide representation of community residents.
- Public Hearings – Public hearings are more formal than public meetings and are normally held prior to a decision point. Hearings require an official hearing officer and must follow specific procedures to announce the time and place. They normally have a time period during which written comments can be received, and the proceedings must be recorded in written form as input to an agency.
- Open House – An open house is an informal meeting in which people get information about a plan or project. It has no set formal agenda, and unlike a meeting, no formal discussions and presentations take place. People get information informally from exhibits and staff and are encouraged to give opinions, comments, and preferences to staff either orally or in writing. Normally, information is provided buffet-style; agencies reserve table space for comments sheets, agency staff is available to answer questions or provide details, there is no fixed agenda, and take-home material is often given.
- Open Forum Hearing – A public forum hearing expands a public hearing to include elements of an open house. In addition, after reviewing exhibits and working with staff, participants can comment on a proposal for the formal transcript of the public hearing.
- Conferences – Conferences are special meetings to inform people and solicit input on specific policy issues, plans or projects. In size and importance, they range from a subset of a larger meeting to a large multi-day event. They are highly-structured programs of presentations and discussions, usually with an overall theme. They can have presentations or panel discussion followed by questions.
- Workshops – A workshop is a task-oriented meeting organized around a particular topic or activity. It typically involves a relatively small group and addresses aspects of a narrowly defined topic. Sometimes workshops can be part of a larger meeting or conference.

B. Select the Format of the Meeting

Meetings focus on discussion, whether people are giving opinions, debating issues, or challenging an agency. They can be explanatory or consensus building. The specific techniques used to organize and format meetings are important because they help people think and discuss issues, decide how they are personally affected, and identify how proposed solutions impact community life. Meetings traditionally begin with presentations given by one or several speakers then continue with a discussion. Organizing features could include the following:

- Brainstorming – Participants brainstorm when they come together in a freethinking forum to generate ideas. This does not have to be an unstructured method of eliciting ideas from a group but can be an effective method of moving participants out of conflicts and toward consensus. Brainstorming is most effective when the groups generate as many solutions as possible, list every ideas presented without comment or evaluation, evaluate ideas to each consensus, and prioritize ideas.
- Charrette – A charrette is a meeting to resolve a problem or issue within a specified time limit. The sponsoring agency usually sets the goals and time limit with the leader responsible for bringing out all points of view from concerned local residents, agency representatives, and experts. The normal components are a clear definition of issues to be resolved, an analysis of the problem and alternative approaches, an assignment of small groups, the use of staff people, a presentation of final proposals, and a consensus and final resolution.
- Visioning – Visioning leads to a statement of goals. Typically, it consists of a series of meetings focused on long-range issues. Visioning results in a long-range plan. Priorities and performance standards can be part of visioning. Visioning uses participation as a source of ideas in the establishment of a long-range policy. It draws upon feelings to solicit opinions, and after consideration it generates a single integrated vision.
- Small Group Techniques – Small groups, typically limited to twenty or fewer members, are designed to facilitate the participation of each member in a setting more conducive to informal discussion. They meet as small gatherings or as break-outs of large meetings and emphasize active participation and interaction, are run by a group leader or facilitator, have a theme or goal, help reach consensus or develop priorities, gather a range of ideas and concerns and apply them to either planning or project development, and report back to the larger group.

FUNCTIONAL AREA 3 – GETTING FEEDBACK

Besides dispensing information and arousing interest in a transportation project, public involvement programs elicit public feedback and support. Public comments are received by agencies in the form of question, challenges, or suggestions for alternative ways of dealing with issues. Feedback provides new ideas and perspectives to help agencies devise plans and projects that meet the public's need. It measures the depth of the public's understanding of the issues and provides a means of assessing the relative success of the outreach program.

The following are elements of getting feedback:

A. Establishing Places for Information

Giving people information about transportation projects is a fundamental step toward getting their informed feedback. Agencies need to establish a variety of places where the public knows information is readily and conveniently available. New places to give out information are crucial. New high-tech methods can effectively ensure that all aspects of the community are being reached. Some non-traditional ways to get information out include:

- On-Line Services – On-line services provide communications through a computer network around-the-clock. They are a cross between a personal computer and a telephone line. The keys to on-line services are that the information can be up-to-date and the access is instantaneous.
- Hotlines – Hotlines are agency telephone lines that receive inquiries from the general public. They offer updated information on a project and general news regarding a special program. They should be well publicized, be open at a minimum during business hours, have an answering machine if staff is not available, normally have a staff person designated to receive and respond to calls, and have a policy regarding how to respond to calls.
- Drop-in Centers – A drop-in center is a place for give-and-take exchange of transportation information within a neighborhood or community. An easy-to-find location on home turf makes it convenient and easy for people to get information.

B. Develop Program

Standard meeting formats are not always successful in bringing out a full range of community viewpoints or resolving differences of opinion. Sometimes participants need other ways to make their views known and to build consensus. Agencies can use some specific means to obtain feedback from participants and weigh it along with other people's positions. Ways to get direct feedback include:

- Focus Groups – A focus group is a toll to gauge public opinion. Borrowed from the marketing and advertising industry, it regards transportation as a product that can be improved and the public as customers for that product. It can identify needs, wants, and expectations. A focus group uses a small group discussion with professional leadership. A carefully selected group of individuals convenes to discuss and give opinions on a single topic. Participants are selected in two ways: random selection or non-random selection to elicit a particular point of view.
- Public Opinion Surveys – Public opinion surveys assess widespread public opinion from a sample of people via a written questionnaire or through interviews in person, by phone,

or by electronic media. The limited sample is considered representative of a larger group. They can be formal (scientifically assembled and administered) or informal.

- Facilitation – Facilitation is the guidance of a group in a problem-solving process. The group leader—a facilitator—is neutral in regard to the issues or topics. The facilitator works with the group as a whole and provides procedural help in moving toward a conclusion.

FUNCTIONAL AREA 4 – USING SPECIAL TECHNIQUES TO ENHANCE PARTICIPATION

Public involvement programs aim to involve the largest possible segment of the population yet traditional methods such as meetings and hearings frequently interest only a small group of people. Capturing the attention of a larger, more representative group may require the use of special techniques to enhance participation. Special techniques may attract both new and existing participants or give a jump-start to a lackluster program. The following are several options.

A. Holding Special Events

Special events can effectively generate interest if they are used sparingly and are kept light-hearted and fun for participants. They should have a holiday-like feel and give people the opportunity to meet others and share their ideas in a friendly non-threatening setting. A one-time special event can benefit most public involvement programs by reaching new participants, helping recruit neighbors to the process, and generate interest in the issue.

Two techniques with potentially significant use for transportation projects are transportation fairs and games and contests:

- Transportation Fair – A transportation fair is an event used to interest community members in transportation and specific project or programs. It is typically a one-day event, heavily promoted to encourage people to attend. Attraction such as futuristic vehicles can be used to bring people to the fair, and noted personalities can also draw participation.
- Games and Contests – Games and contests are special ways to attract and engage people who might not otherwise participate. They often vividly demonstrate issues and the consequences of decisions. They typically include board games, card games, computer simulations, crossword puzzles, games of chance, and essay or design contests.

B. Changing a Meeting Approach

A modest shake-up in the meeting approach can often inject new life into a dying public involvement program. For instance, changing the venue may change people's perspective, changing the dynamics of interaction may allow new viewpoints, or alternating group leadership

may spark interest. Non-traditional meeting places may help, as could a site visit to some transportation projects.

C. New Ways to Communicate

New ways to communicate include interactive television, interactive displays and kiosks, computer presentations and simulations, and teleconferencing. As new technology becomes more prevalent, its potential for public involvement increases.