

Chapter 3. GETTING FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

Besides dispensing information and arousing interest in a transportation plan or project, public involvement programs elicit public feedback and support. Public comment comes to agencies in the form of questions, challenges, or suggestions for alternative ways of dealing with issues.

Why is feedback important and how can it be used?

Feedback—positive and negative—provides new ideas and perspectives to help agencies devise plans and projects that meet the public's needs. It also helps them determine how well the public understands specific issues and where additional information is needed for better understanding and support. A more specialized use of feedback is to determine the success of an outreach program—how many people have been reached, what percent of the public is represented, and what portion supports the proposal. As agencies assess feedback, they take stock of plans and programs to be certain they are providing the intended public service in the best possible way. Thus, feedback from the community vitally affects an agency's decision-making process and the results it generates.

How do agencies improve methods of getting feedback?

This chapter provides a guide to the following steps toward reaching people and getting their feedback:

- A. Establishing places people can find information;**
- B. Designing programs to bring out community viewpoints and resolve differences; and**
- C. Taking initial action steps.**