

# Locally Administered Federal-Aid Projects

## Stakeholder Partnering: Virginia



### Virginia's Stakeholder Partnering Groups

Stakeholder Partnering can provide State Transportation Agencies (STAs), Local Public Agencies (LPAs), and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) with an effective means of working together to improve Federal-aid project delivery. The **Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)** is employing this strategy through different partnering groups to allow opportunities for collaboration among representatives at all three levels of government.

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

#### Q: Why does VDOT have different stakeholder partnering groups?

**VDOT:** One group, the Urban Construction Initiative Group, began as a result of a new program that allowed certain localities to take responsibility for their entire construction program. VDOT began its stakeholder partnering efforts in order to help the group of localities that chose to participate in that program. A separate Local Stakeholder Partnering Group was later formed with representatives from a variety of localities in order to provide inputs for improvement in the local program in general. VDOT was recently tasked with creating a District Group that consists of VDOT District personnel. It will operate in parallel with the Local Stakeholder Partnering Group.

#### Q. How will the District and Local Stakeholder Partnering Groups work together?

**VDOT:** VDOT is putting together a subgroup that mixes the two. The Local Stakeholders Group will give their perspective, the District Group will give their perspective, and the subgroup will take this input, as ideally there will be some overlap, and then create a subset of strategies. This will be five or six items, either programmatic or specific, that VDOT can do to improve the whole program.

#### Q: Are consultants a part of any of the stakeholder partnering groups?

**VDOT:** Consultants are not included in the stakeholder partnering groups. Consultants did call and ask to be a part of the group, but although they do a lot of the locals' work, VDOT decided there was not a good way to fairly choose consultant representatives. Locals are also not allowed to send consultant representatives to the meetings; it has to be a staff member who attends.

#### Q: Are any metropolitan planning organizations or regional councils of government eligible to become Local Public Agencies in Virginia, or is the LPA designation reserved for municipal and county governments?

**VDOT:** MPOs are eligible as LPAs in VA

### The Stakeholder Partnering Initiative

Stakeholder Partnering can be used to augment and improve the collaborative relationship among those involved in locally administered Federal-aid programs and projects. These partnering committees provide for in-person, two-way communication that can increase understanding of program responsibilities at each level of government and clarify project development requirements and policies. This enables process reviews and refinement and increases training opportunities.

## Q: What steps did VDOT take to get the first Stakeholder Partnering group started?

**VDOT:** VDOT participated in a peer exchange with the Missouri DOT before developing the first stakeholders group, so a lot of the thoughts and ideas came from that. Missouri had created a stakeholders group to kick off their local program vision. VDOT staff spent a couple days with them, and that helped a lot. VDOT staff received information from a couple other states' partnering programs as well.

## Q: How large is the UCI Group?

**VDOT:** The UCI Group includes project support, managerial and executive staff from 14 cities and towns, both large and small. In Virginia, cities are independent of their counties, and the counties, except for two, are not responsible for maintaining their roads. They depend on VDOT to do all of the road maintenance and building. The rest of the UCI Group includes VDOT staff and an FHWA representative.

## Q: How are the stakeholder group goals and tasks accomplished?

**VDOT:** The UCI Group includes a smaller Working Group with representatives from about half of the UCI member localities. They keep a running list of tasks, which are then assigned to teams, and each team works on those as they can. Everyone has other duties, so this is something that is prioritized as possible.

## Q: How was the representation of the smaller workgroup determined?

**VDOT:** It was strictly volunteer. Some of the initial representatives dropped out because they found they did not have enough time. Some representatives have dropped in and dropped out over the years. There is a core group of five or so who have been a part of the workgroup since the beginning.

## Q. What type of training is offered at the UCI Group meetings?

**VDOT:** The members request training on different topics, such as Disadvantaged Business Enterprise or specific procurement training, and VDOT specialists are often able to provide that. The Virginia Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Division Office has also provided training, and so has the National Highway Institute (NHI). NHI provided the FHWA's Contract Administration Core Curriculum course.

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