



## Public Engagement Plan

### Dakota County

### Pedestrian and Bicycle

### Plan



# 1. Introduction

Public engagement is a critical aspect in ensuring that all Dakota County government services are performed efficiently, effectively and in a responsive manner. Dakota County strives to ensure that the proper level of public engagement is realized in all projects. To identify this proper level of engagement, the County utilizes a public engagement process tool that is standardized across the organization and results in consistent approaches and outcomes. If a project scores a 1-3 a public engagement plan must be created. The levels of engagement and what each entails in terms of description and specific examples can be seen in the table below.

Level	Description	Examples
<b>Level 1 – Inform and Listen</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain, educate or gather information.</li> <li>• Use when priorities and decisions are still being shaped.</li> <li>• Can explain the issue, while gathering information to understand and perspectives and ideas of citizens.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public meeting with information presentation and collection of comments.</li> <li>• Open houses.</li> <li>• A webpage with information about a project but also provides an email address for people to submit questions or comments.</li> </ul>
<b>Level 2 – Discuss</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally involves two-way information exchange in which the public discusses a policy, issue, or research priority.</li> <li>• Discussion among and with different stakeholders is encouraged.</li> <li>• Can deepen knowledge by exploring and responding to ideas and concerns described by individual participants.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public meeting with information presentation and collection of comments.</li> <li>• Open houses.</li> <li>• A webpage with information about a project but also provides an email address for people to submit questions or comments.</li> </ul>
<b>Level 3 – Involve</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different perspectives are shared and parties can influence each other and develop consensus.</li> <li>• Allows the organization and participants to explore and work through issues together, understand each other's perspectives and values, and consistently address concerns.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public meeting with information presentation and collection of comments.</li> <li>• Open houses.</li> <li>• A webpage with information about a project but also provides an email address for people to submit questions or comments.</li> </ul>

# 1. Introduction (cont.)

## Project Description:

The intent of the Dakota County Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan project is to create a county-wide pedestrian and bicycle plan that includes both content for the county's 2040 Comprehensive Plan Update (currently underway, under a separate contract), and a toolbox of recommended bicycling and walking policies, strategies, and best practices to be considered in the Dakota County 2040 Transportation Plan update (anticipated update in 2019).

This effort will include the development of community design strategies to encourage active living, improve community health, and address health equity for populations most likely to experience disparities (people 60 or older, children, people with low incomes, or others experiencing a health disparity). The goals of the project are to complete the following:

- Existing pedestrian and bicycle system inventory
- Pedestrian and bicycle system analysis (safety and health analyses, gaps and barriers, etc.)
- County pedestrian and bicycle system plan (network mapping, recommendations, strategies, toolbox of design best practices)

## Engagement Level:

2 - Discuss

Based on the above engagement level score, this plan will utilize certain methods and tools to reach stakeholders based on the table from the previous page.



## 2. Public Engagement Objectives and Approaches

The purpose of this Public Engagement Plan is to serve as a means of process planning and engagement designing in order to achieve a desired level of public engagement. An important aspect in achieving this is identifying the key objectives and potential outcomes and then deciding which approaches are best suited to achieving those outcomes. The following lists the key objectives and approaches for this Public Engagement Plan.

### **Key Public Engagement Objectives:**

Identify community desires for improvements to the County pedestrian and bicycle system

Engage people 60 or older, children, people with low incomes or others experiencing a health disparity

Prioritize future pedestrian and bicycle improvements and policy changes

Raise awareness about the relationship between active living and resident health

Build new and strengthen existing relationships with stakeholders and project partners

### **Public Engagement Approaches:**

Engaging with stakeholders, SHIP priority populations and the general public to allow the opportunity to provide input on community desires and plan recommendations.

Involving representatives from Dakota County Cities, Dakota County, Metropolitan Council, and MnDOT Staff.

Establishing, renewing, and maintaining relationships with stakeholders.

Recognizing and thanking stakeholders for their contributions.

Listening to and learning from residents who actively use and support non-motorized transportation and those who may not walk or bike on a regular basis.

### 3. Major Groups to Engage and Methods

A holistic public engagement process requires a diverse group represented by various populations that are involved from start to finish. A process that involves diverse stakeholders assists in achieving a project that is reflective of the County’s diverse interests and ever-changing population. However, in order to effectively reach and involve various stakeholders different types of specific engagement methods need to be used as their effectiveness can vary from one group to another. Major groups to engage and methods of engagement most likely to be successful are listed in the following table.

Groups to Engage	Scientific Survey	Workshops	Focus Group	Open House	Project Management Team	On-line Input/Events
Dakota County Staff					X	
Partner Agency Staff (City, Metro, State)			X	X	X	X
SHIP Priority Populations			X	X		X
Stakeholders		X	X	X		X
General Public		X	X	X		X

- A Project Management Team (PMT) will work provide direction and support for the design of the project, and will participate in the review of consultant work. The PMT will be comprised of representatives from Dakota County (transportation, planning, parks, transit and public health) and staff from Dakota County cities, MnDOT, and the Metropolitan Council.
- Open Houses and/or workshops will allow opportunities for residents to provide input during the analysis phase of the project and to review the draft plan.
- Engaging people at existing events or where they naturally gather to get input from a spectrum of residents. This may be ‘pop-up’ open houses at existing events or in parks, bike-walk audits, information at CDA housing complexes, places of worship, businesses, or other ideas.
- On line engagement such as on-line questionnaires and interactive mapping to allow people to provide input when it is convenient for them.
- Presentations at existing standing meetings CONDAC and Active Living Dakota County to keep City staff informed.
- Listening sessions and field walks/rides with stakeholder groups such as cycling clubs, walking clubs, and those populations most likely to be experiencing health disparities (people 60 or older, children, people with low incomes or others experiencing a health disparity).

## 4. Key Questions to Ask

Once the methods of engagement have been identified the questions that need to be asked then need to be created. Questions that are asked in the public engagement process must address the major concerns and issues of the proposed project. Questions that do not necessarily lead discussions towards the end goals of learning about the major issues can result in a more disjointed discussion that lacks effectiveness which is why it is important that questions are well thought out and refined. Questions need to be asked in such ways where they encourage participation and dialogue amongst those people asked to respond. They should also be asked in a way to solicit responses from a variety of groups rather than only a limited amount. Similar to the methods of engagement, certain types of questions can be more effective than others in garnering a response from certain groups of individuals.

### **Project Issues to Address with Questions:**

What improvements are needed to improve walking and biking conditions?

How can the County ped-bike system better connect to city, regional, and state systems?

How can the County ped-bike system better address the needs of those who do not drive because they are too young, too old, or do not have access to a private automobile?

What improvements/bike-ped treatments are appropriate for County Roads?

What policy changes are needed to achieve the desired system?

### **Public Engagement Questions:**

What improvements are needed to improve walking conditions?

What improvements are needed to improve bicycling conditions?

What are the most important gaps in the ped-bike system to fill?

What improvements are needed for those who do not drive?

What would make the ped-bike system safer and more comfortable to encourage residents to participate in active living?

What are the priorities for the next 5-10 years?

## 5. Action Plan by Project Phases

<b>Phase I</b>	<b>Existing System &amp; Analysis</b>	<b>6/17-8/17</b>
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Project Management Team Meetings (PMT)  
Listening sessions with stakeholders and SHIP priority populations  
Field walk and ride  
Electronic survey  
Interactive on-line map  
Newsletter/website establishment  
Community open house/workshop  
Input at existing events

<b>Phase II</b>	<b>Draft Reccomendations</b>	<b>9/17-10/17</b>
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Project Management Team Meetings (PMT)  
Listening sessions and/or presentations with stakeholders and SHIP priority populations  
Newsletter/website update  
Community open house/workshop  
On-line input  
Input at existing events

<b>Phase III</b>	<b>Final Report</b>	<b>10/17-2/18</b>
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Project Management Team Meetings  
Newsletter/webiste update  
Presentations to stakeholder groups/SHIP priority populations  
On-line input

## 6. Available Resources and Budget

The Dakota County Board of Commissions authorized entering into a \$106,174 consultant contract with Alta Planning + Design, Inc. for the Dakota County Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan. Community engagement will be conducted by the project consultant and County Staff. Resources for community engagement to be conducted by the consultant is included in the overall project budget and contract.

**Briefly discuss any increased project costs, project delays and additional staff/consultant resources required by this public engagement plan, if any.**