



Public Engagement Plan

METRO Orange Line Extension Study



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

1. Introduction (cont.)

Project Description:

This study will define and evaluate options for station locations, highway improvements, service planning and operations for an extension of the METRO Orange Line on I-35 W/I-35 in Burnsville and Lakeville. Through cooperation with other agencies including MnDOT and the Metropolitan Council, we expect to define the extension and be prepared for future engineering and environmental documentation work.

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:

Promote awareness of the project.

Identify and disclose potential opportunities and issues for riders, property owners, and motorists.

Seek input from the public and stakeholders on undetermined elements of the project.

Public Engagement Approaches:

Website, email and social media communications to engage a wide section of the public at their convenience.

Public open houses to provide detailed information and updates to public and provide in opportunity for direct comments and dialogue.

Focus group meetings to communicate with specific groups of stakeholders (e.g. - property owners, transit dependent groups)

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		
Current transit riders	x			x		
Potential transit riders			x	x		
Property owners	x		x			
Employers	x		x			

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:

Need for multiple ways to access the service.

Need to determine appropriate types of transit service within the corridor.

Need to understand where employment/activities will be located in the future within the corridor.

Need to understand how transit service and stations can operate in areas of high automobile traffic.

Public Engagement Questions:

By what mode would potential riders access Orange Line service? (Auto, walking, other)

What are the most likely destinations for riders?

What changes in land use and development may occur in the area in the future?

5. Action Plan by Project Phases

Phase I

Station Area Needs

July 2017

Outreach efforts will focus on understanding where current and potential transit users are traveling to and from and where stations should be established along the Orange Line to most effectively provide access to service. This will include open houses and online outreach.

Phase II

Station/operation

Aug-Nov 2017

Evaluation of potential station locations and routing will include input from riders, landowners and community leaders on through targeted discussion.

Phase III

Recommendations

December 2017

Following the evaluation process, additional open houses and online engagement will be conducted to share and receive comment on the study recommendations and future steps for project development.

6. Available Resources and Budget

Approximately 15% of the \$300,000 budget for the study is dedicated towards public outreach and involvement.

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