



Public Engagement Plan

Vermillion River Greenway Master Plan

Hastings Segment

11/10/2018



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:

The Vermillion River Greenway is a proposed regional trail and open space corridor that will run from the Mississippi River in Downtown Hastings to Marshan Township along the Vermillion River. The greenway will provide linear recreation for residents of Hastings and serve as a destination trail for the larger surrounding area. The five mile corridor is within the City of Hastings connecting multiple parks and activity centers. Four of the five miles of trail exist today as part of the city's trail system.

Engagement Level:

3 - Involve

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:

Share the purpose and need of the project

Provide inventory and analysis of alignment alternatives

Consider feedback from stakeholders on alignment and design considerations

Gather input from stakeholders regarding non-motorized use and safety concerns

Public Engagement Approaches:

Provide updates to and gather input and direction from the Dakota County Planning Commission and the Dakota County Board of Commissioners

Presentations to City Committees/Council

Meeting with key stakeholders/landowners

Direct outreach to underserved populations

Open Houses and Pop-Up event attendance

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	Pop-up Event	PMT Meetings
City of Hastings				x	x	x
County and City Staff				x	x	x
Area Residents				x	x	
Park User Groups				x	x	
Chamber of Commerce				x	x	
Hastings Historic Preservation				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 needs 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 alignment options best provide a greenway experience?

What alignment options minimize impacts to adjacent landowners?

Identify opportunities for water quality and natural resource enhancement?

Access to the greenway?

Unknown issues

Public Engagement Questions:

Safety concerns along the corridor? lighting/winter use

Places greenway should connect to?

Coordination with upcoming public works and park projects

5. Action Plan by Project Phases

Phase I	Inventory & Analysis	Winter 18/19
<p>Map and analyze land use and potential connection points for greenway routing. Including general assessment of open space and water quality enhancement opportunities. In addition begin cultural resources investigation.</p>		
Phase II	Alignment Alternatives	Spring 2019
<p>Identify and analyze greenway alignment. Provide general interpretative themes for review and comment. Assess road crossing options.</p>		
Phase III	Final Recommendations	Summer 2019
<p>Collect and respond to agency and public comments and provide final recommendations to Dakota County Board for plan adoption.</p>		

6. Available Resources and Budget

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