



Public Engagement Guidance

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Some links in this document are only accessible to MnDOT users connected to the MnDOT network.

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Introduction

Purpose and Audience

This document is the technical companion to [MnDOT's Public Engagement policy](#) and provides guidance to employees on how to comply with the policy by providing:

- a public engagement framework and planning process;
- tools, templates and worksheets;
- links to regulatory guidance and other resources, and
- clarity on allowable public engagement expenses.

MnDOT's transportation vision, articulated in the [Minnesota GO 50-year Statewide Vision](#), is to align the transportation system with what Minnesotans expect for quality of life, economy, and natural environment. Building relationships and implementing collaborative and inclusive public engagement practices across all modes of transportation are key to realizing this 50-year vision. MnDOT pledges ongoing engagement and relationship-building with the public to increase trust, develop mutual understanding, and achieve community-driven solutions for community-identified problems.

The audience for this document is all employees – including project managers, planners, engineers, communications and public engagement staff, specialty office staff and others - who want to better understand MnDOT's approach to implementing meaningful public engagement. The guidance may be used as a tool to operationalize MnDOT's public engagement policy and during the onboarding process to orient new employees. The intent of this document is to offer high-level guidance and direction rather than detailed and prescriptive procedures. The document includes additional resources and tools to reference for more instruction. Please reach out to the Communications & Public Engagement Office or your district/office communications and public engagement staff for consultation or questions. See [Appendix 1: Contacts](#).

Overview of Public Engagement at MnDOT

MnDOT is committed to providing meaningful engagement opportunities in transportation decision-making and developing plans, projects, programs, studies, and services (hereinafter collectively referred to as “Projects”). MnDOT staff are responsible for communicating and engaging with communities, stakeholders, and transportation partners when undertaking long-term planning (e.g., to develop the [10-year Capital Highway Investment Plan \(CHIP\)](#), the multimodal [Family of Plans](#), and other corridor studies), scoping for and completing construction projects within the [State Transportation Improvement Plan \(STIP\)](#), conducting operations and maintenance activities, and developing and delivering core programs and services. Public engagement objectives will be different for each phase of the process, but engagement is critical throughout and is key to developing an efficient transportation system.

Minnesota’s transportation system affects everyone, no matter how, when or why they travel. Many people do not engage with MnDOT unless their own personal commute is directly and immediately impacted. Engaging the public throughout the process of developing a Project can be challenging. We must recognize that people are juggling many priorities in their own daily lives and may not prioritize engaging with MnDOT on activities planned to occur well into the future. However, as transportation professionals, we know that every decision made by MnDOT affects someone to some degree and that is why it is so important that we meet people where they are and focus on engaging communities early and throughout the process.

Employees must comply with MnDOT’s Public Engagement Policy and all governing laws, policies, and executive orders listed in the policy (e.g., Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Environmental Justice, and NEPA). (See [Appendix 2: Process and Regulatory Considerations](#) for additional information.)

Resource: [Objectives of Public Engagement by Project Phase](#)

Definitions

Public Engagement

Public engagement is any process that:

- Involves the public in identifying and solving challenges and problems;
- Uses public input to make sustainable decisions;
- Educates or informs the public about a topic or issue; or
- Seeks to build meaningful connections and trust with the public through communication and interaction.

Examples of *public engagement* activities by MnDOT include: inviting and facilitating community participation in MnDOT’s planning, project development, and decision-making processes; holding community events to educate the public or celebrate achievements or project milestones; seeking community input to identify and solve

problems or help MnDOT make a decision; and reviewing and analyzing data collected to inform decision-making.

Public

For the purposes of the public engagement policy and this guidance document, whenever the term “**public**” is used, it refers to the broadest sense of public to include the general public, stakeholders and transportation partners.

- **General public:** any individual or group not necessarily associated with decision-making power or special interests but *may* have an interest in the outcome of a decision.
- **Stakeholders:** any individual or group that has, or perceives they have, a real and particular stake in the outcome of a decision.

Examples include impacted landowners, businesses, committees, associations and advocacy groups such as the Minnesota Freight Advisory Committee (MFAC), Upper Mississippi Waterway Association, Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota, Transit for Livable Communities, and Minnesota Environmental Partnership – among many more.

- **Transportation partners:** Governmental or nongovernmental entities that work in partnership with MnDOT to facilitate transportation-related efficiencies, effectiveness, and cooperation, and to promote and encourage economic and technological development in transportation.

Examples include: Airport Development Regional representatives, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs); Regional Development Organizations (RDOs); Area Transportation Partnerships (ATPs); Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils (RTCCs); federal partner agencies such as FHWA, FAA, FTA; and educational partners such as Center for Transportation Studies (CTS) – among many more.

Why do Public Engagement?

MnDOT is committed to authentically engaging the public in its issues-identification and decision-making for several reasons:

- Engagement early and often informs MnDOT decisions to best meet agency goals
- Problems and issues that require mitigation will be revealed earlier
- Collective problem solving takes advantage of the unique and creative insights of everyone involved
- Authentic engagement increases trust in MnDOT, which leads to stronger policies and support
- Decisions made when the public are engaged are likely to be more implementable and sustainable
- Involved stakeholders and community members have ownership of the solutions developed

There is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to public engagement. MnDOT recognizes that any public engagement effort must be flexible and adaptive to address the anticipated impact that the Project may have on users and the surrounding community. All employees are responsible for engaging the public in their work, as appropriate, for the purpose of achieving long-range goals and for developing sustainable Projects.

Public Engagement is an Art

Recognizing that public engagement must always consider the unique characteristics of communities and MnDOT projects, it is beneficial to approach the practice of public engagement with these points in mind:

- Public engagement is an ongoing process involving communications and interaction between MnDOT, the general public, stakeholders, communities, and constituent groups.
- Public engagement can and often occurs outside of a project life cycle on topics such as noise walls, traffic signal timing, speed limits, snowplowing, congestion management, and pedestrian safety – just to name a few.
- Public engagement specific to projects is needed through all phases of the project, from the early planning and scoping stages to construction, operations, and maintenance.
- Public engagement efforts should be scaled to match the magnitude or complexity of the project including the historical context of MnDOT’s relationship with the community and potential challenges of a project, such as right-of-way acquisition or relocations.
- Engagement planning should be flexible, fluid, and updated as the project, study, or plan progresses in response to changing conditions. Staff should hold routine check-ins to track the progress on the Public Engagement Plan and related communications to assess and make adjustments as necessary.
- Staff should be cautious about prejudging the level of public engagement needed based on their own perceptions of the project’s complexity or previous project experiences. Early public engagement provides insight about potential controversy.
- The act of *planning* for engagement (i.e., completing a stakeholder analysis or assessment regarding public expectations and impact, etc...) will help determine the *level* of recommended engagement appropriate for a Project.
- There is no “silver-bullet” approach or level of engagement prescribed or pre-determined for any particular type of Project. Developing appropriate engagement strategies for different audiences is recommended.

International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) as Public Engagement Framework

MnDOT currently uses the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) as a foundation and framework for public engagement training curriculum, process, tools, and terminology.

IAP2 is a leading organization in advancing the practice of public engagement. Its mission is to advance and extend the practice of public participation through professional development, certification, standards of practice, core values, advocacy, and key initiatives with strategic partners around the world.

There are several public engagement or public participation models and ideologies that exist. ([See Appendix 3: Other Public Engagement Frameworks](#) that may be useful to reference.)

Resource: [IAP2 website](#)

Resource: [IAP2 Public Participation at MnDOT Training Manual](#)

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

MnDOT uses the [IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation](#) as a tool to determine the level of engagement with the public appropriate for a particular project or planning effort. The spectrum describes five levels of public participation: Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate and Empower. The differences among these levels are defined primarily by the promises that MnDOT makes to the public and its stakeholders about their level of participation in a project or decision-making process.

Because the goals of engagement will vary depending on the phase of the Project, the activities and level of engagement will vary along the spectrum from Inform to Empower. Examples corresponding to each level of engagement are found below.

The identification of a Project as either complex or non-complex is insufficient alone to determine the level of public involvement and stakeholder consultation appropriate to the project or planning study. There may be circumstances, such as coordination of highway projects with other infrastructure work (water/sewer and utilities) and working through impacts to adjacent landowners, among other circumstances, that indicate a higher level or degree of engagement is needed. MnDOT must collect information and consider the context and variables surrounding the Project before determining which level of engagement is appropriate. (See the “Public Engagement Planning Process” section for worksheets to assist with this analysis.)

Examples of Activities and Tools along the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

Activities that fit within the “Inform” level are considered one-way directional focused activities that do not allow for a back-and-forth dialogue and include activities such as:

- Press releases/conferences.
- Social media or website posts.
- Fact sheets.
- Trainings on using MnDOT technology or resources.
- Booths at fairs, conferences or community events where MnDOT hands out brochures, swag and general information about projects or programs (but does not collect input from the public).

Activities that fit within the “Consult/Involve/Collaborate/Empower” levels are considered two-way directional focused and include activities that:

- Build trust and relationships with communities and stakeholders and allow MnDOT to broaden its perspective.
- Restore relationships with communities and stakeholders that have historically had unequal access to services/programs and/or communities that experience disparities.

- Invite and facilitate community participation in MnDOT’s project development and decision-making processes.
- Seek community input to identify and/or solve problems or help MnDOT make a decision.
- Provide information on how communities may influence and inform the work of MnDOT.
- Transform the way MnDOT does its work based on what it learns from listening to communities/stakeholders.
- Provide opportunities for communities to share their voices and ideas to shape a MnDOT policy, procedure, practice, study, project activity, decision, or outcome.

Resource: [Appendix 4: Examples of Activities and Tools along the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation](#)

IAP2 Core Values

MnDOT adheres to the IAP2 seven Core Values when developing and implementing public engagement processes. Public engagement:

1. Is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have the right to be involved in the decision-making process.
2. Includes the promise that the public’s contribution will influence the decision.
3. Promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including the decision-makers.
4. Seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in the decision.
5. Seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
6. Provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
7. Communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

Public Engagement Principles

In addition to adhering to IAP2’s core values, MnDOT is committed to integrating meaningful engagement into the fabric of MnDOT’s work by following these principles (listed in alphabetical order):

- **Accountability:** MnDOT is accountable to measure outcomes and communicate with the public about how their input affected the Project.
- **Cultural Competence:** Engagement efforts and activities will incorporate, reflect and mitigate racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, or other barriers that may exist to effectively engage with diverse populations.
- **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion:** MnDOT will engage equitably with historically underrepresented communities, such as Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), immigrants, people with disabilities, individuals with low-incomes, the elderly, youth, LGBTQ+, and other underserved populations to address existing disparities and inequities in transportation planning, project-

development, and decision-making processes. Engaging equitably means that, when appropriate, MnDOT will provide accommodations to remove barriers to participation so that opportunities to engage are accessible to everyone and processes are flexible and accommodating.

- **Respect:** MnDOT will engage respectfully with the public so they are heard, and their interests and needs are included in MnDOT’s Project development and decision-making processes. MnDOT will respect the public’s time and commitment to providing valuable input, and whenever it is possible and appropriate, will partner and contract with community-based organizations or neighborhood councils/associations to engage with their constituencies on MnDOT’s behalf.
- **Transparency and Accessibility:** MnDOT will ensure that all engagement events and activities, points of contact, and information the public needs to understand issues and effectively participate in transportation planning, project, and program-development processes are accessible. Information will be written in plain language and information and materials will be translated or interpreted when requested. Decisions made throughout the process will be transparent and communicated broadly.

Ongoing and Sustained Engagement

MnDOT recognizes that building trust and sustained relationships with communities and stakeholders is critical to ongoing, meaningful engagement. MnDOT builds trust by being present and connected to communities, and builds long-term relationships by having regular, reoccurring meetings with local partners and business groups and by regularly participating in community conversations, events and activities – even when there is no immediate present role for MnDOT.

For example, the Office of Aeronautics has incorporated language into their office policy that outlines expectations of employees to engage with and forge relationships with organizations by participating as a member or partner. (See [Appendix 5: Membership in Professional Organizations.](#))

As public engagement evolves at MnDOT, staffing and resource needs should be evaluated to ensure MnDOT is adequately building and maintaining sustained relationships with Minnesota communities and stakeholders.

Public Engagement Responsibilities

The Public Engagement Policy outlines the responsibilities of key functions and offices and acknowledges that District Engineers and Office Directors have discretion in determining the public engagement responsibilities of their staff. Thus, public engagement may be implemented differently in each office, district, program, and mode across MnDOT. By focusing on the responsibilities that need to be met, rather than articulating the roles of each functional position, autonomy is given to leadership to decide “who” is responsible for ensuring public engagement responsibilities are carried out in their respective office/district. Office/modal directors and District Engineers are responsible for determining the position and staff that should accomplish these responsibilities.

Public Engagement Planning Process

Development of a Public Engagement Plan is a component of the planning and scoping processes. A Public Engagement Plan is a starting point and should be updated and revised throughout the planning study or project. Staff should remain flexible by considering feedback received throughout, addressing issues that may arise, and making course corrections or adjustments as necessary to the Public Engagement Plan. Engagement is scale-able to the type of Project and staff are responsible for managing the public's expectations during Projects. MnDOT district staff, specialty and modal offices, and project teams retain the final decision on determining the level of engagement and corresponding techniques for their specific Project and/or ongoing engagement needs.

Resource: Public Engagement Planning Handbook

The following six steps are used for public engagement planning.

Step 1: Clearly Define the Project and MnDOT's Expectations and Commitment

Begin public engagement planning by clearly defining the Project, any problems or challenges, and key milestones. It is important for MnDOT to not only describe the problem/challenge from MnDOT's perspective, but also to listen to and include the public in identifying the problems/challenges that the public sees in their community. MnDOT should be clear on the decisions that will be made during the planning study or project and the level of influence the public and stakeholders will have on those decisions (i.e., understand internal expectations before managing external expectations).

Considerations should include:

- What are the Project objective and goals?
- What does the public identify as problems or challenges?
- What does successful and meaningful engagement look like?
- What are the best ways to communicate with impacted communities?
- How will public engagement advance the goals of the Project?
- How will equity goals be advanced?
- Are the planning study objectives or problem that the project is anticipated to solve clear to the public?
- Do stakeholders and the public understand and agree on the problem to be solved? If not, could it be clarified and communicated?
- What is the level of influence that MnDOT expects the public to have?
- What are the Project milestones and timeframe?

Resource: [MnDOT Expectations worksheet](#)

Step 2: Identify Stakeholders, Issues and Needs

A critical step to public engagement planning involves conducting a thorough stakeholder analysis to understand who has an interest or stake in the Project, the key issues they care about, and the needs they have. When identifying stakeholders, consider the range of voices and perspectives that should be heard, but may not attend public meetings or open houses. In addition, think about who will be impacted and who might influence the outcome. A stakeholder analysis should be comprehensive and include the general public, stakeholders, and transportation partners. Consider plotting the positions and needs of stakeholders on a grid according to their level of interest in the Project and their level of influence. Use the grid to select appropriate engagement strategies.

Considerations should include:

- What is the initial feedback from the public and stakeholders on the Project?
- Who are all the stakeholders? Who cares about the Project?
- What do people know, believe and fear?
- What are the key issues?
- What communities will be impacted?
- What level of interest and influence do stakeholders have in decisions?

Resource: [IAP2 Stakeholder Analysis and Interest and Influence Grid](#)

Step 3: Determine Level of Engagement

The Scaling Public Engagement Factors Reference Sheet and Worksheet (links below) may be used as references when making decisions on the level of intensity of public engagement needed for a Project. The document outlines common factors that may affect the level of engagement that may be needed for Projects. The factors fall into five main categories: people, relationships, impacts, community, and existing studies and plans. Possible mandates to consider are listed with each factor. Each factor is then rated from very low to very high to indicate the intensity of the public engagement that may be needed.

Resources:

[Scaling Public Engagement Factors Reference Sheet](#)

[Scaling Public Engagement Factors Worksheet](#)

Step 4: Clarify Public Role in Decision Making

Ensure there is agreement with the public and stakeholders on the role of the public in solving the problem. If there isn't agreement, reassess the nature of the problem to determine the public's role in decision-making. Ensure the public and stakeholders understand and agree with their role in decision-making.

Considerations should include:

- What is the level of influence or control that MnDOT expects the public to have?
- How much has MNDOT engaged the public in the past and what are MnDOT's expectations regarding sharing control of the decision with the public or other stakeholders?
- How much influence or control does the community want?
- What does the decision-making process look like? Which project decisions will be made by the public?

Resource: [Public Expectations worksheet](#)

Step 5: Create a Public Engagement Plan

The worksheets and analysis completed in Steps 1-4 may be compiled to create a Public Engagement Plan. A Public Engagement Plan is an iterative process and the plan should be updated and refined throughout the Project. Project-based Public Engagement Plans should be developed before entering the STIP.

The Public Engagement Plan may include documentation of:

- Goals and objectives for public engagement & MnDOT's Expectations Worksheet (Step 1)
- Community demographic data and helpful statistics
- Stakeholder analysis and issues and Influence and Interest Grid (Step 2)
- Communication plan
 - Audience
 - Key messages to reach the target audiences
 - Strategy and format (social media, open houses, community conversations, email, project website)
 - Timeline
 - Roles and responsibilities among team members
 - Note: The tools and methods used will depend on the audience, their goals, their level of trust, etc.
- Public engagement level, activities and budget plus Engagement Level Assessment Worksheet (Step 3) (Also, see Cost Guidance section)
 - Contacts made, activities conducted, input received, and decisions made
 - Individuals and organizations contacted and interacted with (and dates of touchpoints)
 - Channel(s) used to reach individuals and organizations
 - Input received from open houses, public hearings, online meetings, surveys, etc.
- Public role in decision making and worksheet (Step 4)

- Evaluation plan (Step 6)

Resource: [Public Engagement Plan template](#)

Step 6: Evaluate Engagement Efforts (After Action Review)

Project team members should assess the impact and outcomes of engagement activities throughout the process by using the evaluation questions below and documenting the responses to improve public engagement efforts along the way. In addition, staff must reference existing mandated indicators or data points that they are required to collect and report, such as requirements for Title VI reporting. Evaluation efforts may be scaled according to the level of the Project and public engagement activity. It is important for MnDOT to involve internal and external audiences by summarizing what was learned during the engagement process, how the input informed the Project and, if needed, explain why MnDOT did not use selected input.

Survey questionnaires

To evaluate an **open-house or meeting**, use these [survey questions](#) and send a post-meeting evaluation.

To evaluate the effectiveness of your public engagement efforts at the **completion of a Project**, contact market research staff within the Office of Communications and Public Engagement for assistance administering a [post-project evaluation survey](#). To assess engagement efforts at an agency-level, a standardized questionnaire has been developed, piloted, and approved by MnDOT's Public Engagement Leadership Group and Public Engagement Evaluation workgroup. A customized survey tool for MnDOT was created based upon the questionnaire from the [NCHRP Research Report 905: Measuring the Effectiveness of Public Involvement in Transportation Planning and Project Development](#).

To track attendance at meetings and events and to identify groups of people or populations that are not attending engagement events, ask participants to provide demographic information on a sign-in sheet (for in-person meetings) or send a post-meeting survey (for virtual meetings) to participants to collect this information. The information collected at an in-person meeting will not be as comprehensive as what is collected in an online survey, so be sure to scale back questions on a sign-in sheet. Compare the demographic information collected with the demographic make-up of the community (through Census or ACS data) to identify gaps in participation and to strategize new engagement methods and techniques to reach people that are missing from engagement efforts. If any private data is collected, be sure to include a Tennesen Notice in your survey. Contact market research staff for assistance.

Measures of success

In addition to any goals that are identified by the project team and documented in the Public Engagement Plan, the following measures of success may be used to evaluate public engagement efforts. **MnDOT:**

- Successfully managed the engagement process and made modifications as needed to meet the goals of the project, plan, study, or program.

- Effectively communicated the “right” information to the “right” audiences.
- Documented public engagement activities, public and stakeholders engaged with, and public comments received.
- Engaged appropriately with the public based on the complexity of the plan, project, study, or program goals (Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, or Empower).
- Provided accessible, inclusive and equitable engagement opportunities to reach affected communities and underserved populations (e.g., provided materials in plain language or other languages if needed, hosted meetings at ADA accessible locations, provided ASL or language interpreters or other accommodations as needed).
- Effectively identified and addressed barriers to engagement by providing creative ways to engage with the public and providing accommodations.
- Reviewed and analyzed demographic data of people who participated to identify and address gaps in participation among population groups.
- Implemented effective communication and engagement strategies to meet the goals of the Public Engagement Plan and/or project, plan, study or program so that the:
 - Public’s needs and concerns were heard and understood by MnDOT;
 - Public had sufficient knowledge about engagement opportunities to inform the process, project, plan, or study;
 - Public understood the purpose, benefits, and negative impacts of the project, plan, study, or program; and
 - Public were comfortable providing input and had adequate time to give input
- Summarized input received from the public and shared information with them about how the input was used to identify or solve problems, make a decision, or inform the process.
- Maintained relationships for ongoing engagement and improving trust.

Evaluation questions

1. How well is MnDOT managing the engagement process? (Either directly by MnDOT staff or through a consultant)
 - Was there a spreadsheet to track who participated, the tool or channel that was used, and the comments that were received?
2. How effective are MnDOT communications? (e.g., Is MnDOT communicating the “right” information to the “right” audience?)
3. How well is MnDOT documenting its engagement work?
4. To what extent is MnDOT ensuring that key stakeholders are informed and engaged?
 - Are participants demographically representative of the affected community?
 - Did MnDOT identify and address barriers to engagement for specific underrepresented groups?
 - Were there any groups that may have been under-represented? Which ones and how?

5. How well does the communication and engagement plan and its strategies meet the needs of the project and key stakeholders?
 - What engagement effort(s), if any, stand out as being particularly insightful, or exceeded expectations? *How so?*
 - Was the public engaged at an appropriate level? (*Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, Empower*)?
 - What engagement effort(s), if any, were not particularly effective? Why not?
 - Is Project information available in languages other than English?
 - Do key stakeholders (especially vulnerable populations) perceive that they had an adequate opportunity to participate?
 - Are meeting locations ADA accessible?
 - How could MnDOT modify and/or improve upon future engagement efforts?
6. Has MnDOT shared what it heard back to the community and stakeholders along with what it did with the feedback?
 - Involve internal and external audiences by summarizing what MnDOT learned during the engagement process, how the input informed the project plan or study, or was used to identify or solve a problem, or make a decision, and (if needed) explain why MnDOT was not able to use selected input.
 - What recommendations or changes made came directly from input received from the public? (i.e., examples of how engagement efforts impacted decisions)
 - Are there any summaries of the public engagement efforts that could be reviewed if more detail was requested? What and how can others access them (URL, contact person, etc.)?
7. Are there any specific recommendations to help other staff succeed in public engagement efforts? Are there any tips about logistics, planning, timing or anything else that impacts participation or quality?
 - Staff should share lessons learned with the MnDOT community of practice to increase institutional knowledge (i.e., at monthly Discussing Public Engagement meetings, staff meetings, annual project management leadership group, or planning management group forums).

Resource: [Evaluation framework](#)

Resource: [Standard demographic questions](#)

Removing Barriers to Participation

Engaging Diverse Audiences

It has always been a goal and priority of MnDOT to engage with all audiences to deliver a safe, reliable, and efficient transportation system. However, how to deliver an *equitable* transportation system was less

understood. In 2018, MnDOT launched the Advancing Transportation Equity Initiative to study how transportation affects equity and to identify transportation strategies and approaches to meaningfully reduce disparities. It is more important than ever that MnDOT continue engagement and research efforts to reduce disparities. This is especially true as we witness minority populations being disproportionately impacted by the global COVID-19 pandemic and in the aftermath of the civil unrest that ensued in low-income communities after the killings of unarmed black men and women across the country. MnDOT must continue to seek new and innovative ways to engage early and often with diverse communities who experience these disparities and other transportation and health barriers.

The goal of engaging with diverse audiences goes beyond [Environmental Justice populations](#) to include a wide variety of populations and communities that may be traditionally underrepresented in government planning and decision-making processes or who may face unique challenges or barriers to participating in these processes. Neighborhoods where people have limited English proficiency or where many of the residents work multiple jobs may be harder to involve than more affluent demographic groups. Examples of historically under-represented populations include:

- Farmers
- Households with no vehicles
- Individuals from ethnic or racial minority groups
- Individuals who identify as LGBTQ+
- Low-income households
- Older adults
- People with disabilities
- Single-parent households
- Youth

Below are guidance, tips and considerations for engaging with diverse audiences.

Apply Equity Lens Framework

MnDOT is committed to delivering programs and services with the goal of achieving equitable transportation outcomes. The Office of Equity and Diversity developed an equity lens framework to help staff assess policy and programs to achieve the most equitable outcome possible. Contact the Office of Equity & Diversity for more information about applying the equity lens framework to your Projects.

Resource: [Office of Equity & Diversity](#)

Resource: [Diversity & Inclusion Resources](#)

Provide Language Services

All public engagement activities must be considerate of limited English proficient (LEP) communities by providing written translation and oral interpretation as needed. Public engagement professionals determine the level and type of language access necessary by completing a four-factor analysis, as follows:

1. The number or proportion of LEP persons in the eligible service population that are likely to be encountered by a MnDOT program or activity;
2. The frequency with which LEP individuals come into contact with the program or activity;
3. The nature and importance of the MnDOT program or activity to people's lives; and
4. The resources available to MnDOT and associated costs.

The analysis requires compiling demographic data from external sources, including the [U.S. Census Data](#), [American Community Survey](#), [EPA EJSCREEN](#), [MPCA Environmental Justice Map](#), [Minnesota Compass](#), and/or [Minnesota State Demographic Center](#). Internal data collected from prior public engagement surveys may also be useful for analysis of factors one and two above.

[Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act](#) requires that the communication needs of hard of hearing and deaf persons are met, and this frequently requires the use of an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter. To provide equal access, a public accommodation must provide auxiliary aids and services for people who are deaf or hard of hearing when needed. Examples of auxiliary aids and services include qualified interpreters, note takers, and written materials. The type of auxiliary aid or service provided will depend on what is needed for a specific situation.

MnDOT has specific language (below) that must be used when public engagement opportunities are communicated. Use this language (and ensure consultants use it) when communicating engagement opportunities; whether through social media, direct mailers, email, or other channels:

- *MnDOT invites and encourages participation by all. If you need an ASL, a foreign language interpreter, documents in an alternative format (such as braille, large print or in a different language), or another reasonable accommodation for this email or event, please email your request to Janet Miller at ADArequest.dot@state.mn.us or call 651-366-4720.*

According to federal guidance, documents considered “vital” should be translated into the most prominent non-English languages in the area in which engagement will be conducted. The U.S. DOT Language Access Plan defines “vital documents” as “paper or electronic written material that contains information that is critical for accessing a component’s programs, services, benefits, or activities; directly and substantially related to public safety; or required by law.”

Whether a document is deemed “vital” depends upon the importance of the program, information, encounter, or service involved, and the consequence to the LEP community if the information in question is not provided in an accurate or timely manner. Determining whether a document is “vital” is left to the discretion of individual

engagement professionals who are in the best position to evaluate the circumstances, services, and resources available.

To determine which non-English languages are considered most prominent within a particular engagement area, MnDOT relies upon a safe harbor provided by federal guidance. MnDOT shows strong evidence of LEP compliance regarding translation of “vital” documents if the agency:

1. Provides written translations of vital documents for each eligible LEP language group that constitutes 5% or 1,000, whichever is less, of persons eligible to be served or likely to be affected or encountered; or
2. If there are fewer than 50 persons in a language group that reaches the 5 percent trigger, MnDOT does not translate vital written materials but provides written notice in the primary language of the LEP language group of the right to receive free competent, oral interpretation of those written materials.

Oral interpretation may be necessary during some in-person events, especially if the planned engagement activity is targeted towards LEP populations. MnDOT mitigates some need for in-person oral interpretation at informational public events by ensuring critical information is translated into necessary languages and provided to attendees as needed. Bilingual MnDOT staff deemed qualified to provide interpretation assistance may also be able to assist in emergency situations.

MnDOT provides written translation and oral interpretation services through contracts established by the Department of Administration. The cost for these services does not require a district or office to locate the necessary funds. The costs are paid via pre-authorized funds through the Department of Administration. The Office of Equity and Diversity acts as the point of contact for facilitating the use of those contracted services. For general information, visit the Office of Equity and Diversity [language services website](#). The [Language Line Solutions: Reference Guide](#) provides an explanation of the available oral interpretation service.

The Title VI Coordinator in the Office of Civil Rights is responsible for providing oversight of MnDOT’s language access compliance. Visit the [Title VI Program: Limited English Proficiency website](#) for further resources. Please contact the Title VI Coordinator for additional guidance.

Ensure Documents, Technology and Location are Accessible

Content for this section is currently being developed by the ADA Transition Team. In the meantime, please refer to the following resources.

Resource: [Appendix 2: Process and Regulatory Considerations](#)

Resource: [Accessibility standards](#),

Resource: [Virtual Meeting Resource Guide](#)

Use Tools and Techniques Appropriate to Audiences

Public Engagement may involve a variety of tools and techniques that work better for some stakeholders than others. It is important to know what your audiences prefer, expect, and benefit from the most. After completing

a stakeholder analysis and/or impact assessment and determining the public audience, it is recommended to consult with public engagement staff, consultants and/or cultural liaisons to determine specific tools and techniques to use for engagement. Also, see “Engaging with Tribal Nations and Tribal Populations” section below.

Create Alternative Opportunities for Input

Some people may find public hearings or open house meetings to be an intimidating environment and may opt not to provide input or ask questions, even if they have a strong opinion about a particular issue. MnDOT should ensure that there are alternative opportunities available to provide input, such as surveys, online engagement, Project phone line, and smartphone-based engagement. Small group engagement may also provide a less intimidating and more welcoming environment for quality public input.

Virtual Engagement Tips and Tools

The COVID-19 pandemic has required MnDOT to shift its in-person engagement methods to virtual or online. While MnDOT provided alternative engagement opportunities prior to the pandemic, such as hosting meetings and surveys using virtual and online platforms, the level of public participation that continued during the pandemic has reinforced that this practice will continue beyond the pandemic. As districts/offices are learning and experimenting with various online tools to engage Minnesotans, the Office of Communications and Public Engagement will continue to compile tips, how-to guides and best-practices to guide this evolving practice within MnDOT.

When planning an online meeting or event, please complete the **Online Meeting Planning Form** to help evaluate the steps, meeting content, and additional logistics considerations applicable to online meetings.

Resource: [Online Meeting Planning Form](#)

Resource: [Star Tribune article - MnDOT Innovative Virtual Engagement](#)

Resource: [MnDOT Newline article - Public Engagement during COVID-19](#)

Resource: [Virtual Meeting Resource Guide](#)

Resource: [Outreach tools matrix](#) - *Help overcome barriers to participation by finding the best outreach tool for your audience.*

Ensure Contracts Outline Expectations for Community Engagement

Because MnDOT frequently contracts with consultant firms to conduct public engagement activities in large projects and planning studies, it is critical for MnDOT to establish clear expectations for the consultant of their role in engaging with communities in partnership with MnDOT. For example, the community (and the Project) will benefit more if the contractor has existing connections and relationships within the community impacted.

Office and district communication and engagement staff can assist in developing contract language. Below are examples of responsibilities that may be used within Professional/Technical (P/T) contracts:

- Develop and maintain effective communications with the business organizations, associations, and district councils impacted by this Project.
- Include staff from district councils and multicultural business associations in [community] in engagement activities.
- Communicate with a high-level of understanding of inclusivity best practices, Environmental Justice and demonstrated application of cultural competencies.
- Identify and engage freight and commercial businesses that travel in the Project area as a means of delivering goods and services.
- Cultivate partnerships with the business community to engage stakeholders and to use stakeholders as a conduit for sharing information about the Project.
- Develop a trusted community partner relationship for information sharing and other opportunities to answer questions and engage the community.

Other Tips for Reducing Barriers to Participation

- Partner with elders and trusted community members and liaisons to engage with community members who face barriers to participation or have not yet engaged with MnDOT on the particular Project.
- Contract directly with community-based organizations or neighborhood and community development associations to conduct engagement in their respective communities and networks on behalf of MnDOT.
- Use culturally adaptable practices such as providing for language access, developing new channels to cultivate relationships, using facilitators or contractors from cultural communities, and using culturally-tailored materials and methods.
- Ensure meetings are inclusive by incorporating sufficient notice, scheduling at times and locations that promote community participation and accessibility for people with disabilities, providing materials in different formats, and taking into account community needs, such as transportation or childcare.
- Avoid scheduling events and meetings during holidays, religious obligations and other ethnic or cultural festivities that may affect community members' participation by referring to the [Calendar of Observances](#). (Source: Calendar of Observances, Anti-Defamation League.)
- Provide food or refreshments, especially if the event is over the lunch or dinner hour, if the event is targeting participation from traditionally underserved communities (e.g., minority, low-income, people with disabilities), is located in a community where there is a "[food desert](#)," or if participants have a long commute from their home or job to the event.
 - If providing food or beverages, be culturally aware and sensitive by offering acceptable food choices for the participants (e.g., not providing ham or pork in some communities or offering halal food or vegan/vegetarian options, etc.).

- Provide allowable incentives or reimbursement to attract participation and/or reimburse or thank community organizations and people for their time, planning and outreach efforts. (See Cost Guidance section for more information).
- Provide low-cost or no-cost children’s activities at events to attract families and give adults time to engage with MnDOT staff. See [Appendix 7: Allowable Public Engagement Items](#)
- Provide multiple engagement opportunities and use a variety of methods to reach a broader audience (e.g., in-person open house, online survey, virtual open house, call-in phone line, mailed postcard, paper survey, project website updates and forms, email distribution, etc.).
- Use relevant media channels for communicating about engagement events (e.g., cultural media outlets, community-based organizations and associations, school districts, faith-based organizations, etc.).
- Refer to public engagement Cost Guidance section for guidance on allowable activities and expenses for Professional/Technical contracts.
- Go to where the community members meet; do not expect them to come to MnDOT.

Engaging with Tribal Nations and Tribal Populations

Minnesota is home to 11 federally recognized tribes, all unique and sovereign. Per [Minnesota Statutes §10.65](#) and [Executive Order 19-24](#), signed by Governor Tim Walz in April 2019, “The State acknowledges that Minnesota Tribal Nations are comprised of a majority of the State’s 108,000 American Indians and provide significant employment in the State. Members of the Minnesota Tribal Nations are citizens of the State of Minnesota and possess all the rights and privileges afforded by the State.”

At MnDOT, the [Office of Tribal Affairs](#) guides the tribal Government-to-Government work. It is important to recognize that engaging with urban Native communities is not the same as the work with the Tribal Nations. Additionally, Tribal Nations are not considered “stakeholders;” they are sovereign governments.

Remember that 11 of the 574 federally recognized tribes in the United States share lands with the State of Minnesota. Many tribal members in the urban Native community are citizens of Tribal Nations located inside and outside the State of Minnesota boundaries. In addition, many tribal members in Minnesota live off reservations. Therefore, engagement in urban areas, including work in Minneapolis, St. Paul, Duluth, and Bemidji all contribute to public engagement with Native communities.

Additional steps must be taken, and protocols observed, for engagement when Projects impact Tribal Nations and tribal populations in Minnesota.

Seek Advice from Tribal Affairs

[The Office of Tribal Affairs](#) helps the agency ensure that outreach and engagement efforts with the urban Native communities are done in a positive manner.

Explain your goal, whether the effort is project-related or program-related, where it is located, and identify who is the focus of your work.

Levi Brown

Office of Tribal Affairs Director and Tribal Liaison

levi.brown@state.mn.us

651-236-7048

Adrien Carretero

Tribal Affairs Coordinator

adrien.carretero@state.mn.us

651-236-7674

Building Cultural Awareness

To build cultural awareness of American Indians and Alaska Natives cultures in the United States, refer to the [Culture Card, a guide to build cultural awareness, American Indians and Alaska Natives](#). This card covers topics such as historic distrust, etiquette (Do's and Don'ts), and cultural customs.

For information specific to Tribal Nations in Minnesota, refer to the [MnDOT Indian country guidance, Section III, History and identity of Minnesota tribes \(page 17\) and Glossary \(page 23\)](#).

Know that the terms *consultation*, *coordination* and *collaboration* have a specific meaning with Tribes. The [MnDOT Indian Country Guidance](#) and [Tribal-State relations training](#) provide key definitions that are listed in the Appendix.

Minnesota Tribal Nations Policy

MnDOT requires that the provisions and principles of the [Minnesota Tribal Nations policy](#) be considered at all phases of planning and Project development in the establishment, development, operation, and maintenance of a comprehensive, integrated, and connected multimodal transportation system. Principles include, but are not limited to:

- Tribal Nation interests will be addressed using transparent, effective and Project-appropriate public involvement processes;
- Considerations, concerning all Tribal Nations, must be in the Project development process scoping worksheets and documents;
- MnDOT requires Tribal input in the development of the [State Highway Investment Plan](#), [District Highway Investment Plans](#), and [State Transportation Improvement Program](#);
- Projects will consider future demand from all users along and across all corridors, such as with phased projects in the corridor; and
- MnDOT must consider all impacted Tribal Nation's members in project safety reviews, road safety audits, and intersection control evaluations.

Training Requirement

[Minn. Stat. §10.65](#) and [Executive Order 19-24](#) mandate all state employees likely to work with Tribes in Minnesota to attend the [Tribal-State relations training](#).

Resource: Please refer to the [Tribal-State Relations Training](#) website for more information.

Resource: [Appendix 6: State-Tribal Terminology](#)

Public Engagement Cost Guidance

Decisions about budget and funding sources must be identified early in the activity planning process. Public engagement activities and budgets will vary depending on Project type, scope and the needs of the community. The following provides guidance to MnDOT employees who have a role in procuring, providing, or managing public engagement services and activities through Professional and Technical (P/T) contracts or via a Special Expense Form.

Professional Technical Contracts

Professional/Technical (P/T) contracts for public engagement activities must be written according to, and comply with, MnDOT's Public Engagement Policy and the guidance and expectations outlined in this Cost Guidance section.

If the level of public engagement needed for a Project is not clearly understood or known when a P/T contract is initially negotiated, it is acceptable to include within the contract placeholders for public engagement activities with high-level information and anticipated expenses (e.g., a list such as: 6 open houses, 2 business listening sessions, 2 online surveys, project promoted through print and social media venues, etc.) in the Public Engagement Plan.

However, as MnDOT and the consultant learn more about the Project, more detailed information about public engagement activities and expenses should be added to the Public Engagement Plan. If details about the public engagement activities and events are not known when the consultant delivers the Public Engagement Plan to MnDOT, additional informal project memos may be attached to the Public Engagement Plan to outline additional details and cost estimates when they are known. Unit pricing should be utilized whenever possible (even if rounded up for a starting point). If the memos differ drastically or exceed what is in the contract, a formal amendment to the P/T contract may be necessary.

All public engagement expenses should be reasonable and fiscally responsible. When determining if an activity or expense is reasonable and appropriate, consultants and project managers should refer to the list of considerations and to "Allowable Public Engagement Items" in [Appendix 7: Allowable Public Engagement Items](#).

Items to Consider when Planning Engagement Events

- The time the meeting or event is held. If the event is scheduled over the breakfast, lunch or dinner hour, participants may reasonably expect MnDOT to provide refreshments or a light meal.
- Time commitment you are asking of participants. For example, asking people to participate in a 2-hour focus group or facilitated workshop to provide input may warrant providing refreshments and/or a reimbursement for their time.
- Level of engagement. ([See IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation.](#))
- Location of event. For example, if the open house is located in a community where there is a [food desert](#), providing refreshments or even a meal may be reasonable.
- Length of commute for participants from their home or job to the event.
- Who are you trying to reach at the event or meeting? If the event is targeting participation from traditionally underserved communities, additional accommodations may be needed.

Public Engagement Expenses within Public Engagement Plan

The Public Engagement Plan (or the informal Project “amendment/memo”) must include the following information for each public engagement event that includes expenses within the “facility and accommodations” category described below:

- Public engagement event name, purpose, event date and time
- Target audience description and approximate number of people anticipated to attend event
- Line-item description of public engagement item with budget and cost. Avoid using lump sums that would make it difficult to discern the cost for each item or activity.
- Public engagement expenses generally fall into one of the three categories below. Items in the facility and accommodations category are subject to stricter review. For transparency and accountability purposes, consultants and project managers must maintain documentation and receipts as needed for the project close-out audit review.
 1. **Public engagement staffing costs** (e.g., creating Public Engagement Plan, planning and attending open houses or business listening sessions, developing website content or surveys, etc.)
 2. **Media and printed materials** (e.g., advertising, mailing, printing, meeting handouts, poster boards, postcards, postage, targeted social media, etc.)
 3. **Facility and accommodations** (e.g., refreshments, meals, facility, speakers, translation services, etc. ([See Appendix 7: Allowable Public Engagement Items.](#)))

Special Expense Form

If a Professional/Technical contract is not used to provide public engagement activities or services, MnDOT staff must complete a Special Expense Form and obtain pre-approval for these expenses. All expenses must meet [MMB Administrative Procedure 4.4 – Special Expenses](#) provisions. MnDOT’s Special Expense Form is located on iHUB under “Forms” and the special expense procedures are located in [MnDOT’s Business Manual](#).

Allowable Public Engagement Items

[Appendix 7: Allowable Public Engagement Items](#) includes a table that outlines the public engagement expenses that may be considered within the “Facility and Accommodations” category. The approval process is listed for expenses within a Professional/Technical contract and those using a Special Expense Form. Definitions and other notes include additional detail.

Resource: MMB Administrative Procedure 4.4: [MMB Administrative Procedure 4.4 – Special Expenses](#)

Resource: [MnDOT’s Business Manual](#).

MnDOT Acknowledgement of Donations/Gifts

The Commissioner has the authority to accept gifts from parties outside of MnDOT. MnDOT must provide public acknowledgement of all gifts donated to MnDOT for public engagement events to recognize the contributions of services, funds, or gifts of products or in-kind services. It is important to note that “acknowledging” should not equal “advertising.”

The following are additional cautionary notes about accepting gifts:

- Be wary of accepting “gifts” from firms that do business with MnDOT. Avoid any appearance of “pressuring” a party or firm to give MnDOT something (especially one of MnDOT’s consultants or vendors). There are two potential issues: (1) the “appearance” of *quid pro quo* – (firms feeling “forced” to donate if they want future work from MnDOT); and (2) firms feeling compelled to “contribute.” Gifts should be offered organically; MnDOT must not actively solicit gifts.
- Watch for “tails” – MnDOT cannot accept something as a gift that locks MnDOT into a single-source type contract to maintain. (For example, the razor brands that send you a free razor because they want to lock you into buying their replacement blades.)

Additional guidance:

- If refreshments, meals or entertainment is donated by a consultant firm or other non-MnDOT party (outside of a contract), MnDOT must clearly and visibly acknowledge and name all donors and sponsors at the event and on marketing and communications materials.
- Care must be taken in the wording and appearance of any acknowledgement to ensure that it does not convey, or appear to convey, MnDOT endorsement or advertisement of a product, service or vendor.

- A registered **trademark** or **service mark** may be included in an acknowledgement with the expressed permission of the mark owner.
- A **tagline** may be used as part of the acknowledgement if it is not a statement of quality or endorsement. An example of an appropriate tag line is: “This event is sponsored by the Neighborhood House.”
- A credit line may be used to acknowledge contributions. A suggested format for a credit line is “MnDOT acknowledges the contributions of (name) in the planning and delivery of (event).”
- Mention of the contribution of others to a MnDOT program, event, or product may appear in print, broadcast, and electronic mediums. “MnDOT” must come before the donor in the acknowledgment. For example, “This event was hosted by MnDOT and meals were donated by XYZ Company, a catering company located in St. Paul.” Care must be used to define the relationship between MnDOT and consulting firms and third-party vendors to avoid the appearance of giving an endorsement.
- Use a disclaimer statement whenever an assumption could be made that an endorsement is taking place. An example of a disclaimer statement is: “This publication is partially funded through advertising revenue. The State of Minnesota and MnDOT do not endorse the products or services or vendors advertised nor accept any liability arising from the use of these products or services.”

Definitions

- **Service Mark:** A distinctive name, symbol, slogan or emblem that identifies a service that may be legally registered.
- **Tagline:** A statement or motto that succinctly defines or represents an organization’s mission.
- **Trademark:** A distinctive name, symbol, slogan, or emblem that identifies a product or firm that may be legally registered.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Contacts

[District and Central Office Public Engagement Contacts](#)

[MnDOT Communications Contacts \(Central Office & District Public Affairs Coordinators\)](#)

[Statewide MnDOT Office Locations and Contact Information](#)

Appendix 2: Process and Regulatory Considerations

Environmental Justice

MnDOT's Office of Civil Rights leads the department's efforts to comply with the [Title VI Program](#) and [Executive Order 12898](#), *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations*, which requires federal agencies to make achieving environmental justice a part of its mission. The requirements are to be carried out to the greatest extent practicable and permitted by law so that public agencies treat people fairly and involve them in a meaningful way during the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

MnDOT supports environmental justice through every stage of its planning, construction and maintenance processes. This ensures MnDOT gains input from the community that will shape how it builds and maintains roads, bridges, regional airports, rail lines, ports, and trails that are critical to connecting people to their destinations.

MnDOT accomplishes this by:

- Ensuring the full and fair participation of all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process;
- Avoiding, minimizing, or mitigating disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority and low-income populations;
- Providing timely information to area residents and businesses affected by transportation Projects;
- Performing periodic reviews of the public engagement process to gauge effectiveness, including making revisions as necessary; and
- Preventing the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

Resource: [MnDOT Title VI Program: Environmental Justice website](#)

Resource: [FHWA Environmental Justice website](#)

Resource: [Minnesota Compass data profiles tool](#)

Americans with Disabilities Act

The [Americans with Disabilities Act](#) prohibits discrimination and ensures equal opportunity for persons with disabilities in employment, state and local government services, public accommodations, commercial facilities, and transportation.

ADA Title II Obligations

Under [Title II](#) of the ADA, MnDOT is obligated to ensure that public involvement opportunities and public hearings are accessible. [ADA Title II regulations 28 CFR Part 35 Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability in State and Local Government Services](#) outline the basic procedures for providing accessible and equitable meetings. The procedures require, but are not limited to, ensuring:

- Locations for public meetings are fully accessible
- Materials are accessible and available in alternative formats
- Interpreters can be made available upon request

When developing an event and materials, it is important that not only the venue and materials are accessible but the site layout and communications allow for effective participation by all.

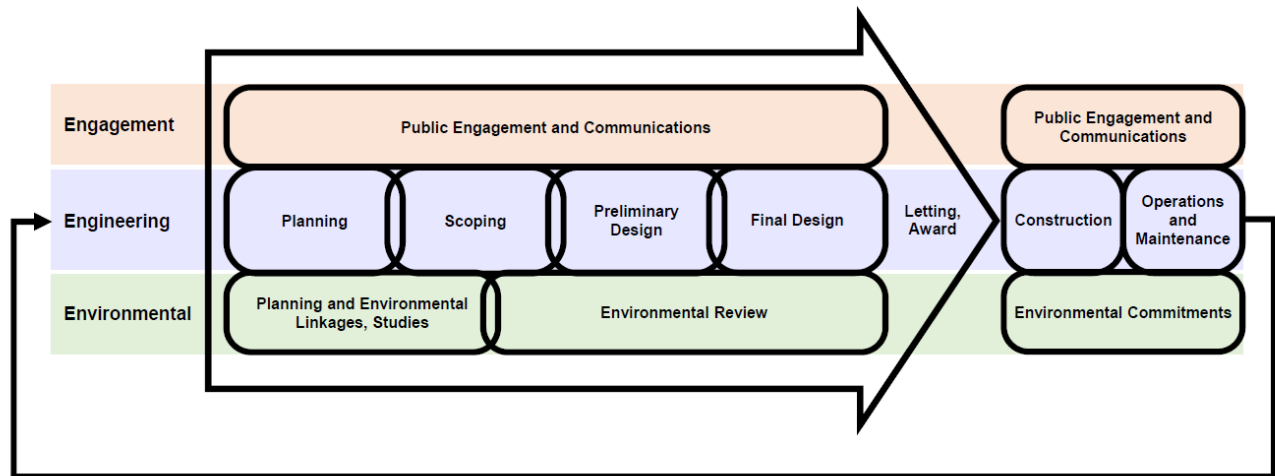
Resource: [State and Local Governments \(ADA Title II\)](#)

Resource: [Accessible Information Exchange: Meeting on a Level Playing Field](#)

Resource: [Virtual Meeting Resource Guide](#)

Highway Transportation Development Process

The Highway Transportation Development Process (HTDP) provides project guidance, report templates, and regulatory background for the preliminary design and environmental documentation processes. The process includes the use of multi-disciplinary concurrent efforts, including public engagement, to develop transportation projects from inception to construction.



With regard to federally funded projects, the HPDP addresses compliance with all local, state, and federal legal requirements regarding the environment, including the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 ([NEPA, 42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq](#)).

The overall goal is to gain meaningful input from stakeholders, the public, and all interested parties to transition through the project development process phases. Accordingly, the level of public engagement required depends on the purpose, scope, and complexity of a project, the magnitude of environmental impacts, and anticipated and realized public reaction.

Resource: [Highway Project Development Process website](#)

Resource: [Scoping Guidance](#)

NEPA Environmental Documents and Public Hearings

MnDOT’s Office of Environmental Stewardship leads the department’s efforts to comply with environmental law and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). A major goal of NEPA is to develop a project development process that provides the opportunity for stakeholders and the public to actively participate in transportation decision-making. Before a project is approved for federal funding and construction, MnDOT is required to consider and assess all social, environmental, and economic impacts that a project may have on a community.

MnDOT is also required to provide supporting documentation showing how it met the legal requirements for public engagement. Failure to do so could require repeating the project’s public engagement activities or reconsideration of a previously dismissed alternative. Both could have significant impacts to the project’s budget and schedule.

Environmental documents are categorized into three Classes of Action:

- Class I - Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) - Actions that significantly impact the environment
- Class II - Categorical Exclusion (CE) - Actions that generally do not have a significant environmental impact
- Class III - Environmental Assessment (EA) - Actions in which the significance of the environmental impact is not clearly established

MnDOT's work is aligned with various respective federal agencies (e.g., FAA, FTA, EPA). MnDOT's role in NEPA differs across the modes as not all federal agencies delegate the same authorities as FHWA.

Within the required NEPA documentation process, there may be occasions based on the project's impacts that require the project to conduct additional public engagement. Such scenarios include when a project may result in Section 4(f) impacts. These procedures are described in the [Highway Project Development Process](#) website within the [Section 4\(f\) guidance](#).

Resource: NEPA Public Involvement Requirements & Public Hearing Procedures

Engagement for Municipal Consent and Cooperative Agreements

Both the municipal consent process and local agency agreements for cost sharing/maintenance responsibilities are important processes where public engagement also occurs.

According to Minnesota law, cities hold public hearings when MnDOT requests local approval or municipal consent on highway layouts. Layout approval is required for any trunk highway project that results in any of the following within a municipality:

- Alters access,
- Increases or reduces traffic capacity, or
- Requires acquisition of permanent right-of- way.

Reference: [Minnesota Statutes secs. 161.162 – 161.167](#)

Another public engagement process involving local governments occurs when cities or counties hold their own public hearings and public meetings for gathering input before signing Cooperative Agreements for cost sharing and maintenance responsibilities within MnDOT projects. Project Managers should identify construction cost participation and maintenance responsibilities as early in the project development process as feasible when the project scope and trunk highway purposes are determined.

Reference: [Cost Participation for Cooperative Construction Projects and Maintenance Responsibilities](#)

Appendix 3: Other Public Engagement Frameworks

Systematic Development of Informed Consent (SDIC)

SDIC is a training curriculum created and delivered by Hans and Anne Marie Bleiker. The curriculum emphasizes that public agencies should not do *more* engagement with the public – instead, they should do it *differently*. SDIC encourages agency staff to bring everyone to the table early to try to solve problems collaboratively, especially with opponents.

SDIC leverages trust to facilitate palatable solutions. SDIC ensures proper attention is given to stakeholders to understand their concerns, motivation, and objectives from the start, and maintain their involvement over the life of the project. While public sentiment might not change, the community acknowledges that a MnDOT project or decision will solve a problem and benefit the greater good, even if individuals don't feel they will benefit personally. With SDIC, those with concerns about the project will know all the facts and are less likely to stand in the way of progress.

MnDOT has provided SDIC training over the past 20 years to employees.

Resource: [Systematic Development of Informed Consent](#)

Conflict Assessment & Management Process (CAMP)

CAMP is a Conflict Assessment & Management Process that educates, empowers and helps MnDOT personnel in proactively addressing potential conflicts—internal and external to the agency—that could affect their work. The risk assessment tools in the manual provide valuable guidance.

Resource: [CAMP process and manual](#)

Livability Framework

MnDOT's Rethinking I-94 Office developed the [livability framework](#) using the information provided during the engagement activities of Phase 1, Technical Research and Engagement Activities. This framework may be used to guide the design and evaluation of other projects.

Updated contacts:

Gloria Jeff, Gloria.Jeff@state.mn.us or 651-245-0128 or William Goff, William.Goff@state.mn.us

Appendix 4: Examples of Activities and Tools along the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

IAP2 Levels of Public Engagement				
<p>Inform</p> <p>To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives, and/or solutions</p>	<p>Consult</p> <p>To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions.</p>	<p>Involve</p> <p>To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered.</p>	<p>Collaborate</p> <p>To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.</p>	<p>Empower</p> <p>To place final decision making in the hands of the public.</p>
Examples of tools to achieve the levels				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project website • Fact sheets • Email updates • Newsletters • Social media • U.S. Postal Delivery • Press release 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews, focus group or listening sessions • Small meetings with stakeholders or business owners • Online surveys • Field walks and tours • Community or stakeholder events • Online meeting chat box • Website comment box 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission or advisory group • Online forum • Stakeholder meeting • Roadway design activity • Planning study • Community liaisons • Scenario planning • Design charrette • Rendering of options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen or stakeholder advisory committee • Collaborative work group • Partnerships with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) • Empowering community representatives • Participatory budget or decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voting committee • Survey balloting or polling • City Council vote (municipal consent) • Visual quality committees
Examples of when and/or how these tools may be used				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informing audiences about lane closures, detours, or construction schedules • Posting Project information • Providing information about MnDOT’s District Bicycle Plans to the public • Attending a fair, conference, or community event • Responding to public inquiries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtaining feedback from audiences on pavement resurfacing or road and bridge realignment projects • Consulting with businesses to develop mitigation strategies to lessen construction impacts • Conducting a survey to collect input on Projects. • Gathering input on modifications to products and plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting listening sessions to obtain and incorporate input on policies • Hosting focus groups to obtain, understand and consider public and stakeholder behaviors, opinions, or sentiment • Conducting 1:1 interviews to develop relationships with community-based organizations to advance transportation equity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborating with stakeholders when conducting corridor planning studies or doing scoping outreach • Engaging with the public to develop the Capital Highway Investment Plan (CHIP) • Collaborating with industry and agency partners on large oversize and overweight load projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing the public to vote for or against noise walls, allowing snow fence or accepting or rejecting a “road diet” plan • Allowing public to make decision on specific project design aspects (e.g., light fixtures, landscaping, railings, etc.) • Empowering communities through distributed Master Planning process (Aeronautics).

Appendix 5: Membership in Professional Organizations

MnDOT leadership can help create an office work culture that encourages relationship-building with MnDOT's stakeholders and partners by creating and implementing an office policy that allows staff to join professional organizations or associations. Examples of a template/draft office policy is below.

Individual Membership

As allowed by labor agreements, MnDOT [Office/District] may reimburse an employee for individual membership dues paid to professional organizations.

- Reimbursement is limited based on each union contract. The professional organization must be related to the employee's job and the organization cannot exist primarily to lobby state government. Reimbursement will be made via the employee expense report, rather than payment made directly to an organization.
- In no circumstance may an employee represent the organization and MnDOT simultaneously. Work on behalf of professional organizations (attending business meetings, organization promotion, membership recruitment, etc.) must be done on the employee's own time and not use state resources (e-mail, supplies, etc.). Typical exceptions may include:
 - Being invited to present or speak on behalf of MnDOT
 - Continuing education or training
 - Representing MnDOT while planning events that MnDOT co-sponsors

Agency Membership

MnDOT [Office/District] may pay agency membership directly to a small number of national organizations, such as the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, Transportation Research Board, American Planning Association or IAP2. Work performed in partnership with these organizations may be part of an employee's regular job duties. However, supervisory approval is required in advance of performing work to ensure that activities are aligned with MnDOT's core mission.

[District/Office] will continue to partner with professional organizations in Minnesota by co-sponsoring conferences, events, training, and other activities. Office Director approval is required before employees commit work time or state resources to these activities.

Appendix 6: State-Tribal Terminology

- **Anishinabe:** Anishinabe is the Ojibwe/Chippewa's name for themselves. It means "the people." This word is also correctly spelled as Anishinaabe. The terms Anishinabe, Ojibwe, and Chippewa are generally used interchangeably to refer to the same people group.

- **Community:** The Dakota tribes in Minnesota use the word “community” in the same way that the word tribe, nation, or band is used. The word “community” comes from the original Dakota community which was created by an 1851 treaty.
- **Collaboration:** “All parties involved in carrying out planning and Project development work together in a timely manner to achieve a common goal or objective.” This [interactive map](#) may be helpful.
- **Consultation:** “Government-to-government communication in a timely manner by all parties, about a proposed or contemplated decision in order to: secure meaningful tribal input and involvement in the decision-making process; and advise the tribe of the final decision and provide an explanation.” This happens at the Governor, Commissioner and tribal leadership level.
- **Coordination:** “Each party shares and compares in a timely manner its transportation plans, programs, projects and schedules with the related plans, programs, projects, and schedules of the other parties and adjusts its plans, programs, projects, and schedules to optimize the efficient and consistent delivery of transportation projects and services.” This typically happens annually between MnDOT district leadership and planning, tribal representatives and tribal government officials such as head of departments and sometimes with staff members.
- **Dakota:** The Dakota are the largest dialect group within the Sioux tribes. Dakota means “ally” in the Dakota language.
- **Indian:** a person recognized as Indian by a tribal nation. It is a political distinction, not a racial category.
- **Indian Country:** A legal term of art referring to lands held in trust for Indians and Indian tribes. Indian country goes beyond reservation boundaries. It includes reservations, some off-reservation allotments, and “dependent Indian communities” (i.e., land that is federally supervised and set aside for the use of Indians, this is usually found on off-reservation trust land).
- **Indian tribe:** a political and legal entity possessing inherent rights of self-government, having a government-to-government relationship with the United States, and entitled to receive certain benefits, services, and protections because of this relationship. Indian tribes are Nations, not minorities.
- **Sioux:** The Sioux are a group of tribes in North America. Within the Sioux tribes are three main groups, the Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota.

Appendix 7: Allowable Public Engagement Items

Item	Allowable?	Approval process	Definition/notes
Refreshments	Yes	Per P/T contract Or MnDOT Special Expense Form - <i>Located on iHUB under "Forms"</i>	Refreshments may be provided at events (when deemed appropriate) to create a welcoming environment for participants. Definition: light snack and/or beverage consumed outside a regular meal (morning, afternoon or evening). Refreshments include, but are not limited to, coffee, tea, milk, juice, soft drinks, donuts, bagels, fruit, vegetables, pretzels, cookies, chips or muffins. Box lunches are not considered refreshments.
Meals	Yes	Per P/T contract	Meals may be provided at events (when deemed appropriate) if the expense is incidental to the overall contract amount. Please contact your District contract administrator or the Central Office Consultant Services office if you have questions. Definition: food provided as a regular meal (morning, afternoon or evening) that is over and above what constitutes "refreshments."
Meals	No	MnDOT Special Expense Form	Meals are not allowed for non-state personnel under MMB Administrative procedure 4.4 provisions.

Item	Allowable?	Approval process	Definition/notes
Facility/space/venue	Yes	Per P/T contract Or MnDOT Special Expense Form	Considerations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the appearance of MnDOT using the space or venue? Does it pose a reputational risk to MnDOT? • Are there any safety concerns for MnDOT or the participants? • Is the space physically accessible and inclusive? (e.g., ADA accessible, near public transit, parking available, etc.) • Are there free or low-cost spaces available? (e.g., libraries, community organizations, public spaces, parks, etc.).
Speaker	Yes	Per P/T contract Or Special Expense Form	Speakers may be used for educational purposes and cannot be used solely for entertainment. Must be paid through consultant contract or through SWIFT as a contractor.
Promotional items of nominal value used for drawings or to incentivize participation in transportation decision-making processes or market research study	Yes	Per P/T contract Or MNDOT Special Expense Form Or Contact Communications and Public Engagement Office	Promotional items of nominal value are allowed. Definition: Item having little or no marketable worth. Examples include, but are not limited to: [MnDOT] trinkets such as water bottle, key chain, magnet, pencil, sunglasses, window scraper, road or bicycle map, bumper sticker, etc. Note: Gift cards or cash are not allowed (donated or provided by MnDOT).

Item	Allowable?	Approval process	Definition/notes
Language or translation services	Yes (required)	Per P/T contract Or Office of Equity and Diversity contract	<p>The Office of Equity & Diversity (OED) contracts with professional language service providers statewide, both internal and external to MnDOT, to provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign Language Interpretation • Foreign Language Interpretation (spoken word) • Foreign Language Translation (written word) <p>Contact Janet Miller for assistance.</p>
Licensed/professional childcare	No	None	<p>Due to the inherent liability risks associated with providing supervised childcare services at MnDOT-hosted events (through consultant, sub-consultant or via MnDOT employee), MnDOT is not allowed to provide childcare services at public engagement events – even if the provider is considered professional or licensed.</p> <p>Consider providing low-cost activities to engage children during MnDOT’s public engagement events (e.g., MnDOT GoMobile, coloring books, photo booth, etc.).</p> <p>Materials at events must clearly communicate that any children’s activities are not being supervised by a licensed or professional childcare provider and MnDOT does not assume responsibility for any accidents or injuries that may occur.</p>
Incentives larger than nominal value used for drawings or to incentivize participation in transportation decision-making processes or market research study (for non-state personnel)	No	None	<p>Any item valued at greater than nominal value are not allowed as a donation, part of a drawing, or provided by MnDOT. Examples: items such as bicycles, toys, or electronics.</p> <p>Note: Gift cards or cash are not allowed (donated or provided by MnDOT).</p>

Item	Allowable?	Approval process	Definition/notes
<p>Gift card incentives used to incentivize participation in transportation decision-making processes or market research study (for non-state personnel)</p>	No	None	Gift cards are currently not allowed (donated or provided by MnDOT).
Entertainment	No	None	<p>Entertainment activities and expenses are not allowed.</p> <p>Definition: An event, performance, or activity that is non-educational, designed solely for entertainment purposes; action of providing or being provided with amusement or enjoyment.</p>
Transportation (e.g. Metro pass or mileage reimbursement)	No	None	Transportation expenses are not allowed.