
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

KDOT's Public Involvement Program was formally created in 1997, although KDOT has undertaken public involvement activities for many years. The agency's public involvement plan, "Sharing the Future- Public Involvement in the Kansas Transportation System", was updated in January 2007. It provides policy direction and guidance for integrating public involvement in the agency's decision-making processes. KDOT's "Sharing the Future- Public Involvement in the Kansas Transportation System" document may be viewed online at: www.ksdot.org/publications.asp.

KDOT is currently in the process of updating the plan to reflect activities such as the Partnership Project (P2), which was started in 2003 as a top-to-bottom review of KDOT with the goal of finding ways for the Department to be more responsive to internal and external customers and become a more efficient agency. In addition to P2, both the statewide Kansas Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) developed in 2007/8, and the T-LINK Task Force subsequently created in 2008, recommended changes to improve the public involvement process. The plan is also being updated to include the public involvement procedures in place for the STIP and STIP amendments.

Public Involvement Mission & Program

The mission of the Public Involvement Program is to foster effective two-way communication, facilitate citizen participation, and help KDOT and its customers work together to provide a statewide transportation system that meets the needs of Kansas. The program is guided by the Bureau of Public Involvement, within the Division of Public Affairs. A Bureau Chief of Public Involvement and two Headquarters Public Involvement Liaisons assist KDOT engineers and planners with public involvement activities for design projects and planning studies.

The program is further strengthened by a District Public Affairs Manager in each of the agency's six districts and a Public Affairs Manager at the Wichita Metro Area Office. These District Managers focus on local and regional public affairs for construction and maintenance projects, assist with public involvement for design projects and planning studies, work with local news media, and foster relationships with citizens and businesses at local levels. A Community Affairs Manager, located in Chanute serves communities in southeast Kansas, focusing on fostering relation-

ships with local governments, school districts, and economic development groups.

Public Involvement Purpose

Public involvement helps KDOT staff make informed decisions that address the values, concerns, and issues of people potentially affected by transportation projects. Public involvement can help identify and clarify important issues, help identify environmental constraints and possible mitigation, and help bring out potentially helpful ideas. Incorporating public input with current engineering criteria and a variety of other factors can provide a basis on which to develop or select alternatives. Thus, the public's participation contributes to the larger body of knowledge used to help make planning, programming, design, and construction decisions.

KDOT includes public involvement in its transportation planning and programming processes to provide:

- Early, continuous, and proactive public involvement opportunities throughout the transportation planning and programming process;
- Timely and complete information about transportation issues and processes to any interested citizens and groups affected by transportation plans, programs, and projects;
- In accordance with the Kansas Open Records Act, full public access to key decisions and rea-

sonable public access to technical and policy information used in the development of the plan and Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP);

- Adequate public notice of public involvement activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including, but not limited to action on the plan and STIP;
- A process for demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input during the planning and program development process;
- A process for seeking out and considering the needs of traditionally underserved populations;
- Periodic review of the public involvement process so that the process provides full and open access to all and revision of the process as necessary.

Local Consultation & Project Selection

One of the priorities coming from the P2 project and reiterated by the LRTP and T-Link Task Force, was the need to develop better relationships with local governments and improved processes for incorporating stakeholder input into the project selection process. All noted the importance of involving local officials early and often in planning, project programming, and project development. As a result, KDOT renewed its efforts to partner with local officials and is in the process implementing changes to provide for increased interac-

tion between KDOT District staff and local officials, as well as the general public, and to get input from a wide range of transportation stakeholders about project programming priorities and project scopes. In early 2010, KDOT began the process of documenting the results and benefits of the Local Consultation process and will provide the results for review to the public and FHWA by February 2011.