

Best Practices in Public Involvement



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Introduction

The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) recognizes the importance of involving the public in the exchange of information when providing transportation facilities and services to best meet Indiana's transportation challenges.

INDOT defines public involvement as two-way communication aimed at providing information to the public and incorporating the views, concerns, and issues of the public in the transportation decision-making process. The public provides input on transportation needs, community concerns and environmental considerations. INDOT uses this input to help make decisions. By involving the public early in planning transportation projects and throughout the development and implementation of projects, INDOT will deliver a statewide transportation system that meets the needs of, and is supported by, its customers, the citizens of Indiana.

Best Practices in Public Involvement highlights the innovative ways INDOT involves the public during all phases of project development and delivery, and the people who make the engagement possible. By using a variety of methods to engage our customers, INDOT enhances its ability to establish relationships, credibility and consensus throughout the course of the transportation decision-making process.

INDOT Mission

INDOT will plan, build, maintain and operate a superior transportation system enhancing safety, mobility, and economic growth.



Public Hearings and Meetings



Although public hearings and meetings differ, INDOT has used both to engage a variety of stakeholders in single, project-specific events. Public hearings are formal, federally required meetings. Hearings must be documented, require an official transcript to be produced, and are subject to other specific requirements coordinated through the Office of Public Involvement. Hearings are held

to help with decision making during the project development phase. Conversely, public meetings can be held at any time, for any purpose, and at INDOT's discretion. In general, public meetings and hearings both feature formal presentations, a public comment session, and a project display area where project officials explain details in an informal setting.

How did they do it?

- Scheduled public hearings and meetings at publicly accessible local venues near project location.
- Published legal notices in local newspaper and made project-related documents available for public viewing.
- Sent invitations to residents and businesses and invited the media to attend.
- Held an internal planning and coordination meeting with project team members to identify roles and responsibilities for the hearing/meeting.
- Prepared presentations and handouts in advance and allowed time for appropriate approval.

What was the outcome?

- Public hearings and meetings reduced the overall number of inquiries about specific projects. Direct communication with customers also minimized the likelihood of miscommunication about a project.

How long did it take?

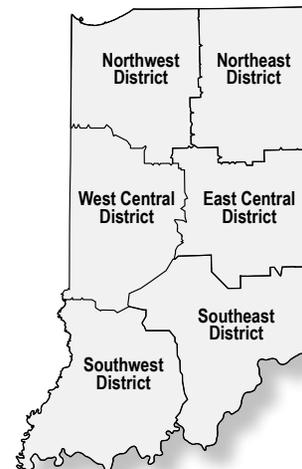
- Public hearings must be advertised 15 days in advance of the hearing date. After the hearing, a two-week comment period is required. Generally, 30 days were necessary to advertise, conduct and allow for the comment period for a public hearing.
- Public meetings are held at INDOT's discretion, but usually follow the same timeline as hearings.

Why use this best practice going forward?

- Public hearings and meetings typically receive significant attention from the affected communities and provide a great opportunity to share INDOT's story with the media and stakeholder groups.
- Stakeholders talk with officials – such as project managers, designers, and real estate, environmental, and customer service representatives – from all areas of the project in a single setting.



Attendees of a public hearing in South Bend meet with public officials for the State Road 23 Added Travel Lanes project.



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Public Hearing Officer*

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Community Outreach



Five communities across southwest Indiana hosted events on the same day to celebrate the new I-69 corridor before its opening. The I-69 Community Day celebrations marked the first time INDOT permitted public access of this nature on an interstate under construction. The events took place in four counties: Gibson, Pike, Daviess and Greene, with two separate events in Daviess County. Each of the Community Day venues featured

a variety of family-friendly activities planned by local organizing committees. Some of the highlights included: a Little Miss Interstate Pageant, a hot air balloon flyover, a special skydiving exhibition, ceremonial remarks, 5K runs for local charities, food vendors, chalk art, antique tractor displays, horse and buggy rides, corn hole and golf putting contests.

How did they do it?

- Proactively identified opportunities to include local communities in celebrating the opening of the new interstate.
- Partnered with local communities through public outreach and planning support from the I-69 Project Team.
- Assured INDOT participation in community events and provided event guidelines and parameters for each community.

What was the outcome?

- The events led to larger public acceptance of the new highway, and helped communities make a positive connection with INDOT.

How long did it take?

- Three months; planning efforts started in August and continued through the week of the event in October.

Why use this best practice going forward?

- Community outreach activities promote a sense of pride and ownership within each community.
- Allows INDOT and local communities to work together to celebrate the accomplishment and completion of a project



A 5K run to support a local charity accentuates Pike County's I-69 Community Day events.



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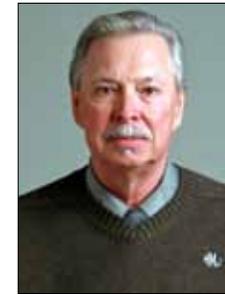
Project Websites



INDOT's Southeast District developed project websites to improve customer service during the U.S. 50 North Vernon West and East projects, a highway bypass around the city of North Vernon in Jennings County. INDOT estimated that the corridors would take approximately four to six years to plan and build. The project websites provided stakeholders updated information throughout the process and included: project overviews, maps, public meeting information and the latest news releases.



Glenda Seal
Communications Director



Harry Maginity
Media Relations Director



Beth Hamilton
Customer Service Coordinator

How did they do it?

- Identified the need for a project website based on the size, scope and duration of the project.
- Collaborated with INDOT eCommunications to create the project websites.
- Coordinated activities with project team to secure timely and accurate website information and ensure content updates to maximize site effectiveness.

What was the outcome?

- The websites enhanced public access to project information, increased customer satisfaction and helped gain positive support for a project that will reduce congestion and improve safety and accessibility.

How long did it take?

- The websites took one month to create and required about one hour per month to update. The websites will be updated throughout the duration of the project.

Why use this best practice going forward?

- Project websites are inexpensive to create, easy to update and manage, and easily accessible by the public.
- Websites can serve as a repository of public information about project development, planning and construction.
- Stakeholders can provide feedback through website contacts.



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Social Media



The East Central District created a social media plan specifically designed for the South Split project in Indianapolis. The South Split project closed I-65 and I-70 between the north and south splits, on the east side of downtown Indianapolis for 59 days in 2013 to lower pavement beneath seven low bridges over the interstate. Working with the Joint Transportation Research Program at Purdue University, the East

Central District produced and uploaded to social media a video of several oversized trucks striking the bridges prior to the project start. The video helped raise public awareness and support for the project. Once construction began, INDOT used a dedicated web page, Facebook and Twitter to provide detour information, news releases and status reports about project construction. INDOT uploaded additional time-lapse videos to YouTube that showed construction progress. Use of social media enabled the public to become involved and receive updates on the progress of a project that displaced more than 100,000 vehicles each day.

How did they do it?

- Created a compilation video of trucks with oversized loads striking the Virginia Avenue Bridge.
- Created a dedicated website, www.SouthSplit.IN.gov, as an Internet home for project information.
- Posted a variety of videos, photos and information on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram using the hashtag #SouthSplit to increase public interaction.
- Utilized other media channels and key stakeholders to direct the public to follow the project on social media sites.

What was the outcome?

- Use of social media ensured that interested stakeholders received timely, accurate information directly from INDOT, which enhanced their ability to make daily decisions regarding travel routes.
- The social media campaign resulted in a significant reduction of customer inquiries and complaints regarding road closures, detour routes, project status, and construction duration.

How long did it take?

- The social media plan began months in advance of the highway closures and lasted throughout the duration of the project.

Why use this best practice going forward?

- Social media increases direct interaction with the general public and helps develop relationships with stakeholders, which can be utilized for future outreach.
- Provides up-to-date information and invites discussion from others.
- Achieves results with a relatively low investment of time and capital.



Crews work to replace a damaged beam on the Virginia Avenue Bridge.



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Kitchen Table Meetings



Kitchen Table Meetings (KTM) were created for use on the I-69 Section 4 project, a 27-mile new segment that cuts across Greene and Monroe counties in the Southwest District. During the construction of previous sections of I-69, property owners raised concerns over field investigations impacting their properties during the design phase and the land acquisition process. KTMs – individual meetings held at a property owner’s home or at a project office – were designed to proactively improve the information provided to affected property owners.

INDOT customer service representatives also collected valuable information from the property owner about their property during the meetings.



Crews use a geotech drill on a property owner’s land during the I-69 Section 4 project.

How did they do it?

- Six customer service representatives were identified to facilitate the KTMs. They attended a day-long training session to ensure they presented a unified message to property owners.
- All personnel, including those in the field, attended customer service training.
- INDOT staff prepared an information packet before each KTM. Each packet included a customer survey, project map, land acquisition brochures, photos of geotechnical equipment and a state highway map.
- After the KTM, the customer service representative completed a meeting summary report, which helped complete future field work more quickly.

What was the outcome?

- A total of 222 property owners (about 94 percent) participated in the I-69 Section 4 KTMs, 91 percent of which allowed surveyors and geotech drillers unlimited property access.
- Complaints by property owners dropped by 36 percent compared to previous I-69 section projects.

How long did it take?

- A typical KTM took one to two hours. Most meetings took place in the property owner’s home, so additional travel time was required.
- Contacting each property owner and setting an appointment took about one to two weeks to finalize. All I-69 Section 4 KTMs were completed in four months.

Why use this best practice going forward?

- KTMs help increase coordination between property owners and project personnel, resulting in higher satisfaction of both parties during project development.



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Educational Event



The West Central District created a unique educational event after Lafayette-area residents expressed concerns about being unfamiliar with navigating the roundabout included as part of the new State Road 25 Hoosier Heartland Highway. A one-day "Roundabout School" event, held at an area middle school, featured several different information stations that included technical information, videos, maps and display boards that were used as hands-on learning tools. The highlight of the event was the construction and use of a half-

scale roundabout driving course on the school grounds. Attendees used golf carts to practice maneuvering the roundabout, which was created by adding lane markings, flags, traffic cones and traffic signs to a grass field area at the school.

How did they do it?

- Recognized a specific element of the project where an educational component would be vital to public acceptance.
- Established a team in charge of planning the event. Team members included INDOT employees from the Communications and Technical Services Divisions, and consultants from the project.
- Worked with key stakeholders to secure a venue, prepare lists of invitees, provide logistical support and staff the event.

What was the outcome?

- The event attracted more than 100 attendees. Many participants told INDOT staff that the activities helped them feel more confident about using roundabouts.
- The community stakeholders who attended became proponents of the project and were able to raise awareness to others in their communities.

How long did it take?

- The West Central District prepared for the Roundabout School in six weeks.

Why use this best practice going forward?

- Hands-on activities provide an innovative, fun and creative way to educate the public about a project.
- Encourages engagement and collaboration with local municipalities and key stakeholders. It also galvanizes consensus within a community.



Attendees practice on the half-scale roundabout driving course, located on school grounds.



West Central District Roundabout group, from left to right, front row: Nathan Awwad, Traffic Investigations Engineer and Joe Lewien, Technical Service Director. From left to right, back row: Debbie Calder, Communications Director; Bill Smith, Traffic Engineer and Fuel Coordinator and Aimee Bennett, Communications Specialist.



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Mailer



The Northwest District developed an informational mailer regarding a chip-seal project, a common type of pavement preservation that helps extend the life of a roadway, along State Road 2 from U.S. 20 to U.S. 31. The purpose of the mailer was to inform residents and businesses of upcoming pavement preservation work that required lane closures and a reduced speed limit. The mailer described the construction activity, duration of the work, ways to best minimize the impact of construction on daily routines, and project contact information. The Northwest District sent more than 1,000 mailers to area residents and businesses.

How did they do it?

- Collected addresses using a variety of sources, including INDOT Survey Sections, the Office of Public Involvement, local municipalities, and the local post office.
- Coordinated with the local post office to determine the best possible postal rate.
- Wrote a concise informational mailer that included photos of the chip-seal process, and provided contact information to address any questions.

What was the outcome?

- By contacting the area residents directly, the mailer helped save time and resources by reducing the number of property owner inquiries.

How long did it take?

- The mailer took one to three weeks to plan, create, approve and distribute.
- The letter was sent approximately three weeks before the beginning of the chip-seal process.

Why use this best practice going forward?

- Mailers directly address impacted property owners and businesses in advance of the activity, and provide individuals an opportunity to plan ahead.
- Mailers encourage resident engagement and dialogue with INDOT.



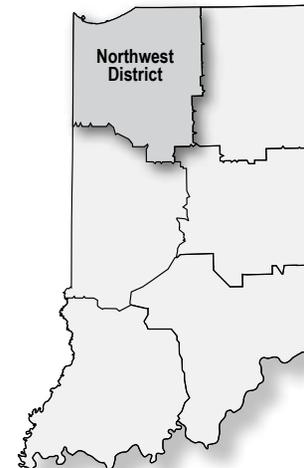
Jim Pinkerton
Communications Director



Matt Deitchley
Media Relations Director



Jennifer Alander
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The mailer included photos like this chip-seal operation in the Northwest District.

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Video



The Northwest and Northeast Districts collaborated on a video to informally explain the chip-seal process. “A Cup of Coffee with the Chip-Seal Skeptic” shows two friends meeting for coffee, after one of the women arrives late, and frustrated, because of chip-seal maintenance. The conversation that unfolds provides information about the benefits of chip sealing roadways, while giving viewers friendly advice on planning ahead and avoiding vehicle damage. The video gave INDOT a new way to highlight a common maintenance activity and explained why the process is a benefit to stakeholders.

How did they do it?

- Wrote a script to explain a maintenance process in basic, easy-to-understand terms.
- Contacted a local theater to find actors for the video.
- Determined the locations to film the video and included real footage from a local chip-seal project.
- Filmed and edited the video, then distributed through social media and email.

What was the outcome?

- The video became an additional tool for districts to use for upcoming chip-seal projects, and it was included on social media, press releases and project websites.

How long did it take?

- The script for the video was written, approved and finalized in about a week. Filming the video took place over two days at two separate locations. It took three additional days to finish editing the footage.
- If actors are needed for the video, allow extra time.

Why use this best practice going forward?

- Videos can be used exclusively to reach stakeholder groups or as an additional tool to reach a wider audience.
- Informative videos that explain general activities, like the chip-seal process, winter operations and mowing, can be reused and repurposed for multiple projects and audiences.



*Matt Deitchley
Media Relations Director*



*Northwest Customer Service group, from left to right:
Toni Mayo, Communications Director; Deb Jent, Clerical
Assistant/Radio Operator; Laurel McCurdy, Customer Service
Coordinator and Monic Black, Administrative Assistant.*



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Open Houses



INDOT hosts open houses throughout the state to solicit public comment on proposed projects before the projects are programmed and funded. Open houses are a part of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), a federally mandated four-year planning document that lists all projects expected to receive federal funding. Open house events include a

brief presentation about project ideas, and provide time for stakeholders to have one-on-one conversations with program officials from INDOT. Open houses provide opportunities for local transportation users to offer feedback on project ideas and identify other needs that are not present on project lists.

How did they do it?

- Established a team, including communications and technical services, to plan the open houses.
- Collaborated with STIP Coordinator to determine timing of STIP document release.
- Secured a location, date and time for the open house.
- Notified stakeholders and media of the open house; also included information on INDOT's website and social media pages.

What was the outcome?

- Open houses increase the amount of public input and provide ideas and feedback on a variety of transportation needs.

How long did it take?

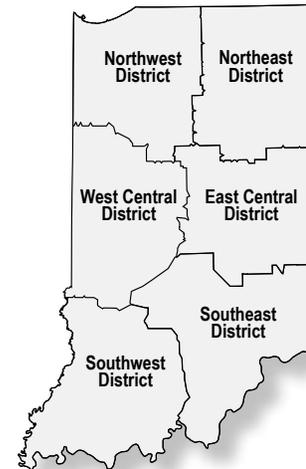
- Open houses took four to six weeks to plan and conduct in order to satisfy document availability requirements.
- Occurs once every four years per federal mandate.

Why use this best practice going forward?

- Open houses provide an opportunity for stakeholders to talk to INDOT program managers about present and future transportation needs in their communities.
- Promotes STIP document for public review and comment.



Local residents attend an open house hosted by the East Central District.



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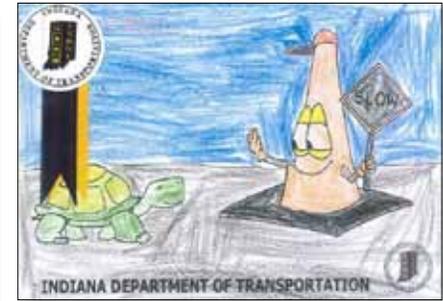
School Presentation



The Northeast District created work zone awareness programming for first- and second-graders at two Fort Wayne elementary schools. The programming included original characters to help teach about safety – Coney the Traffic Cone, Barney the Safety Barrel, and Sammy the Slow Paddle. After learning about safety concerns for highway workers and commuters traveling through work zones, the children colored their own Coney the Traffic Cone and, upon completion, received an award ribbon as a prize.



Elementary school students participate in a work zone safety game.



Student artwork at the event results in an INDOT award ribbon.

How did they do it?

- Created a public outreach strategy geared around an established agency theme.
- Developed a presentation and pilot program, custom-tailored to appeal to the stakeholder group.
- Contacted local area schools, with which INDOT had a previous relationship.

What was the outcome?

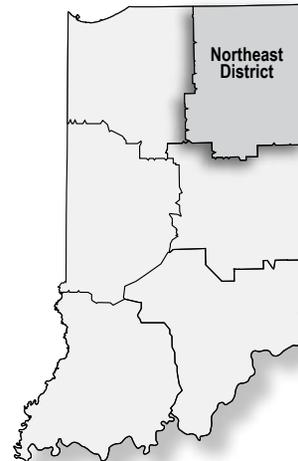
- Approximately 300 students took part in the work zone safety awareness presentations. Although the presentations were geared toward school-age children, students were encouraged to talk to their parents and family about what they learned.

How long did it take?

- The Northeast District prepared six weeks for the program, coordinating schedules with schools at least four weeks in advance.
- The presentation lasted about an hour, including time for questions and answers.

Why use this best practice going forward?

- School presentations strengthen community support while providing INDOT an opportunity to promote agency programs or initiatives, including pedestrian safety, seatbelts, and construction zone awareness.
- School presentations enable INDOT to distribute informational materials to students, who will show them to parents and guardians.



Northeast Customer Service group, from left to right: Toni Mayo, Communications Director; Deb Jent, Clerical Assistant/Radio Operator; Laurel McCurdy, Customer Service Coordinator and Monic Black, Administrative Assistant.

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District Offices

To better serve the citizens of Indiana, INDOT maintains six district offices, in Crawfordsville, Fort Wayne, Greenfield, LaPorte, Seymour and Vincennes. Each district office organizes and manages highway construction, maintenance, traffic, development and testing for the specific needs of the communities it serves. Approximately 400 engineers and inspectors work out of these district offices and report daily to construction sites. For rapid response, INDOT also operates subdistrict offices and units that maintain the roads, and remove snow and debris. For a map that shows INDOT district boundaries, visit www.districtoffices.indot.in.gov.



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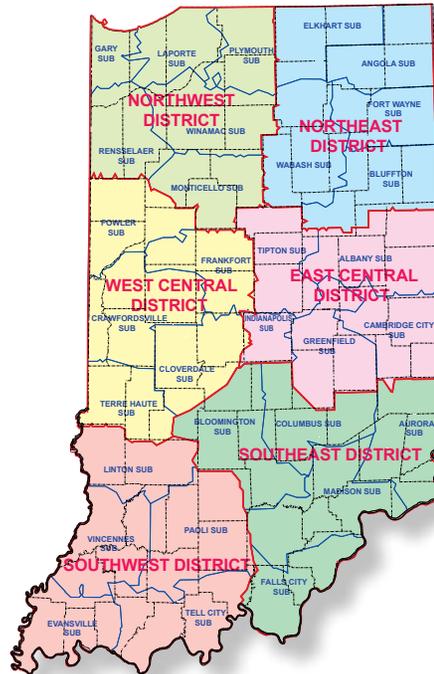
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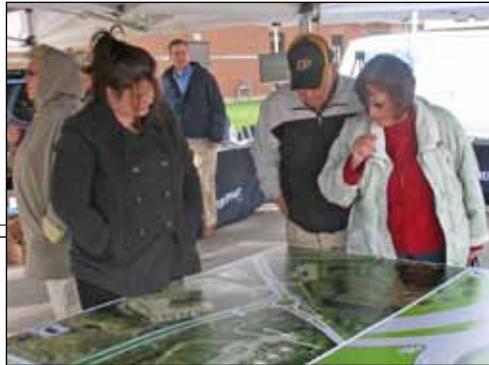
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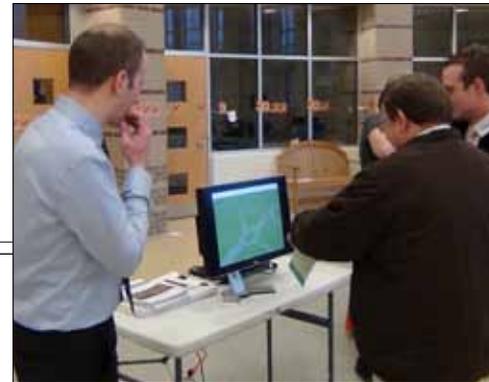
Crowds gather to view a ribbon-cutting during the I-69 Community Day in Daviess County.



A commuter reviews road closures for the South Split project.



Attendees view a map of the roundabout located on State Road 25.



Residents watch a video simulation of traffic navigating a roundabout on U.S. 31 Hamilton County.



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