

Public Involvement Plan

Introduction

The purpose of this Public Involvement Plan (PIP) is to outline the public engagement process and communication methods to be used in the VTrans2035 Update. The PIP was prepared by the consultant team led by Michael Baker Jr., Inc. with the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIPI) staff. It includes four major components:

1. The elements of the public outreach program, including the various meetings and deliverables;
2. The communications process between the consultants, sub-consultants, Commonwealth staff, and the general public;
3. A contact list for the study; and
4. The tentative public outreach schedule.

The PIP will be revised as needed during the plan effort and will be used to manage the overall public outreach and stakeholder involvement process.

Deliverables involving public participation include all public meeting materials and summaries as well as website content and will be reported to the staff and posted on the project website (www.VTrans.org). All public involvement efforts will be documented in a public involvement log and summarized for the VTrans2035 Update. *The goal of all public involvement efforts is to pro-actively engage stakeholders and citizens so that they can have ownership in the VTrans2035 Update plan, while providing meaningful ways for people to participate in the process.*

1. Elements

Baker will develop an on-going public issues log that tracks the input we receive as a result of the following public involvement process. This will ensure that the OIPI responds to all requests for information as the Plan is developed. The log will include a listing of all issues identified and how the study team responded to either the citizen or stakeholder input as part of this process. In addition to the log, there are four main activities included in the public involvement plan:

- Regional Forums;
- Public and Virtual Meeting Workshops;
- Web-site and Social Media and lastly;
- Other forms of engagement such as surveys, newsletters and media outreach.

The consultants will develop content for each of the public involvement activities and will participate in outreach activities as requested by OIPI.

1.1. Regional Forums

Purpose

The Consultant team will design and facilitate two interactive forums with local and regional government representatives. Designed to complement the public open house meetings described in Task 1.2, below, the forums will provide an opportunity for local staff and officials to share their perspectives and questions with the project team in more depth than the public meetings will allow. The recommended approach is to hold two forums with the same invitees in a single central location – one in the early project stages and one as a follow up at a later stage.

Format

The first forum, held shortly after the first round of public meetings described in task 1.2, will help the project team to interpret and elaborate upon the ideas and the perspectives of local and regional agencies regarding the overall priorities of the statewide plan, and to gather ideas for developing meaningful, effective performance measures. In order to better understand the different regional perspectives, it is anticipated that participants would work in small groups with others from their region, followed by a plenary discussion to compare the regional perspectives. Facilitated discussions/exercises would focus on two basic questions:

- What is missing or has changed since VTrans 2035? (to parallel the questions asked in the public meetings)
- What kinds of transportation performance measures are most relevant to your work and to the needs of the Commonwealth in the coming years?

At the second forum, which will be held before the second round of public meetings, the project team will present and “vet” the key concepts of the updated plan with forum participants. This activity will provide the project team with a way to test and fine-tune the important elements of the updated plan with local officials before rolling them out to the public at large. Local officials will appreciate the opportunity to have a proactive discussion about the proposed priorities and performance measures that could affect them, and they can provide the project team with helpful insights and support for the second round of public meetings and the subsequent plan adoption process.

Role in VTrans Update

The regional forums will enhance the value of the VTRANS update in three ways:

1. The perspectives and ideas shared at the regional forums will help OIPI to ensure that the statewide priorities established in VTRANS 2035 are still relevant and consistent with local and regional goals for multi-modal accessibility and community development.
2. The input and ideas generated at the forums can help OIPI to shape performance measures that are useful and relevant to local and regional interests as well as statewide goals.

3. The meetings themselves provide an opportunity for OIPI to establish and strengthen its long-term relationships with local and regional agencies. A strong base of communication sets the stage for more effective plan implementation in general, and can open the door for innovative partnerships, such as data-sharing agreements to help generate and monitor performance measures.

1.2. Public and Virtual Meeting Workshops

Purpose

Public meetings will be held to enable broad-based public input on the VTrans2035 Update. The purpose of this public outreach will be to gather early input on what may need to be updated in VTrans2035, and as the draft plan update is prepared, to gather input on the performance measures and updated components of VTrans2035.

Format

Round 1 Public Meetings: The VTrans2035 Update will participate in a series of open houses throughout Virginia during fall 2011 in conjunction with VDOT's public outreach to all 9 construction districts in the Commonwealth. These meetings will include static displays, handouts including a comment card, and informal discussions between the VTrans2035 Update team (specifically, Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIPI) staff and meeting attendees). Their purpose will be to present information about the goals and priority initiatives of the plan and solicit input on updates or omissions that should be addressed by the Plan update.

Round 2 Public Meetings: The VTrans2035 Update will host a series of open house meetings on the draft plan update in the spring or summer of 2012. The meetings will feature displays, handouts, comment forms, and potentially a PowerPoint presentation. An "open microphone" comment period will be included to afford participants the opportunity to make a brief statement, though the meetings will not constitute formal public hearings. Verbal and written comments will be compiled as part of the public outreach record. In efforts to garner as much public participation as possible, Round 2 of the public meetings will be advertised through newspapers, e-notes, on-line calendars and social media sites. Additionally, direct email notifications can be sent to those citizens and groups who provide an email address via sign-in sheets from the Listening Sessions, Regional Forums, Round One Public Meetings and www.VTRANS.org web-site.

Virtual Public Meeting: The Round 2 Public Meeting materials will also be provided on-line and will be presented at a designated time as a virtual public meeting. This webinar-style presentation will allow on-line participants to see and hear the same information as presented at the workshops and on-line comment forms will be provided to gather input. These comments will be compiled as part of the public outreach record.

Role in VTrans 2035 Update

The input from the Round 1 public meetings will be used to identify potential additions/modifications and new information to be considered in the update regarding the plan Goals and Priority Initiatives.

The input from the Round 2 public meetings and Virtual Public Meeting will be used in developing the draft and final documents for the VTrans2035 update.

1.3. Website and Social Media

Purpose

Baker will work with the OIPI and other agencies to provide information about the study for the www.VTRANS.org website. The VTrans2035 Update web-site will act as the main repository for project information and primary means of disseminating that information to the public. The web-site will provide background information about the plan, list announcements and the study's progress, answer common questions, inform the public about ways to participate, offer mechanisms to communicate directly with Plan partners, and act as an online library for plan documents.

Format

VDOT maintains the VTrans.org website and will have ultimate responsibility for website format. The Baker Team will provide pdf files suitable for posting for all public outreach materials. Baker also will provide input on formatting of comment pages or other interactive components of the website and support the development of these pages as practicable.

In addition to web-site materials, Baker will incorporate various social media outlets to enhance public participation via the internet. If desired, Baker will utilize our expertise in Social Media to develop a low-cost interactive site hosted on Facebook. Facebook allows for the ability to do low-cost internet outreach as the site provides the following interactive elements:

- The ability to host chat sessions following meetings
- Post meeting materials
- Post blogs about elements of the Plan
- Link to photo and video sharing sites, such as Flickr and YouTube, where people can post images of transportation concepts or issues in their local area.

Baker will program and maintain the social media project website for the duration of the project and update the sites to announce public workshops, host informal surveys about transportation, and host chat sessions and blogs as part of the VTrans2035 Update. Information received from the social media websites will be documented as part of the planning process. Interested citizens will be able to sign up for the social media sites at our workshops or over the internet.

Role in VTrans 2035 Update

The website will be a key means of two-way communication in the VTrans2035 Update. I will provide a portal for the public to review documents prepared in support of the plan development, public meeting materials, and draft and final VTrans2035 Update reports. The input provide through the website will be combined with input from the other public outreach tasks, and this information will be documented and posted on the website to provide a record of public input for the VTrans2035 Update.

1.4. Other Forms of Public Involvement

In addition to the regional forums, public meetings and internet-based engagement, other forms of public participation may also be utilized. The following types of engagement provide another means to attract public participation and may be used as part of the public participation efforts for the VTrans2035 update:

- *Articles and Newsletters*
Articles and newsletters will be used to “push” information about VTrans2035 Update to interested parties. Articles may be submitted for inclusion in outside newsletters such as those produced by MPOs and PDCs as well as planning schools and associations. In addition, information about VTrans2035 Update will appear in e-Notes. Approximately seven e-Notes will be distributed over the course of the study providing a brief summary of important information and directing the reader to the VTrans2035 web-site for more details.
- *Study Mailing List*
The VTrans2035 Update project mailing list will hold, at a minimum, the contact information for all project participants including meeting attendees and those who submit comments. The mailing list will be used to distribute electronic material and in keeping with a “green policy,” printed materials will be kept to a minimum. The list will be compiled from existing transportation agency mailing lists as well as those from other organizations and groups participating in the process. The mailing list will be continually updated over the course of the project as people request to join the list, participate in meetings or provide comments to the project team.
- *Conference Presentations*
Where appropriate, the VTrans2035 team will give presentations or set up display booths at transportation and planning related conferences throughout the commonwealth. This provides the chance to publicize and provide information about VTrans2035 Update, foster interest and encourage participation developing the Plan, and provide an opportunity to receive feedback from conference attendees. Attendees will be encouraged to pass along information about the Plan to other interested parties and promote greater participation.
- *Listening Sessions*
As identified by OIPI staff and consultant team, a series of 4-6 targeted Listening Sessions could be held with key business, industry and interest/advocacy groups in the Commonwealth. Examples may include the State Economic Development Partnership, NVBIA, etc. The goal would be to get focused input on issues important to these groups, within the general context of the same basic questions that are being asked of all participants (i.e. what’s missing/changed since VTrans 2035?). Interests that will be asked to participate could include:

- Real Estate Developers	- Motorist
- Trucking/Freight	- Transit/Rail
- Bike/Pedestrian	- Port
- Aviation	- Seniors
- Minorities	- Disabilities
- Tourism	- Environmentalism
- Federal Government	- Economic Development

2. Communications Process

The following is a general outline of the recommended communications process between the consultants, sub-consultants, Commonwealth staff, and the general public. Refinements to this communications process will be made as the project progresses and in response to specific recommendations and outcomes from the input meetings throughout the process.

Participants	Primary Type of Communication	Frequency
Sub Consultants & Prime Consultant	Meetings/Conference Calls	Weekly/As Needed
Consultant Team & OIPI Staff	Meetings/Conference Calls	Bi Weekly
OIPI Staff & MMWG	Meeting	Monthly
OIPI Staff/Consultants & Public	Public Input Meetings*	2 rounds over course of project
OIPI Staff/Consultants & CTB	CTB Meetings	9 over course of project
OIPI Staff/Consultants & Regional Stakeholders	Regional Forums	2 over course of project
OIPI Staff/Consultants & State/National Stakeholders**	Listening Sessions	As needed (estimate 4-6 needed)

* also includes website, newsletters and other means described above

** e.g. business, industry groups, advocacy groups

An important component of the communications process is providing information about VTrans2035 and the Update to organizations with a role in transportation planning throughout the state. Using materials that are developed for the public outreach process and the website, OIPI staff and members of the MMWG will seek opportunities to increase awareness of VTrans at meetings and conferences such as the following:

- CTB Public Meetings and Public Hearings
- Governor's Transportation Conference
- Virginia Association of Counties
- APA Virginia
- Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations

OIPI and the MMWG will coordinate efforts to make information about VTrans2035 and the Update available in a cost-effective manner at these and similar events, as funding and staff availability permit.

3. Contact List/Communication

Media communications are to be directed to the OIPI staff listed below. Communications with the Commonwealth Transportation Board will be directed by Deputy Secretary David Tyeryar with the support of the OIPI staff and the Consultant Team. Inter-agency communication within the Secretariat will be conducted by the Multimodal Advisory Working Group, comprised of representatives of each modal agency.

A contact list has been developed for internal communication purposes between consultants and Commonwealth of Virginia staff. The contact list will be included in the work plan for VTrans2035 Update. The OIPI contacts for purposes of public communication are as follows:

Dironna Belton, 804-786-0448, dironna.belton@governor.virginia.gov

4. Schedule

The anticipated schedule is shown below. The public involvement process began in October of 2011, in conjunction with the VDOT statewide public meetings.

