

**NORTH COUNTY CORRIDOR
EXPRESSWAY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY**

ITEM: 3a

SUBJECT:

Community Involvement Plan for the North County Corridor Project

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Information Only

FISCAL IMPACT:

None

DISCUSSION:

The attached Community Involvement Plan for the North County Corridor Project sets out to describe the efforts needed to ensure that community and agency input is timely, coordinated and incorporated into the environmental document. Realizing that regional stakeholders, the public, Caltrans and the NCC Team must collaboratively work to meet the transportation needs of the region, the Plan includes ample opportunities for the public to become aware of and understand the Project and its alternatives and to identify strategies for avoidance, minimization, mitigation, and enhancement measures related to possible environmental impacts. This Plan is inclusive of public involvement activities for the environmental phase, approximately between summer of 2010 and spring of 2014.

The Plan is also intended to be dynamic and will evolve as the project evolves.

Community Involvement Plan for the North County Corridor Project

*Project Approval/Environmental Documentation (PA&ED)
(Caltrans Project #10-0S800)*

October 14, 2010

Table of Contents

Background and Purpose..... 3

Guiding Principles..... 3

Participant Groups and Interested Parties..... 5

Key Messages..... 9

Methods..... 10

Tools..... 12

Schedule..... 14

Background and Purpose

The North County Corridor Transportation Expressway Authority (NCCTEA) — comprised of Stanislaus County, and the Cities of Modesto, Oakdale, Riverbank and ex officio members— is responsible for developing an environmental document for the North County Corridor Project. Federal and State regulations require participation throughout the environmental documentation process by stakeholders and residents that may be affected by the project.

The Federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) and its predecessor, the Federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act, emphasized the role of public participation in the transportation decision-making process. More recently, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) encourages collaboration with stakeholders as well. Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice (1994) and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, in addition to other federal laws and regulations, also require public involvement, particularly the underrepresented, in transportation decision-making.

The purpose of this Community Involvement Plan is to describe a set of efforts to engage the public and targeted stakeholders in reviewing the Project to ensure that community and agency input is timely, coordinated and incorporated into the environmental document. The NCCTEA, Caltrans, regional stakeholders, and the public will collaborate to build infrastructure that meets the transportation needs of the North Stanislaus County region. The Plan includes ample opportunities for the public to become aware of and understand the Project and its alternatives and to identify strategies for avoidance, minimization, mitigation, and enhancement measures related to possible environmental impacts. This Plan is inclusive of public involvement activities for the environmental phase, approximately between summer of 2010 and spring of 2014.

Lastly, this Community Involvement Plan for the North County Corridor Project is designed to be a fluid, dynamic guide for community involvement—a guide that is both proactive and reactive, a guide that will be responsive to community interests and concerns throughout the course of the project.

Guiding Principles

This plan is based on Caltrans Guidance¹ and a number of key principles for engaging the public, stakeholders and interest groups in understanding the technical information related to project design, engineering, construction and environmental impacts and mitigation options. The guiding principles are the following:

¹ *Standard Environmental Reference (SER) – Environmental Handbook Vol. 1, Chap. 6*
Standard Environmental Reference (SER) – Environmental Handbook Vol. 1, Chap. 37
Project Development Procedures Manual (PDPM), Chapter 10, Sections 3 & 4; Chapters 11 & 22, All

- ✓ **Inclusive Process.** The general public and stakeholders will be given an opportunity to provide input on alternative solutions. The public will be provided with pertinent information about the project and project alternatives. Through continued interaction with the community, Caltrans will build community awareness and, more importantly, assure that members of the public have the opportunity to express their views regarding the project and the alternatives as part of the environmental evaluation process for the North County Corridor project.
- ✓ **Reach.** The Community Involvement Plan describes a range of activities that allow for varying levels of participation, depending on a person's level of interest.
- ✓ **Participant Satisfaction.** Stakeholders and members of the public who take the time and energy to participate should feel that their perspectives and participation are valued.
- ✓ **Maintaining Contact.** Contact with the community throughout the transportation decision-making process is vital. This contact will begin at the early part of the environmental phase, through alternatives development, analysis, and the alternative selection process.
- ✓ **Use of a Variety of Community Involvement Techniques.** A variety of techniques will be used to identify the general public, business, community and neighborhood groups, and other concerned parties to maximize opportunities for input.
- ✓ **Diversity.** Concerted efforts will be made to include individuals with varying interests, such as minority and low-income residents, senior citizens, business groups, auto and transit users, pedestrians, bicyclists, freight shippers, environmental groups, as well as local geographically-based parties and interests.
- ✓ **Education.** The community involvement program will assist in educating the community about the environmental process as well as about the project's complexity and the variety of issues and needs associated with the statewide, local and regional transportation system.
- ✓ **Accessibility.** Every effort will be made to ensure that anyone who wants to participate in the community involvement process has ample opportunities to access project information and provide his or her comments.

Participant Groups and Interested Parties

Many stakeholders will be affected by the North County Corridor Project. NCCTEA has developed, and continues to refine, a comprehensive list of parties who may be interested in the project. This list includes local, regional, State and Federal agencies and organizations, local businesses, and community and environmental groups.

General Public and Property Owners

Input will be solicited from property owners and from a wide variety of individuals and organizations that have relationships with the project based on direct impact, interest, or geographic proximity. Members of the general public will be invited to share comments and engage in discussions about the project.

Stakeholder Groups

Many agencies, businesses, residential groups and elected officials are directly interested in the project. These include, but are not limited to, the following groups:

Business/Community Groups (Private Sector)

- Airports, e.g. Hawke Airport
- American Automobile Association
- Area Merchants
- Association of General Contractors (AGC)
- Black Chamber of Commerce
- Building Industry Association
- California Trucking Association/Other Trucking Associations
- California League of Food Processors
- California Poultry Federation
- Central Labor Council of Stanislaus County AFL-CIO
- Central Valley Association of Realtors/CVAR- Modesto Council
- Crossroads Shopping Center
- Friends of the Tuolumne River
- Farmland Working Group

- Gallo Center for the Arts
- Great Valley Center
- Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Land Developers
- Manufacturers Council of the Central Valley
- Modesto Chamber of Commerce
- Native American Groups (Bureau of Indian Affairs, Central California Indian Tribal Council, Native American Heritage Commission, North Valley Yokuts, Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation, Tule River Indian Tribe, and others)
- Oakdale Chamber of Commerce
- O'Brien's Shopping Center in Riverbank
- Riverbank Chamber of Commerce
- Salida Civic Association
- Save Our Farming Legacy
- Service Clubs (Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, AAUW, League of Women Voters, and others)
- Sierra Club, Yokuts Group
- Stanislaus Audubon Society
- Stanislaus County Chamber of Commerce
- Stanislaus County Farm Bureau
- Stanislaus County Historical Society
- The Alliance

Regulatory and Permitting Agencies

Several federal, state and local agencies have compliance, permitting and regulatory responsibilities related to transportation planning and decision-making regarding the North County Corridor Project. These include:

- California Air Resources Board
- California Department of Fish and Game

- California Department of Transportation
- California Department of Water Resources
- California Public Utilities Commission
- California Transportation Commission
- Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Central Valley Flood Protection Board
- National Resources Conservation Service
- State Historic Preservation Office
- San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District
- San Joaquin Valley Air District, Northern Region
- State Water Resources Control Board
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Department of the Interior
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Elected Officials and Public Agencies

Elected officials and public agencies must be actively engaged and kept informed of project activities so they can be responsive to constituents. This target group includes:

- California Highway Patrol, Modesto Area
- Office of Emergency Services
- Stanislaus Regional Transit (StaRT)
- Schools and School Districts
 - Escalon Unified School District
 - Modesto Unified School District
 - Oakdale Unified School District
 - Riverbank Unified School District
 - Salida Union School District

City of Modesto

- Modesto City Council
- Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Planning Commission
- City Manager's Office
- Library
- Public Works Department
- Planning Department
- Parks and Recreation
- Police and Fire
- Redevelopment Agency
- Historic Preservation Commission
- Modesto Area Express

City of Oakdale

- Oakdale City Council
- Planning Commission
- City Manager's Office
- Library
- Public Works Department
- Planning Department
- Redevelopment Agency
- Parks and Recreation
- Police and Fire
- Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Historic Preservation Commission

City of Riverbank

- Riverbank City Council
- Planning Commission
- City Manager's Office
- Public Works Department
- Planning Department
- Parks and Recreation
- Police and Fire
- Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Downtown Revitalization Commission
- Redevelopment Agency
- Riverbank/Oakdale Transit Authority
- Historic Preservation Commission

Salida Community

- Salida Municipal Advisory Council
- Salida Fire Protection District
- Salida Sanitary District
- Nick W. Blom Regional Branch Library

City of Escalon

- Escalon City Council
- City Manager's Office
- Parks and Recreation
- Planning Department
- Police and Fire
- Public Works Department

County of Stanislaus

- Agricultural Commissioner

- Board of Supervisors
- Chief Executive Officer
- County Counsel
- Department of Environmental Resources
- Municipal Advisory Councils (MAC)
- Office of Emergency Services
- Planning Commission
- Planning Department
- Public Works Department
- Sheriff and Fire
- Stanislaus County Library
- Stanislaus County Superior Court

Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO)

Stanislaus Council of Governments (StanCOG)

Utilities

- American Telephone & Telegraph (AT&T)
- Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA)
- California Public Utilities Commission
- Modesto Irrigation District
- Oakdale Irrigation District
- PacBell
- Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E)
- San Francisco Public Utilities Commission
- South San Joaquin Irrigation District
- Cable television companies

Special Interests

- Burlington, Northern, and Santa Fe Railroad (BNSF)
- Union Pacific Railroad/Southern Pacific Railroad (UPRR/SPRR)
- Sierra Railroad
- Kaiser Permanente
- American Medical Response
- Con Agra (California Regional Water Quality Control Board)
- U.S. Army Munitions Plant

KEY MESSAGES

1. All three alternatives must meet the purpose and need for the project, which includes interregional connectivity, reducing congestion and commute times, and improving traffic operations and safety.
2. The set of guiding principles will provide an over-arching vision for the community involvement process. All decisions made about the process will be discussed within this context.
3. The NCCTEA/Caltrans process is fair and reasonable.
4. NCCTEA has the ability and responsibility to improve the transportation system of the Stanislaus North County region.
5. The project team is committed to ensuring that the public and stakeholders fully understand the project and have ample opportunity for input into the decision-making process.
6. The community involvement process is designed to ensure that interested parties remain updated on the process and have an opportunity to provide input into the process of selecting alternative solutions.

METHODS

The following activities will be conducted to reach both identified groups and broad audiences. A variety of methods will help to address the various levels of project interest and knowledge, and are sensitive to the preferred communication and participation styles of each identified group.

Project team Meetings

Staff members from Caltrans, NCCTEA, StanCOG, Stanislaus County and the Cities of Modesto, Oakdale and Riverbank, and the project team representatives will convene regularly in monthly meetings to review project issues and schedule and to provide guidance on its implementation.

Mailing List

The project team will develop and maintain an up-to-date database of names and contact information for individuals and organizations interested in the project. This list will be updated and will be used to deliver information related to public meetings, public hearings, and other key milestones and project elements.

Stakeholder Meetings/Targeted Outreach

A variety of meetings will be held to reach the variety of stakeholders affected by this project. The objective of these meetings will vary depending on the audience and will range from one-way communication of project status updates to two-way communication of ideas, concerns and recommendations. The purpose of these meetings will be clearly communicated to help establish expectations from identified groups at each meeting. These different forums, as described below, will provide an opportunity for the project team to periodically consult with key project partners and constituents. Ongoing contact with stakeholder groups helps to build consensus and encourages broader community support through informed stakeholder outreach efforts. Targeted meetings will include, but are not limited to, the following: 1) Public Meetings/Open Houses/Hearings, 2) NCCTEA Technical Advisory Committee meetings, 3) Community Briefings, 4) Community Focus Groups, 5) One-on-One Conversations, and 6) Speakers Bureau.

Public Meetings/Open Houses

Formal project public meetings in an open house format will be held early in the project scoping phase and later, during the public comment period following release of the draft environmental document. The target audience will be very broad and will include the general public and stakeholders as identified in this document. As required by the environmental process, public meetings will be held prior to critical decision points as a mechanism to gather community comments and positions from all interested parties for public record and input

into decisions. Notification to the public will be through direct mail to parties on the mailing list, posting to the NCCTEA website, notices published in newspapers, news releases to mainstream and alternative media outlets, and other methods as opportunities arise. All notices will follow the standard Caltrans public notice format and be published in a section of general readership in *The Modesto Bee*, *Oakdale Leader*, *Riverbank News* and Spanish-language newspapers, e.g., *Bilingual Weekly*, *Latino Times* and/or *La Vida*. Notices will also be shared on the project website, www.dot.ca.gov/dist10/environmental/projects/northcounty/index.html. Notices will be published early, providing enough time between notices and meetings for members of the public to prepare comments for submission to the NCCTEA. During the period, the project team will accept questions and provide clarification. A translator will be provided for those languages commonly used in affected neighborhoods. An open house format will be used for the formal public meeting events. Written comments will be encouraged, and a public stenographer will be available for those who prefer to dictate their comments. A brief presentation may also be considered.

Technical Advisory Committee

A Technical Advisory Committee comprised of representatives from StanCOG, Stanislaus County, and the cities of Modesto, Oakdale and Riverbank will meet monthly. Members of the community are encouraged to attend those meetings and provide input. Agendas are posted at www.ca.stanislaus.ca.us/publicworks.

Community Briefings

A representative(s) of the project team will be available to provide quarterly briefings to local elected bodies, if desired.

Community Focus Groups

Community Focus Groups will involve two-way communication, including dissemination of project-specific information by the project team and active feedback from participants. The groups that may be involved include, but are not limited to, small business, civic and community groups and will involve issue-focused communication related to the specific civic, community or business group being addressed.

One-on-One Conversations

One-on-one interviews will be conducted, as requested, with interested residents, property owners, and businesses. These will be the result of specific requests.

Speakers Bureau

Requests for speakers will be accommodated.

Community Participation Report

A report of community outreach activities will be developed and maintained throughout the life of the project. A detailed record of each meeting will be created that will include a one-page summary of the meeting, followed by copies of boards, meeting notices, correspondence, comments received and presentation materials, all in accordance with Caltrans' format. After each public meeting or outreach event, a bound report will be produced that describes the purpose of the meeting, describes the public notifications, summarizes essential details (purpose, date, time, location, etc.), lists attendees, documents all comments, and logs communications. This will serve as a written record and documentation of public input for the Community Impact Report and environmental process.

Tools

Fact Sheet and Public Information Materials

Several types of public information materials will be developed to communicate key messages according to the approved schedule and timeline. The project team anticipates that each of the following will be developed as needed:

Fact Sheet: A sheet describing the project's purpose and need, as well as key design parameters and environmental studies will be prepared based on Caltrans/NCCTEA's initial work. To ensure the public is informed and aware that progress is being made, this fact sheet and other display materials will be available for use with multiple audiences and will be updated as status changes or key milestones are achieved.

Announcements/Flyers: Jumbo postcards or flyers will be used to invite audiences to public meetings and will be prepared and distributed by direct mail to the mailing list or a portion of the mailing list as appropriate, and posted to the project website. Formal public meetings will be noticed in *The Modesto Bee*, *Oakdale Leader*, *Riverbank News*, and in Spanish-language newspapers, e.g., *Bilingual Weekly*, *Latino Times* and/or *La Vida*. News releases will be prepared and sent to an extensive list of mainstream and alternative print and broadcast media in the region. Other methods may be used to notice members of the public, e.g., social media and posters in community gathering places.

Outreach Focus Groups: Phone calls will be made to representatives of community groups to ensure invitations were received.

Display Boards: Display boards will be created for public meetings and outreach events to adequately illustrate pertinent project information and to facilitate gathering input from meeting participants.

Frequently Asked Questions: A document of Frequently Asked Questions will be developed and distributed to the project team members at pertinent intervals to ensure complete, consistent information is supplied to members of the public.

Project Website

Caltrans will maintain information about the North County Corridor Project on its website. Information to be provided for posting on the project website will include such elements as background, project purpose and description, reference documents, meeting announcements, meeting summaries, conceptual designs, maps and other project-related material. It may also include FAQs, fact sheets, news releases, brochures, newsletters, announcements and flyers. The website might also be used to clarify misinformation circulating in the general public or among stakeholders. The project website is at www.dot.ca.gov/dist10/environmental/projects/northcounty/index.html.

Media Strategies

Media strategies will inform the public about project status through print and electronic media outlets, allowing Caltrans to proactively frame the message. Media coverage will also assist with generating public interest and provides the project team a mechanism for disseminating information. Media outreach will be coordinated for the meetings targeted to the general public. The project team will provide the following materials:

News Releases: News releases will be developed to share information on the project's goals and objectives, community benefits, and updates on major milestones and project status. News stories will be provided to local media to generate stories from news releases.

Media Meetings: As needed or requested, project team representatives will meet with reporters and/or the editorial boards of the various local media outlets to provide background information to help with the coverage of the project and its development activities.

News Kits: News kits will be developed and updated as needed to inform the news media about the environmental process, project status, major schedule milestones, and other information required to assist the media in preparing a message that is consistent with the project.

Social Media: Use of social media techniques will be considered and applied, if deemed appropriate by the project team.

Schedule

Start conceptual engineering and environmental studies.	In Progress
Solicit initial public input and comments.	Fall 2010
Prepare environmental documents.	Winter 2011 to Summer 2012
Circulate the draft environmental documents.	Fall 2012
Solicit public comments and hold Public Information Meetings on the draft environmental documents.	Fall 2012 to early 2013
Respond to comments and prepare the final environmental document.	Spring 2014
Secure approval of final environmental document.	Spring 2014