

# Public Involvement Plan

MnDOT I-90 Bridges and Approach Roadways Preliminary and Detail Design in Austin, MN

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Prepared by:



SRF No. 13678

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# Introduction

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## **Purpose of the public involvement plan**

This public involvement plan outlines the tasks associated with public involvement that are recommended for this project.

The intent of public involvement for this project is to bring together project partners to inform, educate, and involve area stakeholders - including landowners, businesses, other associated stakeholders, and the public regarding the proposed bridge replacement and alternative analysis for I-90 in Austin, MN.

A key goal is to effectively engage under-represented community members.

Public involvement is a dynamic process; as such, this plan is considered a living document and will be updated to reflect input received from project partners, stakeholders and the public as the project progresses.

## **Project background and summary**

I-90 is an important national east-west transportation facility that connects many population centers in the U.S. In the Austin area, I-90 was built in the 1950s, and the structures are at the end of their useful design life. The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) has completed significant planning work in coordination with the City of Austin for the replacement of these structures. This planning work included the scoping phase of the overall corridor plan that identified preferred alternatives at each interchange, preliminary staging analysis, and a visual quality manual. A certain amount of public engagement was done during the scoping phase. The current project is the next phase of the corridor implementation plan, which includes preliminary and final design.

With any large infrastructure project, managing change, relationships, and public expectations and providing adequate opportunities for feedback is crucial to the political and public perception and success of the project. Engagement with residents, local agencies and the traveling public provides insights into local priorities and needs that ultimately lead to refinements in the final recommendation of project alternatives.



Figure 1: Project extent

## **Community understanding**

I-90 and its approach roadways serve a variety of user types including residents, commuters, transit riders, travelers, and freight.

The project study area is within the city of Austin.

The city of Austin has a population of approximately 24,718 and 2.9 persons per household. The demographics for the city of Austin are 92.6 percent White, 2.22 percent Asian, and 1.81 percent African American. Hispanic or Latino/a populations of any race are 15.4 percent of the population.

Key community considerations for this project include:

- Potential impacts to properties from proposed bridge replacement.
- Up-to-date information and addressing community concerns.
- Access and detour impacts during construction.
- Coordinate with other I-90 or approach roadway projects and nearby construction project outreach.

## **Public Involvement strategy**

### **Goals**

- Effectively engage under-represented community members.
- All communications are clear and consistent (look/feel, how the project is referenced, information being shared, etc.).
- Community expectations are established appropriately (e.g. type of work, phases, limits, resources for staying in touch).
- Community members are provided opportunities to identify issues and comment on proposed alternatives.
- Provide clear communications about engagement opportunities to identified stakeholders.

### **Objectives**

- There is an easily recognizable and consistent entity, point of contact and resource for those who want and need updates about this project (As project lead, MnDOT is the recognizable entity for all major communications).
- Materials and messaging are shared by local communities, local public/private organizations, and businesses.
- Those who are participating in the project's planning process feel informed and heard.

## Tasks

SRF proposes the following tasks to achieve authentic and robust engagement:

- Develop a Public Involvement Plan.
- Identify the preferred level of involvement for this project.
- Conduct stakeholder identification, conflict identification and conflict mapping exercises with select members of the PMT.
- Conduct targeted engagement with BIPOC, Immigrant, Latino/a community.
- Host three open houses (or virtual meetings if dictated by COVID requirements): one in July 2021, a second in Spring/Summer 2022, and a final open house during final design. Conduct targeted outreach and community door-knocking to understand resident preferences. Engagement opportunities will reflect the latest COVID-19 guidelines and will be virtual or distanced when appropriate.
- Work with local contacts established in the community and partner with them to expand MnDOT's communications network and ability to reach underrepresented groups. These contacts will be referred to as Multicultural Local Outreach Liaisons.
- Conduct a post-engagement evaluation and prepare timely engagement summaries for all outreach activities.

## Key messaging areas

This project will communicate with the public on the following topics:

- Project purpose and need.
- Project processes (e.g., who makes the decisions, where public input comes in.), status and schedules (e.g., Right-of-Way acquisition, design and construction).
- Design goals and objectives.
- Design alternatives.
- Assessments from local governments.
- Final design decision.
- Construction staging alternatives

## Potential stakeholders and key populations

The following list of stakeholders are identified as possible community partners/stakeholders to involve. This list will expand as relationships are built and networks are leveraged.

Directly Impacted	Indirectly Impacted	Agency Partners
Property owners adjacent to I-90 and commuters	Area residents (City of Austin) Latino Organizations Congregations	Mower County
Residents who live adjacent to the potential project area.	Chamber of Commerce	City of Austin Vision2020 Group
Property owners whose land may be purchased.	Trucking and freight industry	MnDOT
	Business owners who use the route (City of Austin and Mower businesses)	Police/Fire/EMT
	Pedestrians/Bicyclists	Metro Transit
	Students and faculty/staff at Riverland Community College	FHWA
	Employees who use routes through the project area	Transit Services (Greyhound, Palmer Bus, SMART)
	MN DNR (Cedar River Impacts)	Austin ISD
	Hormel	Private and Public Utilities
		Representative Jim Hagedorn
		Councilmember Oballa
		Mayor Steve King

## Issues/Considerations

The project team identified the following issues and considerations at the outset of the project:

- Age of the existing structures
- Pedestrian and bicycle access across I-90
- Operational issues due to offset of ramps at 4<sup>th</sup> Street
- The need for additional public outreach
- A need to not induce flood stage increase on the Cedar River
- The need to secure project funding.
- Winter safety on bridges (ice/freezing).
- Maintaining access during construction
- Possibility of needing a corridor wide noise study



# Agency involvement approach

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This section outlines the approach for engagement with key agency stakeholders during the project.

## Project Management Team

The Project Management Team (PMT) is the decision-making body for the project. PMT meetings will be held monthly beginning in March 2021. PMT members will participate in public and business meetings as needed. Consultants will prepare agendas and meeting minutes, as well as any exhibits or additional meeting materials required.

The PMT will consist of internal stakeholders from:

- City of Austin
- Mower County
- MnDOT
- Consultant team (SRF and consultant partners, if needed)
- Key agency representatives may be invited as needed

## Stakeholder and agency coordination

Effective public involvement necessitates coordination with a wide variety of agency stakeholders, including city and county officials. The project will hold periodic meetings with internal stakeholders to assist in identifying tailored approaches for engaging with targeted audiences.

The project will meet periodically with internal stakeholders from:

- MnDOT
- Consultant team (SRF)
- Mower County
- City of Austin
- FHWA
- MnDNR
- Transit Authorities
- Emergency Service Providers

# Information sharing approach

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## 1. Public communication

To ensure impactful, effective, and timely communication, the team will utilize a combination of existing communication tools available to MnDOT, as well as the city of Austin and project partners. Communications tools will include:

- Project website (MnDOT)
  - Project updates, feedback opportunities, project contacts and other information for the public. Throughout the project, stakeholders will be directed to use the website to get the latest information.
- GovDelivery list
  - Use MnDOT GovDelivery to provide engagement opportunities and road-specific e-mail/wireless alerts. This will be a primary tool for pro-actively communicating directly to residents, city partners and other stakeholders. Project staff during engagement events will encourage stakeholders to sign up for email updates or visit the MnDOT project website to enroll in project updates.
- Print/traditional communications
  - Share information on major project developments and public input opportunities. Depending on the topic of discussion and its importance, such as public meetings, mailers can be sent to affected residents and/or businesses within 0.5-mile radius of project study area.
- Social media
  - Facebook and Twitter will provide effective and affordable platforms for MnDOT, consultant team and project partners to provide project updates, inform stakeholders of upcoming engagement events. Social media activity could include advertisements. The Multicultural Local Outreach Liaisons will help promote these social media posts and advertisements through their connected agencies and groups.
- Engagement activities
  - Open houses (3): The project will host three public open houses, one in July 2021, a second in Spring/Summer 2022, and a final open house during final design. All Open Houses will be held in person at an accessible and central community space. Open house events provide residents an opportunity to identify issues, discuss details with project team members and stay informed regarding next steps for upcoming projects along I-90.

In advance of all three open houses, share social media posts advertising the open houses. Additionally, the project prepared a traditional press release that MnDOT

communications will share with local media outlets to publicize these public input opportunities.

- o Stakeholder Outreach (7): Stakeholder outreach is an effective way to meet with residents in public spaces. The seven engagement events will be in high-traffic areas that are accessible and near the project area.
- o Continue to work with Multicultural Local Outreach Liaisons established in the community to identify underrepresented groups and the best ways to ensure they are represented in engagement activities.

#### Other resources

The consultant team will work with MnDOT communications staff to provide project updates and information to agency partners.

It is assumed that MnDOT communications staff distribute information and work with media outlets.

- Agency partner websites
  - o MnDOT - <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/metro/projects.html>
  - o City of Austin - <http://www.ci.austin.mn.us/>
  - o Mower County - <https://www.co.mower.mn.us/>
- Social media
  - o City and agency social media accounts should be considered primary tools, as their followers are the stakeholders the project is aiming to communicate with.
    - MnDOT Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/mndot>
    - MnDNR Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/MinnesotaDNR>
    - City of Austin Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/cityofaustinmn/>
    - Mower County Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/MowerCountyGovernment/>

## Local media

The project team (MnDOT) will coordinate with local media outlets to inform the public about upcoming events and provide other important project information and timelines. MnDOT and the consultant team will share a traditional press release with local media prior to each large public event.

<b>Outlet</b>	<b>Type</b>
<b>Austin Daily Herald</b>	Newsletter/Website
<b>Southern MN News</b>	Newsletter/Website
<b>Austin Area Chamber of Commerce</b>	Newsletter/Website
<b>KAAL, KTTC</b>	Regional Television/Radio
<b>Riverland Community College News</b>	Newspaper/Website

# Public outreach approach

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## Outreach tools and methodology

This section provides a description of the tools to be used to specifically to inform, consult and/or involve the public during this project. Tools will be tailored to ensure that a wide variety of community members and stakeholders are able to connect with the project planning process.

### 1. Community open houses

It is recommended that the project host three public open house meetings. These public meetings are designed to allow the community to identify issues, discuss project materials with project team members and learn about next steps.

#### *Open house #1*

The first open house was held in-person in July 2021, after the 4<sup>th</sup> Street interchange concepts were developed. The content was available on the project website with the ability for community members to leave feedback. An accompanying video will be available on the Project Website. There were two full rounds of social media outreach to encourage participation.

The open house served as an opportunity to discuss issues, goals, and objectives with residents as well as obtain feedback on the proposed interchange design from attendees. Feedback received during open house engagement activities will help confirm criteria for evaluation. The open house was reviewed and refined by the PMT, the consultant team, and MnDOT to ensure accessibility and that alternative formats were available to the public.

Final design will be available on the project website for Municipal Consent in Spring 2022.

#### *Open house #2*

The second open house will be held in Spring/Summer 2022. The purpose is to continue the discussion on refined construction staging alternatives, the visual quality process and noise wall solicitation process, if needed. The open house will leverage a variety of graphics and visualizations to share project updates and include a comment box to obtain general feedback or questions from attendees.

#### *Open house #3*

The final open house will be held during final design. The purpose is to inform the public regarding final recommended project alternatives. The open house will leverage a variety of graphics and visualizations to share final project updates.

## **2. Stakeholder outreach**

Stakeholder outreach will be held beginning at the outset of the project and are designed to meet residents identified as key users of the project corridor. Populations identified for stakeholder outreach are typically populations not represented at traditional open house settings. These stakeholders will share more about project updates and share feedback about their experiences traveling around the corridor. Potential populations to include are identified in the table below. This is a living list and is meant to be added to as engagement is underway and the project team has a better understanding of community goals.

<b>Potential Stakeholder Populations</b>
<b>Minority Affairs – Riverland Community College</b>
<b>Minority-owned businesses</b>
<b>Families with young children</b>
<b>Pedestrian and bicycle community</b>
<b>Transit riders</b>
<b>Hormel plant employees</b>
<b>Cedar Valley Services</b>
<b>Emergency Services</b>

## Detailed timeline – subject to change

PHASE 1 – Initial Analysis of Alternatives at 4th Street				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prepare draft messaging for social and traditional media</li> <li>2. Identify the needs and concerns</li> </ol>				
Timeframe	Action/Event	Purpose and Outcome	Target Audience	Responsible Party
March 5 <sup>th</sup> , 2021	Project kick-off meeting	Introduce project Define goals and objectives	Internal, PMT	All
Late-March, 2021	Identify stakeholder group #1 and schedule meeting time and location	Select groups underrepresented in traditional engagement	Internal	Consultant
Late-March, 2021	Schedule virtual open house	Meeting time suggested when many can attend	Internal, PMT	Consultant
Late-March, 2021	Begin advertising open house. Social Media Blast #1	Notify the public of the upcoming open house	Residents, commuters, other roadway users	Consultant Team, PMT
Late-March, 2021	Reach out to stakeholder #1 group	Ensure group has adequate time to prepare and block time to attend	Internal	Consultant Team
Mid-April 2021	PMT #1	4th Street Concepts	PMT, Internal	All
Mid-May, 2021	Stakeholder outreach #1	Understand goals and initial concerns of the project area	Stakeholder group TBD	Consultant Team
May 2021	PMT #2	Review PIP, Conduct Interest/Influence exercise	Consultant	Consultant, MnDOT

June 2021	PMT #3	Traffic management, Bridge pre-design, Noise	Consultant	Consultant, MnDOT
June 2021	Schedule meeting time and location for Stakeholder #2	Select groups underrepresented in traditional engagement	Internal	Consultant
July 2021	Stakeholder outreach #2	Understand goals and initial concerns of the project area	Stakeholder group	Consultant Team
July 2021	PMT #4	Review of design, public engagement, traffic management, bridge design, and noise	Consultant	Consultant, MnDOT
July 2021	Open house #1	Introduce project and inform public of process and how to stay involved	Residents, commuters, other roadway users	Consultant team, PMT
July 2021	Schedule meeting time and location for Stakeholder #3	Select groups underrepresented in traditional engagement	Internal	Consultant
August 2021	Stakeholder outreach #3	Understand goals and initial concerns of the project area	Stakeholder group	Consultant Team
August 2021	PMT #5	Public engagement update, design update, noise update	Consultant	Consultant, MnDOT
August 2021	Schedule meeting time and location for Stakeholder #4	Select groups underrepresented in traditional engagement	Internal	Consultant



September 2021	Stakeholder outreach #4	Understand goals and initial concerns of the project area	Stakeholder group	Consultant Team
August 2021	Summarize engagement from phase 1	Understand community feedback so comments can be incorporated into project elements	PMT	Consultant Team
November 2021	PMT #6	Design updates, construction staging and risk management	Consultant	Consultant, MnDOT
November 2021	Schedule meeting time and location for Stakeholder #5	Select groups underrepresented in traditional engagement	Internal	Consultant
December 2021	Stakeholder outreach #5	Understand goals and initial concerns of the project area	Stakeholder group	Consultant Team
January 2022	PMT #7	Project and design updates	Internal	Internal, PMT
February 2022	Update project website with public engagement feedback	Keep interested parties informed of public comments and engagement events	General public, key stakeholders	Consultant Team
March 2022	Provide final alternative for Municipal Consent	Provide a final chance for the public to give feedback on the recommended alternative	General public, key stakeholders	Consultant Team
April 2022	Summarize Municipal Consent Feedback	Keep interested parties informed of public comments and engagement events	General public, key stakeholders	Consultant Team

Phase 1 Important Dates		
Strategy	Date	Status
Public communication / involvement plan finalized	End of March, 2021	Working draft developed
Stakeholder Meeting #1	May 2021	Feedback on draft alternatives
Open House #1	July 2021	Public feedback on draft alternatives
Stakeholder Meeting #2	July 2021	Review of public feedback and recommended alternative
Stakeholder Meeting #3	August 2021	Review of concept design recommendations
Stakeholder Meeting #4	September 2021	Review of concept design status and stakeholder input
Stakeholder Meeting #5	December 2021	Review of concept design status and stakeholder input
Municipal Consent	Spring 2022	Provide final design alternative for Municipal Consent.

PHASE 2 – Construction Staging and Noise Analysis

1. Feedback on identified staging alternatives and noise solicitation process
2. Inform and update community and leaders

Timeframe	Strategy	Purpose and Outcome	Target Audience	Responsible Party
Late-April, 2022	Identify location for open house #2. Schedule open house	Meeting time suggested when many can attend	Internal, PMT	Consultant
Early-May, 2022	Identify stakeholder group #6 and schedule meeting time and location	Select groups underrepresented in traditional engagement	Internal	Consultant
Mid-May, 2022	Begin advertising open house. Social media blast #2	Notify the public of the upcoming open house	Residents, commuters, other roadway users	Consultant Team, PMT
Mid- May, 2022	Reach out to stakeholder #6 group	Ensure group has adequate time to prepare and block time to attend	Internal	Consultant Team
Late-May, 2022	Stakeholder outreach #6	Understand goals and concerns of the project area	Stakeholder group TBD	Consultant Team
Late-May, 2022	Open house #2	Project update and design element update	Residents, commuters, other roadway users	Consultant team, PMT

Early-July, 2022	Identify stakeholder group #7 and schedule meeting time and location	Select groups underrepresented in traditional engagement	Internal	Consultant
Mid- July, 2022	Reach out to stakeholder #7 group	Ensure group has adequate time to prepare and block time to attend	Internal	Consultant Team
Late-August, 2022	Stakeholder outreach #7	Understand goals and concerns of the project area	Stakeholder group TBD	Consultant Team
Early-October, 2022	Summarize engagement from Phase 1	Understand community feedback so comments can be incorporated into project elements	PMT	Consultant Team
Mid-October, 2022	Update project website with public engagement feedback	Keep interested parties informed of public comments and engagement events	General public, key stakeholders	Consultant Team

Phase 2 Important Dates

Strategy	Date	Status
Stakeholder #6, and #7	Late-May, 2022 Late-August, 2022	Groups and outreach type to be identified
Open House #2	Late-May, 2022	Meeting times to be identified

PHASE 3 – Final Recommended Design, Construction Staging Scheme, and Noise Solicitation Coordination

1. Inform public on proposed design
2. Inform public on recommended construction staging scheme
3. Coordinate Noise Solicitation activities, if needed

Timeframe	Strategy	Purpose and Outcome	Target Audience	Responsible Party
Late-October, 2022	Identify location for open house #3. Schedule open house	Meeting time suggested when many can attend	Internal, PMT	Consultant
Mid-November 2022	Begin advertising open house #3. Social media blast #3	Notify the public of the upcoming open house	Residents, commuters, other roadway users	Consultant Team, PMT
Late-November, 2022	Open house #3	Project update and final recommended design	Residents, commuters, other roadway users	Consultant team, PMT
Early-December, 2022	Summarize engagement from Phase 1	Understand community feedback so comments can be incorporated into project elements	PMT	Consultant Team
Early-December, 2022	Update project website with public engagement feedback	Keep interested parties informed of public comments and engagement events	General public, key stakeholders	Consultant Team
Phase 3 Important Dates				
Strategy	Date		Status	
Open House #3	Late-November 2022		Meeting times to be identified	