

Highway 210 Washington Street Corridor Study

Public Involvement Plan

Introduction

This document is a high-level outline of the plan for public involvement for the Highway 210 Washington Street Corridor Study, including:

- a shared understanding of project context
- a robust stakeholder list
- tactics to be used to communicate and collect input
- engagement schedule
- key messages
- a project communications strategy
- evaluation metrics for engagement

The plan is meant to be a living document, updated throughout the life of the project, as needed, to reflect the public involvement process.

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Project Overview

Washington Street (Highway 210) is a major travel corridor spanning west to east in Brainerd, MN. Highway 210 also serves as a major east-west arterial extending across north-central Minnesota. The study corridor extends from Baxter Drive on the west to Pine Shores Road on the east and includes a mix of primarily commercial land uses along with some residential and institutional uses. The road has the highest traffic volumes in Crow Wing County and is the only continuous east-west corridor in the City. There are currently limited provisions for pedestrians and bicyclists to travel along or cross-over the corridor.

The focus of the improvement project is to improve pavement conditions and travel safety, accommodate ADA requirements, and enhance pedestrian and bicyclist accommodations.

Public Involvement Goals

The high-level goals for public involvement for this study include:

- Communicating key project information to the community
- Creating opportunities for the community to provide input throughout the planning process
- Using a variety of tools and tactics to reach different audiences in ways that work for them, including online and in-person opportunities
- Setting appropriate expectations for what the project can accomplish
- Educating project partners about cost sharing and future maintenance roles and responsibilities
- Building community buy-in and ownership for the results
- Conveying complex, technical information using plain language and graphics
- Collecting, summarizing and reporting on input received so the community feels heard

Key Audiences

The following individuals, groups and organizations have been identified as stakeholder who will potentially have interest in or be affected by this study:

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| • Nearby residents and neighborhoods | • Brainerd Lakes Chamber of Commerce |
| • Nearby businesses and employees | • Local medical and emergency services |
| • Commuters and travelers through the area | • Nearby destinations |
| • Visitors to the area | • Brainerd Arboretum |
| • City of Brainerd staff and elected officials | • Paul Bunyan Trail |
| • City of Baxter staff and elected officials | • ISD 181 School District |
| • Crow Wing County staff and elected officials | • Traditionally underserved populations – low income, minority, youth, elderly, zero vehicle households, individuals with disabilities |
| • Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway | • Local media |
| • Minnesota Department of Natural Resources | |

This is not an exhaustive list. Additional stakeholders will be added and included in public involvement activities throughout the project.

Key Messages

The following are high-level key messages that will be used to communicate about this study:

- MnDOT will be redoing Washington Street (Highway 210) in 2025 from Baxter Drive to Pine Shores Road. This study will help us identify what the new roadway should look like based on technical analysis and input from the community.
- This is a multimodal study. We're looking at the needs of all roadways users – drivers, freight and people walking and bicycling – and the needs of the businesses and residents along the corridor.
- We won't be able to do everything as part of the upcoming project but we're looking to maximize what Washington Street (Highway 210) can be. We're looking for solutions that balance the movement of vehicles along the stretch of highway, getting to and from the corridor, and everyone's safety.
- This is a new study. We're building off of previous planning work but not repeating it.

Additional messages may be developed as needed throughout the project. More specific messaging for each project stage will be developed as part of the public involvement activities for that stage.

Project Schedule and Stages

The overall schedule for this study is from Fall 2019 through the end of 2021. However, the majority of public input opportunities will occur between Fall 2019 and Fall 2020. The following table identifies the project stages and their timing:

Project Stage	Timing
Needs Identification	Fall 2019 to Spring 2020
Design Concept Alternatives	Spring 2020 to Fall 2020
Preliminary Design	Fall 2020 to Fall 2021
Final Study	Fall 2021

Public Involvement Tactics and Tools

In-Person Involvement

Open Houses

The project team will host two in-person two-hour evening public open houses throughout the project. The first will occur during the Needs Identification project stage to collect input corridor needs and issues. The second will occur during the Design Concept Alternatives project stage to collect input and preferences on the design concepts. The goal of the open houses is to provide a traditional in-person opportunity for the public and stakeholders to interact with the project team and with one another.

Pop-up Events

The project team will administer input sessions at four pop-up events within the community coordinated with the timing of the open houses. The first will occur during the Needs Identification project stage to collect input corridor needs and issues. The second will occur during the Design Concept Alternatives project stage to collect input on the design concepts. The goal of the pop-up events is to provide additional opportunities to reach area residents, businesses and visitors, specifically those unlikely to participate in traditional input opportunities. Pop-up event locations will be chosen specifically to reach populations underserved or underrepresented in other input opportunities.

Passive Input Stations

The project team will also create and deploy two passive input installations such as input kiosks or visualization stations. The specific timing, location and style of each will be determined by the project team as the project unfolds to complement other engagement activities. The goal of the passive input installations is to communicate project information and provide input opportunities for those unable to attend other in-person events, specifically area visitors.

Policy and Business Meetings/Workshops

The project team will host stakeholder-specific meetings/workshops – four for policymakers and four for the business community. The goal of the meetings/workshops is to get detailed input from these key stakeholder groups. The first meeting will occur at the beginning of the project to increase awareness. The second will occur during the Needs Identification project stage to collect input corridor needs and issues. The third will occur during the Design Concept Alternatives project stage to collect input on the design concepts. The fourth will occur near the completion of the project to share results. Additional meetings will be scheduled as needed.

Individual Interviews

The project team will meet one on one with individuals to discuss the project on an as needed basis. Individual interviews will be used to connect with key stakeholders who are not well served by other engagement tactics, such as political representatives and community leaders within underserved or underrepresented communities.

Online Involvement

Online Open Houses

In coordination with each in-person open house, the project team will develop and host an online open house. The goal of the online open houses is to provide a comparable input opportunity to the in-person open houses for those unable to attend in person. Each online open house will mimic the experience of an in-person open house through features, such as virtual versions of materials, chat functionality, online surveys, visualizations, comments maps and/or videos, as appropriate for the project phase. Online open houses will launch the day of the in-person open houses and remain open afterwards to allow for greater participation.

Online Surveys

The project team will administer two online surveys tied to. The first will occur during the Needs Identification project stage to collect input corridor needs and issues. The second will occur during the Design Concept Alternatives project stage to collect input on the design concepts. The online surveys will be coordinated with and used as part of the online open houses. They will also be distributed directly through other methods, such as email lists, social media and/or at pop-up events. The goal of the online surveys is to reach a broad audience.

The project team may occasionally administer post involvement surveys to ask participants in project activities about their experience engaging with the project team. Input from these post surveys will be used as part of the public involvement measurement and tracking.

Project Website

MnDOT will host a project webpage as part of MnDOT's overall website. The goal of the website is to provide the community with up to date project information and directions for how to provide input. The website will be updated regularly throughout the project. At a minimum, the project website will be updated in coordination with transitions between project stages.

Stakeholder Email Updates

MnDOT will develop and maintain an email list specific to this project. Interested individuals will be able to sign up for the email list via the project website. The goal of the email list is to keep interested individuals informed about project activities and milestones. At a minimum, email updates will occur in coordination with transitions between project stages.

Social Media Promotion

The project team will use MnDOT's social media channels to promote online and in-person input opportunities within the project area. The goal of social media promotion is to reach a broad audience, specifically those that do not normally participate in planning processes.

Public Involvement Measurement

The public involvement approach, tactics and tools will be evaluated using both qualitative and quantitative metrics. Evaluation will occur on an ongoing basis and reported quarterly. Adjustments to the approach will be made based on the evaluation on an as needed basis at the direction of the project team.

Quantitative Metrics

Quantitative metrics help evaluate the reach of public involvement by tracking how many people are participating in the process. Specific metrics that will be tracked include, but are not limited to:

- How many meetings and engagement events are held
- How many people attend meetings and engagement events
- How many surveys are completed

- How many people receive email updates
- How many people view and engage with social media posts
- What is the demographic makeup of participants

Qualitative Metrics

Qualitative metrics help tell the story of public involvement by assessing the quality of interactions and information. Specific metrics that will be used include, but are not limited to:

- What kind of feedback is received
- What level of support or opposition exists for the project
- Is municipal consent obtained
- Are the tactics and tools used appropriate for the project audiences
- Have participants expressed any challenges related to participating in the process
- Results of post involvement surveys

Public Involvement Summary

Project Stage	Timing	Engagement Focus	Tactics and Tools	Key Messages
Ongoing	Throughout	General project information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website Project email updates Individual interviews (as needed) 	Information updated based on project stage
Needs Identification	Fall 2019 to Spring 2020	Community input on corridor issues and needs, coordinated with the technical needs analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open house (1) Online open house (1) Pop-up events (2) Online survey (1) Passive input station (1) Policy and business meetings/workshops (2 total; 1 each) Individual interviews (as needed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are your priorities for the corridor? Where are the issues along the corridor?
Design Concept Alternatives	Spring 2020 to Fall 2020	Community input on design concept alternatives, coordinated with the technical evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open house (1) Online open house (1) Pop-up events (2) Online survey (1) Passive input station (1) Policy and business meetings/workshops (2 total; 1 each) Individual interviews (as needed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do you like about each design concept? What do you dislike about each design concept? Which design concept do you prefer?
Preliminary Design	Fall 2020 to Fall 2021	Stakeholder input on preliminary design, to inform municipal consent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy and business meetings/workshops (2 total; 1 each) Individual interviews (as needed) 	Review and comment on the preliminary design
Final Study	Fall 2021	Community awareness of the final study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website Project email updates Policy and business meetings/workshops (2 total; 1 each) Individual interviews (as needed) 	Awareness of the final study results and recommendations and what is next

Communications Protocols

The following table identifies the member of the project team that is the key contact or responsible person for each key project communications role.

Communications Role	Responsible Person
General project engagement and communications information	Stephanie Castellanos
Media inquiries and news releases	Krista Rydberg
Social media posting, promotion, and response	Krista Rydberg, Jenny Seelen and Kristi Loobeek (as needed)
Project website and email updates	Jenny Seelen
Project spokesperson	Luke Wehseler