

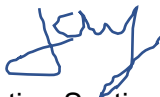


Wisconsin Department of Transportation
Division of Transportation System Development
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4822 Madison Yards Way, Room S408
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Memorandum

Date: July 1, 2021

To: Project Development Chiefs
Technical Services Chiefs
Systems Planning Chiefs
Region Communication Managers
Region Environmental Coordinators

From: Jay Waldschmidt, P.E., Section Chief 
Environmental Process and Documentation Section

Subject: Updated policy on project-level public involvement and public hearings

Thank you for all your patience as we continue to improve the methods in which we deliver the public involvement program to all the people of Wisconsin during these challenging times.

This memo updates the project-level public involvement and public hearings policies. The memo also rescinds the latest versions of the Interim Policy on Project-Level Public Involvement memo and the Interim Policy on Project-Level Public Hearings memo. These memos may be found at <https://wisconsindot.gov/Pages/doing-bus/eng-consultants/cnslt-rsrcs/environment/pubinvolve.aspx>.

The Guidance for Complying with the Interim Policy on Project-Level Public Hearings document included with the Interim Policy on Project-Level Public Hearings memo should still be used as a reference for best practices related to conducting a virtual public hearing component if that component will be implemented.

The Virtual Public Involvement Workgroup is currently working on updating the Division of Transportation Systems Development (DTSD) public involvement process to include a virtual public involvement option for all DTSD public involvement efforts. The Workgroup goal is to develop consistency in delivery of DTSD public involvement efforts while allowing the project teams, in cooperation with the Region Communication Managers (RCMs) and Region Environmental Coordinators (RECs), to 'right-size' project-level public involvement to meet the project needs.

By late fall, the Virtual Public Involvement Workgroup anticipates completing updates to Facilities Development Manual Chapter 6, Public Involvement and associated public involvement delivery templates to serve as a one-stop shop for all DTSD public involvement delivery needs.

Starting July 6, 2021:

- All DTSD public involvement efforts may include an in-person component.
- Project teams with a previously approved Public Involvement Plan (PIP) consisting of virtual public involvement only shall work with the RCM if there is a desire to include an in-person public involvement component or change to in-person public involvement only.
- Project teams initiating development of a PIP shall consult the RCM, and the REC (if needed), to determine the right-sized public involvement delivery strategy (in-person, virtual, or both) when it is determined a level of public involvement greater than a postcard or newsletter will be implemented.
- If the delivery method will include a virtual component, the project team shall also include the RCM in selecting the appropriate virtual delivery platform.
- When a public hearing is required, the Federal Highway Administration shall also be included in the discussion of the appropriate delivery method for the public hearing.
- Project teams and RCMs shall determine if there are any local COVID-19 protocols that must be considered when delivering in-person public involvement.
- Project teams should set up the meeting room with physical-distancing considerations if possible and practical.
- Project team members that have not been fully vaccinated shall wear a mask unless they have a qualified exemption from wearing a mask.
- A sign shall be placed at entry points to the meeting room that includes a statement regarding the requirement that meeting attendees who have not been fully vaccinated shall wear a mask unless they have a qualified exemption from wearing a mask. The Division of Facilities & Transportation Services, Space Management group should be contacted for any signage needs.
- Opportunities for public involvement announcements (news releases, postcards, newsletters, websites, etc.) shall include the name, phone number and email address of a project team contact. This ensures all individuals are afforded an opportunity to be involved in the project decision-making process.
- It is recommended that other bureaus outside DTSD begin using this updated policy for their project-level public involvement activities.

The department will continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation and in-person contact restrictions. Follow-up emails will be distributed if changes occur.

Environmental Justice (EJ) considerations and projects on lands of tribal interest

Project teams should continue to work with the RECs and Region Tribal Liaisons, as appropriate, to determine special outreach considerations needed for public involvement delivery related to EJ populations and for projects on lands of tribal interest.

If you have questions related to this updated policy, please contact Jay Waldschmidt at 608-267-9806 or by email at jay.waldschmidt@dot.wi.gov.

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