



# **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTION PLAN**



**COUNTY OF UNION**

**Local Concept Development Study for South Front Street Bridge  
over the Elizabeth River, City of Elizabeth, Union County, NJ**

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**North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority**

**Union County South Front Street Bridge  
over the Elizabeth River**

**Local Concept Development Study**

**City of Elizabeth, New Jersey**

**Public Involvement Action Plan (PIAP)**

**Prepared by:  
Hardesty & Hanover, LLC  
M.A. Culbertson, LLC**

**March 2014**



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#### A. Purpose

The purpose of the Public Involvement effort for the Union County South Front Street Bridge Local Concept Development Study is to have an informed and involved public who has access to the planning approach and the decision making process. The Public Involvement Action Plan (PIAP) seeks to provide ample opportunity for public comment regarding the identification and development of proposed improvements. The intention of this document is to establish a public involvement guideline that is dynamic in nature so that it can evolve as the project progresses to keep the public involved and maintain broad-based support for the project with consideration for context sensitive design solutions.

#### B. Project Description

The limits of the project for the Local Concept Development Study of the Union County South Front Street Bridge over the Elizabeth River includes a 200 feet off set on each side of the river. The North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) is the lead agency administering the contract and working in coordination with Union County and the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT). The project will be managed by the Union County Division of Engineering and supported by their Department of Public Works.

The Union County South Front Street Bridge is a critical transportation connection within the industrial complexes, the Elizabethport and City of Elizabeth community. The bridge has been closed for more than two years creating a single access point on each side of the river, with only one way in and out. It also serves as a coastal evacuation route for the City of Elizabeth. This movable bridge is in serious overall condition that routine maintenance can no longer address its deficiencies. Its serious structural condition warranted the bridge closed to vehicular and pedestrian traffic in March 2011. The bridge is locked in the upright position to allow marine traffic flow.

It is the interest of the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA), Union County, and the NJDOT to determine the appropriate improvement alternatives, which will indicate whether a major bridge rehabilitation or replacement is needed. The first phase will be to establish the purpose and need for the project. The Purpose and Needs Statement will focus on the transportation needs to be addressed.

#### C. Public Involvement Process Overview

Public Involvement will be on-going throughout the project. Though the Public Involvement Action Plan (PIAP) is organized by project phases, it will be implemented in such a manner to present the public with one seamless process. The PIAP is organized by project phase to allow its integration with the planning and engineering efforts to facilitate the scheduling of contingent activities.

The public involvement steps to be implemented during the Local Concept Development phase are presented in the Public Involvement Process Section and a schedule of the activities is provided in a matrix following the process section.



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*Local Concept Development (LCD).* The Local Concept Development Phase purpose is to identify and compare reasonable alternatives and strategies that address a well-defined and well-justified Purpose and Need Statement and select a Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA). The PPA is selected based on several factors, including environmental impacts, constructability, cost effectiveness, and if the project can be constructed in a timely manner. This phase involves data collection, internal and external stakeholder coordination, and alternatives analysis. Along with the PPA, key products that are produced in this Phase include the Purpose and Need Statement, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Classification, and the Local Concept Development Report. LCD denotes concept development by a local entity (MPO, county, municipality).

Beyond the Local Concept Development, the scope of the next phase of the project will be determined based upon the results of this phase and the selected PPA to be evaluated for transition to the Preliminary Engineering Design phase and determination of the environmental process. The final design phase and construction phase would follow.

The project phases following the Local Concept Development are as listed below. The PIAP will be amended as necessary to allow for the outreach activities of the future phases:

- Preliminary Engineering
- Final Design
- Construction

*Preliminary Engineering.* The Preliminary Engineering Design Phase will further develop the PPA and identify any issues that may require community input and public involvement to resolve. Environmental Documentation and NEPA clearance is also part of this phase.

*Final Design.* During Final Design, the design of the selected alternative will be completed, taking into consideration the input obtained through the public involvement effort to provide an improvement solution that satisfies the project Purpose and Need.

*Construction.* Notifying the public about traffic patterns and potential delays due to construction activity will be important prior to Construction of the identified solution. Providing this information in a timely manner will facilitate the formation of positive public perception towards both the project and Union County.

#### **D. Public Involvement Process Steps during Local Concept Development**

An Initial Project Team Strategy Meeting was held on Tuesday, January 7, 2014 at the NJTPA's office in Newark, NJ, in which the public involvement process was initiated for this phase of the project.

In coordination with Union County and the City of Elizabeth, a preliminary contact mailing list of stakeholders was developed along with a mailing list of residences and businesses within a 200 foot radius of the project in concert with the commencement of field survey and environmental screening work.



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The following steps provide direction for community involvement and public outreach, which will be in coordination with the other project study activities.

#### **Step 1. Project Team Status Meetings, Public Involvement Coordination**

At Project Team Status Meetings, via conference call or on-site meeting at the NJTPA office, the Public Involvement (PI) strategy and community outreach steps will be an agenda item for discussion with the Project Team members, which include: Sarbjit Kahlon, NJTPA Project Manager; Eileen Schack, Frank McCombs, and Alberto Nogueira NJDOT Local Aid; Pamela Garrett and Marie Limage, NJDOT Environmental Team; Paul Leso, Union County Project Manager; Glen Schetelich, H&H Project Director, Bruce Riegel, H&H Project Manager; and Martine Culbertson, Community Involvement Facilitator. An overall strategy for the development and presentation of information to key Local Officials and County representatives will be reviewed and steps to coordinate the development of a Community Stakeholders Group and public outreach efforts proposed for the Local Concept Development phase will be discussed.

The PI agenda items include a brief project status update, the proposed public participation strategy, and opportunity to identify and discuss community issues, potential stakeholders for the Community Stakeholders Group, logistics, meeting formats, next steps for public involvement, action items and the project schedule.

#### **Step 2. Review Stakeholders and Develop Community Stakeholders Group (CSG)**

To build community consensus and discuss the context sensitive design issues, it is necessary to work in advance to review issues and identify potential stakeholders. A stakeholder is an individual or group with an interest or investment in the way an issue is resolved. For example, major employers within the vicinity of the South Front Street Bridge could provide information on the commuter employee needs and may benefit from proposed improvement alternatives.

A list of potential stakeholders with contact information will be distributed to the Project Team for review and discussion. Representation from the communities and agencies is at the discretion of the Project Managers and in coordination with Union County and the municipal local officials. The reason it is necessary to review stakeholders for potential Community Stakeholders Group (CSG) membership is to understand the issues represented by each stakeholder prior to meeting and to determine that there is not high duplication of interests, or any missing interests for inclusive representation. This is to ensure community balance, environmental justice and development toward broad-based support. It may contribute also to a manageable and effective number of stakeholders for effective discussion and collaborative problem solving and consensus building during this phase of the project.

#### **Project Stakeholder List**

The project stakeholder list will be developed in coordination with NJTPA, NJDOT, and Union County officials and with discussion and review by local officials from the City of Elizabeth. The stakeholder list will include local and state officials as well as municipal engineers, planners, and community stakeholders'



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representation from businesses, hospital, schools, historic and other cultural organizations and neighborhood representatives within the project area as identified by the Project Team and recommended by local officials. A separate list of stakeholder agencies will also be maintained for communication and coordination.

Stakeholders may be added throughout the project process as pertinent individuals become evident. Environmental and cultural resource agencies involved in the delivery process will be amended to the stakeholder list at the appropriate phase for those work activities as initiated in the transportation improvements development process. The stakeholders list includes representation from the following municipalities, local and regional organizations:

#### County and Municipal Officials and Organizations

- Union County Officials, Engineer, Planner, OEM, Parks
- Legislative Representatives, State Senate and Assembly
- City of Elizabeth Elected Officials, Engineers, Police, Fire, Planning and OEM providers
- Business chambers of commerce, bus companies, schools, hospitals and historic associations
- Marinas, recreational boating and commercial marine operations
- Interested groups in the area, such as cycling organization, neighborhood and condo associations
- Private residential and commercial property owners

#### Federal and State Agencies

- NJTPA, NJDOT (Local Aid, BEPR, Pedestrian Bicycle Program)
- Federal Highway Administration
- U.S. Coast Guard
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- NJDEP, Land Use Regulation Program
- NJDEP, State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
- NJ TRANSIT

### **Step 3. Conduct Issues Assessment and Tracking – Stakeholder Surveys**

The issues assessment is an essential step and public involvement strategy, which provides the means to identify and acknowledge issues relevant to all affected parties and identifying the stakeholders and their underlying interests. It is critical to developing and maintaining a successful public outreach program for this project. Issues identification prior to meetings allows for more effective planning so as to design the appropriate meeting format and agenda to accomplish the goals of the public outreach meetings and the overall project effort. This information also assists in the developing the project purpose and need.

To assess issues, a stakeholder survey will be designed and distributed to obtain initial input from community and agency stakeholders. The initial stakeholder survey will be mailed and sent via email.



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Once the project specific web site is established, the stakeholder survey will be posted to the web site to allow any future interested parties to submit their comments. Any follow-up surveys may be conducted after local officials briefings or public meetings if necessary to provide additional clarity for developing concepts, and later for resolution of support. The survey will also be conducted via email notifications and available on the project specific web site. It is also effective in determining if any stakeholders need to be added or if new issues may have surfaced during the concept development phase. Issues assessments are conducted via email surveys or phone interviews. A summary of the survey responses will be provided for the Project Team to review and presented at the Stakeholder and Public Meetings. The Stakeholders Summary will be posted to the project specific web site.

#### **Step 4. Conduct Local Officials Meetings**

A Kick-Off Local Officials Meeting will be held to introduce the project to the Local Officials, and to obtain information on the concerns/comments, requirements/guidelines potential problems and/or additional issues from their perspective, and to identify potential stakeholders and local interest groups as potential members for the Community Stakeholders Group. Key Local Officials are to be invited from the City of Elizabeth in addition to Project Team members.

Local Officials Meetings will also be held for input and concurrence to the PPA and to provide a Resolution of Support for the PPA.

For all local officials meetings, meeting logistics, including email notification, will be provided and telephone follow-up calls will be made as necessary. The Project Team will provide an agenda, meeting facilitation, meeting minutes and action items. A list of potential members for the CSG will be provided for review. A project portfolio and meeting materials will be designed to clearly define the project and the purpose of stakeholders' role in the public involvement process for this phase of the project. A Project Portfolio will be developed with hard copies of project information including: list of Project Team members, Community Stakeholders Group members, Community Stakeholders and Agency members, project information sheet and maps. The Project Portfolio serves as an effective communication tool for the Project Team and within stakeholders to use with their constituents in disseminating project information. At the Project Team Status meeting, the Project Portfolio and other public information materials will be designed and reviewed with NJTPA, NJDOT, and Union County officials such as the draft agenda, sign-in sheets, handouts, fact sheets and display boards. Updates of the handouts will be provided as the project progresses.

#### **Step 5. Facilitate Community Stakeholders Group Meetings**

A Community Stakeholders Group (CSG) will be established to exchange project information and community interests so to reconcile the various community interests represented in the project area and provide NJTPA, NJDOT, and Union County with input into the process of formulating recommendations for transportation improvements associated with the South Front Street Bridge. It is anticipated that CSG Meetings will be held in March 2014, November 2014 and asked to attend the Public Information Center Meeting No. 2 in March/April 2015.



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The CSG will include community leaders representing local municipal government (planning and engineering, traffic safety, and OEM), civic organizations, businesses, hospitals, schools, EMS providers, environmental and historic preservation agencies, marinas, and affected neighborhood representatives. Federal and State agencies involved in the transportation process may attend meetings and will be provided meeting summaries.

For the initial CSG meeting and follow-up meetings, an agenda will be prepared, meeting notice distributed via email, and reminder phone calls for attendance will be conducted as needed. The Community Involvement Task Leader will provide facilitation for the meeting and the Project Team will design and create presentation meeting materials such as agendas, sign-in sheets, nametags, handouts, display boards and Power Point presentation as needed.

During the initial and follow-up Community Stakeholders meetings, the facilitator will monitor the communication to ensure balanced participation and clear understanding of information by all participants and observers during the meetings. The facilitator will record issues and provide meeting summaries. The agenda and meeting report will be distributed as determined by the Project Team. A Project Portfolio of information will be provided for each member of the CSG and Project Team in order to maintain clear, concise, and consistent information within the CSG and for members to report such information accurately to their constituents.

#### **Step 6. Conduct Public Information Center Meetings**

The purpose of Public Information Center (PIC) meetings is to obtain feedback on the development of the Project Purpose and Needs Statement and the development of alternatives that meet the purpose and need. The layout of the PIC meetings will be designed for the exchange of information in an open house format with support staff available to answer questions. Stations may be created to display specific information and obtain input directly on specific topics such as pedestrian access, traffic and environmental concerns or safety issues. It is anticipated that the Public Information Center meetings may be held in April 2014 and March/April 2015.

Display boards and Power Point presentation may be available for viewing. Sign-in sheets will be used to record attendance and Union County blank comment forms will be available to obtain input from the general public and officials who wish to provide comments, recommendations or questions in writing, which the Project Team can review and respond to as required to develop the Purpose and Needs Statement and support the alternatives analysis.

A Project Information Handout/Notice for the Public Information Center meeting will be generated for distribution. A summary report of the PIC meeting noting the attendance, participation and key issues will be developed. A general public mailing list will be created from municipal and project contact lists (property owners within 200 feet of the project and other interested parties such as the Community Stakeholders Group members and lists they may provide). The Project Team will work with Union County in the advertisement of the PIC meeting and assist with any press release or media requests.





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#### **Step 7. Develop and Maintain Project Website**

During this phase of the project, a project specific web site will be created to store and provide meeting reports and public documents for access by community and agency stakeholders as well as the general public. Additional information such as a project overview, draft purpose and need statement, FAQs (*Frequently Asked Questions*), community outreach efforts, maps, photos, and helpful links will be included as needed and approved by the Project Team. All materials and information associated with this project specific web site must be reviewed and approved by the Project Team, NJTPA, NJDOT and Union County.

#### **E. SCHEDULE OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT INITIATIVES**

	STEP	DATE	PURPOSE
1.	Conduct Project Team Status Meetings / Public Involvement Coordination	Project Team – Kick-off Meeting – January 7, 2014, and bi-mthly status conference calls and mthly sit-down mtgs. (on-going)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• present approach and updates</li> <li>• discuss PI strategies</li> <li>• review stakeholders and support status</li> </ul>
2.	Review Stakeholders and Develop Community Stakeholders Group (CSG)	Jan 2014 – Mar 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify stakeholders for CSG.</li> <li>• Develop and maintain contact information for community stakeholders, local officials, and agencies.</li> </ul>
3.	Conduct Issues Assessment and Tracking (Stakeholder Survey)	Feb 2014 - Mar 2014 (on-going)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify issues/interests.</li> <li>• Assess stakeholders.</li> <li>• Develop issues list or matrix.</li> </ul>



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4.	<p>Conduct Local Officials Meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kick-off Local Officials Meeting No. 1</li> <li>• Follow-Up Local Officials Meeting No. 2 (Concepts - PPA)</li> <li>• Local Officials Meeting No. 3 (Resolution of Support)</li> </ul>	<p>Monday, January 27, 2014 (City of Elizabeth, Union County)</p> <p>Local Officials Meeting No. 2 March/April 2015</p> <p>Local Officials Meeting No. 3 May/June 2015 (as needed)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present project status and schedule.</li> <li>• Review goals and objectives.</li> <li>• Identify issues and concerns.</li> <li>• Review logo and portfolio materials.</li> <li>• CSG meeting preparations.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtain input and/or concurrence for Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA).</li> <li>• Preparation for PIC No. 2</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide feedback on PIC Meetings and written comments received</li> <li>• Obtain Resolution of Support for Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA).</li> </ul>
5.	<p>Facilitate Community Stakeholders Group (CSG) Meetings.</p>	<p>CSG Mtg. No. 1 March 19, 2014</p> <p>CSG Mtg. No. 2 Nov/Dec 2014</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define purpose and goals of team.</li> <li>• Review project status and schedule.</li> <li>• Obtain input for project purpose and need.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present and obtain input on developed conceptual alternatives.</li> </ul>
6.	<p>Conduct Public Information Center (PIC) Meetings</p>	<p>PIC No. 1 (P&amp;N) - April 2, 2014 (City of Elizabeth, 4:00 pm – 7:00 pm)</p> <p>PIC No. 2 (PPA) – May 2015 (City of Elizabeth 4:00 pm – 7:00 pm)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present project information.</li> <li>• Present project history, current status, studies &amp; concepts via display boards.</li> <li>• Obtain input for project purpose and need (provide blank comment forms).</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present alternatives and PPA.</li> <li>• Obtain public comments and provide blank comment forms.</li> </ul>



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7.	Develop and Maintain Project Web Site	Status Meetings – Agenda Item - web site outline, design, content and implementation – Jan - April 2014 (on-going)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft web site outline for review and discussion by Project Team.</li> <li>• Draft web site visual design of home page and menus for review and selection of title, picture, format of pages.</li> <li>• Draft content and build pages to web site for review and approval.</li> <li>• Release web site upon approval for PIC meetings.</li> </ul>
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Note: Project Team Status Meetings as conference calls or on-site are to be held as appropriate and prior to Local Officials Briefings, CSG meetings and PIC meetings.

#### F. Public Involvement Deliverables

*Project Information Sheets.* A project fact sheet or Project Information Sheet handout will be prepared and distributed to local officials at the initial local officials meeting, community stakeholder group outreach meetings, and later to the general public at Public Information Center meetings. Fact Sheets or Project Information Sheets may include project status and schedule, and other information such as brief project history, project issues, project location map, project purpose and needs statement, and proposed concepts as appropriate and approved by the Project Managers at the County, NJDOT, and NJTPA. The Project Information/Fact Sheet will be updated as the project progresses to reflect the most up-to-date project information available. Information contained in the Project Fact Sheet can be adapted to fashion a project newsletter, a PIC Notice handout, or website posting.

*Project Portfolios.* Project Portfolios will be developed and utilized to provide clear and consistent hard copy materials to Project Team members, government agency representatives and key stakeholders from Union County and local municipality of the City of Elizabeth. The materials include contact information lists, regional map, map of project study area, project schedule, project fact sheet, meeting agendas and reports.

*Display Boards.* Display boards will be utilized to convey the proposed improvements to the public. Project display boards will include a project deficiency display, purpose and needs display, concept displays, project aerials or renderings if appropriate, and in later phases a PPA display, and a display of the final project configuration and traffic staging plans.

*Comment Forms.* NJTPA/NJDOT/Union County blank comment forms will be made available for Public Information Center meetings, the project web site, community stakeholder meetings, and at the Local Officials Briefings so on-going public comment and input can be submitted and shared with the Project Team and County through this phase of the project.



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**The above PIAP has the concurrence/approval of:**

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Sarbjit Kahlon, *NJTPA Project Manager*

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Frank McCombs, E.I.T., *NJDOT Local Aid Senior Engineer*

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Pamela Garrett, *NJDOT Environmental Project Support Manager*

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Paul J. Leso, P.E., *Union County Project Manager*

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Glen Schetelich, P.E., *Hardesty & Hanover Project Director*

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Bruce K. Riegel, P.E., *Hardesty & Hanover Project Manager*