

## APPENDIX E

### SUMMARY OF OUTREACH METHODS FOR THE LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

PPUATS recently adopted “Envision HOI: Heart of Illinois Long Range Transportation Plan.” This plan covers the period from 2015 to 2014. During the development of the plan, numerous outreach methods were used.

Public participation is an important component of any planning process. A planning process should both communicate information about the process to the general public and enable the general public to provide input into the process. The constant exchange of information and ideas between planners and the general public helps save time and money by discovering and avoiding issues long before they become burdens on the tax base. Effective participation also builds trust and buy-in from the general public, resulting in not only a better plan, but a more easily executable plan that is more likely to be supported and embraced by the region.

The geographic scope of the long range transportation plan is the 20-year planning area, an area that consists of portions of Peoria, Tazewell, and Woodford Counties that encompass the densely developed areas of the region centered on the City of Peoria and land immediately surrounding the densely developed areas. Given the size and large population of this area, engaging residents in meaningful interaction is challenging.

In order to effectively engage the general public in this planning process, TCRPC used a variety of outreach methods in order to maximize the number and type of opportunities for residents to become involved in the process. From participating in special meetings to attending community events to offering input online, residents became involved in the planning process through all of the outreach opportunities used during this process.

#### *Outreach Methods*

**L RTP Technical Committee.** The technical committee that oversaw the LRTP process included individuals who represent a local bicycle advocacy group and a local advocacy group for individuals with disabilities. Including non-practitioners on the committee enabled direct input from system users into discussions pertaining to the management of this planning process. This committee structure also enabled a variety of perspectives to be shared when different transportation issues were being discussed.

**MindMixer Website.** A website was established with the sole intent of engaging residents in the LRTP process. The website was developed in cooperation with MindMixer, a company devoted to building stronger relationships between communities and residents through transparent, meaningful and productive interactions. TCRPC worked with MindMixer to establish an online platform through which residents could provide input into the LRTP process from their own homes and on their own schedules. The website enabled residents to:

- Click on a map of the region to identify locations where a transportation issue or challenge exists;
- Select the project types for which a hypothetical \$100 for transportation should be spent; and
- Submit ideas on innovative transportation improvements that the region should explore.

**Innovation Board.** Instead of asking residents only to ‘come to us’ to provide input into the LRTP process, TCRPC staff sought to go out into the community to inform residents of the LRTP process and seek input. To do this, staff attended the following community events and meetings in the region:

- Bike Peoria Meeting;
- Bradley University Welcome Week Event;
- Central Illinois Artists Organization First Friday;
- Central Illinois Black Expo;
- Chillicothe Ride the Rails Event;
- CityLink ADA Subcommittee Meeting;
- Focus Forward Central Illinois Technical Working Group Meeting;
- Human Services Transportation Plan Committee Meeting;
- Illinois Department of Transportation Open House;
- Pekin Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee Meeting;
- Peoria Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee Meeting;
- PPUATS Policy Committee Meeting;
- PPUATS Technical Committee Meeting; and
- Tri-County Regional Planning Commission Meeting.

When attending community events, TCRPC staff brought the ‘Innovation Board,’ a portable chalkboard custom-built by TCRPC staff for the purpose of gathering input from residents at community events. Questions such as “What do you think are the region’s biggest transportation challenges?” were written on the board, and residents, armed with sidewalk chalk provided by TCRPC staff, wrote their responses on the board. The Innovation Board proved to be a fun way of engaging residents in the LRTP process.

**Focus Groups.** In order to obtain detailed input from stakeholders on important transportation-related issues, several focus group meetings were held. For each focus group meeting, TCRPC brought together a group of stakeholders, posed questions to the stakeholders about a particular topic, and facilitated a group discussion. The following focus group discussions occurred during the LRTP process:

- **Economic Development.** A facilitated discussion occurred at a regular meeting of the Focus Forward Central Illinois Technical Working Group (TWG) on September 23, 2014.

The TWG is a group consisting of local economic development and community development professionals that helps guide regional economic development.

- **Tri-County Regional Planning Commission.** A facilitated discussion occurred at a regular meeting of the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission on September 25, 2014. The Commission – the governing board of the agency of the same name – primarily consists of county board members representing Peoria, Tazewell, and Woodford Counties.
- **Environment.** Stakeholders representing environmental advocacy groups gathered at TCRPC offices on November 10, 2014 for a facilitated discussion.
- **Individuals with Disabilities.** Stakeholders representing organizations that advocate for individuals with disabilities gathered at TCRPC offices on November 13, 2014 for a facilitated discussion.
- **Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation.** Stakeholders representing bicycle and pedestrian transportation advocacy groups gathered at the Peoria Heights Public Library on November 17, 2014 for a facilitated discussion.

In addition to the verbal input that was gathered at the focus group meetings, an artistic record of the discussion was created for two meetings. A local artist was hired to create a drawing that reflected the discussion at the Environment and Individuals with Disabilities focus group meetings. This artwork served as another record of the discussion. The artwork was shown at the LRTP open house events, enabling attendees to learn about the input that was gathered at the focus group meetings.

**Open House Events.** TCRPC hosted two open house events to enable residents to learn about the LRTP and provide input. The open house events were held from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm at Five Points Washington on November 18, 2014 and the Gateway Building on the Peoria Riverfront on November 20, 2014. Residents could arrive at any time and stay as long as they wanted. Residents that attended the open house events represented 27 different zip codes.

Attendees could visit three stations at the open house events. At Station 1, attendees could view display boards that explained what the LRTP is and how the LRTP is developed. At Station 2, several iPads were available to allow attendees to log on to the MindMixer website and provide input via the website. At Station 3, attendees could play the “Money Game.” To play, each attendee was given \$25 of play money and asked to spend their money according to how they would prioritize transportation funding for various projects. Attendees could spend their money on 34 high-volume roadway projects, 17 trail/non-motorized transportation projects, and two potential CityLink mass transit transfer centers. Each attendee was instructed to spend no more than \$5 on any one project; this instruction was given in order to replicate the current transportation funding climate in which limited funding exists for many different transportation needs. The Money Game proved to be a fun and engaging way to encourage residents to think about the future of transportation in our region.

**Media Coverage.** The LRTP attracted coverage from media outlets in the region. The Peoria Journal Star newspaper published an article on October 27 promoting the MindMixer website. The newspaper also published an article on November 10, 2014 promoting focus group

meetings. An advertisement for the MindMixer website also appeared on the Peoria Journal Star website.

WMBD-TV aired a story promoting the Open House events during its November 18, 2014 evening newscast. The story described the purpose of the Open House events and notified viewers of the November 20, 2014 event occurring in Peoria.

**Online Resources.** The Whiskey City Collaborative is a local blog developed to create and cultivate ideas, serve as an inspiration, and take action to spark change in the City of Peoria. Public participation activities were communicated via the blog as another method of informing residents of the LRTP and opportunities to provide input.