

Chapter 7: Comments and Coordination

7.1 Public Involvement

The New US 31 Hamilton County Project includes an extensive public involvement program. This program is designed to ensure that the public has numerous opportunities to learn about project developments, and that the project team has the opportunity to learn about individual and community concerns.

The key elements of the public involvement program include: Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings, public meetings, briefings with public officials, stakeholder meetings and contacts, website updates/interactions, newsletters, videos, media relations, and public hearings

7.1.1 Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Meetings

Upon the revitalization of the project in 2007, a multi-stakeholder Community Advisory Committee (CAC) was convened to provide regular public input to the project team. The CAC includes 25 members representing the following organizations:

- Baker & Daniels
- Carmel City Council
- Carmel Clay Schools
- Carmel Fire Department
- Carmel Street Department
- Clarian North Medical Center and Riley Hospital North
- Conseco, Inc.
- Crossroads Church
- Hamilton County
- Hamilton County Highway Department
- Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Indiana Farmers Mutual Ins. Co.
- St. Vincent Carmel Hospital
- SePRO Corporation
- US 31 Coalition
- City of Westfield
- Westfield Chamber of Commerce
- Westfield City Council
- Westfield Fire Department
- Westfield Washington Parks
- Westfield Department of Public Works
- Westfield Washington Schools

The CAC was consulted on interchange design alternatives, trail and pedestrian issues, context sensitive solution (CSS) considerations, and several other project elements. Five CAC meetings

were held at various locations around the corridor from December 2007 through June 2008. The CAC will continue to meet as the project moves into final design and construction phases. Materials presented at CAC meetings were posted to the project website the day following the CAC meetings. Communication with the CAC members outside of meetings occurred primarily by email. All CAC members were encouraged to contact key project team members individually as necessary. Any individual comments or questions were answered at the subsequent CAC meeting for the benefit of the larger group.

7.1.2 Local Meeting Presentations

Several presentations were given to local special interest groups or organizations at their regular meetings (Table 6.1-1). These included groups such as the Chamber of Commerce, neighborhood associations, local planning workshops, etc. The project team widely offered and advertised its willingness to do these local presentations at the invitation of members from the local groups.

7.1.3 Public Officials Briefings

Meetings with local officials occurred on an as needed basis and often focused on isolated issues such as traffic forecasts or local infrastructure plans (Table 6.1-1).

7.1.4 Stakeholder Meetings

Members of the project team have also met with individual stakeholders or groups including developers, trails representatives, emergency responders, school officials, and other members of the public with an interest in the New US 31 Hamilton County Project. All meetings that have occurred since the project's revitalization are listed in Table 6.1-1.

**Table 7.1-1
Stakeholder Meetings**

Date	Met With	Topic
2008		
5/8	CAC Meeting	
5/5	SHPO Hunt House Meeting	Discussion of Hunt House and Addendum to the MOA
5/5	SR 32 design discussion	SR 32 issues and options
5/1	Target Store representatives	Target store property
4/30	Pedestrian/Trails Work Group	Trail and pedestrian needs/wants
4/17	Westfield Chamber of Commerce	General project presentation
3/21	School Transportation Meeting	Project update, seek input on routes, closures, key crossings, etc.
3/20	CAC Meeting	Environmental issues introduction, Issues related to depressing roadway, preliminary options for SR 38, 116 th St., 136 th St., and trails connections and pedestrian crossings
3/19	146 th /151 st Design Charette	Discussion of F4 Modified design - discussion and solution development
3/18	Greyhound Pass Neighborhood Association	General project presentation
3/15	Carmel Transportation Workshop	General project presentation

Date	Met With	Topic
2/27	Hamilton County Alliance	General project presentation
2/15	CAC Meeting	Review of preliminary options for 131 st St., 161 st St., 191 st St., noise policy, and CSS image preferences
2/14	City of Carmel, City of Westfield	CAC update and material preview
2/6	Emergency Responders Meeting	Project update, seek input on routes, closures, key crossings, etc.
1/25	Developers Meeting	Project update and input on new developments and/or plans
2007		
12/14	CAC Meeting	Introductory meeting
11/13	Utilities meeting	Introductory meeting
10/10	Project meeting with Westfield officials	Introductory meeting
9/27	Project meeting with Carmel officials	Introductory meeting

In addition, project team members have answered questions and addressed comments throughout the project via phone calls and emails.

7.1.5 Website

Upon revitalization of the project in 2007, a new project website (www.us31hamiltoncounty.in.gov) was established in September 2007. The old project website (www.us31indiana.com) associated with earlier phases of the project was disabled simultaneously as the new one was launched. The project website (past and present) serves as an up-to-date, comprehensive source of information that has drawn consistent use by interested citizens.

Information on the site includes a project overview, project newsletters, presentation, interchange alternatives, answers to frequently asked questions, periodic updates on the project's status and key documents such as the Purpose and Need Statement, Preliminary Alternatives Analysis and Screening Report, DEIS, and this SDEIS.

7.1.6 Newsletters

One newsletter has been published since the revitalization of the project in 2007. It provided a project update, interchange design discussion, and updated project schedule, including the announcement of an upcoming public hearing (the exact date was still pending at time of publication). The newsletter was circulated as a hardcopy publication to the project's mailing list, as well as an electronic version circulated via e-mail. A copy was also sent to the local libraries and government offices in Carmel and Westfield and posted to the project website.

7.1.7 Video

A project video is being produced for presentation at the summer 2008 public hearing and open house. The video will be posted to the project website and available to the public after the upcoming hearing. Video content will focus on project updates, renderings of design alternatives, and commentary from local officials.

7.1.8 Media Relations

Area news media outlets including newspapers, television stations, and radio stations are part of the project media list. News releases and direct contacts from public-involvement staff served to alert local news media of project developments. Press representatives were also able to attend CAC meetings and discuss project details with project team members after the conclusion of the CAC meetings.

7.2 Public Hearings

7.2.1 DEIS Public Hearings/45-Day Comment Period

A formal Public Hearing on the DEIS was held on June 30, 2003 at the Dale E. Graham Auditorium at Carmel High School, 520 E. Main Street, Carmel, IN. More than 400 people were in attendance. The public hearing focused on the results of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and the recommended alternatives.

Twenty-six members of the public (including public officials, residents, and special interest representatives) offered verbal comments during the public comment session. Most of the comments focused on east-west connectivity, pedestrian/bicycle access, context sensitive design, depressed highway, and cooperation with local entities during the design process.

Following the Public Hearing and 45-day comment period, an Official Public Hearing Transcript (Part 1 and 2) was prepared which includes all the comments submitted during the DEIS 45-day comment period, comments submitted at the Public Hearing, and the transcript of those individuals that spoke at the Public Hearing. Copies of the Official Public Hearing Transcript are available for public review at INDOT's Public Hearings Section in addition to all of the substantive comments received after the 45-day comment period.

In response to public comments on the DEIS, modifications were made to the Preferred Alternatives that resulted in an Alternative that came to be known as Alternative F4 Modified. This Alternative was subsequently circulated to a few key public officials and agency staff. As a result of the aforementioned modifications, INDOT continued to accept comments and conduct stakeholder meetings related to these changes after the official 45-day comment period ended.

As part of the design modifications to the 146th Street interchange, a public officials meeting and a stakeholder meeting were held on June 23, 2004 to discuss these modifications and obtain public input. Design plans of the modified 146th Street interchange were also posted on the project website for public review and comment. However, widespread publication/announcement of the design modifications did not occur.

All substantive comments received on the DEIS, including those from various agencies, will be categorized and a summary/disposition included in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). Comments received during the upcoming SDEIS comment period will be added to the DEIS comment categories and be included in the FEIS summary/disposition of comments.

7.2.2 SDEIS Public Hearings/45-Day Comment Period

A second formal public hearing on the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) is scheduled for the summer of 2008 at the Dale E. Graham Auditorium at Carmel High School, 520 E. Main Street, Carmel, IN. The public hearing will focus on the results of the SDEIS and the updated Preferred Alternative, the Major Moves Alternative.

The public hearing will include an open-house session and a public comment period. At the open-house session, maps and information boards outlining the remaining alternatives will be displayed, as well as the presentation of a looping video about the project and recent developments. Project team members will be available to answer questions and address comments.

Following the Federal Register notice of availability, a 45-day comment period will ensue. The public hearing will be held during the comment period. An official public hearing transcript will be developed to document those individuals that spoke at the public hearing.

Comments regarding this SDEIS should be submitted to:

Pankaj Desai
Indiana Department of Transportation
100 North Senate Avenue, Rm N955
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

7.3 Agency Coordination

A letter updating the agencies on the revitalization of the US 31 Hamilton County Project was sent to all previous participating agencies on February 5th, 2008. The letter outlined recent developments and changes in the project area and the current project timeline. Receiving agencies were asked to comment on their relative interest in attending an Interagency Review Meeting prior to the publication of the updated environmental document and analysis. General responses indicated a meeting was not necessary until further progress was made on the project. Responses were received from the following agencies:

- Indiana Department of Natural Resources
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- US EPA Region 5

7.4 Section 106 Consultation

Since publishing the DEIS, another meeting with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) was held to discuss the eligibility of the Hunt House. FHWA in consultation with the SHPO determined that the Hunt House has lost sufficient integrity and therefore is no longer eligible for NHRP. The updated Section 106 documentation will be distributed to consulting parties for a 30 day comment period, and the public will have an opportunity to comment during the 45 day public comment period.