

MUNICIPAL PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM GUIDELINES

It is the Department's policy to keep persons informed and involved when projects are undertaken. This will be accomplished through a public involvement program conducted by the Municipality. This document is intended to provide guidance to Municipalities conducting both regular in person and virtual public involvement meetings. The most recent revisions to this guidance include references to the *CTDOT Public Involvement Update Due to the Corona Virus* document, dated May 2020 (attached below), which is intended to guide the Department and Municipalities through the basic requirements for conducting public outreach through a Virtual Public Involvement Meeting (VPIM) as a result of the recent Corona Virus pandemic. Please note that this document will contain references that only apply to internal Department sponsored VPIM's and not Municipally administered projects. A sample press release and display ad to be used in conjunction with the VPIM are also attached to these guidelines. **The Municipality must post a recording of the VPIM within 7 days of the meeting on their website.** If you have any questions relative to these guidelines, please contact your Department representative on your specific project.

The public involvement program can be advanced prior to application for Federal funding during the scoping phase. It is continued with a Public Informational Meeting after the completion of the Preliminary Design plans. The public must be informed of the meeting by (1) issuing news releases and/or newspaper display advertisement, (2) conducting a formal mailing to parties affected by the project and 3) on the Municipalities website.

News Release and/or Newspaper Display Advertisement

The Municipality is requested to issue a news release and/or a newspaper display advertisement based on the attached samples and have them published in local newspapers having a substantial circulation in the project area. It is recommended that the news release and/or display advertisement be published twice: **once approximately two weeks prior to the public informational meeting, and again approximately one week before the meeting.** Attached is a list of area legislators and agencies that should also be sent a copy of the news release or display advertisement to inform them of the project. **A draft of the news release and/or display advertisement is to be forwarded for review by the Department prior to being published.**

Please forward written verification to the Department that the news release and/or display advertisement were published in area newspapers and sent to all others on the list. In accordance with Federal Title XI requirements, please also email a copy of the public notice to dot.publicmeetings@ct.gov and taffy.womack@ct.gov.

To ensure that minority, low income and Limited English Proficient individuals have an opportunity to fully participate in the public process, targeted engagement efforts should be made as part of your public outreach efforts. Please refer to the maps located on CTDOT's website at: <http://www.ct.gov/dot/cwp/view.asp?A=3529&Q=305564> to determine if there are impacted populations that could be affected by the project or activity.

Meetings should be held in venues which are ADA accessible. Meeting notices should state that the facility is ADA accessible and that individuals needing language assistance may request services by

contacting (your designated contact person in the Department).

AND

Formal Mailing

The Municipality is also requested to perform the formal mailing. Attached is a sample letter which can be used to assist the Municipality in conducting the mailing. **A draft of the letter is to be forwarded for review by the Department prior to being sent.**

To fulfill the intent of the Department's public involvement program, the letter is to be sent, at a minimum, to each affected abutting property owner in the project area and each of the local agencies, commissions, etc., on the attached list. Also, the Municipality should send a copy of the letter to any area agency, commission, public advisory or community group, etc. that may be interested in the project. **It is recommended that the formal mailing be performed approximately one week in advance of the public informational meeting to provide sufficient advance notice.**

The Municipality is to verify in writing that the formal mailing is done, as required by State policy, and provide a list of names and addresses of each abutting property owner and others that are mailed the letter.

Conclusion

It is suggested that a post meeting, two-week comment period be allowed to provide an additional opportunity for written comments to the municipality. After the public informational meeting, the Municipality must notify CTDOT in writing of the results of the meeting. **The Municipality's position with regard to the continuation of the design must also be expressed in the letter** (see sample letter).

SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE for in person Public Involvement Meeting

(CITY or TOWN name), CONNECTICUT - the (CITY or TOWN) of (City or Town name) will conduct a public involvement meeting concerning the proposed (project title) on (day, date). The meeting will begin at (time) pm. Preliminary design has been completed by the (city /town name) and the project is slated for construction under the Surface Transportation Program administered by the Connecticut Department of Transportation.

It is the (City or Town)'s and the State's policy to keep persons informed and involved when such projects are undertaken. It is important that the community share its concerns to assist in the project's development. The (City or Town) will conduct an informational meeting on (date, time, and place).

The purpose of the project is to (brief description of project).

Based upon a preliminary assessment, the construction cost will be approximately \$ (Dollar amount).

The Federal Highway Administration will provide 80% of the construction cost with the (City or Town) providing 20%. (the local cost sharing percentage may vary by Federal program)

Persons with hearing and/or speech disabilities may dial 711 for Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS). There will be a 14-day comment period that follows the meeting, individuals may leave a question or comment via email/phone (preferred) at (Municipal contact official email and or phone)

Language assistance may be requested by contacting the Department's Language Assistance Call Line (860) 594-2109. Requests should be made at least 5 business days prior to the meeting. Language assistance is provided at no cost to the public and efforts will be made to respond to timely requests for assistance.

Anyone interested in obtaining further information or providing input may do so by contacting (Name of designated City of Town official and relevant contact information email/phone).

SAMPLE DISPLAY AD for in person Public Involvement Meeting

You are invited to a

PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING

PROJECT NO. {000-000}
 {PROJECT TITLE}
 (TOWN/CITY)

TO BE HELD (DATE, TIME, LOCATION)

Residents, business owners, commuters, and other interested individuals are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to discuss this project in the {Municipality}

**PLEASE JOIN US ON
(DATE)**

Persons with hearing and/or speech disabilities may dial 711 for Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS). There will be a 14-day comment period that follows the meeting, individuals may leave a question or comment via email/phone (preferred) at (Municipal contact official email and or phone)

Language assistance may be requested by contacting the Department’s Language Assistance Call Line (860) 594-2109. Requests should be made at least 5 business days prior to the meeting. Language assistance is provided at no cost to the public and efforts will be made to respond to timely requests for assistance.

NEWS RELEASE/DISPLAY ADVERTISEMENT DISTRIBUTION

(updated July 2017)

Hon. Richard Blumenthal
U.S. Senator
90 State House Square
10th Floor
Hartford, CT 06103

Connecticut Department of Economic and
Community Development
505 Hudson Street
Hartford, CT 06106-7106

Hon. Christopher Murphy
U.S. Senator
One Constitution Plaza
7th Floor
Hartford, Ct. 06103

Connecticut Council on Environmental Quality
Ct DEEP Building
79 Elm Street
Hartford, CT 06106

(Your U.S. Representative)

Ms. Amy Jackson-Grove
Division Administrator
Federal Highway Administration
628-2 Hebron Avenue, Suite 303
Glastonbury, CT 06033

(Your State Senator)

(Your State Representatives)

CT Construction Industries Association
912 Silas Deane Highway #112
Wethersfield, CT 06109

(Your)
(Council of Governments)

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Concord Park
696 Virginia Road
Concord, MA 01742-2718

Field Office Director
Department of Housing & Urban Development
20 Church Street, 10th Floor
Hartford, CT 06103-3220

State Conservationist
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
344 Merrow Road, Suite A
Tolland, CT 06084-3917

Director of Culture
Connecticut Commission on
Culture and Tourism
One Constitution Plaza, 2nd Floor
Hartford, CT 06103

U.S. Dept. of Interior, Office of the Secretary
Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance
Northeast Region
15 State Street
Suite 400
Boston, MA 02109

SAMPLE LETTER
PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION

(Date)

To: (Abutting Property Owners and Those of Enclosed List)

Dear:

Subject: (Project Title)

The Preliminary design has been completed for the (City or Town) of (Name of City or Town)'s (brief project description).

The (City or Town) will conduct an (virtual-if applicable) informational meeting on (date, time, and place). Deaf and hearing impaired persons wishing to attend this meeting and requiring an interpreter may make arrangements by contacting (contact person) of (City or Town Department) at (***_**_*-****) at least five working days prior to the meeting.

Based upon preliminary assessment, the construction cost will be approximately \$ (dollar amount). The Federal Highway Administration will provide 80% of the construction cost with the (City of Town) providing 20%. (the local cost sharing percentage may vary by Federal program)

It is the (City or Town)'s and the State's policy to keep persons informed and involved when such projects are undertaken. It is important that the community share its concerns with us to assist in the project's development.

Anyone interested in obtaining further information, providing input or requiring language assistance may do so by contacting (name and title of designated municipal official).

Very truly yours,

(name of municipal official)
(title)

cc: Hugh H. Hayward, P.E., Principal Engineer - Highway Design, CTDOT
Steven Degen, Supervisor - Office of Rights of Way, CTDOT

Revised 6/2020

Distribution:

Official, Planning and Zoning Commission

Official, Zoning Board of Appeals

Official, Conservation Commission

Official, Inland Wetland Commission

Chief of Police

Chief of Fire Department

Superintendent of Schools

SAMPLE LETTER TO DOT

{Date}

Mr. Hugh H. Hayward, P.E.
Principal Engineer – Consultant Design-Local Roads
Connecticut Department of Transportation
P.O. Box 317546
Newington, Connecticut 06131-7546

Dear Mr. Hayward

Subject: Project No. **{000-000}**
{Project Title} {Municipality}

To afford full opportunity to the public to comment on the **{Project Title}**, the **{Municipality}** held a public (virtual-if applicable) informational meeting on **{Date}**. The **{Municipality}** has reviewed the comments made by the public and has determined that the project should proceed to final design based on the preliminary design plans that were presented at the public informational meeting.

Comments received will be incorporated into the final design as appropriate.

Should you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact **{name and title of designated municipal official}**.

Very truly yours,

{Head of the municipal government}

SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE for VPIM

(CITY or TOWN name), CONNECTICUT - the (CITY or TOWN) of (City or Town name) will conduct a virtual public involvement meeting concerning the proposed (project title) on (day, date). The meeting will begin at (time) pm. Preliminary design has been completed by (CITY or TOWN name) and the project is slated for construction under the Surface Transportation Program overseen by the Connecticut Department of Transportation.

It is the (City or Town)'s and the State's policy to keep persons informed and involved when such projects are undertaken. It is important that the community share its concerns to assist in the project's development. The (City or Town) will conduct a virtual public informational meeting on (date, time, and specific online platform with contact/phone/login information).

The purpose of the project is to (brief description of project).

Based upon a preliminary assessment, the construction cost will be approximately \$ (Dollar amount).

The Federal Highway Administration will provide 80% of the construction cost with the (City or Town) providing 20%. (the local cost sharing percentage may vary by Federal program)

The public informational meeting is being held to afford a full opportunity for public participation and to allow open discussion of any views and comments the community may have concerning this proposed project.

Persons with limited internet access may request that project information is mailed to them by contacting [Municipal official] by email at [Email] or by phone at [Phone]. (Allow one week for processing and delivery.)

Individuals with limited internet access can listen to the meeting by calling [Video conference call-in phone instructions]. Persons with hearing and/or speech disabilities may dial 711 for Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS). The live streams generally offer closed captioning for the hearing impaired and non-English translation options. There will be a 14-day comment period that follows the meeting, individuals may leave a question or comment via email/phone (preferred) at (Municipal contact official email and or phone)

Language assistance may be requested by contacting the Department's Language Assistance Call Line (860) 594-2109. Requests should be made at least 5 business days prior to the meeting. Language assistance is provided at no cost to the public and efforts will be made to respond to timely requests for assistance.

Anyone interested in obtaining further information or providing input may do so by contacting (Name of designated City of Town official and relevant contact information email/phone).

SAMPLE DISPLAY AD for VPIM

You are invited to a

VIRTUAL PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING

PROJECT NO. {000-000}
 {PROJECT TITLE}
 (TOWN/CITY)

TO BE HELD (DATE, TIME, LOCATION)

Residents, business owners, commuters, and other interested individuals are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to learn about and discuss this project

PLEASE JOIN US ON
(DATE)

The meeting will be live streamed via (online platform)

Individuals with limited internet access can listen to the meeting by calling **[Video conference call in phone instructions]**. Persons with hearing and/or speech disabilities may dial 711 for Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS). The live streams generally offer closed captioning for the hearing impaired and non-English translation options. There will be a **14**-day comment period that follows the meeting, individuals may leave a question or comment via email/phone (preferred) at (Municipal contact official email and or phone)

Language assistance may be requested by contacting the Department’s Language Assistance Call Line (860) 594-2109. Requests should be made at least 5 business days prior to the meeting. Language assistance is provided at no cost to the public and efforts will be made to respond to timely requests for assistance.

CTDOT Public Involvement Update Due to Coronavirus

May 2020

Public involvement requirements are being evaluated and modified as the Connecticut Department of Transportation (Department) works to combat the spread of the Coronavirus.

As of March 14, 2020, per Governor Lamont's Executive Order no.7B, *PROTECTION OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND RESPONSE – FURTHER SUSPENSION OR MODIFICATION OF STATUTES*, ("Governor's E.O. 7B") the requirement to make project documents available at public view locations/physical locations and the state requirement to hold in-person open meetings have been suspended.

Public meetings can be held remotely by conference call, videoconference or other technology, provided that: 1) the public has the ability to view or listen to each meeting or proceeding in real time, by telephone, video, or other technology; 2) any such meeting or proceeding is recorded or transcribed, and such recording or transcript shall be posted on the agency's website within seven (7) days of the meeting or proceeding, and made available within a reasonable time in the agency's office; 3) the required notice and agenda for each meeting or proceeding is posted on the agency's website and shall include information about how the meeting will be conducted and how the public can access it; 4) any materials relevant to matters on the agenda, including but not limited to materials related to specific applications, if applicable, shall be submitted to the agency a minimum of twenty four (24) hours prior and posted to the agency's website for public inspection prior to, during, and after the meeting, and any exhibits to be submitted by members of the public shall, to the extent feasible, also be submitted to the agency a minimum of twenty-four (24) hours prior to the meeting and posted to the agency's website for public inspection prior to, during, and after the meeting; and 5) all speakers taking part in any such meeting or proceeding shall clearly state their name and title, if applicable, before speaking on each occasion that they speak.

Below are procedures the Department will follow to ensure they meet the Governor's EO 7B as well as Department and FHWA/FTA requirements for Public Informational Meetings required for projects receiving federal-aid related to public involvement. This document does not cover requirements for Public Hearings required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as States are still awaiting direction. Projects requiring Scoping and Scoping meetings under the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA) should be coordinated on an individual basis with the Department's Office of Environmental Planning until set procedures for such meetings can be established with the Office of Policy and Management (OPM).

Planning, Design, Construction, Survey, Right of Way, Maintenance, Public Transportation projects

For federal-aid projects requiring public involvement, all pertinent project documents are to be made available online for the public to access. For Department projects, officials will post to or link from the respective webpages.

Advertise the Public Informational Meeting

- Identify Title VI and environmental Justice Populations
- Publish two legal notices or advertisements in at least one newspaper of general circulation (https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEEP/Permits_and_Licenses/newspaperspdf.pdf?la=en) to advertise the project informational meeting. The first posting should occur two weeks prior to the public informational meeting scheduled and the second posting should occur one week before the public informational meeting. If Limited English Proficient (LEP) populations have been identified within the project/service area, publish the meeting notice in non-English media (print, TV, radio, website, etc.).
- If the project is municipally administered, the notice must be on the municipality's website
- Mail/email notices to key stakeholders, adjacent property owners, and community-based organizations found on the Department's website (<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DOT/documents/ddbe/CommunityBasedOrganizationsListing09092015docx.docx?la=en>)
- Ensure project documents are available online (do not list any physical viewing location in your notice) on both the DOT's and the municipality's websites, if applicable.
- Contact the Department's Information Systems office to establish a webpage and dedicated project email address to receive comments if needed. Example of email address: DOT.PROJECTxxxx-xxxx@ct.gov. The webpage should be established prior to noticing the project and should be removed after the comment period has concluded.
- The required notice and agenda for each meeting or proceeding must be posted on the Department's calendar/websites and shall include information about how the meeting will be conducted and how the public can access the meeting and the pertinent project documents. Having the meeting on the Department's calendar automatically includes the meeting on the Secretary of the State's calendar. The meeting notice should state clearly that the meeting will be recorded.
- For certain municipally administered projects, the required notice and agenda for each meeting should be posted on the municipality's website and shall include information about how the meeting will be conducted and how the public can access the meeting and the pertinent project documents. Again, the meeting notice should state clearly that the meeting will be recorded.
- Your notice MUST include a statement that offers the public the opportunity to request project information be mailed to them. This is very important as we cannot assume everyone has reliable internet service and/or access. The statement in your legal notice/advertisement should read "Persons

with limited internet access or similar needs may request project information be mailed to them by contacting XXXXXX, Phone Number and Email address”. (allow one week for processing and delivery)

- Your notice MUST include a statement that offers the public free language assistance. The notice should include contact information and procedures for requesting the services, including the deadline for requests. The following paragraph must be included in all public notices.

“Language assistance can be provided at no cost to the public and efforts will be made to respond to timely requests for assistance. Persons needing language assistance may request assistance by contacting the Department’s Language Assistance Line at (860) 594-2109. Requests should be made at least five (5) business days prior to the meeting. . Individuals with limited internet access can listen to the meeting by calling [Conference Call-in Phone] and entering the Participant Code when prompted: xxxxxx. Persons with hearing and/or speech disabilities may dial 711 for Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS). The MS Teams Live Event offers closed-captioning for the hearing impaired and non-English translation options. A recording of the presentation will be posted to YouTube following the event and closed captioning (including non-English translation options) will be available at that time. Visit the project webpage for options for Apple users. During the Q&A session and the 14 day comment period that follows the meeting, individuals may leave a question or comment via email (preferred) at DOTProjectProjectNumber@ct.gov. Individuals may also leave a voicemail question or comment by calling (860) 944-1111. Please reference the project in your voicemail.

- Your notice MUST include instructions on how to access the project webpage. Also include information on the duration that the webpage will be available: Example:

“A project webpage is available which contains pertinent information about the project and contains a link to the upcoming Virtual Public Information Meeting (V-PIM) live streaming event. The webpage will remain available throughout the [14] day comment period following the meeting.”

- Your notice MUST include language on how individuals can access a recording of the VPIM. Example:
“When the recording of the virtual public meeting is uploaded, you can find it in the list of DOT virtual public meetings here: <https://portal.ct.gov/dot/general/CTDOT-VPIM-Library>” **On Municipally administered projects the town must also provide a similar location on their website.**

- Project information to be mailed (upon request) should include project description, location plan, details on the comment period (length, start date), potential impacts to environmental resources and ROW, contact information, etc.
- Presentation materials pertinent to the meeting objectives shall be posted ONLINE via a project webpage on the Department website. A project-specific email address must be included on the webpage that people can use for commenting during the comment period. (14 day minimum) and the

start date of the comment period (the date of the Public Information Meeting), as well as the methods in which comments can be submitted. Every Public Information Meeting (or other open meeting conducted under the Governor's E.O. 7B) should begin with a statement advising everyone that the meeting is being recorded. To the extent that there is public comment during the meeting after some presentation, the same statement should be made again before the public comments begins.

Holding a Public Information Meeting

- List process to use – CTDOT will be using TEAMS Live event
- Town official will generally want to kick-off the meeting, so coordinate with the official on how to be included in the meeting.
 - Closed caption, translation function
 - Live streaming on Facebook, YouTube or other system
 - Suggest pre-recording the presentation by the design team, which is always in advance of the open Q &A. This will minimize possible technical issues.
- Address how public comments or questions will be handled live
- Prepare guidelines for the public to participate

Post Meeting Requirements & Documentation

- As detailed in the online presentation materials, the public should be offered a minimum of 14 calendar days (with additional days provided for more complex projects) in which to submit comments and the period should begin on the date of the Public Information Meeting.
- The Department shall consider all public comments in the decision-making process. The Department should review public comments to determine if a response is required.
- Project Manager or Lead Designer shall document the public outreach process on the attached checklist and keep this information as part of the project record.

- All virtual public meetings must be recorded and posted on the CTDOT website within 7 days of the meeting date at <https://portal.ct.gov/dot/general/CTDOT-VPIM-Library>.