

2 PUBLIC OUTREACH AND AGENCY COORDINATION

Following the ECTS's extensive public process over a large and diverse study area, the challenge facing the public involvement team during the Transitional Analysis was to re-engage a wide range of key stakeholders and constituencies in a short time period. In order to do so, the project team employed a variety of engagement strategies throughout the duration of the project.

2.1 STEERING COMMITTEE

The Steering and Regional Stakeholders Committee was organized at the outset of the Study. The Committee reconvened planning and transportation agencies along with City, County, and State representatives. The following organizations were represented on the Steering Committee:

- Port Authority of Allegheny County
- Westmoreland County Transit Authority
- Allegheny County Department of Economic Development
- Federal Transit Administration
- Pittsburgh Department of City Planning
- Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
- Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission
- Commonwealth of Pennsylvania House of Representatives

In response to widespread interest in transit improvements in the eastern corridor, other stakeholders were invited to attend the Steering Committee meetings.

2.2 ELECTED OFFICIALS

Federal, state, county, and municipal officials were invited to attend both rounds of public outreach: the targeted first round and the more broadly advertised second round. Officials received briefing packets prior to the public meetings that highlighted the information to be discussed at the meetings. In addition, a special briefing was held for public officials at the outset of the first round of public involvement. The briefing was convened in Monroeville, a location chosen for its central location in the corridor.

2.3 TARGETED/PUBLIC OUTREACH

Round One: Targeted Briefings

Three targeted briefings were convened across the study area early in the study process. The meetings were geared to those who had participated in the Eastern Corridor Transit Study. The presentation was intended to be a refresher, to review the ECTS alternatives. During the ECTS, and in deference to the diverse array of stakeholders and issues within the Study corridor, the study team had convened five geographically based working groups to represent the following areas:

- City of Pittsburgh
- Allegheny Valley
- Eastern Allegheny County Suburbs
- Monongahela Valley
- Westmoreland County

Representatives of organizations and agencies which participated in the ECTS corridor working groups were invited to attend one of three ECTS-TA meetings, held in Oakmont, Irwin, and Oakland. Each of the public briefings included a 45-minute presentation followed by a 45-minute question and answer session. The same information was presented at each of the three briefings.

In addition to the public officials and 265 invited working group members, the briefings were advertised on the study website and in the following publications:

- Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
- Pittsburgh Tribune-Review
- McKeesport Daily News
- New Pittsburgh Courier
- Valley News Dispatch

Public service announcements were also distributed to local radio and television stations.

At each targeted briefing and on the study website, presentation materials, a newsletter and comment forms were available. On the comment forms, participants were asked to prioritize the study corridors (1 = highest priority and 5 = lowest priority) and describe their reasons for assigning first priority. The alternatives under consideration were:

- Downtown Pittsburgh to Arnold along the Allegheny Valley
- Downtown Pittsburgh to Greensburg along Norfolk Southern right-of-way
- Downtown to Oakland and points east along the Spine Line Corridor (including Bus Rapid Transit through Oakland)
- Swissvale to Monroeville as an extension of the East Busway
- Downtown Pittsburgh to McKeesport and Etna along the CSX right-of-way

The responses showed a preliminary prioritization, with the alternatives receiving the following combined totals of first and second priority rankings (rated “1” or “2” on the comment forms):

East Busway	4
Norfolk Southern	6
Downtown-Oakland	9
Allegheny Valley	11
Mon Valley/North-South	3

Comments were collected at the briefings, via email, fax, phone, mail and through the project website.

Round Two: Public Input Meetings

Near the end of the study process, five public input meetings were convened to present an opportunity for citizens to support the alternatives that they believed would be the most beneficial for the Eastern Corridor. At the meetings, comparative evaluation characteristics of the ECTS alternatives were presented and the public opinion of the

alternatives was recorded. In order to ensure broad-based participation throughout the study area, the meetings were distributed so that one meeting was held in each of the alternative corridors. The meetings were conducted in the following locations, agreed upon by the project management staff and Steering Committee:

- Greensburg
- Oakland
- East Pittsburgh
- McKeesport
- New Kensington

Each of the public input meetings included a 45-minute presentation followed by a 45-minute question and answer session. The same information was presented at each of the meetings.

As in the targeted briefings, advertisements were placed on the study website and in the five local newspapers. Press releases were sent to the print media and public service announcements were distributed to radio and television stations. In addition to the public officials and working group members, a database of about 450 organizations received invitations to the public input meetings. The total recorded attendance at the five meetings was 128.

Once again, at each public input meeting, comment forms were distributed. Participants were asked to prioritize the alternatives and list their reasons for assigning first priority. An analysis of the comment form summary shows the relative priorities of the alternatives. The numbers below reflect those alternatives which received first or second priority on the comment forms collected at meetings, mailed, emailed, submitted on the web site or telephoned:

East Busway	27
Norfolk Southern	35
Downtown - Oakland	49
Allegheny Valley	126
Mon Valley/North - South	33

In addition to the comment forms received from interested participants throughout the study area, the study team received petitions with 2,368 signatures from residents of the Alle-Kiski valley supporting commuter rail service between New Kensington/Arnold and Pittsburgh. The Allegheny Valley Commuter Rail is also actively supported by the Alle-Kiski Coalition, a bi-partisan group of elected officials and community leaders that has coordinated more than 40 communities in the Alle-Kiski Valley to support local transportation projects.

2.4 COORDINATION WITH OTHER STUDY EFFORTS

Throughout the project, the Study team and Steering Committee have been committed to planning within the context of other on-going studies. When appropriate, those involved in other initiatives have been invited to attend the Steering and Regional Stakeholders Committee. The Steering Committee devoted one meeting early in the study to the presentation and discussion of other studies. Overviews of the following studies and initiatives were presented.

Oakland Transportation Study

The area of Oakland, with its universities, hospitals, civic buildings, and neighborhoods, has continued to experience development and redevelopment. Many Oakland institutions are also expanding to new areas outside of central Oakland where additional land is available. Oakland is the second largest employment center in Southwest Pennsylvania. The Allegheny Conference on Community Development has undertaken a transportation study to address the transportation needs concomitant with the growth of Oakland. The Study, currently in its draft stage, is intended to address both issues of regional access and the trips that occur within Oakland.

Six-Point Plan

In early spring of 2006, Allegheny County Executive Dan Onorato convened a Transportation Action Team to identify previous studies and make recommendations on short, medium, and long-term transportation initiatives for Allegheny County. The Action Team will make recommendations to the County Executive in the following areas:

- Providing rapid transit from Downtown to Oakland
- Utilizing existing rail corridors for passenger service
- Exploring commercial use of busways
- Fostering transit oriented development/economic development sites
- Providing rapid transit from Downtown to the Pittsburgh International Airport
- Exploring the creation of a regional transportation authority

Mass Transit Alternatives

During the 2005 Pittsburgh Mayoral election, mayoral candidate Michael Lamb proposed a series of mass transit alternatives to improve transportation between Oakland and Downtown. The alternatives were based on three principles:

- Great cities have great transit
- Improvements need to work with existing infrastructure
- Short term solutions such as transit service by self-propelled rail vehicles on existing rights-of-way. One example of this is the Colorado Rail Car, which provided demonstration service on the Allegheny Valley Railroad and Norfolk Southern Railroad in April of 2004.

Councilman Peduto: Transportation Priorities

Pittsburgh City Councilman William Peduto represents City Council District 8 which stretches from North and West Oakland on the West through Bloomfield, Friendship, Shadyside, Squirrel Hill, and Point Breeze to the eastern border of the City. The District is the home to universities, hospitals, and other key institutions as well as some of Pittsburgh's most vibrant neighborhoods. In outlining his "Priorities for a New Pittsburgh," Councilman Peduto stressed the importance of "transportation priorities for sustainable growth." He recognizes the importance of filling the gaps to connect existing infrastructure and stresses thinking both locally and regionally. On the local level, as the institutions of the east end of Pittsburgh continue to grow as job centers, it is particularly important to connect these institutions to each other. On the regional level, it is imperative to make connections across rivers, such as the North Shore Connector, and to link to neighboring communities, such as along the Allegheny Valley.

Transit Oriented Communities and the Regional Transit Vision

The Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission and Port Authority of Allegheny County, in cooperation with transit operators in Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Lawrence, Washington and Westmoreland Counties, recently released the Regional Strategic Transit Visioning Study. The Transit Vision proposes a range of transit services, major transit investments and features that would connect residents to places of recreation, education, and employment across Southwestern Pennsylvania. The Study notes that successful implementation of the vision will rest on the development of transit-oriented communities and developments across the region. Transit-oriented communities have eight key characteristics:

- Walkable with pedestrian-friendly streets
- Mixed use to maximize activity near transit
- Appropriately dense to support retail needs and transit
- Pedestrian scaled
- Intermodal with connections to bicycles, pedestrians, transit, and automobiles
- Coordinated to complement uses in other communities
- Diverse, providing a range of housing options
- Designed to encourage transit usage.

North Shore Connector

The North Shore Connector project will extend Port Authority's Light Rail Transit System, the T, 1.2 miles from the Gateway Subway Station in Downtown Pittsburgh underneath Stanwix Street and the Allegheny River – in twin bored tunnels below the river - to the North Shore. The Port Authority Board of Directors recently awarded the contract for the construction of the light rail transit tunnels.

The North Shore Connector is a significant regional investment intended to support residential, business, education, entertainment, and cultural uses of Downtown Pittsburgh and the North Shore.

2.5 NEWSLETTER

Shortly after the outset of the project, the project team prepared a newsletter to serve as a project fact sheet. The newsletter, which was distributed in hard copy as well as posted on the website, explained the Transitional Analysis process and defined the term Locally Preferred Alternative. The newsletter provided graphic and verbal explanations of the five alternatives and provided a schedule of public briefings to encourage public involvement. A copy of the newsletter is available in Appendix A. A second newsletter will be published following release of the study final report, that lists the LPAs, the criteria used for their selection and a discussion of next steps.

2.6 WEBSITE

Throughout the duration of the study, a website for the ECTS-TA project (www.spcregion.org/ECTS) was hosted on SPC's website. It provided an avenue for easy access to a broad range of key documents. The general information page of the website provided the study description and background, an overview of the study process and a discussion of frequently asked questions. The public outreach section announced upcoming outreach meetings and made available materials from the round one and round two public outreach presentations. All printed materials distributed at outreach meetings also directed interested parties with internet access to view the

website for additional information. Comment forms were also provided on the website for downloading or submission via the website. Finally, it allowed easy access to resource documents such as the ECTS Final Report and Purpose and Needs Report.

Figure 2-1: Study Website

