

9.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND AGENCY COORDINATION

9.1 Public Involvement Program Summary

To encourage public participation and ensure that all groups are represented equally throughout the study process, a Public Involvement Program was developed for the US 51 Study at Clinton. The public refers to the full range of interest groups such as citizens, businesses, local organizations, public interest groups, and any other affected parties interested in participating. It was the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet's (KYTC) and the consultant team's desire to engage the public in determining the overall direction of the study, as well as in advising the KYTC in the decision making process.

The public was asked to give input to the KYTC at various points during the study. Input was requested on the following:

1. Identification of Study Issues and Goals
2. Development of the Range of Improvement Alternatives to be Considered
3. Evaluation of the Alternatives
4. Selection of a Preferred Alternative

The process and methods for public involvement are outlined in this chapter. The results and feedback from implementation of the public involvement are provided throughout the entire report. For example, public input on the alternatives development is included in that section of the report and feedback on the alternatives is integrated into the alternatives evaluation sections.

Specific public involvement methods used included a Project Work Group, stakeholder meetings, public workshop / meetings, community outreach activities, and other publicity efforts. This section describes each of these activities in more detail. Meeting minutes for these meetings are included in Appendix E in the back of the report.

Project Work Group – A Project Work Group (PWG) was created for the US 51 Study at Clinton. The PWG was comprised of landowners, business representatives, local residents, community leaders, and government officials. The members of the PWG were selected to represent the various stakeholders that would have an interest in the study. They were to work with the project team which is comprised of KYTC Central Office staff, KYTC District Office staff, Purchase Area Development District staff, and consultant staff.

The purpose of the PWG was to provide input and feedback to the project team regarding key project issues and decisions. They helped the project team by putting forward a wide range of ideas, opinions, and suggestions. Three PWG meetings were held during the study. Each of these meetings is described below.

- Project Work Group Meeting #1 – This meeting was held on April 29, 2002. Items that were presented and discussed included the study process and schedule, study background information, public involvement program, and study issues and goals. Feedback on the last two items played a prominent role in the meeting.
- Project Work Group Meeting #2 – The second meeting was held on August 22, 2002. A portion of this meeting was used to review the previous PWG meeting, the work that had been completed to date, existing conditions data, and project issues and goals. The rest of the meeting was devoted to discussing the three-level evaluation process and the range of potential alternatives to be included in the first level of analysis.
- Project Work Group Meeting #3 – A third PWG meeting was held on May 12, 2003. The project goals and study process were reviewed along with existing and future traffic conditions. A brief presentation of each of the three analysis levels was made, followed by a discussion of the preliminary findings and possible recommendations. Potential short and long term recommendations were also discussed.

Stakeholder Meetings and Information Table Event – Two meetings were held with different stakeholder groups. A meeting with the business stakeholders in the study area took place on June 27, 2002. A meeting with neighborhood stakeholders was held on July 12, 2002. The stakeholder meetings were conducted in the community to gather input on the project. This second meeting was specifically aimed at gaining input from the minority community. The attendees to these meetings were involved to gather their thoughts, input and opinions about various project related issues. A special information table event was also held to gather input from the broader community. This event included setting up an information table (staffed by KYTC and PB) at the courthouse in the morning and at the local grocery store in the afternoon. Information sheets and comment forms were passed out at this event.

Meetings with Local Officials – Public officials' briefings were held to introduce local officials to the study and to inform them regarding the study process. An initial meeting was held on February 22, 2002 with the Hickman County Judge Executive. Subsequent meetings were held with the Hickman County Fiscal Court and the Clinton City Council on March 18, 2002 and April 1, 2002, respectively. The meetings were held to inform those present about the study and to encourage them and their constituents to be involved.

Public Meetings (Open House Workshops) – Two public meeting were held in the study area. Key goals for these meetings were to gather public input on the issues and alternatives to be considered and then to obtain feedback on the final refined alternatives before a final recommendation was made. Each of these meetings is described below.

- Public Meeting #1 – This meeting was held on September 9, 2002. The main purpose of the workshop was to 1) inform the public regarding the study; 2) obtain feedback from the public on the study goals and issues, and 3) receive input on the alternatives to be evaluated. This was done through the presentation of the study area, existing conditions, project issues and goals, and possible alternatives. The public was asked to provide written feedback regarding the above items. They were also encouraged to offer additional alternatives for consideration in the study.
- Public Meeting #2 – This meeting was held on June 30, 2003. The purpose of the meeting was to present to the public all of the analysis work completed up to that time and to present and request feedback on the final round of refined alternatives prior to KYTC making a final decision on the project.

These public meetings utilized an open forum format after a brief presentation on relevant study topics and issues. Take home / leave behind materials and a series of display stations were utilized during each meeting. The purpose of this approach was to facilitate an environment of open communication between all in attendance. All attendees were encouraged to provide their thoughts and opinions on the comment forms provided at each meeting. Project team representatives were also present to discuss all aspects of the study.

9.2 Agency Coordination

An agency mailing was prepared at the outset of the study. The mailing was prepared by PB and sent by the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet to various local, state and federal agencies to obtain input early in the study process. A copy of the mailing and the list of recipients are both included in Appendix D for reference. Supplemental letters were sent by Third Rock Consultants to gather data from four specific agencies for the environmental overview. These letters are also included in Appendix D.

Responses were received from a variety of agencies. Many of the responses indicated that their agency did not anticipate any significant project related issues in the study area. Others outlined standard requirements and guidance related to project planning, design, and construction. A third set of agencies did have specific concerns or issues that they wanted to have considered in the study. The agencies with specific concerns or issues included:

- United States Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service
- Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources
- National Park Service
- The Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission
- MeadWestvaco
- Mayor of Clinton, Tommy Kimbro

A brief summary of concerns and comments related to the project from these agencies is provided below. Copies of all responses to the agency mailing are included in Appendix D.

Both the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources expressed concern regarding the potential for impacts to the federally endangered Indiana bat that is known to have a summer maternity habitat in this area of western Kentucky. The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources suggested that the project should examine the impact on this species. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service requested an assessment of impacts and recommended submitting a copy of the assessment and finding to them for review.

In addition, the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources provided a list of rare and/or endangered species known to occur in the study area. They also expressed concern regarding the potential for wetlands impacts in the study area.

The National Park Service (NPS) expressed interest regarding the preservation and protection of historic resources associated with the Trail of Tears. While the currently designated routes for the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail do not pass through the study area, NPS indicated that there may be trail segments in this part of Kentucky that are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. In particular, the Benge Route has been tentatively identified as crossing Hickman and Carlisle Counties. NPS recognized the difficulty in assessing impacts during the early planning process, but requested consideration as an interested party to the project development process. They asked to review cultural resource reports and that archeological testing or historical investigations account for the possibility of Trail of Tears associated resources.

The Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission (KSNPC) reviewed their Natural Heritage Program Database and determined that five occurrences of plants or animals monitored by KSNPC are reported as occurring in the project area. Of particular concern is the relict darter. The Bayou de Chien drainage supports the only known relict darter population in the world. They requested that stream alterations or disturbances be avoided or held to a minimum. Also, construction activities should be completed during periods of low flow. A written erosion control plan should be developed, implemented, and monitored periodically to ensure that all erosion control measures are functioning as planned. Finally, they request that heavy equipment should not be used in the Bayou de Chien or any of its tributaries.

A letter requesting input on the study was also sent to MeadWestvaco which is a paper mill in Wickliffe, Kentucky. They haul wood products through both Bardwell and Clinton, but have a heavier truck flow through Bardwell. According to MeadWestvaco's letter, their primary concern is safety, and they support local residents deciding which alternative is best for the town. They also stated that a bypass would provide some benefits in terms of speed and time, but for the hauling distance, the time savings are not very significant.

The mayor of Clinton, Tommy Kimbro, also responded to the request for input on the study. In his response, he provided his thoughts on some of the preliminary alternatives for improvements to US 51 through Clinton. He expressed concern about property impacts associated with Alternatives 2 and 3, and did not think they would be viable choices because of potential impacts. He did not favor Alternatives 4A or 4B since both alternatives were shown as impacting natural wetland and floodplain areas. As for Alternatives 5 and 7, he noted that there was the potential for major impacts to the residential areas and would limit future development of the city. The alternatives he viewed as most promising were Alternatives 6A and 6B. He thought that they were the least costly (in terms of impacts) and would be the most desirable options for improvements to US 51 in Clinton.