**Innovative and Interactive Public Involvement for the 21st Century**

Transportation plans and projects can be very complex, involving a wide array of policies, demographics, data sets, and tools. Transportation professionals in communities of all sizes are eager to find interactive ways to engage the public. This workshop introduces storytelling and graphics as ways to create effective dialogue on complex topics. We will share ideas for public engagement for long-range planning, project prioritization, business corridor plans, bicycle and transit plans and road usage charges.

The workshop is designed to provide opportunity for participants to learn about specific tools, techniques and case study examples (US 68 in Green & Metcalfe Counties Study and the US31W/KY 446 Study) of interactive communication about complex transportation concepts.

The first half of the workshop (about 20 minutes) will involve a panel discussion that will cover a range of contemporary challenges and opportunities for interactive communication from the perspectives of KYTC Central Office, District Office staff, and Project Consultants.

The panel discussion will be followed by a hands-on activity (approximately 20 minutes) in which workshop attendees will experience two interactive tools.

## Key insights for participants:

1. The **complexity** is not just about the technical aspects of a project but can easily be about the large number of alternative or improvement choices. This is especially prevalent in the development of Corridor Plans and Long Range Transportation plans in which the public is presented with a multitude of viable options that can easily overwhelm effective analysis and not produce reasonable recommendations.
2. **Good visuals** are vital to the success of engaging the public in complex concepts. A picture is literally worth a thousand words of text and particularly if the visual representation of the improvement or corridor is overlaid upon an aerial photograph which ties it to reality. Additional information such as site photos of the existing conditions, typical sections of what is existing and what is proposed, and any visual representation of concerns (number of crashes, fatalities, injuries, traffic volumes, etc.) can be very helpful in cultivating the understanding of what is and what might be.
3. Know your audience. Tailor your information to meet their level of understanding and the ways in which they are comfortable in communicating. No one usually wants to be the first to mark on the map or place their dots so you might have to “seed the field” to encourage participation. Know the difference between lecturing and discussing and find ways to break that wall between your project team and the public.

## Summary

OVERVIEW

This workshop includes a brief presentation and then an interactive segment in which two techniques are applied. The presentation focuses upon the lessons learned from the engagement of the public and stakeholder groups in the identification and prioritization of multiple transportation improvements along a rural 22-mile long corridor in southern Kentucky, the prioritization of top health concerns in the development of a regional community health plan, and the statewide engagement concerning future transportation concerns and preferences.

The interactive segment is titled “We All Scream for Ice Cream” in which participants will collectively use the sticker dot exercise to select their preferred and least preferred flavor of ice cream from a list of complicated flavors and then apply the “penny for your thoughts” method in the “purchase” of a preferred container (cone or cup) and ice cream toppings.

STICKER DOT EXERCISE

The US 68 Planning Study in southern Kentucky generated several challenges to the study team in their efforts to engage the public and stakeholders in the selection of preferred spot improvements along 22 miles of narrow, two-lane roadway across two very rural counties and a preferred US 68 connector for the small town of Greensburg and most recently with the US31W/KY 446 Study. The US 68 team was faced with how to effectively communicate 13 potential spot improvements and three connector options to the community in order to determine priorities in such a way as not to overwhelm the participants and therefore create confusion and the inability to reach a meaningful decision. The traditional paper survey and an electronic version were offered to the public, but the most active engagement occurred during the public meetings in which attendees were provided a limited number of sticker dots for “voting” for the presented spot improvements. The initial round of public meetings early in the study illustrated that though well attended, these meetings did not effectively engage the public in communication about the US 68 corridor and the possible connector. Actually a very limited number of surveys were submitted in comparison with the number of attendees. During the second phase of the study, the use of the “sticker dot” exercise was instituted to address the issue of “we have them here, now how do we get them to talk to us in a way that can be quantified.” The US31W/KY 446 Planning Study which currently underway is also utilizing this tool to communicate the issues and concerns and then preferred improvements in the study area that includes an existing rural interchange that is now in the midst of an urban setting along with a variety of mobility and safety issues of the connecting streets and commercial & industrial entrances within the study area.

“PENNY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS” EXERCISE

The “penny for your thoughts” exercise is another technique in which to effectively engage the public in the analysis of multiple options. This exercise is effective when the public is confronted with a myriad of solutions or amenities. Through spending a finite amount of funds toward a massive list of transportation improvement options, this exercise also provides a way for the public to experience the reality of so many needs and so little resources which is an effective segue into the discussion of transportation funding (how can we raise the level of funds to meet the list of needs?). This technique has been used during the engagement process with focus groups during the development of the 2014 Kentucky Long Range Transportation Plan and in the determination of the health concern priorities for the Barren River Community Health Plan.

## Web Links

<http://transportation.ky.gov/YourTurn/Pages/US-68-Scoping-Study-main.aspx>

<http://transportation.ky.gov/YourTurn/Pages/US-31W-Corridor-and-KY-446-Ramps-Study.aspx>

**Workshop Panelists & Facilitators**

**Brian Aldridge, Stantec**

Brian Aldridge graduated from UK with a B.S. in Civil Engineering in 1998 and a M.S. in Civil Engineering in 1999. He was a KYTC scholarship recipient and worked for the Division of Highway Design and the Division of Environmental Analysis. Brian joined Stantec in 2004 and is currently Deputy Department Manager for Transportation Planning. In that capacity, he serves as Project Manager for various transportation studies and leads their Phase I design group. Brian and his wife, Sara, live in Simpsonville with their 5-year old twins, Ethan and Ellen.

**Charlie Allen, KYTC District 4**

Charlie Allen is a 1996 graduate of the University of Kentucky with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Civil Engineering.  He has been with KYTC District 4 in Elizabethtown for over 19 years serving in numerous roles including Assistant Resident Engineer, District Materials Engineer for 10 years, Permits and Traffic Section Supervisor and currently as the Planning Section Supervisor. His current duties include planning and developing projects in several areas including highway safety and local government.  Charlie resides in Greensburg with his wife and two children.

**Annette Coffey, Qk4**

Annette Coffiey is currently a Senior Transportation Engineer in Qk4’s Planning Department.  She retired from KYTC in 2005 as Director of the Division of Planning.   Annette is a graduate of the University of Kentucky and resides in Frankfort with her husband Steve; and is the proud parent of Logan, a Masters of Accounting Candidate at UK, and Sawyer, a Public Relations senior at WKU.

**Sreenu Gutti, KYTC Central Office, Division of Planning**

Sreenu Gutti currently works as an Engineer for the Division of Planning’s Strategic Planning Branch at the Central Office.  Sreenu holds a Master of Science degree in Civil Engineering from the Louisiana State University.  Sreenu was born in India.  He moved to the United States after graduating with a Bachelor of Engineering degree in Civil Engineering.  Before moving to Kentucky, Sreenu worked for the Minnesota Department of Transportation and other private consultants.  Sreenu resides in Lexington with his wife and two children.

**Shane Mckenzie, CO Planning**

Shane is a Transportation Engineer for the Division of Planning in Central Office on the Strategic Corridor Team. Shane has worked for KYTC on the Corridor Team since 2013. Prior to KYTC Shane was an Assistant City Engineer in Washington State and a Project Manager for CH2M. Shane graduated from the University of Portland in Oregon in 1999 and lives in Versailles, KY with husband Mark.

**Jeff Moore, KYTC District 3**

Jeff Moore is a 1985 graduate of Western Kentucky University with a degree in Civil Engineering Technology and has been employed with the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, District Three in Bowling Green, Kentucky, since May, 1985. In 2012, Jeff was assigned to co-manage the update of the Kentucky Long Range Statewide Transportation Plan. From 2005 to 20014, he served as a member of the Transportation Research Board’s Committee on Planning for Small and Medium Sized Communities and is currently a member of the Committee on Public Involvement and the Committee on Environmental Justice.