

I-66 Bypass Public Involvement Plan

Project Item Number: 8-59.1

County and Route: Pulaski, New Route

Project Description: Somerset Northern Bypass is a 4-lane, limited access highway that will alleviate congestion in and around Somerset. The bypass extends from the Louie B. Nunn Parkway west of Somerset and heads north bypassing Somerset. It then intersects with Ky 80 east of Somerset in the Barnesburg community.

Project Manager Contact information (Cabinet): David Beattie (current), (606) 677-4017, or Joe Cox (retired)

Project Manager Contact Information (Consultant): Mike Bruce (Design) and Paul Biggers (Environmental) both of JDQ, (859) 277-3639

Other contacts: David Kratt -Central Office, 502-564-3280; Cathi Blair - Environmental Coordinator, (606) 677-4017

Approximate dates: May 2000

Comments (number of people reached, effectiveness of the technique, what you would do differently, etc.): The PIP is used mainly by KYTC and their consultants. It is good to prepare what type of PI may be needed prior to starting the project. Just remember that a PIP can be and should be flexible.

**PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN
PROPOSAL**

**I-66 BYPASS
NORTH OF
SOMERSET, KENTUCKY**

Prepared By
Johnson, Depp & Quisenberry

May, 2000

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Introduction

This document describes how a Public Involvement Plan would be prepared for the proposed project. The structure of the plan, techniques that would be applied, and some basic aspects of how the public involvement program would be conducted also are included.

Why do public involvement? Highway planning decisions often benefit from public involvement. A technically sound plan often becomes a better application by listening to the community and making adjustments. In addition, highway planning decisions are more likely to be accepted and supported by community members who can see that they have had an active role in being part of the planning process.

Listening to the community is the first step. Showing the community that the state and federal highway agencies are willing to respond to concerns establishes a foundation for improved understanding, even when community members do not always agree with the outcome. Good technical decisions that have not involved community members in the planning process are more likely to be opposed by the public.

The Public Involvement Plan for the I-66 Somerset Bypass should be designed to develop and maintain a dialogue between interested, affected, and potentially affected area residents and the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet and its contractors. Through this dialogue, informed consent can be achieved to support an alignment that will link the Cumberland Parkway with Kentucky Route 80 (KY 80) while bypassing downtown Somerset.

What is Public Involvement?

Public involvement is **two-way communication** between the public and KYTC. This dialogue identifies and addresses public concerns before project decisions are made. Ideally, public involvement should begin early in the planning process and continue through design, construction, and operations.

While every public inquiry and concern should be addressed, not every recommendation from the public can be incorporated into the highway design. Where changes are made, the public should be informed of that fact. When the KYTC does not make suggested changes, the technical, legal, or policy basis for not following a recommendation should be explained to the public.

Effective public involvement programs are distinguished by how the needs of community members are proactively handled to prevent and minimize misunderstandings. A customized plan using the most appropriate mix of

public involvement tools and applications can provide the KYTC with a greater ability to respond to specific public needs. Exercising this ability requires:

1. **support from upper management** at both the KYTC Central Office and the District Office,
2. **close coordination** between the KYTC and its contractors, and
3. staff who have **knowledge and experience in public involvement matters.**

Coordination

Johnson, Depp & Quisenberry's Project Manager and team of Public Involvement Specialists would work closely with the KYTC Central Office and District Office staff to prepare a customized Public Involvement Plan. Because legal, technical, and policy requirements must be met, this coordination is especially important. Inter-related parts of the planning process, starting with the initial development of the engineering design and Environmental Impact Statement and continuing through to the Record of Decision, should be integrated with the Public Involvement Plan.

The entire planning process, including the sequence and relationship of the various phases, should be communicated in a manner that is understood by the public. The KYTC and its contractors should work together to provide information, manage issues, and respond to concerns so the public will feel that they truly are being involved in a process that is open and credible.

Step One: Conducting the Community Impact Assessment

A community profile is needed before the plan can be fully implemented and a community impact assessment should continue throughout the planning process. Through this impact assessment, **the issues and concerns of the community regarding the effects of building the project are evaluated.** Who the **affected, potentially affected, and interested individuals and groups** are, how they obtain their information, and what their value systems are should be identified during this assessment. Information is gathered using a combination of sources and methods such as:

1. Obtaining maps and other social, economic and environmental information about the project corridor;
2. Conducting community interviews with a broad range of community members;
3. Reviewing past news clips and monitoring local news; and
4. Conducting a "windshield survey" of the study area and adjacent areas.

In response to the Presidential Executive Order 12898 regarding **environmental justice** in minority populations and low-income populations, the Public Involvement Plan should be designed to alert decisionmakers to the effects on all segments of society as well as the potential for disproportionately high and adverse effects on specific populations.

Most of this information is obtained during the normal social, economic and environmental studies undertaken as part of the environmental impact assessment process.

Step Two: Preparing the Public Involvement Plan

Developing Goals

Effective public involvement for this project should have, at a minimum, the following goals:

1. **Establish that the purpose and need for the project is understood by the public and determine if there are previously unidentified local needs that should be addressed;**
2. **Help the public understand that this project has independent utility while also fitting with the larger I-66 corridor study between Somerset and London; and**
3. **Identify, discuss, and address the concerns and issues of the public related to each alternate alignment under study.**

Community Profile

The project study area will be described using **population, economic, social history characteristics, and other demographic information. Physical characteristics** relating to community activities including, but not limited to roads, streets, schools, churches, community centers, hospitals, parks, and historic districts, should also be part of this profile. **If all of this information is gathered early in the planning process, potential impacts can be better anticipated.** Consequently, the public involvement process will be less volatile as more adverse impacts are avoided or mitigated.

Chronology of Community Involvement

This section should summarize the history of the I-66 development in the Somerset to London corridor. Public perceptions, including views held by a minority of the population, should be included. Key groups (including "Kick 66"), issues, and outcomes also should be identified. This information will provide the KYTC and its contractors a shared perspective to help answer questions and to formulate trust-building strategies with the public.

Issues and Concerns

This section provides a general overview of issues and concerns that will be encountered during this project. As the project development proceeds, a detailed description of these and other emerging issues and concerns will be documented.

Economic Development

Will I-66 and/or a Somerset bypass encourage businesses to move to the area, relocate to other locations within the area, close, or move outside the area? If any existing businesses close as a result of new business activity, what might be the net result to the local tax base?

In addition, experience in Kentucky and throughout the United States consistently shows an increase in economic development in areas adjacent to interchanges along bypasses. Commercial enterprises such as food, lodging, and fuel facilities are among the most frequent type of economic development. Concerns about displacement, as establishments in town lose business to similar establishments that build near the bypass, are valid and should be examined with local economic development officials, chamber of commerce members, and the mayor of Somerset on a case-by-case basis.

Neighborhood Impacts

The quality of neighborhoods is a resource equally as important as other social, economic, and natural environment issues. The proposed bypass is likely to impact neighborhoods located along the northern edge of Somerset. During the planning process, related issues possibly involving: noise; air quality; aesthetics; adverse effects on community cohesion, including the loss of or access to educational, religious, and civic institutions; and changes in networking patterns should be identified and addressed. Misperceptions also will need to be identified. Once these kinds of issues are identified, mitigation measures can be developed as part of the public involvement program. Existing or newly-formed neighborhood groups, as well as local educational, religious and civic organizations, should be encouraged to participate in the process.

Agriculture

Loss of farmland, farm severances, and access to markets should be addressed during the planning process. Agriculture-related organizations, such as the local Farm Bureau and Farm Service Agency, the Natural Resource Conservation Service and the University of Kentucky Extension Office – Agricultural Section, should be contacted and involved in the public involvement process.

Government Services

School transportation, fire protection, law enforcement, and emergency services are some of the issues that could arise in determining an appropriate alignment for the Somerset bypass. Delays and adverse travel that might arise for each of these services should be evaluated before alignments are presented for public comment. The County Judge, Superintendent of Schools, the Fire and Police

Chiefs, and health care and other emergency service officials should be actively engaged in the public involvement process.

Environment

Wetlands, threatened and endangered species, recreational areas, parks, and other ecological resources should be identified during the environmental studies and their value to the local community and to the general public should be identified during the public involvement program. Environmental, recreational, wildlife, and other related groups and advocates should be contacted along with the appropriate environment and natural resource government agencies

Action Plan

After identifying program goals and community issues and concerns, an action plan is needed. The action plan describes the public involvement techniques that will be applied to meet both the community needs and achieve the goals of the program. **Early and ongoing public involvement during the planning phase of this alignment study is described in this portion of the public involvement plan.** Each technique, how it could be applied, and a conceptual schedule showing how these **techniques are integrated with planning milestones can be found in Step Three: Implementing the Plan.**

Mailing List

Developing the mailing list begins during the Community Impact Assessment and continues throughout the project. This list should be divided into categories including: News Media, Government Officials, and General Public. As mentioned earlier, it is important to include those persons and groups who are potentially affected as well as those who are known to be affected. The experience with public involvement in the United States is that the omission of potentially affected individuals can be a critical error.

Repositories

A list of repository locations should be included with the plan along with hours of operation, contact person at the repository, telephone and, if available, fax numbers. Attempts should be made to find repository locations that are handicap accessible and possess copying equipment.

Step Three: Implementing the Plan (Recommendations)

Because of the dynamic nature of public involvement, this plan should be viewed as a "living document" that is updated throughout the project. Changes in the type and frequency of public involvement activities may be necessary as new issues or needs arise. Thus, public issues should be continually monitored so that adjustments can be made in a timely manner.

Techniques and Tools

For the Somerset Bypass project, the following techniques and tools are recommended for initial implementation. All material / information that is to be made public will be approved by the KYTC prior to its dissemination.

Contact Persons—Residents will have questions throughout the planning phase of the project. Persons at the KYTC Central and District Offices and at Johnson, Depp & Quisenberry should be designated as public contacts who will be responsible for making certain that responses understandable to the inquirer are provided in a timely manner.

Newsletter and Fact Sheets—A project of this scope will directly or indirectly affect many people. Additional persons will continually become involved with the planning phase as a result of business expansions, persons moving into the area, and new interests. A newsletter is an appropriate tool for conveying important information on various engineering and environmental studies and other parts of the planning phase that, once created, includes much of the information deemed important by the KYTC and can be used repeatedly. A fact sheet is another communication tool that provides much the same benefits as a newsletter, except it is generally used to convey information on a single issue and can be produced faster than a newsletter.

Community Interviews—Valuable information not otherwise available in written form is obtainable from interviews. These interviews also can be supplemented by surveys to obtain information used to prepare the Public Information Plan.

Citizen Guide—A brochure describing the highway bypass planning process using visuals should be available at the outset of the public involvement process. Definitions of key words and concepts and the names of contacts at the KYTC who can provide more information should also be included in this brochure.

Public Notices—Notices of any scheduled public meetings should be included in the local newspaper and through other means deemed appropriate by the Project Development Team (PDT). The Public Hearing Coordinator in the Division of Highway Design should be advised in advance of all scheduled public meetings.

Two public information meetings and one public hearing are proposed for this project.

Repository—One or more repositories should be established as a means for providing readily available information in easily accessible locations. Public libraries and local government offices frequently serve as repository locations acceptable to the public. The KYTC District Office would be an ideal repository site.

Pre-meeting planning sessions with the Project Development Team—Before both public information meetings and the public hearing (preferably at least two weeks), these sessions should be held for the purpose of : 1) agreeing upon the materials to be shown to the public, and 2) preparing answers for anticipated questions. Draft answers should be evaluated against recognized risk communication principles. This kind of preparation will help avoid some of the most frequently encountered problems with public projects.

Presentations—Prepared presentations approved by the KYTC are needed before public meetings are conducted. Customized presentations in slide show or Microsoft Powerpoint format can be prepared by Johnson, Depp & Quisenberry's Public Involvement Team.

Open House/Availability Session—Relying solely on public hearings as the forum for conveying information and soliciting public comment increases the likelihood of public frustration escalating into outrage and opposition. The use of two open-house style public information meetings and one open-house style public hearing are recommended for this project. Structured as an availability session rather than a traditional public meeting, the open-house style meeting can provide two or more stations in a large room (a gymnasium or civic center are common locations) where people can go to for specific information. A presentation to provide attendees with basic information about the purpose of each meeting, how residents can provide input, and what will happen next is also important. Each station would be devoted to a particular topic. The public can attend at anytime during the designated-hours when the session is conducted to obtain any or all the information available. A public notice is prepared for each session and a summary report of the meeting results would be prepared for the KYTC.

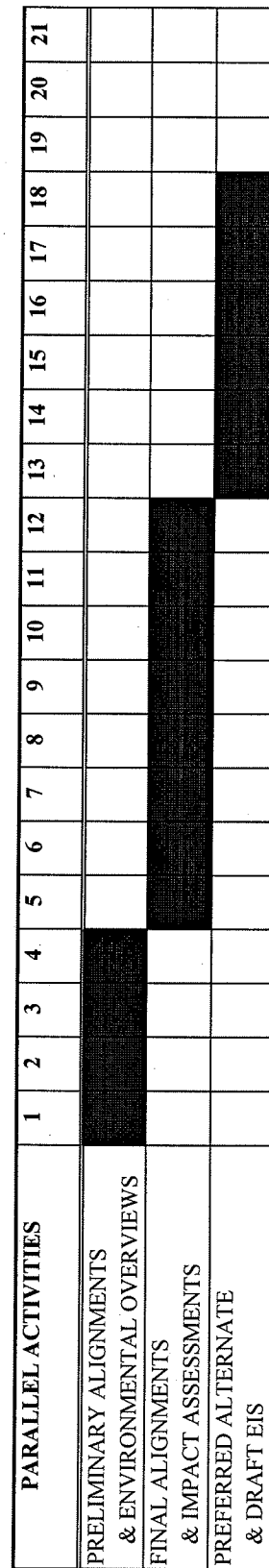
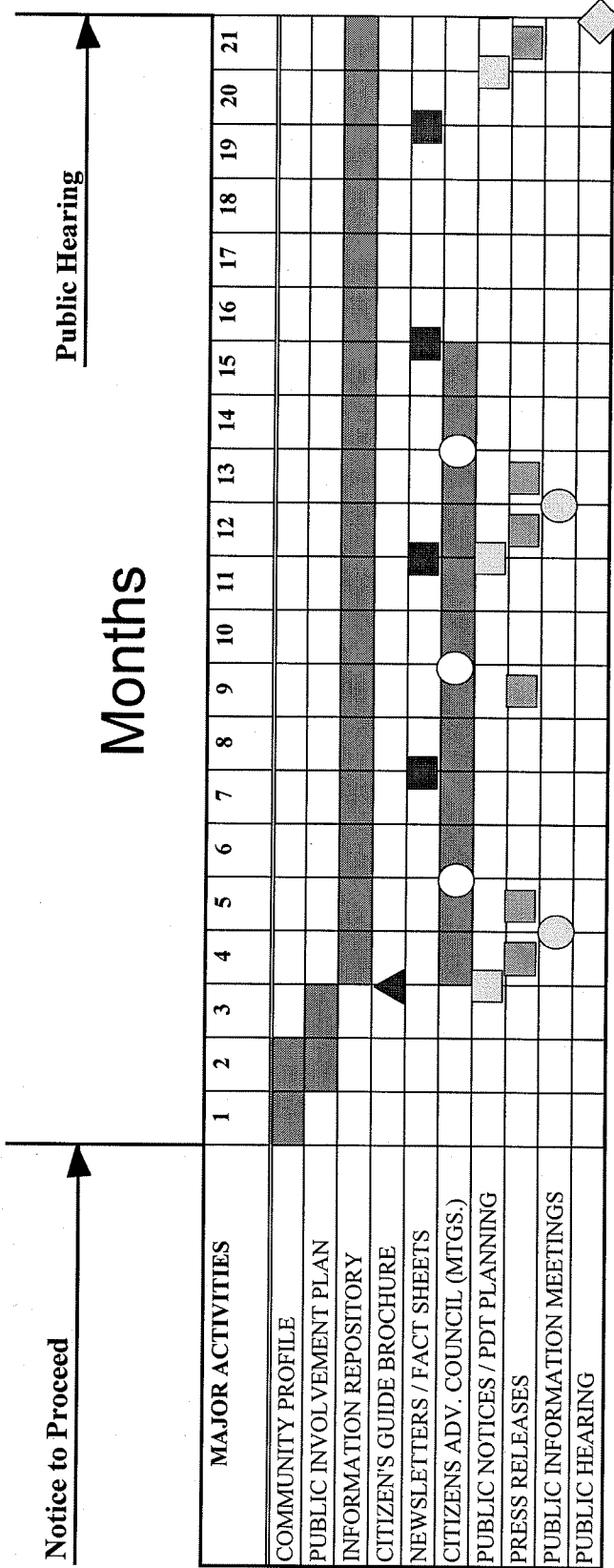
Citizen Advisory Council—Because of the sensitivity and scope of this study, a Citizens Advisory Council is recommended as a primary tool for reaching those persons who are interested or affected by this project. The group selects its own members and leaders. The legitimacy of the group in the eyes of the broader community will be enhanced; however, special efforts should be made to ensure that certain segments of the public are represented. These include neighborhoods, local government, business and economic development, agriculture, and environment. Non-elected community leaders who are active in

community affairs but do not necessarily represent one of the above-listed segments should also be encouraged to participate.

Exhibits—Visual information, primarily in the form of large maps, detailed enough to show house locations, are essential for virtually all public meetings conducted during the planning phase of this project. An easily understood exhibit to help residents sort the relative strengths and weaknesses of each alignment under consideration also is encouraged for use as stand-alone exhibits and for reproduction in a newsletter or fact sheet.

Public Hearing—The formal conclusion of the public involvement program should be an open-house style public hearing.

Schedule of Public Involvement Activities



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News Media

Managing public issues involves news media relations and news article monitoring. Building trust and credibility with the news media is based on responding quickly with accurate information to reporters' inquiries. Responding to inquiries will usually involve answering questions, providing project updates, and directing reporters to the appropriate person within KYTC for a response. Together, the KYTC Central Office, the District Office, and the KYTC contractors can avoid being "blindsided" by the news media and speak with one voice by monitoring the news and by establishing a response policy that conforms with KYTC press policy procedures. All contacts with the news media should be reported to a KYTC-designated person.

A personal relationship should be developed with the news media in conjunction with the KYTC Central and District Offices. Staff experienced with news media relations can help reporters frame a story in an appropriate perspective. Consequently, much time and aggravation can be avoided responding to news stories that contain inaccuracies or are misrepresentative. While KYTC contractors should not be making the news, they can assist reporters in obtaining a broad-based story. In those situations when KYTC contractors are approached in the field to provide a response, the name of the reporter, the media they represent, questions asked, and responses provided should be conveyed to the designated person at the KYTC as soon as possible.

Monitoring news stories, especially newspapers, is vital in identifying emerging issues, changing perceptions, and misperceptions. On a daily basis, stories covered in the Lexington and Somerset newspapers should be reviewed for articles about and related to the project. Rapid networking of news information is extremely important.

APPENDIX A

Community Interviews

Description Face-to-face or telephone interviews held with local residents, community groups, government officials and other individuals is a listening tool to identify issues and concerns about the proposed project and other information that will be used to prepare a customized public information plan.

Value Interviews can be the first step in developing a dialogue that can help become the basis for building good working relationships. By listening to the responses to pre-determined questions, we can obtain concerns, expectations, and insights regarding the proposed project some of which are not obtainable from written sources. Typically, these interviews will lead to other individuals to interview that ultimately will provide a portion of the mailing list. How these persons want to get information about this project, who might be part of the Citizens Advisory Council, and likely project opponents will come out of these interviews.

Conducting the Activity

The first step is to identify people to interview. KYTC staff, letters and petitions to the KYTC about this project or other highway projects in Somerset, newspaper articles, and others who have been involved with or expressed interest in highway planning in the Somerset area can help identify individuals and groups to interview. Experience suggests that local municipal officials, local judges, environmental groups, agricultural leaders, and civic groups form a core of those who should be interviewed.

A list of questions should be prepared that will stimulate discussion. These questions will be submitted to the KYTC for approval before the interviews commence. Interviews should be arranged for a time and location convenient for the interviewee to promote candid discussion. Private individuals and civic group and environmental group leaders may be available only during evening hours. Meetings at homes may be most convenient.

During the interviews:

1. Explain the purpose of the interview and emphasize that the Public Involvement Plan will not attribute specific statements or information to any individual. Interviewees should be asked if their names, street address, phone numbers, or e-mail address should be added to the mailing list. Some individuals may want phone numbers to remain confidential.
2. Identify concerns about the proposed improvement. Some interviewees may not yet be aware of the project. Consequently, a brief description may be necessary towards the beginning of the interview.
3. Assess how citizens want to be involved in the highway planning process. Ask what is the best way to stay in contact with the interviewee. Ask for preferred locations to set up information repositories, meetings, and hearings.

APPENDIX B

Citizen Advisory Council

Description	A citizen advisory council is a tool for increasing interaction between the KYTC and the public by providing a structured mechanism to reach many people. Segments of the population and key groups and organizations should be represented on this council which both receives from and provides information to the KYTC. The Council should be given a specifically-worded charge by the KYTC.
Value	The council gives citizens an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the bypass planning process as well as technical, legal, and policy aspects of determining the best alignment. It also gives the KYTC an avenue for identifying citizen concerns and value systems that the KYTC can use towards determining an alignment that will have better public acceptance.
Conducting the Activity	<p>The makeup of the group should be determined by the citizens themselves under these general guidelines: at least one representative should come from the city of Somerset, local agricultural interests, environment, economic development, affected neighborhoods, and emergency service providers. An appropriate event for solidifying the formation of this group is the first open-house public information meeting.</p> <p>Citizen Advisory Council meetings are facilitated (by either a member of the group or an outside facilitator), and follow ground rules (Roberts Rules of Order can be used but often these groups or the facilitator prepare their own). The size of these groups is typically between 10 and 60 persons. The number of meetings held depends upon the group and the project schedule. In the Somerset case, we recommend at least three meetings.</p> <p>The KYTC or its contractors can assist with administrative functions such as mailings, preparing meeting agendas and meeting minutes. The KYTC and its contractors should be primarily resources for this group and not have any voting privileges.</p>

APPENDIX C

Repositories

Description	A repository contains information related to the highway planning project. It is located in a convenient, public facility such as a library, so that interested persons can have easy access to important documents about the project.
Value	Providing accurate, current information in a location close to the public is one way of demonstrating government's commitment to be responsive to citizen needs for information about this project.
Conducting the Activity	Establishing a repository can be accomplished by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="505 800 1377 1010">1. Select a suitable location. The selected facility should be handicapped-accessible preferable with copying equipment. Someone at the facility should be agreeable to being listed as the contact person who can help the public. More than one repository location may be desirable.<li data-bbox="505 1052 1377 1381">2. Select and deposit materials. The repository should include such items as: a citizen's guide that describes the highway bypass planning process, the public involvement plan, newsletters, fact sheets, and summaries of engineering and environmental studies. An index of the material should be included so that interested persons will know which documents are available at the repository. Supplies of depleted items, such as fact sheets, should be replenished.<li data-bbox="505 1423 1377 1602">3. Publicize the existence of repositories and their locations. In addition to news releases, existing newsletters of churches, schools, and other organizations are useful mechanisms to publicize the location and hours of availability.

APPENDIX D

Open-House Availability Sessions (Public Information Meetings)

Description This special form of public meeting is less formal and structured differently from the traditional government public meeting. Instead of the usual layout where the government officials are sitting together on one side of a room behind a table with the public sitting in rows across an aisle, the open-house style meeting consists of two or more tables or areas, (stations) devoted to a specific subject. In this layout, the public can go from station to station at their own pace within a designated time period, typically three to four hours. Often, two time-periods are held, one during the day and one in the evening. An audio-visual presentation, typically in Microsoft Power Point format, is recommended at the start of each time-period to provide basic information about the specific phase of the project on which the meeting is focused.

Value The “us versus them” setting is reduced, if not eliminated, through the layout. The less formal atmosphere helps reduce tension in high interest issues such as the location of alignments. When certain members of the public need more personal contact or want to discuss a specific issue in detail, this style of meeting lends itself to meeting these needs. Also, breaking through the “mental noise” and intimidation that often comes with a formal public meeting or hearing allows the public to become more familiar with how the process works. Adversarial posturing is reduced as the public and government increase their awareness of each other’s point of view. This type of meeting also is more helpful for citizens who don’t feel comfortable speaking before an audience – they are more likely to discuss their opinions and views in a much less “public” manner.

Conducting the Activity These kind of meetings require at least as much preparation as the traditional public meeting. In certain situations, smaller group meetings, sometimes referred to as “living-room” meetings, should be used as a supplementary tool. For this project, two open-house public information meetings are recommended.

The basic steps for conducting this activity should be supplemented with two additional public involvement tools identified in this preliminary plan. A pre-meeting planning

session should be conducted with the Project Development Team for the purpose of approving materials to be shown to the public and to prepare responses to anticipated questions. An audio-visual presentation that provides an overview of the information for which the meeting is being held should be prepared and approved by the KYTC well in advance of the meeting.

Once these steps are started, the following steps can begin concurrently:

1. Select a meeting date, time, and location. When scheduling the meeting, make sure that the date and time do not conflict with other events, holidays, or special occasions that citizens may want to attend. Be attentive to the special needs of handicapped and elderly individuals (access ramps, elevators, adjacent parking space, access to public transportation). The meeting location should be sufficient to accommodate the number of stations needed and have a separate room to house the audio-visual presentation. School gymnasiums, classrooms adjacent to an auditorium, civic centers, hotels with meeting rooms, and public libraries have been successfully used for this type of meeting. The Center for Rural Development in Somerset is an excellent meeting site.
2. Coordinate how many stations will be needed and how each station will be set-up and staffed.
3. Issue appropriate public notice. This notice should appear in the Lexington and Somerset newspapers, typically 30 days and 15 days before the meeting.
4. Prepare exhibits and other hand-out materials. A large map of the project area that shows potential alignments and other physical characteristics will be extremely important. A smaller version of this map should be considered for either a newsletter or fact sheet that residents can take home.

During the meeting:

1. Register attendees. Citizens will attend who are not on the mailing list. These individuals should be added to the mailing list.
2. Provide prepared presentations. The purpose of the meeting, how the public can be involved, and next steps should provide the foundation for each meeting.
3. Listen, take notes, and provide prompt follow-up. Discuss the possibility for accommodating concerns or explain the reasons why citizen requests appear unworkable.
4. Make provisions for written public comments. Comment sheets that can be filled out and turned in at the meeting or mailed later to the District Office should be provided.
5. Prepare a meeting summary.