

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

NEW BOSTON TOWN CENTER



1.1 Purpose of Public Involvement Plan

The purpose of this Public Involvement Plan (PIP) is to communicate information about a wide range of activities that are involved in the New Boston Town Center project. This PIP will:

- Communicate the principles of the Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) process that will be incorporated on the New Boston project;
- Communicate information about the project team;
- Communicate upcoming meeting dates; and
- Describe the communication methods that will be implemented to inform the community

The PIP will be distributed at the October 17, 2007 Working Group (WG) meeting. The PIP will be updated periodically to reflect updates to schedule and other items that change over the course of the project. The PIP will not be considered a completed document until the end of the project's design.

1.2 Principles of Context Sensitive Solutions

The New Boston project will incorporate the principles of Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS). This is a process endorsed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and is defined by FHWA as "a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach that involves all stakeholders to develop a transportation facility that fits its physical setting and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic and environmental resources, while maintaining safety and mobility." A stakeholder is defined as a person or group affected by and/or with an interest in the outcome of the project. Stakeholders in the New Boston project include:

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- Citizens who live, work and/or travel along NH 77, NH 13, Meetinghouse Hill Road, and other ancillary roads connected to the Town center;
- Municipal, regional, and state government elected and appointed officials;
- Groups with environmental, economic, or other concerns;
- Local utility companies;
- Resource agencies such as the NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES), NH Division of Historic Resources (NHDHR), US Army Corps of Engineers (COE);
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA);
- And the NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT).

The CSS process has 15 guiding principles that have been divided into two groups: 1) Qualities of Excellence in Transportation Design and 2) Characteristics of the Process Contributing to Excellence (<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/csd/qualities.htm>). The 15 principles are listed below:

Qualities of Excellence in Transportation Design

1. *The project satisfies the purpose and needs as agreed to by a full range of stakeholders. This agreement is forged in the earliest phase of the project and amended, as warranted, as the project develops.*
2. *The project is a safe facility for both the user and the community.*
3. *The project is in harmony with the community, and it preserves environmental, scenic, aesthetic, historic, and natural resource values of the area, i.e., exhibits context sensitive design.*
4. *The project exceeds the expectations of both designers and stakeholders and achieves a level of excellence in people's minds.*
5. *The project involves efficient and effective use of the resources (time, budget, community) of all involved parties.*
6. *The project is designed and built with minimal disruption to the community.*
7. *The project is seen as having added lasting value to the community.*

Characteristics of the Process Contributing to Excellence

1. *Communication with all stakeholders is open, honest, early, and continuous.*
2. *A multidisciplinary team is established early, with disciplines based on the needs of the specific project, and with the inclusion of the public.*
3. *A full range of stakeholders is involved with transportation officials in the scoping phase. The purposes of the project are clearly defined, and consensus on the scope is forged before proceeding.*
4. *The highway development process is tailored to meet the circumstances. This process should examine multiple alternatives that will result in a consensus of approach methods.*
5. *A commitment to the process from top agency officials and local leaders is secured.*
6. *The public involvement process, which includes informal meetings, is tailored to the project.*
7. *The landscape, the community, and valued resources are understood before engineering design is started.*
8. *A full range of tools for communication about project alternatives is used (e.g., visualization).*

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1.3 Project Background

The project is located in the Town of New Boston and seeks to address issues with the intersections of NH 77/NH 13 and NH 13/Meetinghouse Hill Road along with other approaching roadways leading into the Town Center. Also of concern is parking, traffic circulation, and local road operations in the area of the Town Center. The Town of New Boston working through the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission (SNHPC) has initiated this project. The New Hampshire Department of Transportation has agreed to work with SNHPC to offer technical assistance to the Town and SNHPC as they progress through the project development process.



While there is currently no funding source or construction timeframe yet established for this project it is the intent of the Town and SNHPC to use the CSS process to foster ideas and alternatives that could be used to identify solutions and funding sources to complete this project.

New Boston residents and town officials have been concerned about a variety of traffic related issues – primarily excessive speeds, poor visibility, parking, and pedestrian access along NH Route 13 through the Village area for many years. There has been concern about safety of the bridge crossing the Piscataquog River.

The Town's 1987 Master Plan suggested a number of improvements that could be considered, including the addition of curb and gutter and a channelization island within the roadway, new signage, defined parking and cross walks. However, nothing has seemed to work or fall in favor with the property owners and New Boston residents.

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Recently as a result of New Boston Speaks (a UNH Community Profile Project) and the Town's 2005 Master Plan Update, a new "Livable, Walkable Community Committee" was formed by the community to help address the issues again.

After discussions with the Town, SNHPC and NHDOT this project was identified as a strong candidate to use the CSS approach. With the aid of the SNHPC and input from the Department, the New Boston Selectboard, on September 4, 2007, agreed to appoint New Boston residents and Officials to serve on a Working Group for the CSS project. These members, along with representatives from the SNHPC and NHDOT will form a diverse group to lead the CSS process for the project.

1.4 Project Team

The project team consists of:

- The New Boston Working Group (WG);
- NHDOT staff representing the anticipated types of disciplines that will likely be required;
- Staff of the SNHPC to facilitate the CSS process;

The WG members are comprised of citizens, who live in the Town Center area and others who represent the elderly, school, church, and business interests in the area; along with town officials representing the Selectboard, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Conservation Commission, Historical Society, Town Administrator's Office, Planning Director's Office, Police, and Fire Departments. Also the SNHPC and NHDOT staffs represent the regional and state transportation interests. The WG serves in an advisory role (tasked with making recommendations to the NHDOT) and is anticipated to be involved with the project from the project-planning phase through the end of the project's design.

The table below lists the WG members, along with their contact information and representation.

NAME	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE	REPRESENTATION

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2.0 PROJECT PROCESS

2.1 NHDOT Project Development Process

Since most projects, including Municipally Managed projects, are developed using the NHDOT project development process it was decided that this project would also follow this process. NHDOT projects, including the New Boston project, are developed through a seven-step project development process illustrated below.

- Project Scoping / Data Collection / Coordination
- Preliminary Engineering Studies / Environmental Evaluation
- Identification of Preferred Alternative / Draft Environmental Documentation
- Formal Public Hearing Process
- Selected Alternative / Final Environmental Documentation
- Final Design (Project Construction Plan Development) / Right-of-Way Acquisition
- Project Construction

This process is described in more detail in the '*Project Development making transportation projects a reality*' guide that is available on the Department's website at the following link: <http://webster.state.nh.us/dot/public/reports.htm> under the Citizens Guide to Transportation Series section. The CSS process seeks to gather critical community-level input into the first three phases of the project development process prior to identifying a "Preferred Alternative" for presentation, as well as, requesting layout approval at the formal Public Hearing.

Currently, the project is in the Project Scoping, Data Collection, and Coordination Phase. The project team through the WG, will hold a "placemaking workshop" to help create a vision for the project area, and subsequently develop a problem statement, vision statement, and alternative screening criteria. The aforementioned will be used in the development of project alternatives, identification of the preferred alternative, as well as, the environmental documentation for the project.

While it is uncertain at this time how this specific New Boston project will proceed since no funding has been obtained, on typical projects the follow process would be used once the "Preferred Alternative" has been identified and draft environmental documental completed. A formal Public Hearing will be held to procure approval for the project's layout. The Hearing will be overseen by a Hearing Commission that is comprised of three members appointed by the Governor and Executive Council, whom are tasked to a make a decision on the layout of the preferred alternative that has been identified for the project. At the Public Hearing, the Department will make a formal presentation and public testimony will be taken, recorded, and transcribed for the Hearing Commission to determine the occasion for the layout as presented. All issues and/or comments raised at the Public Hearing or during the hearing comment period will be documented and addressed in a report termed the *Report of the Commissioner* (ROTC). The project team will coordinate with the WG to help address each issue raised at the Hearing prior to the finalization of the ROTC. Should the Hearing Commission vote in favor of the project's layout, then the project will advance to the Final Design / Right-of-Acquisition stage. The Public Hearing and subsequent layout approval represents a major milestone in the project development phase as it solidifies the major aspects and right of way requirements of the project's design.

2.2 Project Meetings

Several types of meetings are planned over the course of this project. They are described in the sections below.

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2.2.1 WG Meetings

The purpose of the WG meetings is to obtain input from the team and to facilitate the flow of information and ideas between the team, community, and public at-large. Presently, six WG meetings are planned over the next 12 – 18 months.

The first WG meeting will be held on October 17, 2007. This meeting served as an orientation session as well as a project kick-off meeting. At the meeting, members of the WG will be provided a brief history of the project, an overview of CSS, description of “placemaking”, and explanation of how the CSS process would be implemented for the project. The CSS steps and public participation process will be described in sequential fashion with the first step involving a Placemaking Workshop, followed by a meeting to reach consensus on a problem statement, meeting to reach consensus on a vision statement, meeting to develop and concur on screening criteria, meeting to brainstorm and screen alternatives, and meeting to reach consensus on a Preferred Alternative. Once a preferred alternative has been identified a formal Public Hearing to procure approval for the project layout would be held.

GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

The WG has an important and challenging task of providing public input to SNHPC and the New Hampshire Department of Transportation in several important areas for the New Boston Town Center project: a statement of problems and needs, a project Vision statement, developing concepts to address the problems and needs to meet the Vision, and advising the Department on selecting a preferred alternative for the project design.

Because of the significance and complexity of the issues with which the Working Group will be dealing, it is important to make the most effective use of our meeting times. Therefore, as a group, we commit to the following guidelines and procedures:

A. How we treat each other:

- *Each member has an equal right to speak and ask questions. There are no “dumb questions”.*
- *Each member is encouraged to share individual viewpoints. Individual opinions are valid whether others agree with them or not.*
- *We will listen to, respect and seek to understand the views of others, particularly those perspectives that differ from our own.*
- *Disagreements will be explored not suppressed. In some instances, however, disagreements may be discussed outside of the Working Group meetings so that we are not distracted from achieving the purpose of the meetings.*
- *We will be courteous when addressing other members, staff and consultants.*
- *We will refrain from interrupting each other, staff or consultants.*
- *We will keep our comments relevant to the topic under discussion.*

B. How we make decisions:

- *The Working Group will operate by consensus whenever possible. Consensus does not necessarily mean agreement or active support by each member. Those not objecting are not necessarily indicating that they favor, but merely that they can “live with it.”*

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- *In the absence of consensus, a super majority of three-quarters (75%) of the Working Group members present is required for approval of an action.*
- *Participation in the decision-making of the Working Group shall be limited to its members.*
- *In order to provide continuity in the group's discussions, members are asked to make every effort to attend all meetings. However, if a member cannot attend, he or she may designate an alternate to attend and participate in discussions of the Working Group in his or her absence.*
- *Non-members shall attend as observers and may be invited to offer comments, if time allows.*

C. *How we communicate with those outside the Working Group:*

- *As it is the Town's intent that the members of the Working Group represent the interests of a wide cross-section of citizens who live and work in the project area, Working Group members are encouraged to report on project issues to others who live and work in this area, particularly to groups or organizations to which they belong, and to bring input to Working Group meetings that reflects the interests of these individuals and groups.*
- *It will be helpful if Working Group members explain to others the process being used to develop the project concepts so they better understand how the project is progressing.*

To assist us in making good use of our time, we request that the facilitation team do the following:

- *Present Working Group meeting preliminary agendas and pertinent meeting material in advance.*
- *Ensure that multiple Working Group members have the opportunity to participate in discussions within the time allocated for each agenda item.*
- *Remind us of deviations from timelines; guidelines; and our basic purpose.*
- *Meeting notes will be disseminated to the working group members within two weeks following the meeting.*

We believe that following these guidelines and procedures will help us to develop advice that is fully considered and will be well received by the Department, the public, and the appropriate Federal, State, and local government leaders and agencies whose support is essential for carrying out our recommendations.

Anticipated topics of discussion for remaining meetings:

WG Meeting 1: {Held on October 17, 2007}

- Discuss Context Sensitive Solutions Approach and Process
- Discuss Placemaking and upcoming Placemaking Workshop
- Discuss Working Group Roles and Responsibilities

WG Meeting 2: Review Placemaking Results

- Discuss Draft Problem Statement
- Call for Consensus on Problem Statement
- Discuss Draft Public Involvement Plan
- Discuss Vision Statements
- Develop Project Vision Statement

WG Meeting 3

- Discuss Project Vision Statement

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- Call for Consensus on Vision Statement
- Develop Alternative Rating Criteria
- Results of Preliminary Studies
- Discuss Short-term Low-cost Improvements

WG Meeting 4:

- Discuss Screening Criteria
- Call for Consensus on Screening Criteria
- Discuss Short-term Low-cost Improvements
- Review Operation, Benefits & Drawbacks of Signals & Roundabouts
- Review Conceptual Alternatives
- Discuss Other Alternatives

WG Meeting 5:

- Discuss Public Workshop / Public Informational Meeting Format
- Report from Communications Sub-Committee
- Review Reasonable Alternatives
- Group Breakout – Rate Alternatives w/ Screening Criteria
- Report on Alternative Ratings

WG Meeting 6:

- Results of Public Informational / Public Workshop meeting
- Discuss Preferred Alternative
- Call for Consensus on Preferred Alternative

2.2.2 Placemaking Workshop

The objective of the placemaking workshop is for the New Boston residents to evaluate how well the roadway corridors leading to the Town Center perform and to identify opportunities that exist along these corridors. The ideas generated will help define the context of the area and guide the development of options to improve the transportation system in the Town Center. Participants will conduct a Place Audit exercise at four locations in and around the Town Center to evaluate how the locations perform in terms of Access & Linkages, Uses & Activities, Comfort & Image, and Sociability. Participants will also develop lists of opportunities, problems, and a draft problem statement for their locations. This workshop will be widely advertised within the community with flyers posted in prominent public places and on the Town's website. Advertisements of the meeting will also be included in several local and region newspapers. The placemaking workshop is intended to be held either on a Saturday morning or in the late afternoon / early evening in order to field review the area.

2.2.3 Public Workshop / Public Informational Meeting

The objective of the public workshop / public informational meeting is to review the problem & vision statements, review the rating criteria, and receive feedback on the project alternatives that are acceptable to the community and public at-large. The meeting will be widely advertised within the community with notices posted in prominent public places and on the Town's website. Advertisements of the meeting will also be included in several local and region newspapers. Meeting notices will also be mailed to the abutters within the project limits, and local, region, and state Officials. The public workshop / public informational meeting is intended to be an afternoon / evening session to discuss the various aspects of the project and gather input from the community as to the alternatives that they feel will help to solve the project problems and needs and fit with the community's vision for the project.

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2.2.4 Public Hearing

Once a Preferred Alternative has been identified for the project and the environmental documentation completed, a formal Public Hearing to secure layout approval for the project will be scheduled. The Public Hearing will be held within the Town of New Boston. The Hearing will be widely advertised within the community with notices posted in prominent public places and on the Town's website. Hearing notices will also be advertised in several local and region newspapers. Certified mailings will be sent to all abutting property owners potentially directed impacted by the projects. Mailings will also be sent to local, region, and state Officials, as well as, environmental and interested groups. The Public Hearing and subsequent layout approval represents a major milestone in the project development phase as it solidifies the major aspects and right of way requirements of the project's design. The conclusion of a successful Public Hearing phase, which represents the project at a 30% stage, allows the project to proceed to final design and right of way procurement.

2.3 Project Schedule

The design schedule shown below is approximate and subject to change. Additional interim meetings may be necessary to reach consensus on certain items prior to advancing forward to the next step.

2.3.1 Design Schedule

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ➤ Preliminary Design (CSS Process) | October 2007 – October 2008 |
| ➤ Public Hearing | November 2008 |
| ➤ Layout Approval | March 2009 |
| ➤ Final Design & ROW Procurement | |
| ➤ Construction | |

3.0 COMMUNICATION METHODS

Effective communication is essential to the on-going success of the project. Below is a description of the communication methods that are planned for the project. As the project progresses, public involvement will be assessed periodically to determine if the methods of communication in use are effective or if adjustments are needed.

3.1 NHDOT Website

As an element of the NHDOT Public Interest webpage, the New Boston project will be added and used to post pertinent project information, meeting agendas, and meeting summaries or notes. The webpage can be accessed via <http://www.nh.gov/dot/projects/index.htm>. The purpose of the website is to keep the public informed about the project and provide another way for the public to provide input. The website content will be updated at project milestones and, as necessary, after project meetings. For questions or comments on the material posted on the website, please contact the SNHPC Project Manager:

- Tim White, SNHPC Project Manager, at Twhite@snhpc.org or (603) 669-4664.

3.1.1 Town Website

A link from the town website <http://www2.new-boston.nh.us/Pages/index> to the project's WebPages on the NHDOT website will be provided.

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3.2 E-mail

A primary method of communication for the working group members will be via e-mail. Individual e-mail addresses for the working group members are contained within the project files. Meeting agendas, meeting notes, and other pertinent project information will be disseminated to the working group via this method of communication.

3.3 Meetings

Working Group meetings, Public Informational meetings, and Workshops will be used as different avenues to disseminate and discuss pertinent project related information.

3.4 Media

In order to help maximize the distribution of meeting notices for the Public Workshops, Public Informational meetings, and Public Hearing, news releases and/or meeting notices will be provided to local and regional newspapers.

- **Union Leader**
 - **Publication Frequency:** daily
 - **Distribution Area:** greater Manchester
 - **Address:** 100 William Loeb Drive, Manchester, NH 03108-9555
 - **Phone:** 603-668-4321 or 800-562-8218
 - www.unionleader.com
 - writeus@unionleader.com (newsroom)

3.5 Flyers

In order to help maximize interest and encourage New Boston residents and other members of the public to attend the Public Workshops, Public Informational meetings, and Public Hearing, flyers will be developed with the aid of the working group members. Flyers will be posted in prominent public places within the Town of New Boston, sent to the local and regional newspapers, and posted on the Town's Public Access Cable Channel.