

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PLAN

This Community Participation Plan (CPP) will guide the North Carolina Department of Transportation's (NCDOT's) and the Great Trail State Coalition's (GTS Coalition) public and stakeholder outreach during the duration of the Program. NCDOT IMD's goal is to educate and communicate, build relationships, gather input from affected citizens to influence transportation decisions, and meet federal/state requirements. This CPP outlines the goals for outreach, identifies stakeholders and interest groups including environmental justice (EJ), Title VI, and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations, defines potential outreach tools/communication methods, and lists measures for evaluating success of public engagement. The public engagement for GREAT-NC will build on the robust community engagement that occurred during each project's feasibility study to continue to build coalitions of support for the projects and improve decision making. Over the Program's lifecycle, NCDOT IMD will accomplish the following goals through use of the Program's:

- **Education:** Enhancing awareness and understanding of GREAT-NC and the Program development process to enable informed involvement and meaningful participation
- **Inclusion:** Engaging stakeholders representing a broad range of interests, values, and opinions
- **Transparency:** Providing information in a clear, transparent, and efficient manner
- **Accountability:** Being visible and accessible to the public and other Program stakeholders, as well as considering and responding to their input
- **Responsiveness:** Responding to inquiries in a timely manner

NCDOT will identify the block groups that overlap with the Direct Community Impact Areas (DCIAs) for each proposed facility, which will be the foundation for community outreach, in accordance with Public Involvement, Community Studies & Visualization (PICSviz) policies and procedures, and in coordination with the identified block groups DSA's identified during each feasibility study, per NCDOT policy. The demographics and unique characteristics of the identified block groups will inform outreach needs, discussed further in **Public Meetings and Outreach**.

GOALS OF THE CPP

The purpose of this Community Participation Plan is to inform the community on the proposed design and construction work for GREAT-NC, which will be achieved by:

- a) Presenting goals and objectives for community participation and stakeholder outreach
- b) Identifying key stakeholders and how they'll be engaged.
- c) Recommending techniques and materials to engage the public in the project decision-making process; describe meeting structure and schedule.
- d) Identifying measures for effectiveness

STAKEHOLDERS

GREAT-NC involves 53 economically disadvantaged communities in 8 NCDOT divisions and 11 counties. NCDOT IMD is committed to engaging and utilizing input from a broad range of perspectives and stakeholders. This commitment includes tailoring communications and information in a context-appropriate manner, and sharing to all communities in an accessible, intentional, and meaningful way.

- **General Public:** GREAT-NC's outreach activities will include all residents surrounding the proposed facilities with particular consideration to the accessibility needs of underserved groups such as minority and low-income populations, elderly and retired persons, children, Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations, and people with disabilities.

- **Community Organizations:** NCDOT IMD will engage community groups including environmental advocates, special interest nonprofit agencies, creative placemaking and placekeeping organizations, neighborhood groups, homeowner associations, and charitable associations (see **Appendix A**).
- **Public Agencies:** NCDOT IMD will closely collaborate with public agencies like local transit providers, air quality management districts, public health agencies, water districts, ports authorities, and other Federal and state agencies (see **Appendix A**).
- **Business Community:** NCDOT IMD seeks to engage private sector entities whose work intersects with transportation and land use planning including private transportation providers, freight shippers, consulting firms, technology developers, and business associates.
- **Elected Officials:** NCDOT will engage elected representatives at all levels, from neighborhood councils to mayoral offices and city councils, to county supervisor boards, to state and federal legislators.
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(A full list of stakeholders and interested parties is included in Appendix A)

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES AND TOOLS

The proposed facilities included in GREAT-NC have either already completed feasibility studies or are in the process of completing feasibility studies for the facilities. As such, coordination with the respective agencies/organizations that conducted those studies will be vital in compiling the comprehensive list of stakeholders and understanding the extent of previous engagement activities.

NCDOT IMD will build on efforts from feasibility studies during the public engagement for the design and construction phases of proposed facilities to ensure continuous and coordinated outreach to affected communities and special interest groups.

NCDOT IMD aims to increase early, equitable, and meaningful participation through targeted outreach strategies to meaningfully integrate feedback, aligning with the Statewide Public Participation Plan.

GREAT-NC will incorporate the following tools into individual, segment-specific engagement activities. NCDOT IMD has employed remote and virtual engagement tactics for several years and relied upon them during the COVID-19 pandemic. NCDOT IMD will continue to adjust community participation approaches as needed to accommodate public health or other safety concerns while still affording robust public outreach and accommodation consistent with legal requirements. The activities included in the CPP will be leveraged on a case-by-case basis, and tools/activities will be employed as appropriate for the respective proposed facility and according to local needs.

STEERING COMMITTEE(S)

Since GREAT NC builds on the momentum of feasibility studies for the proposed facilities, NCDOT will reconvene the Steering Committees formed during the feasibility study process throughout the design process for their respective GREAT NC facility. The Steering Committees(s) will be updated on progress towards completion of the environmental review process, design process, and results of community engagement efforts and have the opportunity to provide input and guidance during each of these steps.

PUBLIC MEETINGS AND EVENTS

For each of the proposed facilities included in GREAT NC, there will be at least one in person or virtual public meeting during the environmental review and design process. NCDOT and the local communities may also hold additional virtual or in person small group stakeholder meetings as needed during design and environmental review to obtain targeted feedback, build support, and improve decision making.

- **Public Meeting during Design—Virtual or In Person:** NCDOT and its community partners will share and solicit feedback on the following elements of each project from the public:
 - Design alternatives
 - Incorporate creative placemaking/placekeeping
 - Economic development opportunities
 - Resilience
 - Stormwater management
 - Mobility/community connectivity
 - Safety countermeasures
- **Stakeholder Meetings—Virtual or In Person (optional)**
 - Stakeholders will convene and provide input and opinions on design and development.
 - Number of meetings may vary based on unique needs of each individual project.
 - Potential topics include placemaking/placekeeping, economic development opportunities stormwater management, safety, business, and permitting requirements and needs.
- **Virtual Engagement During Construction**
 - Public notices and announcements to traditional media and social media posts with information on construction progress
 - Provision of traveler information such as road closures and detours, if applicable
 - Clear and simple means for the public to receive information and report concerns (safety issues, failed sediment and erosion control, etc.).

For in-person public meetings, the locations will be *accessible and convenient*, with ADA access and materials provided in Spanish and English, as well as other languages depending on the needs of the community. Additionally, meeting locations and material will be accessible for individuals who lack access to the internet by advertising in traditional media outlets and providing physical materials at public meetings. Meeting locations and materials will also be accessible for those with mobility needs by promoting public meetings at public transit agencies and posting advertisements on buses/vans. The public meetings will be advertised at least 2 weeks prior to the date they are set to occur and will be announced at Council or Commissioner meetings. Whenever possible, the public meetings will be cohosted with community groups, business associations, and other partners.

PUBLIC SURVEYS

NCDOT IMD and/or its community partners conducted public surveys during the feasibility study process for each of the proposed facilities, which will be used to help guide subsequent stages of each project during GREAT-NC's implementation. Additional surveys may be distributed online or by traditional methods to inform:

- Design alternatives (cross sections, GSI/stormwater, compatibility of improvements with adjacent roadways, etc.)
- Potential Impacts to the human and natural environment.
- Appearance (aesthetics/public art, lighting, community character, and streetscaping for proposed facilities)

Survey results will be available on the Program website and/or the community partners' websites.

STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

These meetings will focus on sharing data and plans and developing a detailed understanding for planned facilities and routes proposed in the GREAT-NC grant application.

- NCDOT IMD’s chosen planning and engineering (PE) firms will facilitate two (2) meeting with local stakeholders – one at the beginning of the design for each proposed facility and one (1) after design alternatives are developed.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLATFORM

NCDOT will use a virtual public engagement platform to proactively engage and share information with the public by providing easy access to Program information and enabling citizens to actively participate and share their comments through the user-friendly interface. This platform will complement the other in-person and virtual Program activities and will be used to deploy an interactive map to gather geographic-based input and a community survey to gather other input. This platform will provide opportunities for residents with mobility limitations, property owners, and visitors who may be unable to attend in-person events to participate in the Program.

MEDIA OUTLETS

NCDOT and its community partners will use media outlets such as advertisements and notices in newspapers, radio announcements, and television news to communicate Program information. NCDOT and the GTS Coalition will work with Public Information Offices in proposed facility locations to send out local press releases and upload messaging to social media outlets regarding Program milestones and other updates.

WEBINARS

NCDOT and its community partners may conduct webinars following the public meetings. These interactive, virtual meetings sessions will provide opportunities for active engagement, Q&A, and the sharing of diverse perspectives. To ensure accessibility, meeting recordings will be available on the Program webpage, allowing those who could not attend live to view them at their convenience.

PROGRAM WEBPAGE + MATERIALS

A Program webpage will be posted to the NCDOT IMD website and linked to websites in proposed facility’s communities—encouraged by the GTS Coalition. The following Program overview and updates will be provided by the Program team at set intervals based on the Program schedule:

- Program Overview and Schedule
- Study Area Map
- Contact Information
- Design Alternatives
- Public Meeting Schedule
- Community Survey Link (if applicable)
- Survey Results (if applicable)
- Public Meeting Presentation
- Draft Design Work and Construction Updates

The website will be updated on an as-needed basis throughout the process and will allow individuals to sign up for Program updates.

VISUALIZATION METHODS

Throughout the course of community participation, there will be various tools employed to assist with outreach including maps, charts/infographics, artist renderings/drawings, website content and interactive tools, and data-driven visualizations.

MEASURES FOR EFFECTIVENESS

In order to understand the effectiveness of the CPP, NCDOT will create response forms and comment opportunities for stakeholders throughout the process. If additional stakeholder input is desired, process participants can be surveyed virtually. Factors considered in this evaluation will include but are not limited to:

- **Demographics**
 - At events and in surveys (if used), collect information regarding participants’ demographics—spoken language, gender, age, ethnicity/race, household income, disability status.
- **Influence and Impact**
 - Provide evaluation survey for participants/respondents that captures whether they understood how their input would be used.
 - Track the number of participants/respondents as well as engagement activity on Program website.
- **Transparency and Clarity**
 - Evaluation question at public meetings or on survey regarding level of understanding of the materials presented.
- **Inclusion and Timing**
 - Share information about public involvement opportunities through community ambassadors and if possible, gauge how each participant heard of the engagement opportunity to understand the importance of involving trusted community organizations.
 - Ensure at least 2 weeks public notice prior to activities.
- **Targeted Engagement**
 - Review demographic data collected and compare to DSA for the Program.
 - Hold activities in locations accessible and familiar to communities affected by the various proposed facilities.
- **Accessibility**
 - Were meetings held in facilities familiar to affected communities?
 - Were meetings held in facilities that are accessible to people with disabilities?
 - Were meetings held at transit-accessible facilities?

MILESTONES / SCHEDULE

Activity	Tools/Platform/Task	Responsible Party
Public Meetings	Platform: Microsoft Teams and/or in person	NCDOT
	Send follow up survey to Small Group participants	
	After meeting:	NCDOT
	Report back to Steering Committee	
Website	Separate page on NCDOT IMD’s website. This page will be encouraged to be shared on websites of respective communities with GREAT NC projects	NCDOT
	Program description and message	
	Links to survey(s) if applicable	

	Links to necessary Program background and timeline of the Program	
Social Media	Facebook, Twitter, schedule, and posts	NCDOT and Local Steering Committees
	Tag and share to other groups with more followers	NCDOT
Town and County Trails Working Group	Platform: Microsoft Teams	GTS Coalition and Local Steering Committees
	Monthly meetings	
Other Opportunities	Pop-up Events: - Events to be determined based on the planned community calendar.	NCDOT, GTS Coalition, Steering Committees
	Council Presentations or Updates:	NCDOT and GTS Coalition

APPENDIX A. LIST OF POTENTIAL STAKEHOLDERS

- **Public Agencies**
 - *Local Governments*
 - Cumberland County
 - Randolph County
 - Beaufort County
 - City of Roxboro
 - Burke County
 - Granville County
 - Brunswick County
 - Johnston County
 - Robeson County
 - New Hanover County
 - Town of Marion
 - Person County
 - Buncombe County
 - Ashe County
 - Cleveland County
 - Warren County
 - McDowell County
 - Public Health Agencies
 - Water Districts
 - Air Quality Management Districts
 - *Transportation*
 - Lumber River RPO
 - Kerr-Tar RPO
 - Cape Fear RPO
 - Mid-East RPO
 - Gaston-Cleveland-Lincoln MPO
- High Country RPO
- Greater Hickory MPO
- Upper Coastal Plain RPO
- Foothills RPO
- Wilmington Urban Area MPO
- Transit agencies

- *Creative Placemaking/Placekeeping*
 - South Arts
 - Americans for the Arts
 - NC Council of the Arts
 - Downtown Durham Inc
 - Center for Crafts
 - National Endowment of the Arts
- **Business Community / Social Services**
 - Hospital Systems
 - Treatment Centers
 - Major Employers
 - Chambers of Commerce
- **Community and Nonprofit Organizations**
 - Community colleges
 - Universities
 - Community Foundation of Burke County
 - Asheville on Bikes
 - AARP of NC
 - Community colleges
 - Environmental Advocates
 - Made by Mountains
 - New River Conservancy
 - Burke River Trail Association
 - Conservation Trust for NC
 - Tar River Land Conservancy
 - McDowell Trails Association
 - Connect Buncombe
 - McDowell Trails Association
 - Friends of the Fonta Flora State Trail
 - Foothills Conservancy of NC
 - Triangle Trails
 - BikeWalk NC
 - Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation
 - Friends of the Park
 - Conservation Corps NC
 - Rails to Trails Conservancy
 - Conserving Carolina
 - East Coast Greenway Alliance
 - The Conservation Fund
 - Friends of the Mountain to Sea Trail
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