



# **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTION PLAN**



**Local Concept Development Study for  
City of Newark Central Avenue Bridge over the City Subway  
City of Newark, Essex County, NJ**

## **North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority Local Concept Development Study**

### **City of Newark Central Avenue Bridge over the City Subway**

# **Public Involvement Action Plan (PIAP)**

**Prepared by:  
Michael Baker International, Inc.  
M.A. Culbertson, LLC**

**November 2016**



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## **A. Purpose**

The purpose of the Public Involvement effort for the City of Newark Central Avenue Bridge Local Concept Development Study is to have an informed and involved public who has access to the planning approach and the decision making process. The Public Involvement Action Plan (PIAP) seeks to provide ample opportunity for public comment regarding the identification and development of proposed improvements. The intention of this document is to establish a public involvement guideline that is dynamic in nature so that it can evolve as the project progresses to keep the public involved and maintain broad-based support for the project with consideration for context sensitive design solutions.

## **B. Project Description**

The project study area for the Local Concept Development Study of the City of Newark Central Avenue Bridge over the City Subway includes a 500 ft. off set on each side of Central Avenue. The North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) is the lead agency administering the contract and working in coordination with the City of Newark, the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The project will be managed by the City of Newark Division of Engineering, Department of Traffic & Signals and supported by their Department of Public Works.

The City of Newark Central Avenue Bridge expands over the City subway (NJ Transit light rail) and Central Avenue in this area is a critical transportation arterial roadway for the City of Newark. The bridge provides an important transportation connection for residents and commuters in to and from Newark's downtown business district, the hospital and higher educational institutions in the area. The Central Avenue Bridge provides access for vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists and commuters using the subway. The bridge is in overall serious condition, whereas routine maintenance can no longer address its deficiencies.

It is the interest of the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA), the City of Newark, and the NJDOT to determine the appropriate improvement alternatives, which will indicate what improvements are possible and whether a major bridge rehabilitation or replacement is needed. The first phase will be to establish the purpose and need for the project. The Purpose and Need Statement will focus on the transportation needs to be addressed.

## **C. Public Involvement Process Overview**

Public Involvement will be on-going throughout the project. Though the Public Involvement Action Plan (PIAP) is organized by project phases, it will be implemented in such a manner to present the public with one seamless process. The PIAP is organized by project phase to allow its integration with the planning and engineering efforts to facilitate the scheduling of contingent activities.

The public involvement steps to be implemented during the Local Concept Development phase are presented in the Public Involvement Process Section and a schedule of the public involvement / community outreach activities is provided in a matrix following the process section.

*Local Concept Development (LCD).* The Local Concept Development Phase purpose is to identify and compare reasonable alternatives and strategies that address a well-defined and well-justified Purpose and Need Statement and select a Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA). The PPA is selected based on several factors, including environmental impacts, constructability, cost effectiveness, and if the project can be constructed in a timely manner. This phase involves data collection, internal and external stakeholder coordination, and alternatives analysis. Along with the PPA, key products that are produced in this Phase include the Purpose and Need Statement, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Classification, and the Local Concept Development Report. LCD denotes concept development by a local entity (MPO, county, municipality).

Beyond the Local Concept Development study, the scope of the next phase of the project will be determined based upon the results of this phase and the selected PPA that will transition to the Preliminary Engineering Design phase and the required environmental documentation and approvals. The final design phase and construction phase would follow.

The project phases following the Local Concept Development are as listed below. The PIAP will be amended as necessary to allow for the outreach activities of the future phases:

- Preliminary Engineering
- Final Design
- Construction

*Preliminary Engineering.* The Preliminary Engineering Design Phase will further develop the PPA and identify any issues that may require community input and public involvement. Environmental Documentation and NEPA clearance are also part of this phase.

*Final Design.* During Final Design, the design of the selected alternative will be completed taking into consideration the input obtained through the public involvement effort to provide an improvement solution that satisfies the project Purpose and Need.

*Construction.* Notifying the public about traffic patterns and potential delays due to construction activity will be important prior to construction of the identified solution. Providing this information in a timely manner will facilitate the formation of positive public perception towards the project and the City of Newark.

#### **D. Public Involvement Process Steps - Local Concept Development (LCD) Phase**

An Initial Project Team Strategy Meeting was held on June 17, 2016 at the NJTPA's office in Newark, NJ, in which the public involvement process was initiated for this phase of the project.

In coordination with the City of Newark, a preliminary contact mailing list of stakeholders was developed along with a mailing list of residences and businesses within a 500 foot radius of the project in concert with the commencement of field survey and environmental screening work.

The following steps provide direction for community involvement and public outreach, which will be in coordination with the other project study activities.

**1. Project Team Status Meetings, Public Involvement Coordination**

At Project Team Status Meetings, via conference call or on-site meeting at the NJTPA’s office, the Public Involvement (PI) strategy and community outreach steps will be an agenda item for discussion with the Project Team members, which include:

- Sascha Frimpong, NJTPA Manager Project Development ;
- Sarbjit Kahlon, NJTPA Project Manager ;
- Richard Loveless, NJDOT Local Aid District 2 Supervising Engineer ;
- Ahmad R. Ahmad, P.E., NJDOT Local Aid District 2 Project Manager ;
- Pamela Garrett, PMP, CPM, NJDOT BEPR Environmental Project Manager ;
- Marie Limage, NJDOT BEPR Environmental Project Coordinator ;
- Phillip Scott, P.E., City of Newark, Engineering Department Director ;
- Kimberly Singleton, City of Newark, Div. of Traffic Signals Manager ;
- Juan Feijoo, City of Newark, Div. of Traffic Signals Principal Engineer ;
- Magdy Hagag, P.E., Michael Baker International Project Manager ;
- James Yeager, P.E., Michael Baker International Deputy Project Manager ;
- Martin Wade, P.E., Michael Baker International Project Engineer ;
- Martine Culbertson, Community Involvement Facilitator.

An overall strategy for the development and presentation of information to key Local Officials and agency representatives was reviewed and steps to coordinate the development of a Community Stakeholders Group and public outreach efforts proposed for the Local Concept Development phase were discussed.

The Public Involvement agenda items include a brief project status update, the proposed public participation strategy, and opportunity to identify and discuss community issues, potential stakeholders for the Community Stakeholders Group, logistics, meeting formats, next steps for public involvement, action items and the project schedule.

**2. Review Stakeholders and Develop Community Stakeholders Group (CSG)**

To build community consensus and discuss the context sensitive design issues, it is necessary to work in advance to review issues and identify potential stakeholders. A stakeholder is an individual or group with an interest or investment in the way an issue is resolved. For example, major employers within the vicinity of the Central Avenue Bridge could provide information on the commuter employee needs and may benefit from proposed improvement alternatives.

A list of potential stakeholders with contact information was distributed to the Project Team for review and discussion. Representation from the communities and agencies is at the discretion of the Project Managers and in coordination with the City of Newark and the municipal local officials. The reason it is necessary to review stakeholders for potential Community Stakeholders Group (CSG) membership is to understand the issues represented by each stakeholder prior to meeting and to determine that there is not high duplication of interests, or any missing interests for inclusive representation. This is to ensure community balance, environmental justice and development toward broad-based support. It may contribute also to a manageable and effective number of stakeholders for effective discussion and collaborative problem solving and consensus building during this phase of the project.

## **2a. Project Stakeholders List**

The project stakeholders list was developed in coordination with NJTPA, NJDOT, City of Newark and Essex County officials. The stakeholders list will include local and state officials as well as municipal engineers, planners, and community stakeholders' representation from businesses, hospital, schools, historic and other cultural organizations and neighborhood representatives within the project area as identified by the Project Team and recommended by City of Newark officials. A separate list of stakeholder agencies will also be maintained for communication and coordination.

Stakeholders may be added throughout the project process as pertinent individuals become evident. Environmental and cultural resource agencies involved in the delivery process will be amended to the stakeholder list at the appropriate phase for those work activities as initiated in the transportation improvements development process. The stakeholders list includes representation from the following municipalities, local and regional organizations:

### **County and Municipal Officials and Organizations**

- City of Newark Elected Officials, Engineers, Police, Fire, Planning and OEM providers
- Essex County Officials, Engineer, Planner, OEM, Parks
- Legislative Representatives, State Senate and Assembly
- Business chambers of commerce, bus companies, schools, hospitals and historic associations
- Interested groups in the area, such as social service and civic organizations, cycling clubs, neighborhoods and residential complexes
- Private residential and commercial property owners

### **Federal and State Agencies**

- FHWA (Federal Highway Administration)
- NJTPA (North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority)
- NJDOT (Local Aid, BEPR, Pedestrian Bicycle Program)
- NJDEP, State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
- NJ TRANSIT Newark Light Rail and Bus

## **2b. Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice**

Environmental Justice efforts must be integrated into the planning phase of transportation project development according to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice (EJ) in Minority Populations and Low- Income Populations in 1994. There are three fundamental principles to effective environmental practices:

- Avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low- income populations;
- Ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process; and
- Prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

Based upon a Community Profile assessment of the cultural and economic population residing in the area of the Central Avenue Bridge over the City subway, and consistent with Environmental Justice guidance, notification of residents and consideration of potential property impacts within 500' of the Central Avenue Bridge structure has been indicated.

The Project Team consulted with the local officials to determine what additional efforts are needed to address any potential concerns of Environmental Justice during the Local Concept Development Study such as language and mobility elements as the Study progresses. Based upon the Demographic Profile of the area and consultation with the City of Newark Project Manager and Essex County officials, public information center (PIC) meeting notifications will be done in Spanish as well as English. Also project website announcement paper flyers and PIC notice paper flyers will be circulated in the neighborhoods adjacent to the bridge to supplement standard public meeting legal postings, postal mailings, and internet website postings.

### **2c. Conduct Community Input Survey**

The issues assessment is an essential step in public involvement strategy, which provides the means to identify and acknowledge issues relevant to all affected parties and identify the stakeholders and their underlying interests. It is critical to developing and maintaining a successful public outreach program for this project. Issues identification prior to meetings allows for more effective planning to design the appropriate meeting format and agenda to accomplish the goals of the public outreach meetings and the overall project effort. This information also assists in developing the project purpose and need.

To assess issues, a community input survey was designed and distributed to obtain initial input from community and agency stakeholders. The initial community input survey was mailed and sent via email. Once the project specific web site is established, the community input survey was posted to the web site to allow any future interested parties to submit their comments. Any follow-up surveys may be conducted after local officials briefings or public meetings if necessary to provide additional clarity for developing concepts, and later for resolution of support. The follow-up surveys would also be conducted via email notifications and posted on the project specific web site. It is also effective in determining if any stakeholders need to be added or if new issues may have surfaced during the concept development phase. A summary of the survey responses will be provided for the Project Team to review and presented at the Community Stakeholders and Public Meetings; and will be posted to the project specific web site.

It is important to note that any comments or issues sent through Twitter, cannot be accepted as public comments as determined by FHWA. As such, any issues received via Twitter will be sent a response to go to the project web site to submit written comments or to submit comments by mail, fax or email to the City of Newark Project Manager.

### **3. Conduct Local Officials Meetings**

The first Local Officials Meeting was held as a kick-off meeting to introduce the project to the Local Officials, and to obtain information on the concerns/comments, requirements/guidelines, potential problems and/or additional issues from their perspective, and to identify potential stakeholders and local interest groups as potential members for the Community Stakeholders Group.

Key Local Officials were invited from the City of Newark in addition to Project Team members. Future Local Officials Meetings will also be held with the City of Newark for input and concurrence to the Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA) and to provide a Resolution of Support for the PPA.

For all Local Officials Meetings, meeting logistics, including email notification, will be provided and telephone follow-up calls will be made as necessary. The Project Team will provide an agenda, meeting facilitation, meeting summary and action items. A list of potential stakeholders will be provided and a project portfolio with meeting materials designed to clearly define the project and the purpose of stakeholders' role in the public involvement process for this phase of the project. A Project Portfolio was developed with hard copies of project information including: list of Project Team members, Community Stakeholders and Agency members, project information sheet and maps. The Project Portfolio serves as an effective communication tool for the Project Team and stakeholders to use with their constituents in disseminating project information. At the Project Team Status meeting, the Project Portfolio and other public information materials were developed and reviewed with NJTPA, NJDOT, City of Newark officials such as the draft agenda, sign-in sheets, handouts, fact sheets and display boards. Updates of the handouts will be provided as the project progresses.

#### **4. Facilitate Community Stakeholders Group Meetings**

A Community Stakeholders Group (CSG) will be established to exchange project information and community interests so to reconcile the various community interests represented in the project area and provide NJTPA, NJDOT, the City of Newark with input into the process of formulating recommendations for transportation improvements associated with the Central Avenue Bridge. It is anticipated that CSG Meetings may be held early in early 2017 and summer 2017 (estimated dates) and asked to attend the Public Information Center Meetings.

The CSG will include community leaders representing local municipal government (planning and engineering, traffic safety, and OEM), civic organizations, businesses, hospitals, schools, EMS providers, environmental and historic preservation agencies, and affected neighborhood representatives. Federal and State agencies involved in the transportation process may attend meetings and will be provided meeting summaries.

For the initial CSG meeting and follow-up meetings, an agenda will be prepared, meeting notice distributed via email, and reminder phone calls for attendance will be conducted as needed. The Community Involvement Task Leader will provide facilitation for the meeting and the Project Team will design and create presentation meeting materials such as agendas, sign-in sheets, nametags, handouts, display boards and Power Point presentation as needed.

During the initial and follow-up Community Stakeholders meetings, the facilitator will monitor the communication to ensure balanced participation and clear understanding of information by all participants and observers during the meetings. The facilitator will record issues and provide meeting summaries. The agenda and meeting report will be distributed as determined by the Project Team. A Project Portfolio of information will be provided for each member of the CSG and Project Team in order to maintain clear, concise, and consistent information within the CSG and for members to report such information accurately to their constituents.



## **5. Conduct Public Information Center Meetings**

The purpose of Public Information Center (PIC) meetings is to obtain feedback on the development of the Project Purpose and Needs Statement and the development of alternatives that meet the purpose and need. The layout of the PIC meetings will be designed for the exchange of information in an open house format with support staff available to answer questions. Stations may be created to display specific information and obtain input directly on specific topics such as pedestrian access, traffic and environmental concerns or safety issues. It is anticipated that the Public Information Center meetings may be held in early 2017 and Summer 2017 (estimated dates).

Display boards and Power Point presentation may be available for viewing. Sign-in sheets will be used to record attendance and PIC blank comment forms will be available to obtain input from the general public and officials who wish to provide comments, recommendations or questions in writing, which the Project Team can review and respond to as required to develop the Purpose and Needs Statement and support the alternatives analysis. The second PIC meeting will provide a comment form for input on the conceptual alternatives and the Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA).

A Project Information Handout/Notice for the Public Information Center meetings will be generated for distribution. A summary report of the PIC meeting noting the attendance, participation and key issues will be noted. A general public mailing list will be created from municipal and project contact lists (property owners within 500 feet of the Central Avenue Bridge over the City Subway, other interested parties such as the Community Stakeholders Group members and any public who provide mailing address information).

The Project Team will work with the City of Newark in the advertisement of the PIC meetings and assist with any press release or media requests. For this Study, City of Newark asked for legal notices to be posted in The Star Ledger, and The Times of Trenton (formerly The Trenton Times) that would be run at least 7 days in advance of the PIC meeting. The PIC Meeting Notice will also be distributed to both the City of Newark and Essex County as a pdf file for posting to their websites in addition to posting on the Project website.

## **6. Develop and Maintain Project Website**

During this phase of the project, a project specific web site will be created to store and provide meeting reports and public documents for access by community and agency stakeholders as well as the general public. Additional information such as a project overview, draft purpose and need statement, FAQ's (*Frequently Asked Questions*), community outreach efforts, maps, photos, and helpful links will be included as needed and approved by the Project Team. All materials and information associated with this project specific web site must be reviewed and approved by the Project Team, NJTPA, NJDOT, and the City of Newark.

## E. Schedule of Public Involvement / Community Outreach Initiatives

	INITIATIVES	DATE	PURPOSE
1.	Project Team Status Meetings / Public Involvement Coordination	Spring 2016, (on-going)  Bi-mthly status conference calls/sit-down mtgs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present approach and updates.</li> <li>• Discuss PI strategies.</li> <li>• Review stakeholders and support status.</li> </ul> <p><i>Note: Project Team Status Meetings as conference calls or on-site are to be held as appropriate and prior to Local Officials Meetings, CSG meetings and PIC meetings.</i></p>
2.	Community Input Survey	Fall 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify stakeholders for CSG.</li> <li>• Develop and maintain contact information for community stakeholders, local officials, and agencies.</li> <li>• Identify issues/interests.</li> <li>• Assess stakeholders.</li> </ul>
3.	Local Officials Meetings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Officials Meeting No. 1 (Kick-off)</li> <li>• Local Officials Meeting No. 2 (P&amp;N Statement, Conceptual Alternatives)</li> <li>• Local Officials Meeting No. 3 (PPA - Resolution of Support)</li> </ul>	Summer/Fall 2016  Winter 2017  Spring/Fall 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present project status and schedule.</li> <li>• Review goals and objectives.</li> <li>• Identify issues and concerns.</li> <li>• Review project portfolio materials.</li> <li>• CSG meeting preparations.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtain input and/or concurrence for Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA).</li> <li>• Preparation for PIC No. 2</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide feedback on PIC Meetings and written comments received</li> <li>• Obtain Resolution of Support for Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA).</li> </ul>
4.	Community Stakeholders Group (CSG) Meetings.	CSG Mtg. No. 1 Winter 2017  CSG Mtg. No. 2 Spring 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define purpose and goals of team.</li> <li>• Review project status and schedule.</li> <li>• Obtain input for project purpose and need.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present and obtain input on developed conceptual alternatives.</li> </ul>

5.	Conduct Public Information Center (PIC) Meetings	PIC No. 1 (P&N Statement) Winter 2017  PIC No. 2 (Conceptual Alternatives - PPA) Spring 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present project information.</li> <li>• Present project history, current status, studies &amp; concepts via display boards.</li> <li>• Obtain input for project purpose and need (provide blank comment forms).</li> <li>• Present alternatives and PPA.</li> <li>• Obtain public comments and provide blank comment forms.</li> </ul>
6.	Project Web Site	Winter 2017 (on-going)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft web site outline, visual design, and content for review by Project Team.</li> <li>• Release web site upon approval prior to CSG meeting.</li> </ul>

**F. Public Involvement Deliverables**

*Project Information Sheets.* A project fact sheet or Project Information Sheet handout will be prepared and distributed to local officials at the initial local officials meeting, community stakeholder group outreach meetings, and later to the general public at Public Information Center meetings. Fact Sheets or Project Information Sheets may include project status and schedule, and other information such as brief project history, project issues, project location map, project purpose and needs statement, and proposed concepts as appropriate and approved by the Project Managers from NJTPA, NJDOT, and City of Newark. The Project Information/Fact Sheet will be updated as the project progresses to reflect the most up-to-date project information available. Information contained in the Project Fact Sheet can be adapted to fashion a project newsletter, a PIC Notice handout, or website posting.

*Project Portfolios.* Project Portfolios will be developed and utilized to provide clear and consistent hard copy materials to Project Team members, government agency representatives and key stakeholders from the City of Newark. The materials include contact information lists, regional map, map of project study area, project schedule, project fact sheet, meeting agendas and reports.

*Display Boards.* Display boards will be utilized to convey the proposed improvements to the public. Project display boards will include a project deficiency display, purpose and needs display, identify environmental resources and impacts (environmental constraints map), conceptual alternatives' displays, project aerials or renderings if appropriate, and in later phases a Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA) display, and a display of the final project configuration and traffic staging plans.

*Comment Forms.* NJTPA/NJDOT/City of Newark blank Comment Forms will be made available for Public Information Center meetings, the project web site, community stakeholder meetings, and at the Local Officials Meetings for public comment and input to be submitted and shared with the Project Team and City of Newark through this phase of the project.