

APPENDIX, VOLUME 1

Appendix 1A Public Involvement Process

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City of St. Helens



Transportation Systems Plan Update Public Involvement Plan

May 28, 2010

Background

The City's Transportation Systems Plan (TSP) was last updated in 1997. Given the growth and change that has occurred since then, the TSP's effectiveness has decreased. As such, the City applied for and was awarded a Transportation & Growth Management (TGM) Grant from the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) as financed by Federal SAFETEA-LU funds. This plan update is a land use planning process and public input is critical in developing a good plan that works for all interests of the community.

City of St. Helens citizens and stakeholders will be able to participate in this process by attending public meetings and public hearings, through online means, and via direct communication with staff. Their thoughts, feedback and ideas will be able to be conveyed by direct methods (in person, or by letter, phone or e-mail) and indirect methods (e.g. social networking internet sites, and the City's website). **By using multiple methods of communication, information will be available to the widest audience possible.**

Public involvement is essential because it:

- Leads to better, more informed plans and decisions.
- Provides opportunity for citizens who may not be involved otherwise.
- Engages citizens with the issues that concern them most.
- Provides opportunity for focused, in-depth, and pertinent discussion of key issues.
- Furthers democratic values by ensuring the interests of the majority of citizens are considered in decision-making.
- Achieves planning that is more attuned to the needs of different groups by recognizing diversity within the local community.

Oregon's Statewide Planning Goal #1 mandates the following:

- Provide widespread citizen involvement, including the establishment of a citizen advisory committee (CAC) broadly representative of geographic areas and interests.

- Assure effective two-way communication with citizens.
- Assure technical information is available in an understandable form.
- Assure that citizens receive a response from policymakers.
- Ensure adequate funding for citizen involvement in a planning budget.

The St. Helens Comprehensive Plan addresses citizen involvement, by the following general goals:

- Keep the citizens informed of opportunities for involvement.
- Develop programs to involve citizens in the land use planning process.

Public Outreach Objective

The primary objective for this project is to obtain public input on transportation needs for each mode of travel consistent with Statewide Planning Goal 1 and the City’s Comprehensive Plan policies, and to design an outreach program that reaches all segments of the community.

PIP Component 1 – Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)

The City will advertise for the CAC using the local newspaper, the City’s website, and the City’s quarterly newsletter (if timing permits). Staff will also inquire with the City Council, Planning Commission and other pertinent commissions (e.g. Bike and Pedestrian Commission). Up to six (depending on the level of interest) citizens will make up this committee. The City Council will appoint the committee members. If more than six applications are received, committee membership may be increased beyond six if the Council finds it is in the public interest to do so. The CAC should be a diverse group with a variety of transportation related experiences; diversity will depend on interest (i.e. applications received). The CAC is intended to be involved throughout the update process.

In the City of St. Helens, each Councilor is assigned to a specific department. The City Councilor assigned to Community Development will also be assigned to this committee.

PIP Component 2 – Agency/stakeholder coordination

Agencies/stakeholders that will be potentially affected by the revised Transportation Systems Plan will be notified and invited to participate in the process. Agencies/stakeholders will either be included on the Technical Advisory Committee or notified and provided opportunities to review and comment on project materials through other means. As organized by the intended or anticipated type of participation, the applicable agencies/stakeholders include:

Participation in the Technical Advisory Committee:

- City of St. Helens
- Columbia County Road Department
- Columbia County Land Development Services (Planning)
- Columbia County Rider
- Columbia River Fire & Rescue
- Oregon Department of Transportation

The following agencies will be provided notice to solicit their participation, including through review and comment on project deliverables:

- St. Helens School District
- Port of St. Helens
- Portland & Western Railroad, Inc.
- McNulty Water District
- Senior Center
- Local Oregon Department of Human Services office
- Columbia Health District-Public Health Authority
- Community Action Team

The following agencies will be informed about the project at the City's monthly utility coordination meetings and have an opportunity to comment at those meetings or separately via e-mail, facsimile or phone:

- Northwest Natural Gas
- Qwest
- Columbia River PUD

The Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development will be involved in the actual plan adoption process through provision of 45-day notice and distribution of proposed adoption materials, including the TSP and related Comprehensive Plan and code amendments:

The following agencies will be notified as needed regarding specific planning issues which may affect them:

- Oregon Division of State Lands
- Army Corps of Engineers

PIP component 3 – Widespread citizen awareness

Keeping the general citizenry aware of this project is important. Although some citizens may not want to be involved in every minute detail of the project, all should have reasonable access to information and notices. That said the City will:

- Maintain a project page on the **City's website** to provide information as the project proceeds, including contact information. The City's website also includes a city meetings calendar that will be used to help notify people about times, dates and locations for public meetings held in the City.
- Use press releases for key events: **community workshops and joint Planning Commission/City Council work sessions**
- As applicable, use the **City's quarterly newsletter** to convey pertinent information.
- Use the **social networking sites** for which the City has an account (i.e. Facebook and Twitter) to convey pertinent information/meeting dates, including **community workshops and joint Planning Commission/City Council work sessions**
- Hold **public meetings** during the plan making process.
- Provide **regular updates to the City Council** through various means (monthly department reports, personal attendance at meetings, and interaction with staff) so they can convey information to their constituents. In a small town, word can spread fast.
- Have staff and up-to-date documents/materials available to answer questions (in person, by phone, or e-mail)

PIP Component 4 – TSP Adoption

In accordance with state and local land use law related to plan adoption (Comprehensive Plan amendments), the City will:

- Publish legal notices in the local newspaper to advertise public hearing dates for actual adoption of the Transportation Systems Plan.
- List public hearings on the City’s website.
- Hold public hearings (at a minimum of one before the City Planning Commission and one before the City Council) for adoption of the Transportation Systems Plan.
- Record/air the public hearings on television (Comcast Channel 29)
- Have staff and draft Transportation Systems Plan available to answer questions (in person, by phone, or e-mail)

Comments

All agency, stakeholder, citizen, interest group and other comments will be considered in the Transportation Systems Plan update and adoption process. The city will maintain a record of comments received and how they were addressed during the process.

Outreach efforts to Title VI communities/populations for their involvement and input in this process are incorporated into this plan. Though the City doesn’t have any specific concentration of minorities or low income residents, those populations are present throughout the City. Based on 2000 census data the racial makeup of the City was about 93% Caucasian and approximately 12% of the population was below the poverty line. Though a decade old, these figures are more-or-less accurate except poverty is assumed to have increased as a result of the recession. Outreach to these populations will be addressed by using different methods of communication as described above and by specifically notifying agencies that work with these populations: Senior Center, DHS, Columbia Health District-Public Health Authority, and Community Action Team.