

Section Five

AGENCY COORDINATION AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

5.1 AGENCY COORDINATION

Agency coordination has occurred throughout the US-12 Improvement Study process. In June 2002, an Information Booklet was prepared describing the study, its purpose and need, Illustrative Alternatives under consideration, and issues of concern to be addressed during the study. Issues raised and addressed during the agency coordination process included the following topics:

- Relocation/displacement
- Compatibility with local/regional planning
- Community impacts
- Environmental justice
- Economic impacts/benefits
- Historic and cultural issues
- Wetlands/floodplains
- Water quality
- Threatened and endangered species
- Biological resources
- Noise
- Air quality

During the agency coordination process, the following agencies and other governmental entities were consulted:

- Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG)
- Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS)
- Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT)
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR)
 - Fisheries Division
 - Wildlife Division
 - Farmland and Open Space Preservation
- Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ)

- Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA)
- Michigan State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- US Army Corp of Engineers
- US Environmental Protection Agency
- US Natural Resource Conservation Service
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- US Department of Agriculture
- Pittsfield Charter Township
- Pittsfield Charter Township Historical Commission
- Washtenaw County
- City of Saline
- Ann Arbor Area School District
- Saline Area School District
- Saline Area Historical Society
- Washtenaw County Historical Society

Several letters were received from agencies regarding the U.S.-12 Improvement Study in response to the information packet that MDOT sent out (see Appendix G). In their correspondence, the following agencies emphasized the importance of specific resources:

USFWS, regarding threatened and endangered species in the study area

MDNR Wildlife Division, regarding the presence of threatened and endangered species and unique natural features in the study area

Michigan Department Of Agriculture, regarding potential adverse impacts to agricultural lands and drainage in the study area

Federal Emergency Management Agency Region V, Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment Branch, regarding impacts on floodplains

SEMCOG, Transportation Programs, regarding projected population growth in the study area, consistency with the 2025 Regional Transportation Plan for Southeast Michigan, responsibilities of SEMCOG and WATS, non-motorized travel, and clarification of alternatives.

In addition, telephone calls regarding general questions about the US-12 Improvement study were received from EPA Region 5 and MDEQ.

Coordination also occurred with the Saline Sustainability Circle regarding their draft plan to address land use and transportation issues and sustainability initiatives in the Saline and Pittsfield Township region.

5.2 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public participation activities were designed to inform residents, public officials, business and property owners and other stakeholders about the study and provide methods to receive their input regarding the alternatives being considered, and potential environmental impacts and study concerns. To achieve this objective, a variety of public participation tools were used to convey important and timely study information. These tools included: stakeholder meetings, public meetings, newsletters, study web site, toll-free telephone information line, press releases, and meeting notices. A mailing list was developed using township input, meeting sign-in sheets, and information gathered through the project telephone line and web site.

Stakeholder Meetings

Public participation was initiated early in the study with four stakeholder meetings in the fall of 2001, followed by two more stakeholder meetings held in the fall of 2002. The last stakeholder meeting is tentatively scheduled for spring 2003. Stakeholder participants at all of these meetings included local, county, and state officials, local homeowners representing individual properties and residential subdivisions, business representatives, and special interest groups. These meetings enabled the study team to gain a greater understanding of local issues and concerns and priorities, and receive suggestions regarding potential alternatives. All of the stakeholder meetings were held at the Pittsfield Township offices Located on US-12 within the study area. Meeting summaries and a list of invitees and attendees were prepared. The meeting summaries for the stakeholder and public meetings are included in the Public Involvement Technical Report.

Meeting Number 1, September 24, 2001. Invited guests included local officials from Pittsfield Township and Ypsilanti Township, the City of Saline, Washtenaw County, the Michigan House of Representatives, and the Michigan Senate. The purposes of this and the next three stakeholder meetings were to:

- Introduce the study,
- Define the study purpose and need,
- Explain the overall planning process,
- Explain the sequence of events, and
- Describe how the information generated from these sessions and other methods of public input would be used during the study.

A preliminary issues list was developed by the consultant team and supplemented by input received during the session. The top five issues identified in the first stakeholder session were: transit, traffic/safety, Morgan Road, nonmotorized transportation, and wetlands. Pittsfield Township officials asked that Morgan Road be included in the Illustrative Alternatives evaluation.

Meeting Number 2, October 24, 2001. Invited guests to the second stakeholder meeting included neighborhood representatives who live along US-12. As in the first stakeholder meeting, invited guests prioritized issues for the study area. The top five issues for the neighborhood groups included Morgan Road, noise, community character/identity, truck traffic, and water quality.

Meeting Number 3, October 29, 2001. One individual attended the third stakeholder meeting held for business and commercial groups located along US-12. Rather than prioritizing issues, the participant preferred to discuss their primary concerns with the team. These concerns included foreseeing a continuation of businesses and retail growth along US-12, a preference for widening US-12 to 5-lanes as the best alternative for both businesses and others, funding for construction, State Road as an important corridor, and the new Saline School campus as a contributor to traffic problems on US-12.

Meeting Number 4, October 31, 2001. In this meeting, special interest group representatives prioritized issues in the following order: pedestrian/bicycle links, traffic/safety, truck traffic, social/community impacts, and wetlands.

Meeting Number 5, October 22, 2002. Invited guests to the fifth stakeholder meeting were identical to Session 1. The purpose of the fifth and sixth stakeholder sessions was to: introduce the Practical Alternatives prior to the second public meeting, provide an update on the study's progress, discuss the next steps in the study, receive input to be used in refining the Practical Alternatives, and to answer questions.

Meeting Number 6, October 23, 2002. Invited guests to the sixth stakeholder meeting included representatives from neighborhoods and businesses along US-12, and special interest groups.

Final Stakeholder Meeting, Summer 2003. The final stakeholder meeting will be held before the public hearing and is tentatively scheduled for summer 2003.

Public Meetings

Three public meetings were planned during the course of this study. The first two meetings were held on March 19, 2002 and November 19, 2002. The public hearing is tentatively scheduled for Summer 2003. These public meetings have been structured using an open house format, providing the public opportunity to speak one-on-one with MDOT officials and study team members. A summary of comments received at each meeting was prepared.

Public Meeting #1, March 19, 2002. The meeting was conducted in two sessions; from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. at the Pittsfield Township Hall. Time and location were announced on the study web site, in the first newsletter, in a press release, and through a meeting notice mailing. The purpose of this meeting was to introduce the Illustrative Alternatives, answer the public's questions, and receive written comments. In addition to areas designated for sign-in and written comments, four stations presented information regarding *Study Process, Purpose and Need, Illustrative Alternatives, and Impact Assessment*. Between the two sessions, 76 people attended as determined by the sign in sheet. A total of 41 written comments were received.

Public Meeting #2, November 19, 2002. This public meeting was also conducted in two sessions, from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. at the Pittsfield Township Hall. The meeting was announced on the study web site, in the second newsletter, in a press release, and in a meeting notice mailing. The purpose of this meeting was to introduce the Practical Alternatives, provide information on impacts, respond to questions, and receive written comments on the study. In addition to areas designated for sign-in and written comments, several stations presented information that included: *Study Process, Practical Alternatives, and Impact Assessments*. Satellite stations were also provided that included traffic data, Illustrative Alternatives, and information regarding MDOT's concurrent study on access management for the US-12 study area. Between the two sessions, 70 people attended according to the sign-in sheet. A total of 36 written comments were received along with one prepared statement.

Public Hearing, Summer 2003. A Public Hearing will be held after issuance of the Environmental Assessment (EA). A public comment period of 45 days will be provided. The EA will be available for public review at the Pittsfield Township Offices, the Ann Arbor Saline Public and Ypsilanti District libraries, and the Washtenaw Area Transportation Study offices. The schedule will allow for comments to be received for at least two weeks after the Public Hearing. All comments will be recorded and summarized by the study team and considered in developing the Recommended Alternative. The purpose of the Public Hearing is to present the findings of the EA and to receive public comments submitted in written format or recorded by a court reporter. Two sessions will be held at the Pittsfield Township Offices, from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. The Hearing will be announced on the study web site, in the study newsletter, and through a meeting notice and press release.

Newsletters

Three newsletters were used to announce upcoming public meetings, provide an update on study progress, present recent study information and public involvement opportunities, and preview activities not yet conducted. Two have been published to date. Information was conveyed in narrative and graphic form. Newsletters were mailed to the individuals on the study mailing list (337 people are currently on the study mailing list) and distributed at the public meetings.

Newsletter #1. The first newsletter was mailed approximately two weeks prior to the first public meeting held on March 19, 2002. This newsletter announced the first public meeting, described the Illustrative Alternatives and provided the study history, study process and overview, and purpose and need. The newsletter also outlined public involvement opportunities.

Newsletter #2. The second newsletter was mailed approximately two weeks prior to the second public meeting held on November 19, 2002. The second newsletter thoroughly described the Practical Alternatives that were carried forward into the next phase of the study. The newsletter included graphics showing the alignments of the Practical Alternatives, cross sections considered, and a potential impacts table. The newsletter also announced the upcoming public meeting, and described next steps of the study, public involvement opportunities, and study updates.

Newsletter #3. The third newsletter will be mailed approximately two weeks prior to the public hearing, which is tentatively scheduled for Fall 2003. The third newsletter will announce the upcoming public hearing and describe the Preferred Alternative. The newsletter will also describe the next steps of the study, and public involvement opportunities, and provide study updates.

Telephone Information Line

A toll-free, 24-hour telephone information line (877-238-8712) was established to allow citizens a mechanism to provide input to, and ask questions of, the study team. The line was monitored daily, and responses to recorded messages were issued within two business days. Forty-two calls were received between September 2001 and September 2003, 21 of which were RSVPs for the stakeholder sessions on October 22 and 23, 2002, and 12 were RSVPs for stakeholder sessions on August 19, 2003.

Web Site

A web site (<http://www.mdot.state.mi.us/projects/us12-saline/>) dedicated to the US-12 Improvement Study was furnished by MDOT. Information related to the study was periodically updated at key deliverable points, such as public meetings. One hundred six messages were received between September 2001 and September 2003.

Mailing List

The mailing list was continuously updated throughout the study using various sources. The study team generated an initial mailing list from previous US-12 studies. Addresses were continually acquired using sign-in sheets from stakeholder sessions and public meetings, and from the telephone information line and web site. Individuals on the mailing list received study newsletters and public meeting notices. Input from local officials was also solicited. As of April 2003, there were 337 individuals on the study mailing list.