

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND OUTREACH PLANS

1. INTRODUCTION

The inclusion of a public information component in the Transportation Management Plan (TMP) has the potential to reduce work zone impacts by providing specific project information to the traveling public. The goals of a public information and outreach campaign may include:

- Alerting the public about potential impacts and available means to avoid them
- Providing general information concerning appropriate driving and travel behavior
- Providing travel options associated with the work zone
- Modifying travel habits to reduce traffic congestion during the project
- Improving public awareness/understanding of a project
- Promoting project support

Early public involvement in the development of the TMP and keeping the public informed throughout the project is essential both to identify potential impacts and to ensure that effective mitigation strategies are developed and implemented.

This document is not intended to be a self-contained how-to guide on public relations. Project managers and engineers are required to work with the Office of Communications to develop an organized approach to the communication needs of any project, using available tools such as the PLANS process. Coordination with the Office of Communications will help to ensure success of a public information and outreach effort, particularly for significant projects.

1.1 What is a work zone public information and outreach campaign?

A work zone public information and outreach campaign involves communicating with road users, the general public, communities, businesses, appropriate public entities, and other identified stakeholders about a project and its implications for safety and mobility. Developing and implementing a public information and outreach campaign should be started well before road construction begins and will need ongoing monitoring throughout the life of the project. Effective public information and outreach campaigns generally include the following key steps:

1. Determine the appropriate size and nature of the public information and outreach campaign.
2. Identify resources necessary to support the campaign.
3. Identify partners to assist in developing and implementing the campaign.
4. Identify target audiences for the campaign.
5. Develop the message(s) for the campaign.
6. Determine communication strategies for disseminating the messages to the target audiences.
7. Determine communication timing for the campaign.

8. Evaluate the effectiveness of the campaign.

These steps are discussed in Section 2 and will ideally be presented in a public information and outreach plan that is coordinated with project stakeholders.

1.2 Why develop and implement a WZ PI&O campaign?

Work zones, particularly large ones, can have negative effects on regional traffic safety, mobility and traveler dissatisfaction. A well planned and implemented public information and outreach campaign can help mitigate many of these issues by warning drivers of upcoming work zones and providing information to drivers pre-trip and en-route. This information allows drivers to make informed travel decisions.

1.3 Public Information and Outreach and the Work Zone Rule

The updated Rule defines a category of projects expected to cause a relatively high level of disruption. These projects are called “significant projects.” The Rule requires the use of public information and outreach strategies for all significant projects as part of the Transportation Management Plan.

2. DESIGNING A WORK ZONE PUBLIC INFORMATION AND OUTREACH CAMPAIGN

The following sections discuss the recommended steps for developing a public information and outreach campaign for work zones. The intent is to provide helpful information on the main public information and outreach elements that persons responsible for planning and operating work zones will need to consider.

2.1 Determine appropriate size and nature of campaign

The size and nature of a public information and outreach campaign should be determined by the anticipated impacts of the project. For small projects causing minor traffic disruption, the public information and outreach effort may be limited to routine efforts (PLANS). For longer, more disruptive projects, a more elaborate public information and outreach campaign may be warranted. All work zones should incorporate some form of public information and outreach.

When determining the size and nature of a public information and outreach campaign, a range of elements should be considered, including:

- Traffic delay and safety at the corridor and network levels, including effects on parallel corridors and alternate routes.
- Traffic delay and safety at intersections, interchanges, and railroad crossings.
- Special traffic and safety conditions such as truck traffic, steep grades, and poor weather.
- Disruptions of other modes of transportation, including pedestrian and bicycle traffic, public transportation, airports, rail terminals, and ports.
- Evacuation routes.
- Hazardous material transportation routes.
- Emergency responders (hospitals, fires stations, military installations).
- Other public and private entities (such as schools and universities).
- Planned special events (such as sporting events, holiday parades, concerts).
- Businesses and residences.

For small, short duration work zones, determining the work zone impacts may simply require an informal consideration of these aforementioned factors. In other cases, determining the effects of a work zone and the needs for a public information and outreach campaign may require significant data collection and analysis. For significant projects, the work zone analysis portion of the Maintenance of Traffic Alternative Analysis (MOTAA) will provide insight into the traffic impacts of a project. For other projects, coordinate with the appropriate SHA District Traffic Office to obtain general traffic information and potential work zone impacts.

Even if a project is designated as a significant project, the extent and types of impacts may warrant varying degrees of public information and outreach efforts.

2.2 Identify resources

To be successful, a public information and outreach campaign must be supported with sufficient resources. Public information and outreach should be a significant consideration when developing project budgets. While they can be expensive, experience has shown that benefits of a public information and outreach campaign are likely to outweigh the costs.

Both internal agency resources and external resources can play a role in developing and implementing a public information and outreach campaign.

- *Internal Resources* – Internal resources may include the project manager, public relations personnel from the Office of Communications, a graphic designer, and webmaster. Other resources include the use of CHART for providing traveler information online and changeable message signs, Highway Advisory Radio (HAR), and posting project information on Marylandroads.com.
- *External Resources* – External resources may include using consultants for additional public relations expertise (possibly in graphic design, web design, and writing); radio, TV, and newspaper advertising; printing brochures and pamphlets; or opening a project information center. Such costs can vary widely. Using low cost and/or free of charge services can help stretch resources. External resources that can be free of charge include earned media and assistance from project partners.

The budget for a work zone public information and outreach campaign will depend on several factors, including the size and nature of the campaign, the communication strategies selected, whether the selected strategies are already established in SHA and can be readily used, and the role of partners. Other states have cited PI&O campaign budgets ranging from less than \$50,000 up to several million dollars. In general, PI&O campaign expenditures typically ranged from 0.3% to 1% of the entire project budget.

2.3 Identify partners/stakeholders

Stakeholder is a term applied to individuals, groups, and organizations that have a “stake” in a project. They may be immediately affected by the project because they travel through the work zone, or may be indirectly involved because of their position in the community. Working with stakeholders in the planning and implementation stages of a public information and outreach campaign is important for the following reasons:

- *Establishing lines of communication.* Communication is particularly important during major periods of disruption and when changes occur.
- *Distributing information.* Involving outside groups in planning an outreach campaign is in itself a way to distribute information. Holding meetings with the public to solicit community input is also a way to inform the public of disruptions and plans to mitigate them.
- *Improving the product.* Stakeholders will bring unique perspectives about successful types of messages and methods of communication. Varying perspectives may be important in areas with diverse population groups, for example, non-English speaking communities, truck drivers, and older drivers.

- *Sharing the costs.* Stakeholders may be willing to share the cost of producing materials or to provide free forms of advertising. For example, major employers are often willing to incorporate messages in company communications, such as newsletters, websites, or email.

Developing an all-inclusive list of stakeholders is dependent on the type of construction, extent of construction, length of work zone, and duration of construction. The work zone's geography, and business and residential environment should also be considered. Refer to Figure 1 for a list of possible stakeholders in the public information and outreach:

One way to obtain input from affected parties is through a community task force, made up of stakeholders from the community likely to be impacted by the work zone. Ideally developed during the planning stage of the project, the objective of creating such a task force is to obtain input and review/comment on the development and implementation of construction and transportation management strategies. Both the Contractor and SHA may need to meet with the task force(s) to obtain input and recommendations throughout the project delivery process, from planning through design, construction and project assessment.

Meeting specifically with local businesses and business organizations can be a very important element of a public information and outreach effort. Businesses can channel project information to customers and suppliers. These meetings also provide businesses the opportunity to provide input regarding their concerns and suggest ways a project can be managed to minimize any negative effects.

Figure 1: Possible Stakeholders and Interested Parties

Not an inclusive list - will vary depending on complexity of the project

SHA Internal Partners

- Internal partners
- Office of Communications
- District Public Information Rep.

SHA Jurisdictional Partners

- City/county agencies
- County engineers
- Federal lands agencies
- Transit providers
- School districts
- State agency partners
- Port Authority
- Other

Shipping/Freight Industry; Commodity Haulers

- Trucking industry
- Ports
- Railroads
- Agriculture
- Forest Products
- Fishing

Special Interest Groups

- Maryland Motor Truck Association
- AAA Midatlantic
- Bicycle/pedestrian associations

Property Owners and Property Residents

- Directly affected by project (top priority)
- Adjacent to project
- Other property owners on right of way

Community Residents

- People living in the neighborhood
 - Neighborhood Associations
- People living in the vicinity
- People living in the same city
- People living in the highway corridor
- Commuters traveling the highway corridor

Elected Officials/City, County and Regional Governments/Commissions

- MDOT
- MdTA
- MPOs
- Mayor/city council
- County commission
- Council of Governments
- State representative(s)
- State senator(s)
- US Senator
- US Representative

Traveler Information Providers

- Radio
- Television
- Newspaper

Figure 1 (cont.): Possible Stakeholders and Interested Parties

Other Affected Community Agencies/ Emergency Services Providers

- Law enforcement agencies
 - Maryland State Police
 - City police/county sheriffs
- Fire departments
- Hospitals/ambulance services
- 911 dispatch centers
- Emergency operations managers
- HAZMAT responders
- Schools and school bus managers
- Water/sewer/fire protection districts
- Utility companies
- Parks
- Area attractions/entertainment venues/fairgrounds
- Festival organizers/special events coordinators

Local business community

- Businesses affected by the project (top priority)
- Businesses in the neighborhood
- Businesses in the vicinity
- Businesses in the highway corridor

Environmental Justice

- Low-income communities
- Minority communities
- Spanish translations needed
- Other

Highway Users

- Local drivers/local deliveries
- Commuters/regional and through trips
- Trucking industry
 - Heavy-haul trucking companies
 - Annual permit holders
- Truck stops
- Agricultural and wood products haulers
- Passenger bus companies
- Charter bus companies
- School districts (school buses)

Civic Organizations

- Chamber of Commerce/city clubs
- Convention and Visitor's Bureau
- Local community service clubs
- Local neighborhood associations
- Other

Work Zone Personnel

- Contractors
- Traffic Control Providers
- Consultants

2.4 Identify target audiences

Identifying the target audiences helps to determine the types of messages that need to be conveyed and the best methods of communicating those messages. Ultimately, the target audiences are travelers or potential travelers. However, travelers can be thought of in different ways and they can be reached through different methods (either directly or through some sort of organization, such as a community group). Audiences for a construction project PI&O campaign can be separated into three overlapped categories: types of travelers, types of trip generators, and types of people.

<u>Types of Travelers</u>	<u>Types of Trip Generators</u>	<u>Types of People</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-Trip • En route • Personal – local, commute • Personal – non-local (e.g., tourists, through travelers) • Commercial – local • Commercial – non-local (long distance) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major employers • Shopping districts/malls • Recreation and tourist facilities (e.g., parks, museums) • Organizers of planned special events • Emergency responders/hospitals • Business associations • Transportation management associations • Intermodal passenger terminals (e.g., airport) • Intermodal freight terminals (e.g., port) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents (and neighborhood associations) • Minorities (particularly limited English-speaking groups) • Special demographics (e.g., elderly, children) • Disabled • Small business owners

Types of Travelers – The major audience for a work zone public information and outreach campaign is travelers. Travelers can be reached pre-trip or en route, and each traveler may have different means of receiving information. Pre-trip travelers, accessing information through a project website or TV report, may be more likely to change trip timing, mode, route, and destination than travelers already on the road. En route travelers, receiving accurate and timely information via radio or changeable message signs, may also alter some trip characteristics to lessen delay.

Travelers also differ in terms of the purpose of their trip. A major distinction is between commuters and non-commuters. Commuters tend to be aware of travel conditions and easy to inform, but less flexible about aspects of their trip, particularly the origin and destination. Non-commuters are typically harder to get information to, but may be more likely to respond to messages about changing the timing of a trip and their destination.

Another distinction is between local and non-local travelers. Non-local travelers are generally harder to identify and inform about road work. Also, the information needs of non-locals may differ due to the nature of their trip and the unfamiliarity with the area. Such factors are particularly important in tourist areas and near passenger terminals (airports, ports, rail stations, etc.). It may be necessary to publicize information in different ways and in a wider area for non-local travelers.

Commercial drivers have different needs for work zone information due to their work schedules, oversize or dangerous loads, and overnight travel. When planning a work zone PI&O campaign, it is important to pay special attention to commercial drivers on heavy truck traffic routes and near freight terminals. Trucks with special loads (oversize, hazardous materials, etc.) may need to avoid a work zone entirely.

Types of Trip Generators – Identifying major trip generators near the work zone, such as major businesses, stadiums, airports and the organizations that represent them, is another way to determine target audiences. Major trip generators should be identified early in the development of the PI&O campaign such that information can be provided to them to help them minimize the impacts of the work zone on their customers and suppliers. Major trip generators can also disseminate information to travelers.

Types of People – An outreach campaign needs to take into consideration different types of people affected by the work zone such that any special information can be provided. Residents who live near a work zone are often a primary audience since they may be affected by the work zone on a daily basis. Segments of population who may require special considerations are large groups of limited English-speaking residences, the elderly, children, and disabled. Children can be good conduits of information to their parents.

2.5 Develop campaign message(s)

In general, work zone PI&O campaigns generally incorporate three messages: (1) Safety, (2) Plan ahead to minimize delay, and (3) SHA cares. The details of the work zone messages should be tailored to the circumstances of the work zone and audiences identified for the campaign.

Safety – Encouraging motorists to take safety precautions to protect themselves and workers is the most important message to convey to drivers. Drivers should be continuously reminded to adhere to posted speed limits and stay alert in work zones to prevent crashes. Providing information about work zone fines, safety tips, and work zone crash statistics help inform the driver.

Plan Ahead to Minimize Delay and Frustration – Disruptions caused by work zones can be reduced if travelers plan ahead. In addition, if travelers know what to expect when they get to the work zone, they will be less frustrated about any delays they may encounter. A general message that should be conveyed to the public is to think ahead about the timing of travel, the route, the mode and the destination. Specific messages concerning these items form the centerpiece of the PI&O campaign.

Work zone details can be provided through a variety of strategies, including websites, project hotlines, newspaper articles, changeable message signs, and others. At a minimum, the details of a work zone should include the dates and times of the work zone activity and the routes, lanes, and ramps affected. If the details change, it is important to provide the most current information. Incorrect and out-of-date information can compromise the effectiveness of a PI&O campaign.

Sharing information on travel times and delays can range from very general (e.g., “Expect Delays”) to very specific (e.g., “Two Right Lanes Closed; Merge Right”). More specific information is generally more useful to travelers; however, emphasis must be placed on providing accurate information. Real-time traveler information can be provided by traffic cameras on websites or changeable message signs. Travel time and delay information may be provided pre-trip via web sites, e-mail alerts, or telephone, and en route via changeable message signs, radio traffic spots, and CB broadcasts. Day and time stamping information confirms to drivers that the information provided is current.

Providing information on alternate methods and modes of transportation may be effective in reducing the amount of time through the work zone. This may involve providing detailed information on carpooling/ridesharing, transit, park and ride, and telecommuting options. Messages regarding telecommuting may be targeted to major employers as well as commuters.

For many projects, alternate routes will need to be developed and communicated to travelers. These routes may be different depending on the type of driver (local, long distance, commercial) and timing. Alternate route messages are essential when construction involves shutting down an entire route or when an incident occurs in the work zone. Alternate route messages may involve using changeable message signs located at decision points for drivers, handing out alternate route maps, or providing information in flyers, brochures or handouts.

SHA Cares – Travelers are more willing to cope with disruptions and cooperate with directions when they feel that all of the necessary steps are being taken to advise the public. Acceptance of inconvenience related to the work zone is more likely with a genuine message from those involved. Public information and outreach strategies should incorporate details of the project, including what is involved, the duration of the work, the benefits, and periodic updates on progress to help gain public acceptance.

2.6 Determine communication strategies

After identifying the appropriate audience and message(s) for the project, the next step is to determine the strategies that will be used to get the messages to the target audiences. There are a variety of ways to communicate with the public about work zones. The strategies used should be tailored to the project context, the message being conveyed and funding limitations.

Communication strategies can be modified to fit the needs of each project. A combination of several strategies may make sense for some projects, while only one or two of the strategies may be necessary for other projects. Typically, there will be a significant amount of interaction between different means of communication. For example, informational materials such as brochures and fact sheets can be posted on project websites, making them more widely

accessible. Similarly, information posted on project websites or gained from project materials may be used by news media to provide information through newspapers, radio, and television. Messages must be consistent across all communication strategies to achieve credibility.

2.7 Determine when to communicate

Providing information to the public should not be limited to when a work zone is active. A public information and outreach campaign should consider strategies to be implemented before construction begins and after the project is complete. Prior to construction starting, the campaign should concentrate on general information about the project, the problems it may cause, and how to find out more information. This might involve a range of outreach and communication methods, including working groups, planning/advisory groups, public workshops, project websites, print media, legislative briefings, and branding. Near the project start date, it might be appropriate to add other methods of communication, such as free media coverage and paid advertising, a telephone hotline, or the use of dynamic message signs. After completion of the project, information can be provided regarding the successes of a project and the project partners can be publicly thanked. This is a chance to enhance SHA's image with a customer-driven focus.

The project website or SHA website may also be used to publicize information regarding project completion. People may be checking the website to see what is happening and an old website, if not updated or removed, can become an ambiguous source of information that causes confusion about whether the work zone is still active. If a project website is removed, it is recommended that SHA maintain ownership of the domain name for a period of time following project completion such that it is not bought by others and used for undesirable means.

2.8 Evaluate effectiveness

Evaluating the effectiveness of public information and outreach campaigns is part of SHA's long-term effort to improve safety and mobility in and around work zones. During long-term projects, it may be necessary to evaluate the campaign periodically during the project to determine if it is effective, or if resources need to be redirected towards other strategies. An evaluation might include:

- Documenting and reporting the impacts of the work zone, such as the number of crashes and traffic delay.
- Documenting and reporting the questions, comments, compliments, and complaints received via telephone, website, letter or other means.
- Assessing perceptions of successes and failures among the project partners.
- Surveying the public, businesses, truck drivers, etc. affected by the work zone.
- Surveying tourism bureaus or other major facilities near the work zone, such as rest stops.

One way to evaluate the effectiveness of a public information and outreach campaign is through a statistically valid telephone survey. Items assessed may include:

1. Awareness of the project and project information resources
2. Knowledge of the reasons for the construction project
3. Changes in travel behavior including trip timing, route, travel modes, and destinations
4. Employers' provision of incentives such as flexible schedules, transit payments, company vanpools, etc.
5. Travel problems encountered
6. Levels of traveler dissatisfaction
7. Methods of accessing work zone information (i.e., what strategies did they find most useful for obtaining project information)
8. Usefulness of the information

It may also be necessary to conduct pre-project baseline surveys or use focus groups to identify stakeholder groups, what types of information stakeholders want to know, how often they want or need to have this information, and in what format it should be provided. Focus groups can be instrumental in identifying the preferred modes of communication and timing.

The following are sample goals and associated measures of effectiveness (MOE) and measurement tools:

Goal: Provide information about the project to educate motorists and businesses that are most likely to be affected by the project.

MOE: Positive feedback from motorists and businesses.
Little to no reduction in business reported by local businesses.
Delay on first day of construction is less than projected.
Average of less than X incidents per week.

Tools: Conduct quarterly motorist/business surveys to determine if outreach efforts are sufficient and what outreach methodologies have been most useful.

Goal: Tell motorists/businesses where they can go for more information throughout the duration of the project.

MOE: Number of website hits.
Number of calls to project hotline.
Number of emails.

Tools: Conduct quarterly motorist/business surveys to learn if they are aware of the website and project hotline and determine how they found out about these resources.

Goal: Encourage the use of alternate routes.

MOE: Delay on first day of construction is less than projected.
Less than X complaints received per day on project hotline/website/email.
Average of less than X incidents per week.

Tools: Measure traffic impacts on alternate route to determine if reduction in traffic/incidents through project results in motorists using prescribed alternates.

3. COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

This section describes a number of commonly used communication strategies.

3.1 Public Awareness Strategies

Public awareness strategies include various methods to educate and reach out to the public, businesses, and the community concerning the project and work zone.

Branding – Using distinctive project names and trademark graphics, logos and catchphrases, otherwise known as branding, can be an effective method of getting the target audience(s) to easily recognize any information related or pertaining to the work zone.

Printed Materials – Printed materials can include information on project phasing, events, and other important work zone details. They can be in the form of brochures, newsletters, flyers, fact sheets, and/or maps. Dissemination methods include mailing, hand delivering, placing in newspapers, and handing out at key locations.

- *Brochures and Mailers* – Brochures and mailers are printed material containing project-related information such as advanced notice of the project's start date, schedules, pictures/graphics of the project, a description of the need for the project, alternative routes, etc. They may be passed out at key locations (e.g., large employers, rest stops, travel information centers) or mailed to affected businesses or communities.
- *Newsletters* – Periodic newsletters provide project details, general traveler information, dates and times of community meetings and contact information. Establishing a consistent time frame for publishing and disseminating the newsletter such that readers know when to look for the next issue.

Press Releases – Press releases are used to announce the start of all types of projects. Primary targets are the news media including both print and electronic media. Traffic reporters and transportation related Internet Web Sites should be included to report progress of major impact projects and some longer term medium impact projects. Copies of releases can be sent to other interested parties such as affected businesses, various state, local and county officials. Before a project begins, a letter to the appropriate elected officials in the area outlining the project must be provided.

Media Alerts – Media Alerts are more specific and direct than news releases and can be effectively used to notify media about upcoming events and project progress such as lane shifts, temporary ramp closures, etc.

Mass Media – Outreach to radio, television, and newspapers should be a cornerstone of any public information campaign. It is important to establish a working relationship with reporters to encourage publicity that is positive and information that is accurate.

- *Earned Media* – Earned media, or free media, such as news stories and traffic information, should be used to the maximum extent. Large projects are typically

considered newsworthy by local media outlets, so it can be relatively easy to get news coverage.

- *Paid Media* – Paid announcements of an upcoming major project may use newspaper, radio, or television ads. Paid advertisements can also be used for progress updates, or to provide information regarding major changes to the work zone configuration. Paid advertising can be expensive, but may be a cost-effective way of reaching a wide audience.

Press Kit – A press kit containing information the media needs to get the word out about the project allows consistent messages to be provided to the media and helps develop positive relationships with the media.

Business Survival Kit – Business survival kits may contain tips and tactics for success during construction, business survival videos, and general project information. The kits help develop positive relationships with affected businesses, and stress the importance of meeting the businesses' needs during construction.

Public Service Announcements – Public Service Announcements (PSAs) can be used to support main messages of a project's communication plan. PSAs are useful for messages about safety in the work zone. A time line needs to be established to allow for the scripting of the message, recording and distribution.

Project Information Center – For large, long-term work zones, a project information center can be a useful strategy to disseminate information and provide a key point of contact for the public. It is typically located on or near the project site and contains materials such as scale model displays, maps, brochures, or videos describing the project, potential impacts, and available alternatives to minimize the impacts.

Project Web Site – Project specific websites can provide both static and real-time information, including written project information, traffic camera images, travel times, photographs, maps, and links, for a specific project. The website should provide accurate and up-to-date information, be easy to navigate, and people need to know about it.

Public Meetings, Workshops, and Community Events – Hosting public meetings or workshops gives the affected parties an opening to gain knowledge about the project. They also provide the opportunity for the project partners to solicit information regarding community concerns, and potential impacts and management strategies. Events for gaining public attention and information dissemination include ground-breaking ceremonies, fairs, school assemblies, tours, and informational workshops.

Community Task Forces – Developing a community task force that includes stakeholders from the impacted community (businesses, neighborhood groups, public officials, interested individuals) can be a means of providing information and receiving input related to a project.

Coordination with Media/Schools/Businesses/Emergency Services – Coordination with various community, business, and media groups that are likely to be impacted by the work zone or that

can disseminate information helps to develop positive relationships and to get the information out to affected parties.

Work Zone Education and Safety Campaigns – The purpose of a work zone education and safety campaign is to improve the awareness of motorists and/or workers in order to reduce the number of fatalities and injuries in work zones. Brochures, web sites, media campaigns, videos and worker training are all effective strategies.

Work Zone Safety Highway Signs – Signs with work zone safety messages placed strategically at work zone approaches can increase driver awareness of work zone safety concerns.

Rideshare Promotions – This strategy involves the promotion of an existing rideshare program or creation of a new program through signage, media, advertisements, brochures and events. The purpose of this strategy is to publicize commuting alternatives and to achieve a significant shift to carpool and vanpool through the project site, thus lowering traffic volumes.

Visual Information – This strategy uses videos, slides, and presentations to supplement public meetings, public information center displays, or press releases for meetings and/or Web-based dissemination. An appeal to the visual senses may help get the message across.

Public Opinion Surveys – These surveys contain sets of questions designed to elicit opinion on issues. Public opinion surveys can be an effective method of determining general public attitudes and to educate the public. They can be used prior to developing a PI&O plan to aid in developing communication strategies or they can be used during or post-construction to evaluate the effectiveness of certain strategies.

3.2 Motorist Information Strategies

The goal of motorist information strategies is to provide current and/or real-time information to drivers on the road during the construction of the project. These elements are important components of any project where alternate routing is a practical alternative.

Radio Traffic News – Project related information is disseminated via regularly scheduled traffic reports on commercial radio stations.

Changeable Message Signs – Fixed or portable, changeable message signs (CMS) placed in strategic locations alert road users of lane and road closures, work activities, incidents, potential work zone hazards, queues and slowed or stopped traffic ahead, travel time or delay information, as well as alternate routes in or around the work zone. Information posted on a CMS gives motorists the opportunity to take appropriate measures based on the information provided, such as choosing to divert to an alternate route. As an enforcement tool, these signs can be used to inform drivers of speed limit reductions or enforcement activities in the work zone.

Temporary Motorist Information Signs – Temporary conventional signs – ground mounted, overhead or on vehicles – provide traveler information to guide road users through the work zone and warn of potential hazards.

Billboards - Billboards are used to announce the coming of a major project or to present work zone safety messages. Placement is best on routes leading to the construction area. Billboards have limited usage since messages must be extremely brief and as time passes, motorists have a tendency to ignore them.

Highway Advisory Radio – Highway Advisory Radio (HAR) provides real-time or current information to motorists en-route via their in-vehicle radios. SHAZAM signs are used to inform motorists of the radio frequency where the information is available.

SHAZAM Signs – SHAZAM signs indicate to road users to tune their radios to 1610 AM for travel information when sign beacons are flashing. These signs turn on and off depending on when the HAR has a traveler information message.

Live Traffic Cameras on the Web – Real-time live traffic cameras on the web allow users to view real-time traffic conditions.

Project Information Hotline – Pre-recorded messages and/or real-time traffic or travel information for the work zone is provided using a toll-free telephone number.

Travelers Advisory Telephone (TAT) – TAT is currently used for summer beach traffic [Reach-the-Beach – (800) 541-9595] and is in the planning phase for possible broader applications.

E-mail Alerts – E-mail alerts provide travelers with timely information on work zone activity and traffic delays. Lane closures, delays, and incident/crash information are distributed to travelers who have signed up to receive the information via computer, cell phone or hand-held device.

Highway Information Network (Web-based) – A highway information network is a web site where multiple stakeholder groups can place information related to the roadway. The web site provides data storage areas to each stakeholder group, including control of functionality, security, and data quality.

Freight Travel Information – This strategy involves coordination with the freight community (trucking companies and drivers) to identify work zone information considered useful and development of a way to distribute that information to freight stakeholders. The information can be disseminated to central locations (e.g., via fax or email to trucking companies) or to truckers as they approach the work zone (e.g., via CG communications tools such as the CB Wizard Alert System).

CB Wizard Alert System – The CB Wizard Alert System is an unmanned CB radio transmitter designed to automatically broadcast work zone safety messages prior to drivers entering the work zone. The messages can be pre-recorded or recorded on site, and can be transmitted at fixed time intervals or when there is a lull in CB transmissions. Messages can be played on any channel, however channel 19 is the most commonly used CB frequency by truck drivers.

CHART Activities – This strategy involves the use of CHART and the Statewide Operations Center (SOC) for coordinating and managing road user information dissemination activities, such as maintaining a website with active and planned lane closures, providing messages on CMS signs, and providing accurate and timely information for commercial radio and television broadcasts.

4. FUNDING/BUDGETING

Public information and outreach efforts can be time consuming and resource intensive. However, when citizens feel their concerns have not been adequately addressed, costly project delays, lawsuits, and even project cancellations can occur.

As stated previously, the budget for a work zone public information and outreach campaign will depend on several factors, including the size and nature of the campaign, the communication strategies selected, whether the selected strategies are already established in SHA and can be readily used, and the role of partners.

Unit costs for various public information and outreach efforts will vary based on the region, strategy chosen and size of the effort. Consult with the Office of Communications and/or the District Community Liaison for assistance in determining potential costs for these efforts.

4.1 Sample Costs from Caltrans

The following are sample unit costs for various TMP strategies at CalTrans: (These should be modified to reflect local regional costs.)

- Hiring Consultant to do TMP (\$250,000+)
- Billboards (\$3500/Month)
- Radio Ad (\$800/Minute)
- Newspaper Ad (1/2 page, color - \$14,000/day)
- Open House (\$3,000)
- TV Commercial (Local - \$4,000+)
- Permanent Changeable Message Sign (\$300,000)
- Portable CMS (\$10,000)
- Portable Highway Advisory Radio (\$60,000/unit)
- Ground-mounted signs (\$300/each)

5. PROCESS FOR ESTABLISHING A PI&O EFFORT

Step 1 – District/Design Office Fills Out Communications Plan Template

The Communications Plan Template is a document for the District or Planning/Design Office to request a PR action for a project. The form is completed by the originating office and sent to the Office of Communications. Some portions of the form cannot be completed by the originating office, as they include tactics that only OC would determine. The originating office should complete pages 1 and 2 of the Template and contribute to the budget question (provide information on the project charge number and additional funding resources).

Step 2 – OC Reviews Template and Assigns Tasks

OC will review the form to determine who would be best to handle the requirements of the project. This could be the District Liaison, OC staff directly, or an OC consultant.

Step 3 – Develop PI&O Plan

OC will direct the Communications Plan Template to the proper resource(s). In some instances, all three resources (the District Liaison, OC staff, and consultants) may work together. The plan will be developed and proposed strategies will be shared with the originating office. Refer to Section 6 – Public Information and Outreach Plan Elements for additional requirements of a PI&O plan.

Step 4 – Implement PI&O Plan

After the plan is developed, it will be implemented by the proper resource(s) that were identified through the development of the PI&O plan. Elements to be implemented by the Contractor will be included in the PS&E documents.

6. PUBLIC INFORMATION AND OUTREACH PLAN ELEMENTS

Communicating the details of highway improvement projects is desirable and necessary. It is important to communicate, in some detail, information regarding the start, progress and completion of highway projects. A PI&O Plan should be developed to help SHA keep track of planned communication strategies, what has been done and what needs to be done. It also facilitates planning for future campaigns by providing a record of needed resources, time frames, and other pertinent information. It is important the plan is updated as the campaign progresses so that at the completion of the campaign there is an accurate record of what was done.

The checklist on the following page can be used to identify the tasks involved in public information and outreach campaigns. The efforts made or that need to be made for each of these tasks should be included in the PI&O Plan. The information should include appropriate milestones, budget allocation, task responsibility, and completion date.

In general, each project Public Information and Outreach Plan should consist of the following:

6.1 Brief summary of project

The project summary should include:

- Project purpose and need
- Project description and location
- Project timeframe

6.2 Goals and Objectives

State the principal goals and objectives of the PI&O Campaign. These may include:

- Educating the public on the project's vision.
- Informing the public on project progress
- Providing information to assist the public in coping with inconveniences resulting from the project

6.3 Roles and Staffing

Roles and responsibilities of SHA staff and consultant staff should be detailed. The structure and division of work between SHA and project consultants needs to be clearly defined.

6.4 List of affected stakeholders to be targeted

1. Develop Foundation/Framework for Campaign		✓
1.1	Define goals and objectives for PI&O Campaign	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.2	Determine approach, resources, and scope of outreach	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.3	Define the outreach coordination team and necessary partners and define roles	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.4	Identify the target audience	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.5	Develop messages	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.6	Develop brand themes and a project logo	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.7	Determine general opportunities to distribute the messages (public meetings, peak commute times, direct mail, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.8	Develop draft plan to implement outreach strategies (specific actions, timelines, points of contact)	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.9	Determine success criteria	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.10	Validate communications plan and secure buy-in from key leaders and stakeholders	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Develop Outreach Strategies		✓
2.1	Confirm outreach product types and format requirements (negotiate pricing where possible/appropriate and determine final product types based on budget)	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.2	Determine communication strategies to convey the messages (News, brochures, website, radio ads, dynamic message signs, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.3	Identify audience for each product	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.4	Confirm specific messages for each product	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.5	Determine design of product	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.6	Develop specific content of product	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.7	Produce outreach products	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Implement Outreach Strategies		✓
3.1	Confirm outreach opportunities/distribution channels and identify deadlines or special requirements. Document in PI&O Plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2	Match outreach products to specific distribution channels identified in Item 1.7	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.3	Continue to identify outreach partners and possible outreach opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.4	Develop/maintain contact lists	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.5	Distribute products through channels	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Evaluate/Improve Outreach Strategies		✓
4.1	Regularly review and update each outreach strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.2	Conduct regular process reviews as appropriate (will depend on project duration)	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3	At completion of outreach, evaluate effectiveness of outreach results based on success criteria, document lessons learned, and identify future improvement opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>

Table 6.1 Public Information and Outreach Campaign Checklist

6.5 Communications plan and timeline for each element

The communications plan should answer the following questions:

- How will the message be delivered?
- Who will deliver the message?
- When will the message be delivered?
- How often will the message be delivered?
- Which stakeholders will the message be delivered to?
- What kind of public involvement is needed?

Minimally on every project, the **standard communication tools** should be used. These include:

- The Project PLANS Report (to be filled out by the PE)
- Press Release for Project Start
- Elected Official Letter

The plan should also discuss project specific communication tools and strategies. For each strategy, the following information should be provided:

- Target audience
- Goals of product
- Content (message)
- Distribution channels
- Strategy action plan
 - Tasks involved in implementing the strategy
 - Start date & end date for each task
 - Resource allocation
- Contact information for responsible persons

6.6 Project cost and funding source breakdown

Cost estimates should be developed for each proposed communication tool/strategy. The plan should detail the funding source (construction budget, Office of Communications overhead, project partner, etc.).

6.7 Schedule of communications with OC

This should detail all necessary communication between the Office of Communications and others involved in developing and/or implementing the PI&O Plan. It should include expected updates from the Project Engineer on major changes in the work zone, status updates from consultants regarding product delivery and effectiveness, required submissions to OC for review of products and timeframes for submittal and review, etc.

6.8 Means of evaluation of communications plan

This section should define the success criteria, and the means of collecting information to evaluate the success of the overall PI&O campaign and each individual strategy. It should include the means of evaluating the plan both in progress, and post-construction. Roles and responsibilities for the evaluation should be defined.

6.9 Review and submittals

The PI&O plan should follow the same submittal and review schedule as the TMP document, as it is a component of the TMP. The Office of Communications should be provided the opportunity to review and provide comments on the TMP, especially the PI&O Plan at each submittal. The ADE-Traffic has final approval of the TMP and will verify that all comments from the Office of Communications have been addressed before approving the TMP.

Minimally, the PI&O plan should be submitted for review at the following stages:

- Concept PI&O Plan – Preliminary Investigation
- Draft PI&O Plan – Semi-final Review
- Final PI&O Plan – Final Review