



Dakota County **Eastern Transit Study**

Public Engagement Plan

Version 1.0

Dakota County

Prepared by:



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SRF No. 018 11727

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Public Engagement Plan

Introduction

Dakota County, in collaboration with its partners, the cities of Hastings, Inver Grove Heights, West Saint Paul, South Saint Paul, Rosemount as well as Metro Transit and the Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA), is completing the Eastern Transit Study to evaluate current and future transit and facility needs in the northeastern area of the county. This study will comprehensively identify and evaluate critical transit gaps and mobility improvements between residential, employment, and educational centers through different and potentially nontraditional transit options.

The public engagement plan serves as a framework for the outreach strategies, activities, and conversations with local stakeholders and the public by identifying the purpose of each engagement activity, target audience, timeline, and the intended outcome. Identifying these specific elements as a part of this plan assists the study team in establishing and maintaining ongoing dialogue with local stakeholders and the general public in each phase of the decision-making process. The plan is a living document and will be updated regularly to reflect the feedback received from the study team, stakeholders, and the public as the study progresses.

Principles

The study's public engagement process is designed around the following guiding principles:

Meaningful – A clear intent and purpose will be determined for each outreach activity by communicating how input will be used during the process and in the Dakota County Eastern Transit Study.

Inclusive – All engagement activities and products will be accessible to stakeholders and the public regardless of age, ethnicity, language, income, and mobility. Technical information will be simplified and available in plain language to ensure stakeholders are informed and able to actively participate in the process.

Tailored – Outreach activities will be inclusive and specific to preferences of Dakota County and the Technical Advisory Committee. We understand that there is no “one size fits all” approach, and we will tailor our efforts to meet the intent and needs for the Dakota County Eastern Transit Study.

Goals

The study team is committed to creating and offering multiple opportunities for two-way dialogue with stakeholders and the public during the engagement process in order to meet the following goals:

- Provide convenient opportunities for engagement and the public to provide input
- Solicit input to identify and understand where transit gaps exist for current and future transit users as well as areas of opportunity
- Leverage multiple communication channels to ensure information is shared widely, including face-to-face, online, and local print publications
- Provide a transparent and interactive process to allow the public the opportunity to inform the analysis, and review and affirm the recommendations.

Stakeholder Identification

A preliminary list of internal and external stakeholders (individuals, groups, and organizations) has been compiled as shown below. These stakeholders have been identified as having a known interest in the Eastern Transit Study or anticipated as being directly impacted by its recommendations. This list will continue to be updated with additional appropriate contacts as the study moves forward.

Internal Stakeholders

Staff members and agencies that are part of the technical committees are considered internal stakeholders.

Technical Advisory Committee

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) consists of key staff from Dakota County, the cities of Hastings, Inver Grove Heights, West Saint Paul, MVTA, and members of the consultant team. The TAC is responsible for overseeing the overall study and providing guidance. The TAC also provides technical input on the study process, including the identification of issues and concerns, reviewing potential benefits, and outlining recommendations for improvements. The TAC will meet once per month for the duration of the study.

Members

Contact Name	Agency
Joe Morneau	Dakota County
Nick Egger	City of Hastings
John Hinzman	City of Hastings
Allan Hunting	City of Inver Grove Heights
Melissa Sonnek	City of West Saint Paul
Peter Hellegers	City of South Saint Paul
Kyle Klatt	City of Rosemount
Scott Thompson	Metro Transit
Aaron Bartling	MVTA
Mona Elabaddy	SRF Consulting
Jo Ann Olsen	SRF Consulting

External Stakeholders

External stakeholders include staff from public agencies outside of Dakota County, its partners, and the general public, including area residents, community members, and underrepresented populations (populations with limited English proficiency, low-income, racial minorities, seniors, persons with disabilities, among others). Below is an initial list of external stakeholders. Additional stakeholders may be added as the study progresses.

Federal, State, Regional and County Agencies

- Dakota County
- DARTS
- GoDakota
- Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)
- Metropolitan Council
- Metro Transit
- MVTA
- Ramsey County
- Washington County

Corridor Communities

- Hastings
- Inver Grove Heights
- Nininger Township
- Rosemount
- South Saint Paul
- West Saint Paul

Employers/Businesses

- Commercial and residential developers
- Dakota County Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Hasting Chamber of Commerce
- Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Lyft
- Southview Acres Health Care Center
- Thomson Reuters (Eagan)

Schools

- Dakota County Technical College (Rosemount)
- Inver Hills Community College (Inver Grove Heights)
- Argosy University (Eagan)
- Dakota County Library
- Hastings High School
- Henry Sibley High School
- Humboldt High School (South Saint Paul)
- Rosemount High School
- Saint Paul Technical College (Saint Paul)
- Simley High School
- South St. Paul High School

Public Stakeholders

- Lao Family Community of Minnesota, etc.
- Chicano Latino Affairs Council
- Comunidades Latino Unidos en Servicio (CLUES)
- Commuters and traveling public
- Early childhood and family education groups
- Neighborhood organizations
- Public housing developments (Senior, youth, workforce, rental assistance) (CDA Programs)
- Residents (Owners and Renters)
- Students
- Under-represented and under-served populations

Other Stakeholders

- Alliance for Sustainability
- Hastings YMCA
- Kota Connections
- Living longer and stronger (West St. Paul)
- Move Minnesota (Transit for Livable Communities / St. Paul Smart Trips)
- West St. Paul YMCA

Public Engagement Strategies and Tools

Public engagement opportunities offered throughout the study will focus on providing both in-person and online options for stakeholders and the community to be involved and share their input. This integrated approach allows the study team to communicate early and often with the Dakota County community, while implementing an engagement process that is convenient, transparent and inclusive.

The consultant team will oversee the engagement process and its implementation by identifying of key stakeholders (as listed above), facilitating up to 10 stakeholder meetings, developing and maintaining the website, creating

print information materials, and the overall coordination and logistics of all engagement opportunities.

In-person Engagement

Stakeholder Meetings

Up to 10 stakeholder meetings will be held at key points during the study, which will be split into two rounds. The first round of stakeholder meetings will be held in September 2018. The purpose of this first round of meetings is to identify current and future needs. The study team will then take the feedback shared during the first round of meetings and incorporate it with the technical analysis to develop draft recommendations. The draft recommendations will then be shared with stakeholders during the second round of meetings, which are anticipated to be held in January 2019.

This series of meetings will allow stakeholders an opportunity to share their ideas or voice their concerns by collaborating with the study team in-person. The meetings will facilitate discussion to identify transportation needs/problems, understand how transit can address these needs/problems, and form possible service improvements. Feedback collected during each meeting will provide valuable insight by understanding common themes and priorities as well as differences.

Invitations will be sent via email for each stakeholder meeting based on the master stakeholder list, which will be approved and refined by the TAC. The invitation list may be expanded as other stakeholders are identified throughout the study. Mailed invites or outreach via phone will be used if email is not available.

Meeting locations:

- TBD

Timeframes:

- September 2018
- January 2019

Online Engagement

Website

A study-specific website (dceasternttransitstudy.com) has been established serve as an online resource for the public to learn about the study and stay updated.

The website will include accessible key documents, promotion of upcoming public engagement activities, and contact information for appropriate staff. The consultant will maintain updates to the website.

Email Updates

Visitors to the website will have the option to sign up to receive email notifications. Emails will be sent at key points of the study (e.g. to announce the kick off of the study) to share new information, promote current and future engagement activities, and other appropriate content. The final email notification will share the results of the final study recommendations and a summary of the feedback received. Email recipients have the ability to opt-out of notifications at any time.

Strategic Social Media Campaign

A strategic and targeted social media campaign will be developed and implemented to share key messages and promote in-person and online engagement activities. Social media content will be shared by leveraging existing communication channels (Facebook, Twitter, NextDoor, etc.) of partner agencies and organizations.

Paid social media ads will be used to geo-target the Dakota County area to ensure a broad but relevant audience of stakeholders, current and potential transit users, and community members are educated about this study and have an opportunity to participate and provide feedback. Social media ads can be targeted to specific audiences based on zip codes or other appropriate categories as determined by the TAC. Social media analytics of the ads will be assessed to ensure effectiveness and determine if adjustments to content or the target audiences are needed. The consultant team will work with the internal stakeholders to identify the social media outlets to leverage and external stakeholders to implement the strategy and finalize logistics.

Other

Traditional Media

A summary of the purpose and goals of the study, upcoming public engagement opportunities, and other related information will be shared with local print publications, such as the Hastings Star Gazette. The TAC will determine other relevant publications to share information about the study. The consultant will develop content to be reviewed and distributed by Dakota County.

Input/Comment Tracking

The consultant team will document all comments in a spreadsheet to incorporate into the Public Engagement Summary Report (as described below).

Documentation will also include when a response was provided and what the specific response was. Dakota County will be responsible for responding to and providing follow up to questions from stakeholders and the public. MVTA and Metro Transit will provide responses that relate to transit services in the study area.

Public Engagement Summary Report

The consultant team will summarize and document the public engagement efforts and feedback received in a Public Engagement Summary Report. This report will be available on the study website.

Anticipated Public Engagement Schedule

DATE	ENGAGEMENT
August 2018	Develop and Finalize Public Engagement Plan Establish Study Website Email Notification #1 – Introduce Study Draft and Publish Social Media Content Develop Study Handout Finalize committee members and stakeholder list, Reach out to stakeholder/community contacts Prepare for Stakeholder Meetings
September 2018	Hold Stakeholder Meetings Email Notification #2 – Promote Stakeholder Meetings
November 2018	Reach out to stakeholder/community contacts Prepare for Stakeholder Meetings
January 2019	Email Notification #3 – Promote Stakeholder Meetings Draft and Publish Social Media Content Hold Stakeholder Meetings
February 2019	Draft and Finalize Public Engagement Summary Email Notification #4 & Website – Summary of Study Results/Recommendations & Public Engagement Summary

Study Team Responsibilities

DAKOTA COUNTY & PARTNER RESPONSIBILITIES	SRF RESPONSIBILITIES
Review plan	Develop and finalize Public Engagement Plan
Identify stakeholders	Develop and maintain stakeholder list
Review materials	Develop and finalize materials for study handout and stakeholder meetings
Meeting attendance	Provide meeting logistics support and materials
Implement social media strategy	Develop social media strategy, content, timeline
Review website content and material updates	Create website content and material Post website updates
Review and distribute press releases	Develop press releases
Study spokesperson	Develop key messages
Respond directly to stakeholder/public questions	Document all comments received and responses given