



TxDOT's Public Involvement Process: Setting the Bar for Virtual Engagement

March 15, 2020 to March 31, 2021

Public Involvement Section,
Transportation Planning & Programming





Due to COVID-19 outbreak, TxDOT primarily used virtual public involvement instead of in-person public meetings and hearings



TxDOT coordinated with FHWA to develop virtual public involvement guidelines and best practices

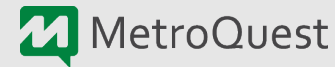


The PI Section collected and analyzed data from those virtual events and developed recommendations

Innovating and Expanding our Public Engagement Methods



Interactive
Maps



Virtual
Rooms



Translation Services &
ASL



Billboards

Success Snapshots: The Agency Delivered!



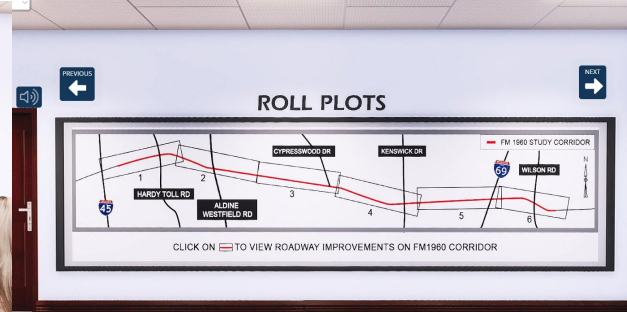
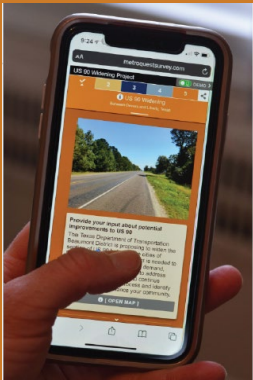
NEWS // HOUSTON & TEXAS

TxDOT's virtual meeting is 'The Sims' for the civic-minded

Jay R. Jordan
March 1, 2021 | Updated: March 1, 2021 7:48 p.m.



Loop 1604 in Bexar County Virtual Public Hearing



FM 1960 Access Management Virtual Public Meeting



I-30 Public Meeting



San Antonio District Rural Transportation Improvement Plan 2021-2024



TxDOT held **192** Public Involvement Events between
March 15, 2020 and March 31, 2021

Virtual meetings, hearings and workshops took many forms



Live events via WebEx or MS Teams

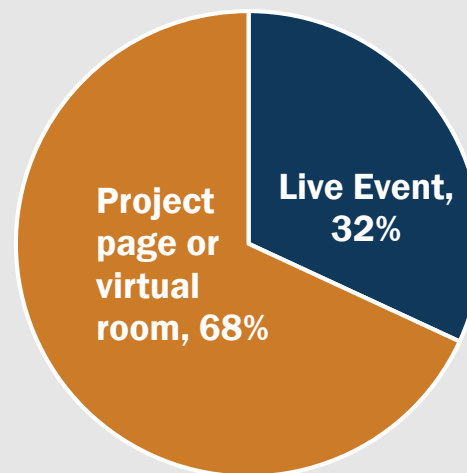


Project web pages with pre-recorded presentations
(YouTube, Vimeo, etc.)



Virtual meeting rooms with interactive elements and
pre-recorded presentations

Virtual Format



Promotion included traditional (notices, emails, mail-outs) and innovative communication strategies.





Year	Event Participation	Total Number of Events
2018	19,786	307
2019	19,466	198
March 2020 - March 2021	47,154*	192

* Out of 169 events in 2020.

Event participation for virtual events was calculated by using views as proxy for attendance.

8,047 *interactive virtual room* views were registered.



39,107 *pre-recorded video* views (as of 5/7/21)

Effectiveness of Virtual Outreach: Metrics Show Dramatic Increase in Participation



MOST VISITED

Loop 360 from MoPac to RM 2244 Virtual Public Workshop (AUS): **1,715 virtual room views**



MOST VIEWED PRE-RECORDED PRESENTATION

US 380 from I-35 to the Collin County Line Public Meeting (DAL): **1,443 views**



VISITORS

Pre-recorded Presentation Average Unique Visitors: **315 views**

HIGHLIGHTS

Historically low attendance at in-person Rural TIP meetings

Average = 8 people/meeting

skyrocketed during virtual outreach efforts

Average = 171 unique views/meeting



Events during this period collected **8,802 public comments**



COMMENTS RECEIVED

From virtual events held from March 15, 2020 to March 31, 2021:
8,802 comments



MOST COMMENTED EVENT

Austin District UTP Update 2020: **3,676 comments**



AVERAGE NUMBER OF COMMENTS RECEIVED

From virtual events held from March 15, 2020 to March 31, 2021:
Average of 51 comments received/event



VIRTUAL MEETING ROOMS

From virtual events held from March 15, 2021 to March 31, 2021:
Average of 31 comments/per event

**Collected from available data*



The virtual public meeting we held had more attendees than we have had at an in-person meeting of the same type. It was not project specific. It was a meeting to revise our Rural Transportation Improvement Program. We typically have very few show up in person, but with it being held virtually we reached more people in this case.

– District Staff



TxDOT's ability to adapt in-person events to virtual ones has been nationally recognized!

- PI Section presented to **10** Departments of Transportation
- State and national conferences



Great response from districts in gathering data on virtual events



High quality events that help TxDOT engage Texans



✓ Quickly responded and effectively facilitated meetings and hearings during COVID-19 outbreak

✓ Provided an effective way to reach many stakeholders and the public

✓ TxDOT should continue to collect data as well as continue expanding virtual engagement practices



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Follow PI/ENV/FHWA tools and guidance
- **Plan early!** Virtual meetings/hearings require the same, if not more effort in certain situations
- Ensure accessibility and plan for traditional outreach as needed
- Content should be concise and visually appealing; make schematics public-friendly and shorten videos where possible
- Strive to make the experience easy for the public



Agency Leadership

- Collaborate with and encourage FHWA to advance virtual public involvement
- Promote agency efforts and best practices

PI Section

- Regularly collect and analyze web engagement metrics
- Continually refine and create virtual public involvement resources
- Lead agency-wide PI and Outreach Community of Practice (CoP) to share data and leverage best practices moving forward

District Level

- Plan for appropriate meeting and hearing preparation time – contact us **early**
- Build technology acumen and redundancy
- Leverage PI support to produce concise and engaging content
- Expand use of social media and other tools for virtual events



Public Involvement Resources

NEW: Virtual Meeting/Hearing Resources

Please see the following resources:

- Environmental Division Virtual Meetings/Hearings Information
 - Check the [Environmental Division Handbook](#)
 - [Virtual Public Meeting Guidance](#) (starts on page 15 of Handbook)
 - [Virtual Public Hearing Guidance](#) (starts on page 27 of Handbook)
 - [Virtual Public Meeting/Hearing Notice Templates](#) available on the [Public Involvement Toolkit Page](#)
- [Virtual Meeting/Hearing Technology Options](#)
 - [WebEx Hosting Tips/Procedures](#)
 - [Virtual Public Meeting Best Practices](#)
- Virtual Meeting/Hearing Marketing and Outreach
 - [Additional Traditional Notification Techniques](#) (could be modified for virtual techniques)
- [Agency COVID-19 Crossroads page](#)
- [Dallas District Case Studies](#)
- [Instructions for viewing a pre-recorded public meeting/hearing presentation](#)
- [Instructions for viewing a pre-recorded public meeting/hearing presentation- Spanish](#)
- [Instructions for viewing a live virtual public meeting/hearing](#)
- [Instructions for viewing a live virtual public meeting/hearing- Spanish](#)
- [In-Person Hearing Appointment Request Checklist](#)

TxDOT PI Crossroads Page





Questions?

For more information:

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TPP PI Section Crossroads Site Refresh Coming Soon!

The Public Involvement Section of TPP

[HOME](#) [STAFF](#) [PI BACKGROUND](#) [BEST PRACTICES](#) [TEMPLATES & SAMPLES](#) [RESOURCES](#) [TRANSLATION SERVICES](#)

TxDOT's Public Involvement Policy

"The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) commits to purposefully involve the public in planning and project implementation by providing for early, continuous, transparent and effective access to information and decision-making processes. TxDOT will regularly update public involvement methods to include best practices in public involvement and incorporate a range of strategies to encourage broad participation reflective of the needs of the state's population." As adopted by the Texas Transportation Commission on [January 27, 2011](#).

****Online Engagement with MetroQuest****

