

# PI Seminar - Challenging Stakeholder Situations

## Strategies for Reducing Outrage

- **Stake Out the Middle, not the Extreme** - Include all sides of the argument, communication and views in your communication
- **Acknowledge Current Problems** - Go beyond mere honesty to transparency
- **Acknowledge Prior Misbehavior (and Mistakes)** - You can build accountability, goodwill and trust with an apology
- **Discuss Achievement with Humility** - Attribute success of projects based on public input
- **Share Control and Be Accountable** - Look for ways to put control elsewhere and if you cannot share control, build in accountability
- **Pay Attention to Unvoiced Concerns and Underlying Motives** - Bring concerns to the surface subtly

## Plan to Anticipate and Avoid Problems

Ask yourself:

- What could be done to *prevent* a potential situation?
- What could be done to *de-escalate* a situation you know will happen or is happening?
- What is it about this project or situation that might trigger emotions?

## Strategies for Response

Look for something you might agree on, state it and start from there.

Confirm how the person feels. If he or she seems upset:

- Understand the details
- Acknowledge the concern
- Listen carefully to understand
- Explore possible alternative agendas
- Ask the person what they propose as next steps

## Additional Tips for an Effective Response

- Correct inaccuracies
- Acknowledge comments
- Develop an FAQ or follow up email
- Build relationships and offer assistance

**Managing Your Emotions** If angry, try the following:

- Listen and say nothing for the moment
- Take three deep, very slow breaths
- Ask yourself what you are picking up from the communication
- Identify commonalities and try to agree on possible next steps

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.

## Public Involvement Section

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🌐 <https://tntoday.dot.state.tx.us/tpp/Pages/Public-Involvement.aspx>