

TEXAS TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

ALL Counties

MINUTE ORDER

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ALL Districts

At its December 15, 2010 meeting, the Texas Transportation Commission (commission) received a report from Texas Southern University's (TSU) Center for Transportation Training and Research regarding its review of the public involvement processes and practices of the Texas Department of Transportation (department).

The report contained specific findings and recommendations to enhance public involvement efforts of the department (Exhibit A), and included a draft public involvement policy (Exhibit B) to guide department public involvement practices, processes and activities.

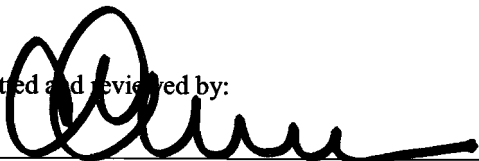
TSU's Public Involvement Study was initiated following the Sunset Advisory Commission's 2008 department review. The Sunset Advisory Commission noted that the department should review and update its public involvement policy.

Further, the Sunset Advisory Commission cited the public's high expectations for the department regarding consistent and meaningful public involvement, and stated that those high expectations were not being met.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED by the commission that the document as shown in Exhibit B is adopted as the Public Involvement Policy of the Texas Department of Transportation.

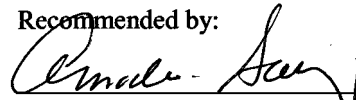
IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the commission directs the executive director or his designee to develop an action plan to implement the Public Involvement Policy and the recommendations of TSU (Exhibit A).

Submitted and reviewed by:



Director, Government and Public Affairs Division

Recommended by:



Executive Director

112555 JAN 27 11

Minute Number Date Passed

Exhibit A

Public Involvement Recommendations

- R1 Continue to cultivate a culture of early outreach that welcomes comments and input from the public.** Strengthen the thinking within TxDOT that public involvement is always desired. Outreach will begin at the initial concept stages and continue through more detailed planning, engineering and construction stages. The use of comment cards and website interfaces should be continued. Comments from the public that are mentioned to staff during meetings should be recorded and submitted for consideration and inclusion in decision making.
- R2 Prepare a written debriefing assessment of each meeting.** Summarize the highlights or major accomplishments from the meeting or event and provide via email distribution or post on-line offering information and updates for citizens whether or not they were able to attend. Assess the communication and work to improve each subsequent citizen contact.
- R3 Develop a response mechanism.** Inform stakeholders which of the public's ideas TxDOT has incorporated into plans. Provide citizens feedback as to the TxDOT department the comment was directed to and when the citizen can expect a response. When citizen requests cannot be honored, clearly communicate why alternate decisions are required.
- R4 Create a compendium of best practices and success stories available on the TxDOT website.** Documenting success in various districts and on various projects/activities offers the opportunity for community members and TxDOT staff to learn the strategies employed in other districts. Successful and best practices may then be incorporated in other districts around the state.
- R5 Increase use of non-traditional outreach and involvement strategies.** Web-based sessions and telephone dial-in methods may attract larger and more diverse constituent pools and prove useful for citizens with less time to attend meetings. Consider new ways to improve communication. Instead of just a map, superimpose photos to show specific locations providing a stronger visual, use 3-D and other visualization tools as often as reasonable. Look for unique opportunities to dialog. For instance, attend a civic group meeting presenting TxDOT's plan or project as part of a larger agenda as a way to approach a new audience.
- R6 Develop and make widespread use of a template of meeting styles and types.** This will allow TxDOT staff to tailor the type of event to better fit the transportation need. Public involvement methods may often be implemented out of habit or convenience for the transportation professional. A normal response is to plan a meeting. Other strategies may be more effective, depending on the

nature of the plans or project in question. Informal meetings with one or two constituents could also prove effective and important for relationship building.

- R7 Be careful about nomenclature and published descriptions.** Prepare for meetings and ensure that engineering terms can be explained for lay stakeholders. Also carefully edit published documents. For example, one task in Module 2 of the Introduction, page 3, of the TxDOT Public Involvement manual for staff reads, “Determine when public involvement is required and when it is recommended.” Change the language here. The actual section in the manual addresses a public hearing (which has specific hold or do not hold guidelines), not public involvement, which is always desirable.
- R8 Require public involvement retooling.** One person in each TxDOT project team should receive additional training every two years. This allows for updating of current public involvement strategies and techniques to better engage the public. Also, an updated TxDOT *Environmental Manual (Revised October 2004)*, could serve as the foundation for the training and facilitate implementing this recommendation.

Exhibit B

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.