ALDOT’S PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT RESPONSE TO COVID
Welcome to the New Normal

- March 13, 2020 – Governor declares public health emergency due to COVID-19
- March 19, 2020 – Public Health Order issued banning gatherings of 25 people or more until April 5th.
- April 3, 2020 – Governor issues stay at home order.
- Order extensions….
“NEW” PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

• Good plan, but no specifics on online process/procedure
• PI meetings flexible and informal
• Public hearings are more formal and have more legal requirements
• Plan accommodates all types and levels of involvement even though Every project is different
THE TEAM (THE “NEW NORMAL” COMMITTEE)

- ALDOT Design Bureau-Environmental Technical Section Staff
- Federal Highway Administration
- Texas Department of Transportation
- ALDOT Computer Services Bureau
- ALDOT Media Relations Bureau
- ALDOT Region Environmental Managers
WHAT ARE WE DOING?????

VIRTUAL PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT MEETINGS
VIRTUAL ROOMS WITH VIRTUAL PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT COMPONENTS
ONLINE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT WITH IN-PERSON MEETING COMPONENT
“NEW” PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT OPTIONS

- Attention!!!!
- Online meetings; e.g., Zoom or live stream through FB, Youtube
- Websites for online public involvement
- Drive in meetings
- Outdoor public meetings
- Individual meetings
“NEW” PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Awareness  Delivery  Engagement  Documentation
AWARENESS

• Local Social Media
• Project Signs
• Enhanced Flyers
• Community Targeted Mailings
DELIVERY

- A new website
- Organization
- Continuity
- Branding

www.ALDOTInvolved.com
WEBSITE COMPONENTS

- Overview Presentation
- PI Ad and Project Flyer
- Project Maps
- Renderings/Videos
- Traffic Simulations
- ROW Brochure
- Comment Form(s)
ENGAGEMENT
(MORE OPTIONS = MORE OPPORTUNITIES)

• Push online Comments
  • Online form
  • E-mail
  • Record by phone
  • Mail-in comment form

• Live interactions
  • Phone comments
  • Small in-person meetings
DOCUMENTATION

- Pre-meeting activities
- Easily access emailed comments and comment forms
- New online comment form
- Log of scheduled n-person meetings
- Transcript of voicemails
- Record of telephone conversations
- Project website content
- Advertising methods
DESTINATION → SUCCESS
TIPS FOR ONLINE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT SUCCESS
LOOKING AHEAD

DRIVE UP EVENT
CASE STUDY:
MADISON COUNTY BUILD GRANT PROJECT

BLAKE BOTTOM ROAD IMPROVEMENTS
MADISON COUNTY, ALABAMA

Public Involvement Meeting
April 30, 2020
5:30 PM.
A UNIQUE APPROACH

• Success!
  • Virtual meeting held using Zoom on April 30, 2020
  • 74 participants (excluding project team)
  • Interactive mapping was key to helping property owners talk about their homes, businesses, etc.
  • Participants could talk with the entire project team to ask questions and voice concerns
  • Muting all participants unless they were called upon was key to preventing people from talking over one another
  • This was as close as we could get to an in-person meeting.

• Satisfied Federal regulations
• Allowed environmental document to move forward
LESSONS LEARNED

• Communicate with project sponsor, FHWA, and ALDOT.

• Leverage software and equipment that is already available.

• Lean on project sponsor and others to advertise and share meeting information through non-traditional platforms.
  • Facebook, Project Sponsor & ALDOT websites, YouTube

• Set the ground rules for participation during a virtual meeting from the beginning.

• Do a test run well in advance.

• Think about how you will document comments and participation before the meeting starts.
  • Take screenshots
  • Record the meeting
  • Print the chat dialogue

• Offer multiple ways to comment.
  • Verbal during meeting, written using chat feature, e-mail, and telephone

• Allow for extended comment period after meeting.

• Be flexible and creative!
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