



Strategies for Communication with Local Units of Government

Prepared for
Office of Public Affairs

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Transportation Literature Searches are prepared for WisDOT staff and investigators to identify completed research and other authoritative information in an area of interest. The citations below are representative, rather than exhaustive, of available English-language studies on the topic. Primary online resources for the literature searches are OCLC's [WorldCat](#) and [TLCat](#), U.S. DOT's [TRIS Online](#), the National Transportation Library ([NTL](#)), TRB's Research in Progress ([RiP](#)) database, and other academic, engineering and scientific databases as appropriate.

To request a literature search, contact the WisDOT Library at library@dot.state.wi.us or (608) 264-8142, or WisDOT Research at research@dot.state.wi.us or (608) 261-8198.

Topic/Problem Statement: Identify Effective Strategies For WisDOT Communication with Local Units of Government: A Survey of Methods and Audiences.

Keywords: effective communication with local government.

Summary

We located two relevant citations: a study performed by the Virginia Transportation Research Council, and an article from a recent edition of *TR News*.

Citations

Links to online copies of cited literature are provided when available. Contact the WisDOT Library to obtain hard copies of citations.

Title: A Survey of Transportation Planning Practices in State Departments of Transportation

Author(s): Eugene Arnold Jr., Patricia Weichmann and Jeffrey Capizzano of the Virginia Transportation Research Council

Date: March 1999

Source/URL: http://www.virginiadot.org/VTRC/main/online_reports/pdf/99-r18.pdf

Description: 15 pp. plus appendices.

Contents: There are numerous ways that a state DOT can organize itself, allocate responsibility, manage personnel and establish procedures and practices to perform tasks associated with the planning process. The purpose of this project was to survey the transportation planning practices in state DOTs, document the findings and identify practices that might be considered for use by VDOT. Investigated practices included coordination between DOTs and MPOs. Points of interest in the report include –

- Coordination between DOTs and MPOs

Page 8 of the PDF:

DOT staff routinely communicate with MPO staff through meetings of numerous committees; staff conferences; newsletters; training workshops, and often communicate daily via telephone calls, fax transmissions and emails. A number of DOTs hold annual or semiannual statewide conferences or meetings to

discuss current issues.

Page 12 of the PDF:

With the exception of the Northern Virginia District, central office staff from VDOT's Transportation Planning Division provide the primary liaison/coordination with MPOs by representing VDOT on the MPO Policy Board, MPO Technical Committee and other committees of the MPO. This is consistent with the majority of the responding DOTs. Also typical is the fact that VDOT staff has periodic communication with MPO staff through meetings of numerous committees, staff conferences, newsletters and training workshops, and daily, routine communication via telephone calls, fax transmissions and emails.

Page 14 of the PDF:

VDOT field office representation on MPO policy boards and technical committees may improve the coordination of transportation planning at the local level. The publication of a newsletter or Internet Web page that focuses on VDOT's transportation planning activities and issues of interest in the transportation planning arena might be an effective public relations tool and help maintain lines of communication between VDOT and the local planning community. The newsletter or Web page address could be distributed statewide to MPOs, planning district commissions and local government planning offices.

Title: A Framework for Stakeholder Involvement

Author(s): Ann Brach

Date: September-October 2004

Source/URL: *TR News*, No. 234, September-October 2004: 11-16.

<http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/trnews/trnews234.pdf>

Description: 6 pp.

Contents: With this issue of TR News, TRB's Research and Technology Coordinating Committee makes a foray into an unexplored topic: how to systematically involve local and regional transportation agencies in the highway research and technology enterprise at every stage. Articles provide background on the topic, and reinforce the theme that local and regional transportation agencies are key contributors to continued, efficient functioning of the surface transportation system. The cited article highlights some of the keys to effective communication between research sponsors and local stakeholders. Scroll to page 16 of the article --

- Building strong relationships with stakeholders requires two-way communication. Research sponsors may start by reaching out to national and state associations of county engineers or metropolitan planning organizations. Attending meetings of these associations can provide the opportunity to engage local and regional professionals from around the country or the state and to learn about their issues. The next step may be to visit sites and gain direct acquaintance with local needs. These steps provide some first-hand knowledge and begin to build a bridge between different cultures -- whether federal, state, regional, local, rural or urban. Local and regional representatives will be more likely to get involved in research programs that demonstrate genuine understanding of their needs and that present the opportunity to address these needs. The sponsor should provide a clear avenue for input and show that the input has influence on the direction of the program.