

Draft Public Involvement Plan

Idaho Transportation Department, District 6

I-15/US-20 Connector Environmental Impact Statement

August 2022



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Public Involvement Plan

Overview

The Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) developed this Public Involvement Plan (PIP) in compliance with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and other federal and state regulations. A National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process will be conducted for the Interstate 15 (I-15)/United States Highway 20 (US-20) Connector to promote informed decision-making by federal, state, and local agencies, resulting in selection of a Preferred Alternative for the project.

The Project Team will continue the collaboration, communication, and cooperation between all who are involved in environmental decisions, including government officials, private businesses, and the public, as the project moves from the Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study into the NEPA process.

Stakeholder and public input continue to provide important insight to ITD as it analyzes Alternatives E3 and H2 and selects the Preferred Alternative for improving the I-15/US-20 corridor. Public and agency input will be integrated into the technical evaluation process before decisions are made.

This PIP outlines the project's approach to the NEPA phase of public involvement. The Project Team will:

- Continue to engage stakeholders involved in the PEL study process and will encourage wider participation in the project and process who has not yet engaged; and
- Continue to provide timely updates and clear communication so that the public is aware of the decisions being made, how their input will be used, and understand the milestones and schedule.

This PIP will continue throughout the NEPA phases of the project.

Key NEPA Activities

The PIP is planned around several key NEPA activities:

- Conduct Scoping
- Evaluate Alternatives
- Publish Notice of Intent (NOI)
- Identify Preferred Alternative
- Publish Draft EIS
- Publish Final EIS
- Publish Record of Decision
- Start Next Steps for Project Implementation



Coordination with FHWA and Resource Agencies

The Project Team and ITD's environmental staff will coordinate with FHWA and District 6. While NEPA is a process and allows for some flexibility, certain steps and coordination points are required. Coordination points are check-in points that confirm the progress to date, solicit input, review any issues or concerns, and lay out next steps. These check-ins are intended to help reduce delay in the overall review process (to avoid back tracking) and to facilitate future NEPA processes and incorporate required elements.

FHWA, as the lead federal agency, will review and concur with the draft PIP and participate in developing the following planning documents during the Pre-NEPA phase. Early coordination will also occur with cooperating and participating agencies (prior to publishing the NOI).

1. Draft NEPA Purpose & Need
2. Draft NEPA Range of Alternatives (and reasoning for eliminating previous alternatives)
3. Draft Agency Coordination Plan
4. Draft Schedule
5. Draft Federal Register NOI

FHWA will obtain concurrence on the items above from the cooperating and participating agencies prior to publishing the NOI.

Ongoing coordination with cooperating and participating agencies will occur throughout the NEPA process, including relevant updates on public involvement activities at key milestones as outlined in the I-15/US-20 Connector Agency Coordination Plan document.

Potential Cooperating/ Participating Agencies

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- Shoshone Bannock Tribes
- Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ)
- Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
- Idaho Department of Lands (IDL)
- Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR)
- Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- City of Idaho Falls
- Idaho Falls Regional Airport
- Idaho Falls Power
- Bonneville County
- Bonneville Metropolitan Planning Organization (BMPO)



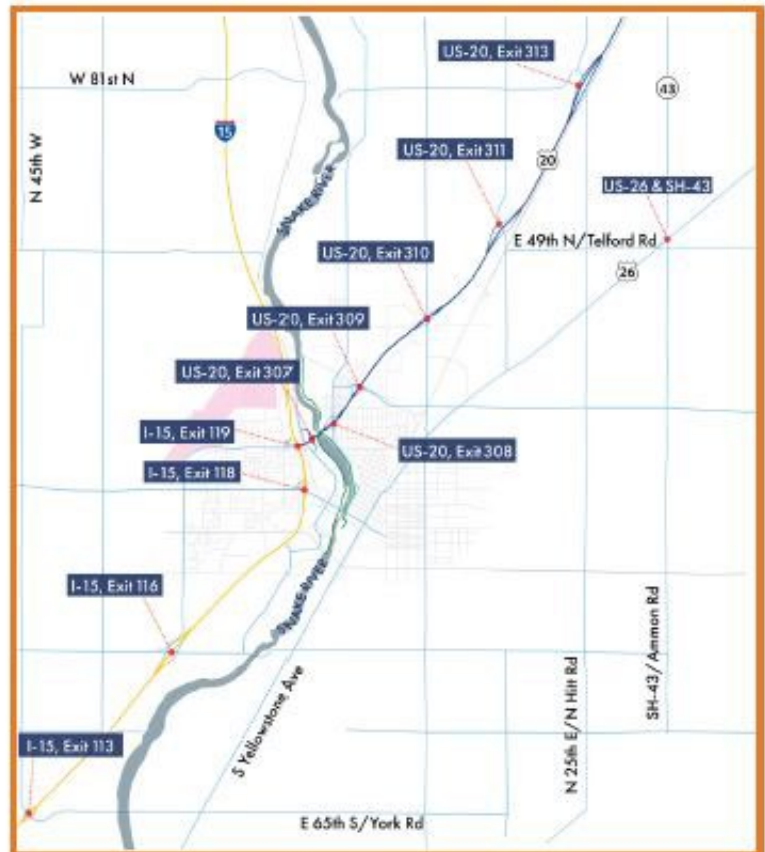
Project Area

The I-15/US-20 Connector project area is generally defined as including interchanges on I-15 at Exits 118 and 119 as well as interchanges on US-20 at Lindsay Blvd (Exit 307), Riverside Drive (Exit 308), Science Center Drive (Exit 309), and Lewisville Highway (Exit 311). The area also includes areas to the west and north of the I-15/US-20 corridor.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

ITD worked closely with FHWA, City of Idaho Falls, Bonneville County, and the Bonneville Metropolitan Planning Organization (BMPO) on the PEL study. The study's focus was identifying improvements to address safety, congestion, mobility, and travel time reliability for I-15 and US-20 and potential new locations for the existing interchanges and highways.

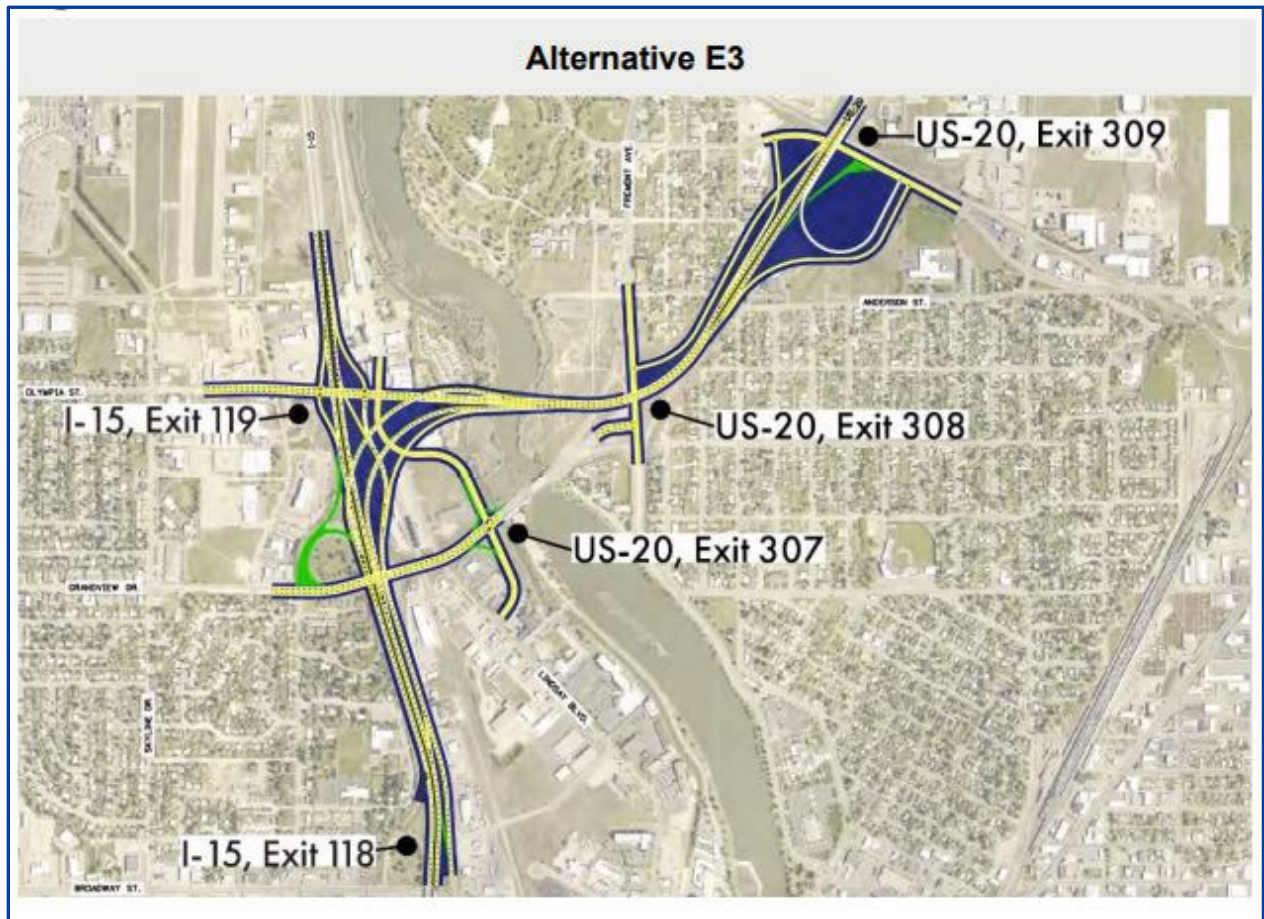
ITD studied 16 concept alternatives that were refined through a three-stage screening process that considered engineering analysis and public input.

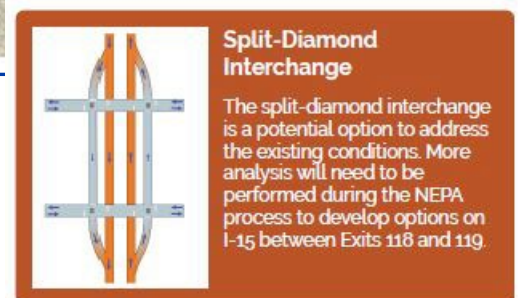


ALTERNATIVES

From the PEL study, three alternatives were recommended to move forward into the NEPA process: Alternative E3, Alternative H2, and the No Build Alternative.







Purpose of the Public Involvement Plan

The primary goal of the PIP is to build on the outreach developed during the PEL study and increase participation, where possible, so affected and interested stakeholders can provide input as part of the Preferred Alternative selection. ITD will continue to foster open communication with the community and public by making information accessible and providing opportunities and multiple ways to comment.

Public Involvement/Outreach Objectives

The objectives of both the pre-NEPA and the NEPA public involvement include:

- Continuing to involve residents and property owners potentially affected by Alternatives E3 and H2; commuters; businesses; freight haulers/companies; elected officials; and community organizations, including pedestrian and bicycle groups.
- Continuing to conduct an open and transparent public involvement process that inspires trust in, and integrity of, information presented. Participants should feel that their input is heard and considered and have an understanding of how their comments will be used.
- Continuing to work with and encourage elected officials, area businesses, and civic and community organizations to represent the interests of their constituents and to promote direct participation by their constituents throughout the process. These community leaders can help reach, or at least represent, the interests of hard-to-reach groups, including youth, elderly, minorities, immigrants, and low-income residents.
- Continuing to provide a variety of options for receiving input from the public and other stakeholders. The effort will include means to engage input through a combination of virtual and in-person activities.
- Educating the public and stakeholders about the NEPA process and how input received during the PEL study and other pre-NEPA coordination will be used in the development of a NEPA decision document (environmental clearance).
- Accomplishing agency and public participation will be conducted in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality and FHWA regulations contained in 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) NEPA Implementing Procedures and 23 CFR Environmental Impact and Related Procedures. The agencies will also apply guidance contained in 23 United States Code § 139 - Efficient Environmental Reviews for Project Decision-Making.
- Achieving compliance with environmental justice (Executive Order 12898) requirements by involving minority and low-income populations that have traditionally been under-represented, to give them equal access to the decision-making process.



- Making specific efforts to increase participation by traditionally underrepresented populations and groups, as required under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and to track participation by these groups.
- Meeting the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.
- Responding promptly to project-related inquiries and requests.
- Recording comments received and the responses to those comments.
- Documenting the progress and effectiveness of the PIP.

Public Involvement Team

The Public Involvement Team is a subset of the Project Team focused on public involvement and outreach for the project. See Table 1 for contact information for members of the Public Involvement Team.

Table 1: Public Involvement Team

Name	Position	Organization	Phone Number	Email Address
Ryan Day	Project Manager	ITD	D 208.745.5659	Ryan.Day@itd.idaho.gov
Karen Hiatt	Engineering Manager	ITD	D 208.745.5601	Karen.Hiatt@itd.idaho.gov
Justin Smith	Public Information Officer	ITD	D 208.234.3614 M 208.813.0027	Justin.Smith@itd.idaho.gov
Cameron Waite	Consultant Project Manager	HDR	D 208.387.7004 M 208.401.5508	Cameron.waite@hdrinc.com
Jason Longsdorf	Consultant Environmental Task Lead	HDR	D 303.323.9792 M 303.301.4017	Jason.longdorf@hdrinc.com
Kelly Hoopes	Deputy Project Manager	Horrocks	D 208.522.1223 M 208.860.4321	KellyH@horrocks.com
Stephanie Borders	Consultant Public Involvement Task Lead	HDR	D 208.387.7012 M 208.608.6635	Stephanie.borders@hdrinc.com
Jennifer Gonzalez	Consultant Public Involvement Coordinator	HDR	D 208.387-7072	Jennifer.Gonzalez@hdrinc.com
Jessamyn Summers	Consultant Public Involvement Support	HDR	D 208.387-7035	Jessamyn.summers@hdrinc.com



Public Involvement/Outreach Strategy

To achieve the PIP goals, the Public Involvement Team will implement the strategy outlined in the following sections.

- Communication Tools
- Meetings
 - Community Working Group
 - Public Open Houses
 - Public Hearing
 - One-on-one meetings
- Elected Official Outreach
- Media Strategies
- Stakeholder Database
- Project Recordkeeping
- Monitoring Outreach

Communication Tools

To engage a variety of audiences of varying demographics and generations, the Public Involvement Team will use the following tools to make engagement easy for stakeholders to use on their terms.

- Project Webpage – The interactive webpage developed for the PEL study will be updated to reflect the current status of the project as it enters pre-NEPA and NEPA analysis. The webpage offers the public 24/7 access to current information and documents and will continue to serve as a repository for all project-related educational materials and public participation opportunities. The website will be reorganized so the public can easily identify current material but continue to access PEL study documents and information.
- Social Media – Posts to ITD’s social media platforms (Twitter and Facebook) will continue throughout the NEPA process, and campaigns will be developed to promote participation at key milestones such as scoping and the Draft EIS. ITD will post ITD-approved messages.
- Project Videos – The Public Involvement Team will develop videos to illustrate typical project-related development activities. Videos will be hosted on ITD’s YouTube channel and embedded in the project webpage.
- Project Collateral – The Public Involvement Team will create and update materials to support project messaging, including frequently asked questions, factsheets, posters, fliers, postcards, and newspaper advertisements that explain the project and how the



public can be involved, and encourage people to seek the webpage for more information.

Public Meetings

The Project Team will coordinate and hold in-person and online public meetings to gather public input.

COMMUNITY WORKING GROUP MEETINGS

The Community Working Group (CWG) established during the PEL study will continue to act in an advisory capacity to ITD. The CWG will meet at key milestones and will serve in the following roles:

- They will be briefed on major project milestones.
- They will serve as advisors to ITD throughout the NEPA process.
- They will keep appropriate staff (attorneys, engineers, modelers, etc.) informed of project progress, and report back to the group on what they are hearing in the community.

CWG members will represent the following organizations and interests.

- City of Idaho Falls
- Bonneville County
- BMPO
- Hotels
- Idaho National Laboratory
- Regional Economic Development Eastern Idaho
- Freight/trucking industry
- Emergency Service Providers (police, sheriff, fire)
- Commercial/Industrial development (represented by city planners)
- Bicycle/pedestrian planners and groups
- Neighborhoods adjacent to the corridor

The CWG could be expanded to include representatives of other entities or areas. A tentative schedule with milestones for CWG meetings is detailed in Table 2.

Table 2: CWG Meeting Schedule

Date	Topic/Milestone
TBD	Pre-scoping meeting
TBD	Post-scoping meeting
TBD	Project Update
TBD	Pre-Draft EIS meeting
TBD	Post-Draft EIS meeting



TBD	Final EIS and next steps
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PUBLIC MEETINGS/HEARING

Up to two public meetings and one hearing will be held:

- Scoping Meeting
- Public Meeting
- Public Hearing

The format of the in-person meetings could include a scheduled presentation, a question-and-answer session, and a guided tour followed by an open house. A combination of traditional and non-traditional meeting times and locations will be considered in order to capture a wide range of interested stakeholders, including commuters. **An interactive online version of each meeting will also be prepared as an option for those who cannot or do not want to attend an in-person meeting. The online meeting will be live for 2 weeks after the in-person meeting is held.**

A specific meeting plan will be developed by ITD or each in-person public meeting/hearing that will include the agenda, talking points, staffing, floor layout, materials, supplies, and equipment. A dry run of the in-person meetings will be held the day of, or day before, the meeting.

MEETING NOTIFICATIONS

The Public Involvement Team will employ the following outreach methods to notify the public of scoping and public meeting/hearing meetings:

- Direct Mail Invitation – Mailings will be sent to property owners by a zip code drop established during the PEL study. Additional addresses collected through comments and through the website will be added to the mailing list.
- Fliers - Informational fliers will be printed and distributed prior to public meetings to broaden the awareness and diversity of participants. Fliers will be placed in community gathering places and may include libraries, recreation centers, restaurants, and businesses. Distribution will target neighborhoods affected by Alternatives E3 or H2.
- Email Invitation - A Constant Contact email will be sent to all email addresses in the Zoho database as a meeting notification. An email will be sent 3 weeks ahead of the meeting and a reminder email will be sent the week of the meeting. Email recipients will be given an option to opt out if they no longer wish to receive meeting invitations. The email address will correspond to the project webpage unique resource locator or URL.
- Newspaper Ads - Ads will be placed in the main news sections of the *Post Register* and will run at least twice ahead of each meeting. Additionally, an online ad will be placed to run on the paper's homepage the week before the meeting. This public notice will announce the date/time/location/format of the public meetings, availability of the project



information, comment opportunities, alternative methods to participate by attending the online meeting, and comment deadlines.

- Social Media – The Public Involvement Team will use ITD's Twitter and Facebook accounts to post meeting notifications, reminders to attend the meetings and reminders to comment. The posts will include links to project website. The team will also purchase Facebook ads.
- Project Webpage – An announcement will be posted on the project website 3 weeks before the scoping and public meetings.
- Press Release/Media Advisory – The Public Involvement Team will develop press releases and media advisories, which will be distributed in advance of public meetings and/or comment opportunities through ITD Public Officer Megan Stark. The media will be invited to attend meetings and encouraged to interview Megan.

Hearing notification will follow guidance found in the ITD Guide to Public Involvement.

MEETING MATERIALS

The following is a list of materials that will be developed to help the public navigate and understand project details. Some materials may be in an electronic format.

- Informational display boards
- Presentations
- Meeting information package/handouts/project brochure
- Comment forms
- Online meeting slides with web-based comment form

MEETING SUMMARIES

A meeting summary will be prepared by ITD within 3 weeks of the closure of the online meeting. The summary will include the number of in-person and online meeting attendees, key stakeholders' present, outreach methods, materials, media mentions, and staff notes. Along with the meeting materials, once complete, the meeting summaries and responses to comments will be posted on the project webpage.

Elected Official Outreach

ELECTED OFFICIAL BRIEFINGS

The Project Team will continue to give updates to elected representatives. Briefings will be coordinated by ITD District 6 at a time most convenient for elected officials.

REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS

In coordination with public meetings, presentations will occur with the BMPO at their regularly scheduled meeting to reach regional planning agencies and municipal governments. It is

anticipated that the Project Team will present at milestones including, but not limited to the following steps:

- Conduct Environmental Evaluation
- Identify a Preferred Alternative
- Identify Next Steps for Project Implementation

ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS

One-on-one meetings will occur as needed and will take place in the form of in-person or virtual meetings. The purpose of these meetings is to provide continual education regarding the project to newly elected officials or officials wanting more context about the NEPA process and alternatives.

Targeted Special Outreach

Throughout the project, it is anticipated that requests will be made for presentations to local community groups, the Chamber of Commerce, or other special interest groups along the corridor. If requests occur, the Public Involvement Team will support ITD by preparing a presentation, flier, or other information that facilitates discussion with these groups.

TITLE VI/LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY OUTREACH

Title VI/Limited English Proficiency (LEP) outreach strategies include the following:

- Seeking out, building, and maintaining a comprehensive database of mail and email contact information for environmental justice communities and advocacy groups.
- Partnering with senior, disability, social service, transit, and area Hispanic liaison offices to provide information regarding the project.
- Inviting environmental justice communities to comment and coordinating with advocates to attend already scheduled meetings.
- Advertising meetings at neighborhood centers along the project corridor using fliers and static displays.
- Placing ads in Hispanic publications.
- Translating other project materials to Spanish, as needed.
- Providing translators (ADA and Spanish) free of charge at the public meetings/hearing.
- Engaging audiences through greater use of visuals, larger font, and simpler language in fliers, display boards, and presentations.
- Holding meetings at ADA-accessible locations.
- Translating features on the project webpage, especially the online meetings.



- Providing font enlargement features on the project webpage.
- Coordinating information distribution to focused communities based on Geographic Information System mapping and socioeconomic and demographic information, such as environmental justice insight.

Media Strategies

Information provided to the media about the project will correspond with public involvement opportunities. The Public Involvement Team will relay project-related information with the media using the following methods:

- Project Team Spokesperson – Megan Stark will serve as the general spokesperson for the project. She will ask for help from Project Team members to answer specific questions where a NEPA/design topic expert is needed.
- Press Releases – Press releases will be developed by ITD at key project points to ensure the media understand the project and the process. Press releases will likely center around the following milestones:
 - Scoping
 - Public Meeting
 - Public Hearing
- Media Advisories – Media advisories will be distributed prior to public meetings inviting the media to attend and interview Project Team members. The Public Involvement Team will develop the media advisory content. ITD will review and approve content and distribute to their media distribution list.
- Pitching Interviews – ITD will follow up on press releases and seek opportunities for the Project Team to be interviewed. The Public Involvement Team will provide key talking points to the Megan Stark ahead of interviews.
- Media Monitoring – ITD will provide relevant project news clips. These clips will be circulated to the entire Project Team for review to remain current and aware of news surrounding the project and related issues. Staying alert for activities of note is vital and can be accomplished through reading print and electronic news media.

PAID MEDIA

The Public Involvement Team will employ the following paid advertising methods:

- Public notices - A public notice will be printed in the legal section of pre-approved newspapers in accordance with NEPA requirements in the State of Idaho.
- Social media advertising - Paid advertisements will be placed on Twitter and Facebook to educate followers about upcoming project milestones, potential impacts, upcoming meetings, and media events.



Stakeholder Database

The Public Involvement Team will continue to upload project contacts to the Zoho database developed during the PEL study and will organize information by project phase. The Zoho contact database will be updated throughout the project and serve as the information distribution list and as a tracking list for all outreach activities.

The Public Involvement Team will also continue to target the following audiences and make special efforts to engage:

- People, property owners, and businesses potentially affected by the project
- Community leaders
- Community organizations
- Elected officials
- Special interest groups (bike/pedestrian, etc.)
- Environmental Justice and Title VI-related groups and organizations (minorities [race, color, and national origin – Idaho Falls 2016 census data shows 12.6 percent of the population is Hispanic or Latino], low-income populations [the 2016 American Community Survey reports 14.4 percent living in poverty in Idaho Falls], the elderly [seniors], disabled, and LEP populations)

Project Recordkeeping

The Project Team will maintain project records that document the decision-making process. The files will be maintained in the Zoho database and be filed in the appropriate folders. Procedures and protocols outlined in the Project Management Plan will be followed for accuracy and consistency in documentation. The following documents will be maintained in regard to public involvement:

- PIP
- All formal comments received on NEPA process, proposals, or recommendations
- Public meetings and hearings information and materials, including date, location purpose, agenda, sign-in sheets, presentation materials, brochures, transcript and other meeting records
- Webpage information
- Newsletters
- Meeting announcements
- Press releases
- Newspaper and magazine articles
- Television transcripts



- Documentation of opportunities for public involvement

PROJECT CLOSEOUT

Upon project completion, all documents considered as part of the decision-making process will be collected and delivered to the client in both printed and electronic form. A report of the close-out documentation will be generated. Contents could include the following:

- Draft and Final NEPA and/or environmental documents (official drafts, but not the preliminary draft)
- Administrative Draft (if it changed substantially)
- Comment letters
- Scientific/technical reports
- Traffic model results
- Contracts
- Correspondence

Monitoring Outreach

Successful evaluation of the effectiveness of the PIP requires tracking outreach activities and establishing initial baseline measurements. Reasonable efforts will be made to evaluate the public involvement strategy and its effectiveness. The outreach process will be evaluated through the following:

- Documenting website visits and time spent on the website – especially during online meetings.
- Tracking the number of in-person participants at meetings.
- Reviewing results of Title VI surveys (as part of ITD's standard comment form) after each round of public meetings.
 - The Public Involvement Team will input Title VI survey responses into a database for review and comparison after each set of public meetings.
- Comparing the number and types of comments received and comparing against goals (after each round of public meetings).
- The Public Involvement Team will review comments to ascertain whether or not the same questions continue to come up as the project progresses. It may require better Project Team education and communication if the questions remain the same.
- Informally surveying meeting attendees and webpage visitors to find out their thoughts on the public participation process, ease of commenting, and frequency of opportunities to participate.



- Evaluating/documenting social media statistics.
- Evaluating/documenting mailing list size and composition.

If there are ways to improve outcomes through engagement based on evaluation, the team will adjust or pivot. The PIP is a living document and will remain flexible to meet the needs of the community and stakeholders.

All outreach activities will be logged, tracked, and documented in the database. The Project Public Involvement will compile reporting, to include outreach activity, comments and their required actions, social media, webpage, and online meeting statistics, in monthly summaries for ITD's review. ITD's ProjectWise will act as the official repository for the Administrative Record.