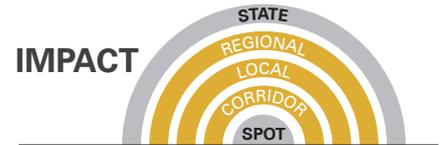




VIRTUAL PUBLIC MEETINGS



WHO LEAD AGENCY	HURDLES MAY EXCLUDE SOME
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SUCCESS STORIES

Oak Hill Parkway Project, Austin, Texas (2013): Provides an early example of a virtual public meeting with live chat opportunities. The virtual open house increased public engagement in the environmental review process for proposed improvements to the Oak Hill Parkway project. **The virtual open house provided an interactive experience designed to mimic the project's traditional open houses and featured two real-time chat sessions with agents.** The website also featured a landing page, registration page, project materials, and an exit survey.

Implementation Issues

Project staff must closely monitor virtual public meetings to ensure that comments received are acknowledged and that staff answer questions in a timely manner. Participants need to feel their comments are valid and heard. Current FHWA rules prohibit the inclusion of comments received through a virtual public meeting into the administrative record.

More Information: tti.tamu.edu/policy/how-to-engage-people

Description

Virtual public meetings use web and chat services to supplement traditional, in-person meetings or open houses on transportation projects. They allow the public to participate, give feedback, provide comments, and in some instances engage in real-time, live-chat sessions with project agents. Virtual public meetings also display project information on a website and allow users to comment. This format allows for as much or as little participation as one may desire.

lunch break. This flexibility increases participation from citizens who cannot attend in-person public meetings because of work or issues with childcare. Virtual public meetings can also increase participation from citizens who cite traffic and parking as nuisances that curb interest in attending in-person meetings.

How Will This Help?

- **Allows an unlimited number of citizens** to participate at the same time.
- **Can allow real-time interaction.**
- **Increases the number of engaged citizens** in the transportation planning process, which may increase public support for final decisions.

Target Market

A primary advantage to citizens who engage in virtual public meetings is that they can participate based on their schedule, from home, or on a

VIRTUAL PUBLIC MEETINGS ON THE SPECTRUM OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

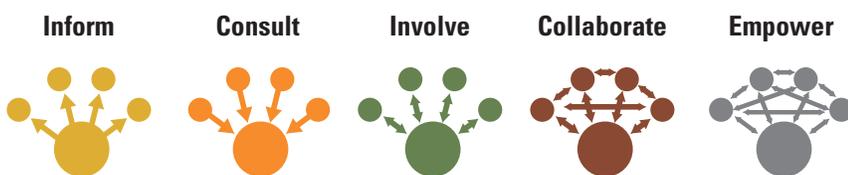


Figure 1. Spectrum of Public Engagement (Source: IAP2)

