

US Highway 12 Downtown Litchfield Study Public Participation Plan

Introduction

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), District 8, is implementing a public participation process to determine and develop consensus for a preferred cross section of US Highway 12 through Downtown Litchfield. Through analysis and thoughtful public involvement, this study aims to identify the needs of the community, areas of improvement, and opportunities for the four blocks of downtown set to be reconstructed.

The purpose of this public participation plan (PPP) is to clearly articulate the goals, objectives, and strategies for public participation; to identify key stakeholders and define the roles of decision-making and advisory bodies; to identify available communication methods; and to set a schedule for conducting public participation activities. The PIP serves as a flexible document that is meant to evolve as the Study progresses. MnDOT will work with the Study Team to update the PIP, when necessary.

Our approach to public participation is centered on the following three principles:

Everyone

All key stakeholders, businesses, agencies, and established committees and groups will have the opportunity to participate, regardless of their ethnicity, age, income, language, mobility or previous experience with public processes. All engagement activities and products will be inclusive, multi-lingual, and multi-cultural.

Whenever

A “one size fits all” outreach approach is ineffective and not representative of all stakeholders involved in this study. In order to gain community input, the Study Team will meet people where they are, including various locations throughout the Litchfield community during convenient times and current existing events.

Interactive – We recognize people are engaged and learn best through interactive, visually appealing activities and events. Engagement activities will be thought provoking, collaborative, and concise.

Public Participation Goals

MnDOT and the Study Team are committed to creating meaningful dialogue with stakeholders and the public during the engagement process in order to meet the following goals:

- Establish a credible relationship early with the community and general public
- Create an inclusive public participation process
- Understand the needs and concerns of stakeholders and the general public including conceptual cross sections, drainage, historic preservation, heavy vehicle freight, geometrics, intersection control, access management, multimodal and aesthetics
- Solicit community input regarding preferences for the reconstruction project
- Present information clearly and concisely to reflect the study goals
- Clearly demonstrate how public input influences project development
- Ensure transparent decision-making
- Build consensus and acceptance for a preferred cross section

Public Participation Outreach Strategies

In order to meet the goals outlined above, MnDOT and its partners will use various methods to conduct inclusive outreach by building credibility, educating the community, and fostering support for the US 12 reconstruction project through downtown Litchfield.

Stakeholder Outreach

Walking Tour

A Walking Tour will be held early in the process to aid in providing a real-world visual of the concept development work that will be prepared as part of this study. Members of the Project Management Team (PMT) and selected stakeholders will be invited to walk the corridor to discuss what currently exists and the future vision of what can exist as a result of this study.

Anticipated date:

Thursday, October 29, 2015, 1-2 p.m.

Targeted Focus Group Meetings

Two sets of three targeted focus group sessions will be held during the study. These targeted sessions allow for the Study Team to have open dialogue with businesses and interest groups in a more focused, more intimate setting compared to an open house with the general public. It is important to have dialogue with these specific stakeholders to build relationships, gain community insight, help identify preliminary issues, concerns, create buy-in and foster active support for the project. In an effort to engage these important stakeholders early in the process, the first sets of meetings will be held prior to the first open house.

Local organizations to participate:

- Large Business/Industry, Downtown area businesses
- Historic Preservation Commission

Anticipated dates:

Week of November 9, 2015

Week of January 19, 2016

Targeted Presentations to Community and Civic Organizations

Study Team members will make presentations to local established organizations in an effort to build a positive relationship with each group, educate its members and provide an overview, and seek their buy-in for the project.

Local organizations may include:

- Chamber of Commerce
- Rotary Club
- Lions Club
- Kiwanis
- City Council
- County Board
- Others as determined by the PMT

Anticipated dates:

- Late January
- Mid-February
- Mid-March

Pop-Up Events & Intercept Surveys

The Study Team will conduct outreach at local events in order to gain community feedback about the needs and opportunities of the corridor. This will allow the Study Team to hear community concerns and ideas through face-to-face interaction in a relaxed environment and “in the moment.” Feedback will be collected through a short survey via Survey Monkey. A printed version of the survey will also be made available for the community to fill out on-site. In addition to the survey, an information board will be created to give an overview of the study and a flier will be distributed with the same information, including a URL directing community members to the study website for further information and engagement.

Anticipated dates:

- Pop-up #1: Nelson Pumpkin Farm Festival
Saturday, October 24, 2015, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.
- Pop-up #2: Farmers Market
Thursday, October 29, 2015, 2:30 -5:30 p.m.
- Pop-up #3: Potential sporting event
- Pop-up #4: TBD
- Pop-up #5: TBD

Open House Meetings

Four open house meetings will take place at key milestones throughout the study. The first open house will allow the Study Team to solicit initial feedback about the project and identify opportunities. The purpose of the second and third open house

meetings will be to interactively develop conceptual cross sections and share results of these activities. The Study Team will present the preferred conceptual layout/cross section at the fourth open house and make final tweaks as needed to the concept prior to moving it forward for detailed design.

All open houses will include activities that engage people in interactive ways including hands-on activities related to study goals, issues/opportunities, and design preference.

Open House Venue Options:

- Litchfield Public Library
- American Legion
- Litchfield schools
- Litchfield Civic Arena
- Local church

Anticipated dates:

November 19, 2015

Week of February 1, 2016 (Hold on Tuesday, Feb 2nd)

Week of March 21, 2016 (either Tuesday, 2/22 or Thursday, 2/24)

Note: Please check the study website for official dates and times of upcoming public participation events.

Roles and Functions

The following sections provide a summary of project advisors and their functions on the US 12 Downtown Litchfield Study.

Decision-Making Authorities

MnDOT is the lead agency for the study and will advise, as well as assist, with facilitating public participations activities. MnDOT anticipates asking the City of Litchfield for agreement to the project by City Council resolution.

Project Management Team

A PMT will be utilized to help guide the Study including input on scheduling, ensuring study progress and oversight of public participation activities. A total of five PMT meetings will be scheduled throughout the study.

PMT members will include:

- MnDOT District 8 staff
- City of Litchfield representative
- MnDOT CRU staff
- MnDOT Environmental Planning staff
- SRF staff

PMT meeting dates:

- October 20, 2015

- December 10, 2015
- January 27, 2016
- March 15, 2016
- April 7, 2016

Project Advisory Team

A Project Advisory Team (PAT) will be used to review and comment on the study process regarding technical analysis, concept renderings, and direction of typical section development. A total of four PAT meetings will be scheduled throughout the timeline of the project and will take place on the same day as PMT meetings.

PAT members will include:

- MnDOT District 8 staff
- US 12 Construction Project Manager
- US 12 Study Project Manager
- SRF staff

PAT meeting dates:

- February 5, 2016
- March 18, 2016
- April 8, 2016 or April 15, 2016

Additional Communication

Study Website

Websites are a vital component to an integrated public participation plan. A website allows stakeholders and the public who are unable to attend in-person engagement activities an opportunity to learn about the study at a time and in a place convenient for them. The Study Team will establish a website and maintain regular updates of its content. The website URL will be included on all printed materials (flier, survey, information board) to help direct the community to the site.

The study website will be linked to the MnDOT study specific website as well. The website will include:

- Study purpose, goals and overview
- Study updates – news, notice of events and upcoming meetings
- Study documents – meeting summaries, technical results, etc.
- Concept renderings/graphics
- Online interaction – surveys
- Contact page – MnDOT Project Manager and Consultant Project Manager

Website Updates:

- October 19, 2015
- November 23, 2015
- December 21, 2015
- February 8, 2016

- March 28, 2016
- April 25, 2016

City of Litchfield Website

The City of Litchfield website can also provide a link to the study specific website in an effort to help direct any additional interested persons.

Local Outlets

The Study Team will contact the following local outlets with meeting notices, media advisories/press releases, and other relevant information:

- **Litchfield Independent Review**
217 N Sibley Ave, Litchfield, MN 55355
Phone: 320-693-3266
Email: advertising@independentreview.net
Website: <http://www.crowrivermedia.com/independentreview>

Translation Services

Written materials for the study will be translated on an as-needed basis.

Other Communication Methods:

- City/county newsletter
- Local church bulletins
- Social media (City, Chamber, etc.)
- Materials for Title VI populations
- Accessible meeting locations

Key dates:

November 11, 2015 – Veterans’ Day
November 26 & 27, 2015 – Thanksgiving holiday
December 24 & 25, 2015 – Christmas holiday
January 1, 2016 – New Year’s holiday
January 18, 2016 – Martin Luther King Jr. Day
February 15, 2016 – Presidents’ Day