



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN

May 2024



DEPARTMENT OF
**PUBLIC
WORKS**

OETM, DPW

1500 E. Franklin Street
Richmond, VA

PURPOSE

This document shall serve as a comprehensive public participation guide for public engagement for the Fall Line Trail (FLT). This guide documents public engagement procedures and stated public engagement principles and is intended to guide the components of FLT plans, programs, and projects considered and undertaken by the City of Richmond's Department of Public Works Office of Equitable Transit & Mobility (OETM). This document is intended to outline public involvement considerations and procedures to be used by OETM staff on FLT projects receiving Federal, state and local funding. If requested, a Spanish translation of the Public Engagement Plan for the Fall Line Trail will be provided. The plan will be available on the OETM website for access by the sighted and visually impaired public. This plan describes the levels of public engagement, and presents minimum and enhanced public engagement activities expected to be implemented during the development of regional plans and programs for the Fall Line Trail.

The Fall Line Public Outreach Plan outlines how the public will be involved in the planning and implementation of the Fall Line Trail. The process of public engagement is intended to create an on-going dialogue between citizens and the City of Richmond regarding the Fall Line Trail. Regional partners to include associated localities and the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), COR elected leadership, affected citizens and the interested public will be incorporated in to the Fall Line Trail Public Engagement Plan. This plan's goal is to develop trail improvements along the Fall Line Trail Corridor, with an emphasis on invigorating areas along the corridor that have been traditionally underserved.

This plan's goal is to develop improved communication, involvement and trust between all impacted by the planning, construction and use of the Fall Line Trail.

DEFINING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public Engagement Philosophy:

It is the policy of OETM to develop the Fall Line Trail in partnership with COR government, included regional governments, interested regional organizations, VDOT and those in the City of Richmond impacted by the project and those who use the Fall Line Trail. OETM shall conduct its public engagement process in a manner to ensure accountability for its actions, continuous communication with stakeholders and citizens, consistency in approach, and integrity in its dealings.

Public Engagement Objectives:

- Provide opportunities for anyone interested in shaping the design and build of the Fall Line Trail through an engagement process that begins early, is convenient and meaningful;
- Provide timely and easily understood information to Citizens, other interested parties, and segments of the community affected by the Fall Line Trail's plans and construction;
- Integrate citizen concerns and needs in to the developmental process;
- Build credibility and trust between OETM, all interested parties and those the Fall Line Trail exist to serve; and
- Provide for periodic review of the effectiveness of the public engagement process to ensure full and open access to all and revisions to the process as necessary.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

OETM has identified four levels of public engagement in order to establish some minimum levels of required public engagement, and allow for the development of flexible public engagement programs for different types of projects. Prior to beginning any public engagement activities, an assessment will be made by OETM staff to which category level in which a segment of the Fall Line Trail's project is most appropriately classified. The level can be elevated, if appropriate, at any time during project planning and/or development process.

Four Levels of Engagement:

Level One

These projects pose minimal impact, and have no significant impact to adjacent properties and the surrounding community or will be of short duration and pose no disturbance to the existing local community transportation system.

Level Two

Projects would have light impact to adjacent properties, but not significant impacts that require redesign and/or realignment from current VDOT segment assumptions.

Level Three

Projects would have moderate impact to adjacent properties, but not significant impacts that require redesign and/or realignment from current VDOT segment assumptions.

Level Four

These projects may have significant impact on adjacent properties and the community, they require reassessment, redesign and realignment or are large-scale efforts in terms of construction from current VDOT segment assumptions.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Public engagement activities associated with each category are defined below in terms of minimum requirements and notes that additional potential enhanced activities can be undertaken. Those defined as "minimum requirements" meet or exceed OETM's recognition of the federal requirements for public engagement. They reflect the minimum level of effort acceptable by OETM regarding this project.

Enhanced activities will be considered critical to implement when there is an indication that additional public involvement is needed for any segment, such as particularly divisive special interest groups within a segment area that would require individual attention (Appendix I). All levels of public engagement will include reviewing demographic information to identify any underserved or special audiences within a segment's area, and determining the appropriate level of outreach.



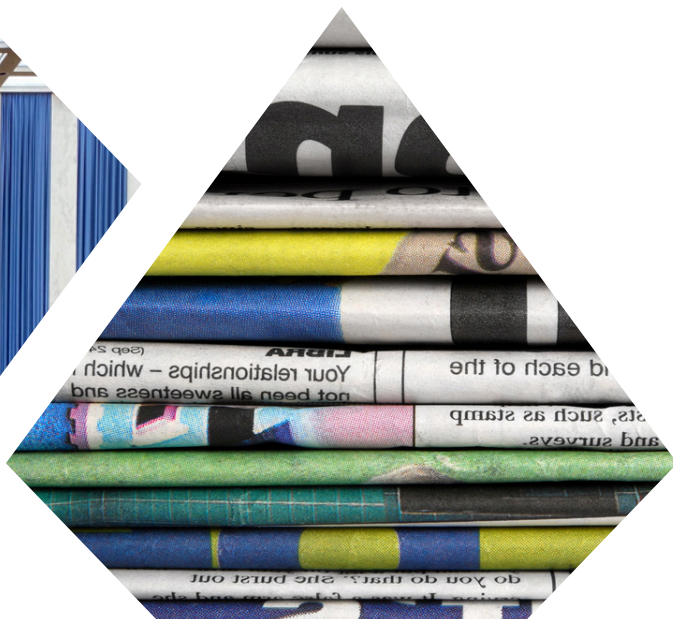
LEVEL ONE

Projects pose minimal impact, and have no significant impact to adjacent properties and the surrounding community or will be of short duration and pose no disturbance to the existing local community's transportation system. If a segment of the FLT is deemed Level 1, then there are minimal changes to the VDOT design, or has no trail and pedestrian safety issues, existing trees, parking and/or travel lanes requiring an operational traffic analysis.

Required Minimum Public Engagement

1. Correspondence will be sent to City Council (elected officials) and the Central Virginia Transit Authority (CVTA) to provide information. The correspondence will describe activities and anticipated impacts, and will invite input regarding the project.
2. Media releases will be sent to at least one newspaper in the project area with wide circulation, and also sent to any ethnic publications within the project area and posted to OETM's website. All correspondence will be distributed at least two weeks (10 days) prior to the date of a public engagement activity.

Also can include Enhanced Public Engagement Activities (See Appendix I)



LEVEL TWO

Projects would have some impact to adjacent properties and the surrounding community, but no significant impacts that require segment realignments. As projects pose moderate impact, projects may present moderate disturbances to the existing local community's transportation system. If a segment of the FLT is deemed Level 2, then there are moderate changes to the VDOT design, or has minimal trail and pedestrian safety issues, existing trees, parking and/or travel lanes requiring more than the operational traffic analysis.

Required Minimum Public Engagement

1. At the beginning of the planning implementation process, correspondence will be sent to City Council (elected officials) and to the Central Virginia Transit Authority (CVTA) in the project area to provide information on FLT project modifications. The correspondence will describe activities and anticipated impacts, and will invite input regarding the project.

2. Coordinate and conduct media releases to be distributed as a Notice of Public Meeting. The opportunity for requesting a public meeting may be satisfied by publishing two notices in a newspaper with general circulation, within the vicinity of the proposed effort, and also sent to any ethnic publications within the project area and posted to OETM's website. The first notice will announce a public meeting. In addition, the appearance of the notice in the newspaper(s) should announce the beginning of a 30-day comment period and invite oral or written comments from all interested. The second notice should be published 15 days after publication of the first notice, and it should remind the public that there are only 15 days remaining of the time period in which to provide comments ahead of a public meeting.

Both notices regarding a public meeting should include a description of the project and its impacts, and the physical address, email address and telephone number of the OETM staff hosting the meeting. The notice will be placed on OETM's website, and a copy will be furnished to the CVTA. Within the OETM office, there will be available for public review, a copy of FLT segment modifications and other information pertaining to the design and build. Specific locations for public engagement activities, such as schools, libraries, City Hall, etc., and their addresses should be listed in the notice with their hours of operation. Each of these locations should provide access sufficient to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

LEVEL THREE

Projects are those that would generally have significant impact on adjacent properties and the community, have trail and pedestrian safety issues, existing trees, parking and/or travel lanes that require reassessment, redesign and realignment or are large-scale efforts in terms of construction from current VDOT segment assumptions.

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LEVEL THREE, CON'T.

Required Minimum Public Engagement, continued...

3. Coordinate and conduct at least one (1) public engagement activity. Meeting Information presented at a meeting should describe the purpose and need for the project, define alternatives, explain the impacts. State and local elected officials with jurisdiction within the vicinity of the project should be invited to the meeting. Work with the existing regional stakeholders to locate and attract traditionally underserved groups within the impacted area. Information on the current VDOT segment alignment must be provided, and an opportunity for discussion presented. Meeting attendees will be given the option of submitting comments in writing or verbally. An announcement must be made during the public meeting that written comments are accepted for at least 10 days after the public meeting; to whom and where to send these written comments and that these written comments are part of the public hearing transcript. This announcement also must include information about internet-based comment opportunities. Answers to questions will be provided through a formal Question-and-Answer period.

Meeting and Hearing Considerations

All meetings and hearings, and all locations where documents are made available to the public should provide access sufficient to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. All meeting or hearing attendees should be asked to sign in and be given a comment sheet on which to record their comments. Other handouts such as fact sheets or newsletters may be appropriate. In order to provide meaningful access to decision-making information, information may need to be translated into a language other than English, provided in large type, produced in Braille or provided on cassettes.

Also can include Enhanced Public Involvement Activities (See Appendix I)

LEVEL FOUR

Projects are those that would generally have significant impact on adjacent properties and the community, have trail and pedestrian safety issues, existing trees, parking and/or travel lanes that require reassessment, redesign and realignment or are large-scale efforts in terms of construction from current VDOT segment assumptions.

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3. Development of a database of citizens living in the project area, elected officials, stakeholders, such as businesses or institutions in the area and any other groups or individuals thought to have an interest in the project. The database will be used to communicate project information to stakeholders.

LEVEL FOUR, CON'T.

Required Minimum Public Engagement, continued...

4. Identification of any populations in the project area requiring special outreach to ensure they have access to information and the opportunity to make comments, regardless of their race, religion, age, income or disability. Identification of these populations will include using Census data or information obtained from groups or organizations known to have knowledge of these populations.

5. Coordinate and conduct at least two (2) public engagement activities. These meetings are held to give local citizens, local public officials, neighborhood groups, civic associations and/or business associations an opportunity to comment, ask questions and express their views for inclusion into the development process. The number of such meetings is determined by the needs of the affected community. A formal presentation will be made by OETM, that provides information about the need and purpose of the effort, its anticipated impacts to the community, a time line for project development, the estimated cost or savings of the project, its funding source (if applicable) and the reasons for the meeting. Answers to questions will be provided through a formal Question-and-Answer period. Participants will be encouraged to view displays, engage in conversation with individual staff, and submit written comments. In addition, a tape recorder should be available for those who make verbal comments. In order to ensure maximum opportunity for attendance, meetings and hearings should be scheduled at times that are convenient for the public and in locations that are convenient and safe for all members of the public. Consideration should be given to the times that shifts occur at major manufacturers and to the need for daylight accessibility of the elderly and disabled. Public Information meetings must be held within the project area or as near as possible to the project area.

Meeting and Hearing Considerations

All meetings and hearings, and all locations where documents are made available to the public should provide access sufficient to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. All meeting or hearing attendees should be asked to sign in and be given a comment sheet on which to record their comments. Other handouts such as fact sheets or newsletters may be appropriate. In order to provide meaningful access to decision-making information, information may need to be translated into a language other than English, provided in large type, produced in Braille or provided on cassettes.

Also can include Enhanced Public Involvement Activities (See Appendix I)

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE REQUIREMENTS

The following explains the notice requirements for public engagement activity meetings:

Notices for OETM, FLT public engagement activity meetings may take the form of either a Legal Notice (in the Classifieds section) or a newspaper display advertisement. Both are legitimate forms of notice. Consideration should be given to using display ads rather than legal notices because of the higher visibility offered by newspaper display ads. When appropriate, notice enhancements may be implemented, including placing notices in community centers, grocery stores and other places of interest throughout the community. Dynamic message boards may be utilized to notify those who do not live in the area but may have an interest in the project.

Public Hearing Notices will include a map of the project/effort location, an explanation of the meeting's purpose, and the time, date and location of the meeting(s). The notice will present information in easily understood language that avoids technical terms and industry jargon. The notice will invite public comment and provide a telephone number and mailing address of the OETM official in charge of the effort. The meeting notice will be placed on OETM's website.



SAMPLE: NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

The Office of Equitable Transit & Mobility (OETM) of the City of Richmond's Department of Public Works, an equal opportunity employer, will conduct a Public Engagement Activity Meeting on the 22th day of February, 2023, at Oak Grove-Bellemeade Elementary School at 2409 Webber Ave. Richmond, Virginia 23224. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss segment alignments of the Fall Line Trail as assumed by VDOT that travels north to south through the City of Richmond as shown on maps that will be available to view during the meeting. The public will be provided an opportunity to review and discuss segment alignments of the Fall Line Trail as assumed by VDOT. Currently in the finalization planning phase of design, this project will provide access through parks, neighborhoods, downtown, over vistas of the James River and towards Chesterfield via Route 1. While the overall proposed Fall Line Trail is not expected to have significant impacts on adjacent properties, and the surrounding communities, some disturbances will present short-term inconveniences during construction. This meeting will be held from 6-8 pm during which time there will be a formal presentation and a question and answer period. The public is invited to ask questions and make comments during the meeting and will be given the opportunity to make their opinions known concerning the need for the project and to present views on any modifications to the plan. Representatives of COR's DPW OETM will be available to answer questions concerning any aspect of the proposed segment modifications. Anyone with questions regarding this meeting should contact:

Dironna Moore Clarke, Director of OETM
1500 E. Franklin Street, Richmond, VA 23219
Phone: (804) 646- 3318

Persons with a disability, who require aids or services to participate at the meeting, may contact:

Crystal Lowery, ADA and Safety Coordinator no less than ten (10) days prior to the date of the meeting at (804) 646-1862 or by email: Crystal.Lowery@rva.gov

Written statements and other exhibits in place of, or in addition to, oral statements made at the meeting must be submitted to the Office of Equitable Transit & Mobility comments,

APPENDIX 1: ENHANCED PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

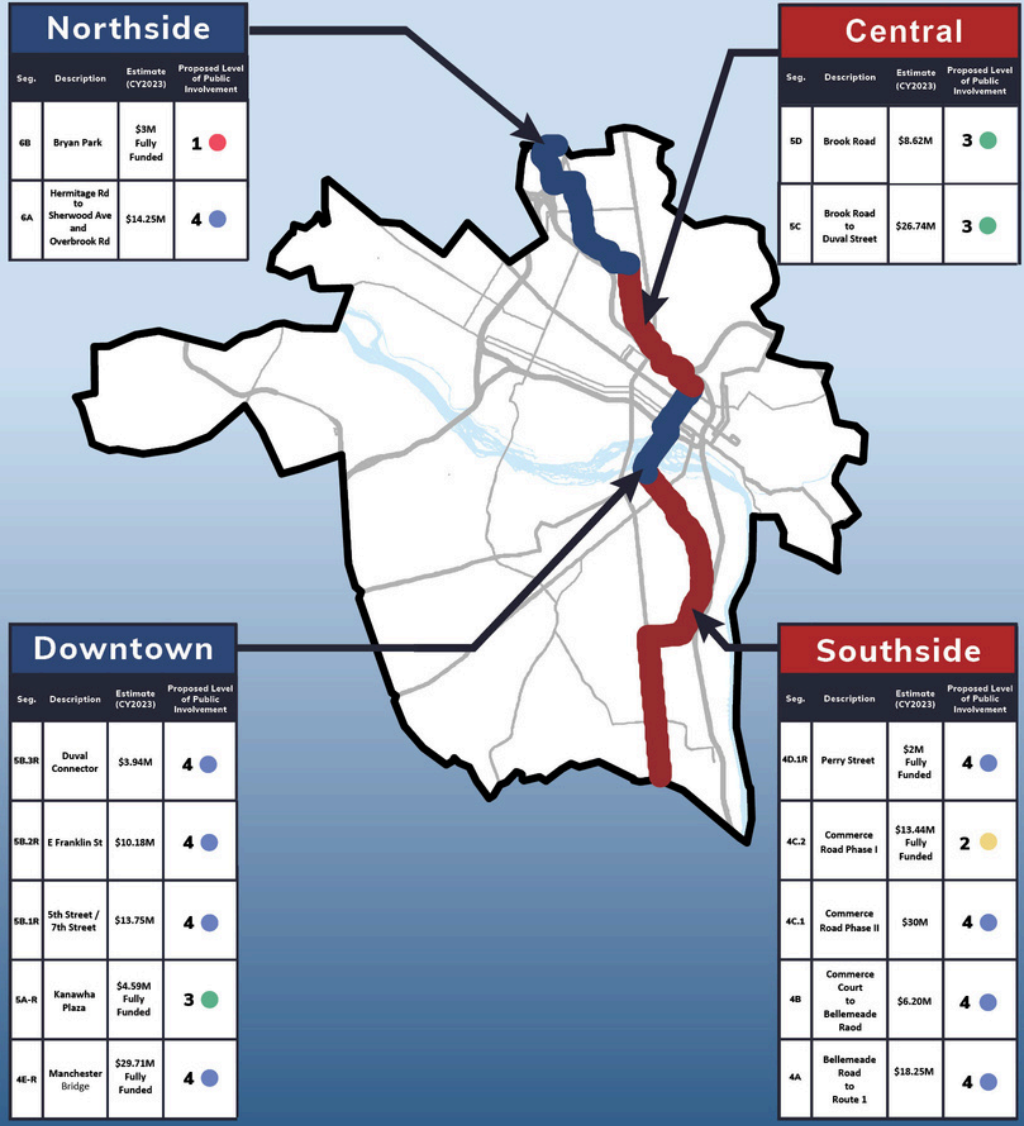
In an effort to be proactive in providing outreach to the general population, including traditionally underserved populations, this list has been developed and is to be utilized as needed

- Expand media activity to include media kits, media conferences and interviews.
- Meet with community organizations such as faith-based organizations, civic clubs, school groups and any organizations serving those traditionally underserved.
- Invite community/group leaders to serve on stakeholder committees, advisory groups and project development teams.
- Utilize lists of environmental justice resources and advocacy groups
- Place documents in libraries, schools and government buildings (including the public engagement plan).
- Present information to the CVTA, Richmond City Council or other organizations
- Add radio advertising to typical newspaper ads to announce meetings or request input from citizens.
- Use facilitators for meetings/hearings.
- Create specialized information for publishing on the web.
- Hold neighborhood meetings or information forums.
- Increase visibility of OETM's telephone number as a means of gaining input.
- Create, locate and staff information booths at regional and statewide public events
- Use surveys to gather input on the preferences and thoughts of the public.
- Utilize focus groups to garner public views and better understand the concerns of the public.
- Place meeting announcements in publications and locations used by traditionally underserved groups (Department of Human Services Offices, laundromats, YMCA, YWCA, Boys Clubs, neighborhood schools, grocery stores, etc.).
- Use fact sheets, news articles, press releases, brochures, fliers, newspaper inserts, video tape, broadcasts, public access channels and public service announcements.
- Use interpreters (language and hearing impaired).
- Print materials and post signs or flyers in other languages, Braille or large type.

APPENDIX 2: EXAMPLES OF ENHANCED PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT RESPONSES

- Trail and Pedestrian Safety Issues
- Preserve Existing Trees
- Trail Maintenance
- Preserve Street Parking
- Signage Directing Trail Users to Support Local Businesses
- The Preservation of Two Driving Lanes in Each Direction

APPENDIX 3: DEFINING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



LEVELS OF INVOLVEMENT
 LEVEL 1 (MINIMALLY INVOLVED): ● LEVEL 2 (INVOLVED): ● LEVEL 3 (SOMEWHAT INVOLVED): ● LEVEL 4 (VERY INVOLVED): ●

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



**CITY OF RICHMOND, VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
OFFICE OF EQUITABLE TRANSIT AND
MOBILITY**



TIMMONS GROUP



CCC PLANNING

CONTACT INFORMATION

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