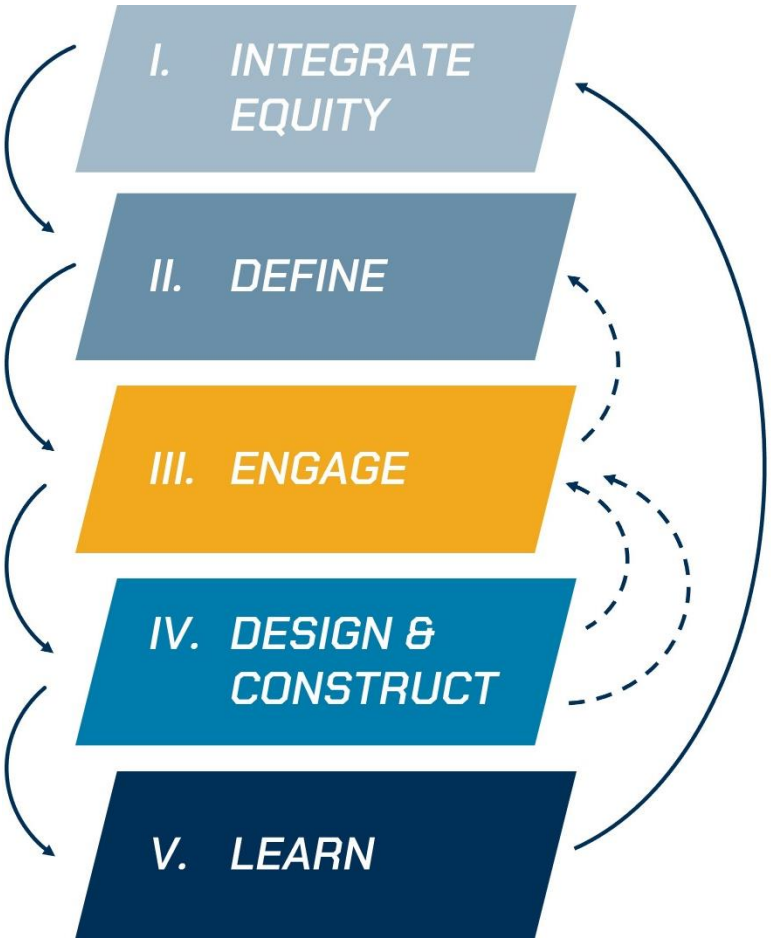
Washington State Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board

Toolkit and Best Practices for Integrating Community Considerations in Infrastructure Investments



1. Integrate Equity in Decision-Making

2. Project Purpose and Potential Community Impacts
3. Project Context
4. Affected Communities

5. Engagement Plan
6. Summary of Findings

7. Project Design
8. Project Construction

9. Data and Learnings

Adopted November 22, 2024

WASHINGTON STATE FREIGHT MOBILITY STRATEGIC INVESTMENT BOARD

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Toolkit Purpose and Use

This *Toolkit* is a companion to the FMSIB report titled *Integrating Community Considerations in Freight Infrastructure*. The *Toolkit* is designed to help public works professionals design and construct projects that advance infrastructure goals while simultaneously providing benefits to the local community and minimizing negative impacts, particularly on overburdened communities.

Infrastructure owners applying for FMSIB support for strategic freight investments may find the *Toolkit* particularly useful, as FMSIB-specific considerations are noted throughout in sidebars along the right-hand side of the page, and several worksheets may be submitted directly to FMSIB as responses to its call for proposals.

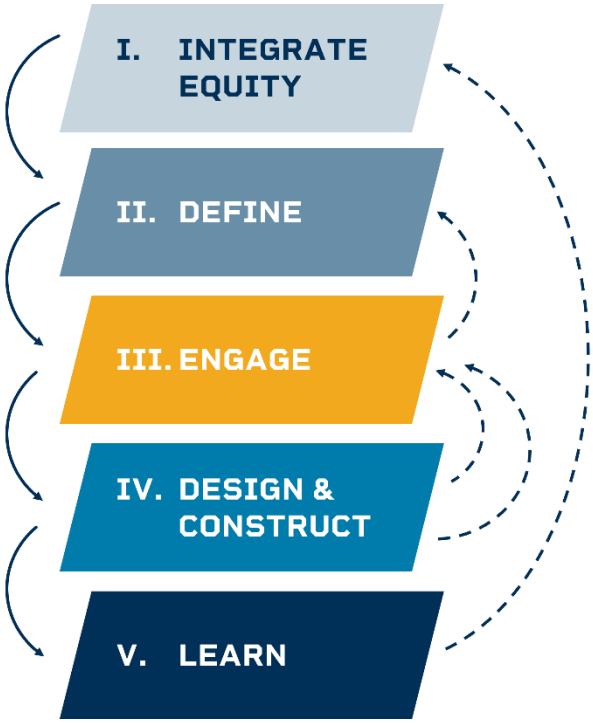
FMSIB supports strategic investments in Washington's freight system that are designed to bring benefit to and minimize harm to surrounding communities. This Toolkit will make it easier for project sponsors to:

- Articulate the strategic relevance of their project.
- Design and implement a community engagement effort to understand community interests.
- Incorporate community considerations in project design and construction.

FMSIB's work on this topic, including the main report, this *Toolkit*, editable versions of the worksheets, the *FMSIB Freight and Community Mapping Tool*, and a narrative StoryMap may be found on the FMSIB website.

Structure and Use

The *Toolkit* is structured in five sections as shown below. These are not necessarily linear steps, and it is likely that infrastructure owners will move iteratively through these topics, looping back to prior topics as they gather more information.



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Each section includes the information listed below and is structured as shown on the following pages.

- **Research Findings and Best Practices.** These sections synthesize learnings and promising practices from literature review, interviews, and outreach with FMSIB project sponsors and others involved in freight investments across Washington. This content is also included in the *Integrating Community Considerations in Freight Infrastructure* report.
- **Narrative.** These pages introduce each module. Some contain a long set of questions that can be addressed in summary on the corresponding worksheet.
- **Worksheets.** These downloadable documents create an opportunity for infrastructure owners to summarize answers to the questions raised in the narrative pages. Some worksheets can be submitted in response to corresponding questions on FMSIB's call for proposals. The downloadable worksheets are available on the FMSIB website.

The table on page 4 summarizes the *Toolkit's* five modules and worksheets. As noted in the last column, three worksheets may be submitted to FMSIB in the funding application process.

Toolkit Format

Research Findings and Best Practices

II. Define Community Context

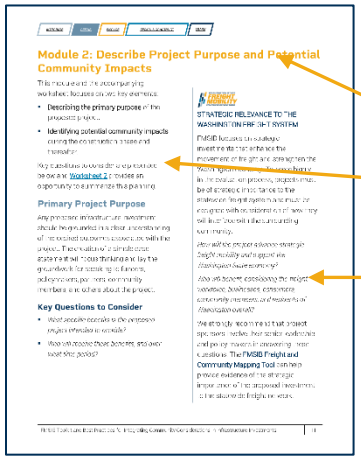
Summary of Research Findings and Best Practices

Understand Affected Communities

- Use mapping tools to visualize the impacted area and identify communities for engagement and consultation.
- Consider multiple dimensions and intersectionality when identifying affected communities.
- Elevate consideration of historically overburdened communities. Determining whether the communities surrounding potential freight investments meet the definition of "overburdened" is an important step for assessing the type and level of engagement

- Brief narrative and bulleted description of research findings and best practices.

Narrative pages



Module 2: Describe Project Purpose and Potential Community Impacts

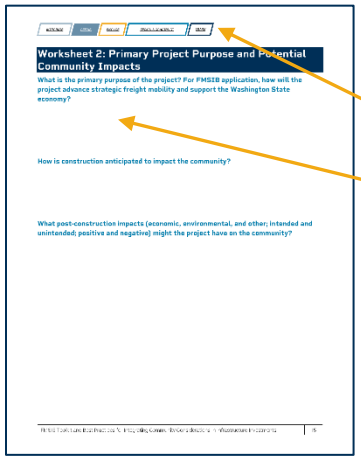
- Describing the primary purpose of the proposed project...
- Identifying potential community impacts during the construction phase and thereafter.

Primary Project Purpose

Key Questions to Consider

- Module heading.
- General guidance and questions for all infrastructure owners to consider.
- Specific guidance and questions for FMSIB applicants.

Worksheets



Worksheet 2: Primary Project Purpose and Potential Community Impacts

What is the primary purpose of the project? For FMSIB application, how will the project advance strategic freight mobility and support the Washington State economy?

How is construction anticipated to impact the community?

What post-construction impacts (economic, environmental, and other; intended and unintended; positive and negative) might the project have on the community?

- Navigation links to other sections.
- Space for answers to key questions.

Toolkit Contents

Sections and Modules	Worksheet Outcomes and Links to Other Worksheets	Submittals for FMSIB Funding Request Process
I. Integrate Equity at the Organizational Level		
1. Integrate Equity in Decision-Making	An assessment of existing guidance and consideration of where additional guidance would be beneficial.	
II. Define Community Context		
2. Describe Project Purpose and Potential Community Impacts	A clear articulation of the project's primary purpose. Understanding of intended and potential unintended community impacts, which informs the subsequent steps: Understand Affected Communities, Develop Engagement Plan, and Develop Project Design.	Description of how the project will advance strategic freight mobility and support the Washington State economy.
3. Review Project Context	Appreciation for project context informs Understand Affected Communities, Develop Engagement Plan, and Develop Project Design.	
4. Understand Affected Communities	Data-informed understanding of the characteristics of affected communities, which informs Develop Engagement Plan.	
III. Engage Affected Communities		
5. Develop Engagement Plan	A robust plan for community engagement.	Community Engagement Plan.
6. Summarize and Share Learnings	Clear understanding of what is important to the community, informs Develop Project Design.	
IV. Design and Construct the Project		
7. Develop Project Design	Design strategies to achieve project goals while maximizing community benefit and minimizing community harms.	Project alternatives and strategies to enhance community benefit and minimize harm.
8. Construct the Project	Strategies to construct the project while maximizing community benefit and minimizing community harms.	
V. Learn		
9. Capture Data and Learnings	Information and learnings that will improve future efforts.	

I. Integrate Equity at the Organizational Level

Consideration of equity in project-specific community benefits and impacts is significantly easier and more effective when equity is institutionalized at the organizational level.

Summary of Research Findings and Best Practices

Jurisdictions will typically invest in many improvement projects over time, some with and some without a freight focus. Best practices focus on integrating equity into organizational decision-making and explicitly including an equity dimension to project selection criteria.

Institutionalize Equity in Decision-Making Structures

- **Develop an equity framework to guide equity integration across the organization.** For example, the Spokane Regional Transportation Council (SRTC) uses an Equity Framework, developed in 2022, to guide the agency's work.[1] The framework recommends ways to: integrate equity in engagement processes; increase access to opportunities; enhance sustainability, health, and safety; prioritize equity spending and project prioritization; and implement performance evaluation metrics.
- **Form an equity working group to integrate equity in organizational planning and operations.** Spokane RTC formed a Transportation Equity Working Group comprised of local residents to "provide important input related to the scope of SRTC's outreach and engagement strategies, the effectiveness of our methods for identifying transportation projects with positive equity impacts, and potential opportunities to grow or evolve what we do as an agency to better ensure that the benefits (and burdens) of our transportation system are being fairly distributed to all residents in SRTC's planning area."[2] The working group is governed by a charter that includes the purpose, proposed activities, composition, recruitment, and meeting cadence. Such working groups support equitable engagement throughout the planning lifecycle and equity integration within the organization.
- **Form community advisory groups on key topics.** All four MPOs and RTPOs interviewed for this study have a transportation advisory committee, a public transportation/human services advisory committee, or both. These committees are comprised of members of the public with an emphasis on those most impacted by transportation decisions (e.g., those with disabilities, low incomes, transit dependency). They coordinate with the technical

advisory committee and MPO/RTPO leadership to inform MPO/RTPO priorities and decisions. Community advisory committees provide a consistent, active avenue for integrating community input and equity considerations in organizational goals, priorities, and decisions.

- **Establish a Community Benefits Agreement, Commitment, or Plan to make the highest commitment to ongoing community engagement and impact mitigation.** These nonbinding agreements are negotiated to outline the benefits provided to a community in exchange for community support, time, and/or services. Community Benefits Plans (CBPs) can include financial contributions to community organizations or individuals; protections of the community's health and natural resources; targeted hiring; and training and apprenticeship programs.[3] Such agreements are most appropriate for instances with ongoing colocation of freight/industrial activity and communities that have faced significant historical burdens. In Washington, one example is the Port of Seattle's Duwamish Valley Community Benefits Commitment (external link). The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is an emerging leader in the use of CBPs, and through the Inflation Reduction Act, requires that a specific framework of CBPs be utilized and scored for all funding opportunities and financing programs.[4]

Include Equity in Project Selection Criteria

Spokane RTC and Walla Walla Valley MPO explicitly integrate equity and/or engagement into their project selection and prioritization criteria.

- Walla Walla Valley MPO gives 5% to 10% weight to community input in project prioritization decisions.
- Projects proposed for Spokane RTC's Unified List are evaluated across seven areas, each worth up to 30 points. Equity is explicitly covered, and public outreach is included in two questions representing up to 20 points.

Module 1: Integrate Equity in Decision-Making

The integration of equity at the organizational level can include:

- Formal equity statements and expressions of organizational values.
- Equity frameworks that guide the integration across the organization.
- The engagement of equity working groups, community advisory groups, or other means to include a community equity perspective in decision-making and recommending bodies.
- Community Benefits Agreements, Commitments, or Plans, that assume an organization will continue to ensure that infrastructure investments continue to deliver community benefits and mitigate community harms.

Worksheet 1 offers a structure for reviewing existing elements and identifying opportunities to establish additional guidance at the organizational level. The remainder of the *Toolkit* focuses on project-level efforts.

Worksheet 1: Equity in Decision-Making

What overarching guidance does your organization provide for how to integrate consideration of equity in decision-making? How can this focus be woven into existing guidance and where is new guidance needed?

How are community voices represented in organizational decision-making? What opportunities exist to include community voices on existing and potential new decision-making and advisory bodies?

How are community impacts and consideration of overburdened communities in particular reflected in your organization's project selection criteria?

II. Define Community Context

This section focuses on defining the purpose of a proposed infrastructure improvement project, understanding the community context surrounding the project site, and understanding the communities that may be affected, both positively and negatively, by the investment.

Summary of Research Findings and Best Practices

Contributors to this study identified several best practices for understanding the communities that may be affected by a proposed infrastructure investment project. This baseline understanding can be used to inform effective engagement strategies and to design and construct the project with full consideration of community impacts.

Understand Affected Communities

- **Use mapping tools to visualize the impacted area and identify communities for engagement and consultation.** The Walla Walla MPO uses a mapping tool to collect community input about potential project locations and Spokane identifies disadvantaged communities by census tract based on a set of criteria. Pierce County and Tacoma have partnered to implement an "Equity Index" mapping tool to identify potential equity impacts while considering new projects. Many organizations use the Washington Environmental Health Disparities (EHD) Map, hosted by the Department of Health, which is used by state agencies to identify overburdened communities. The *FMSIB Freight and Community Mapping Tool* builds on the EHD map and is intended to provide support for infrastructure owners and other interested parties in identifying existing freight features, community characteristics, and environmental factors around past, current, and proposed project locations.
- **Consider multiple dimensions and intersectionality when identifying affected communities.** Jurisdictions and organizations tend to focus first on environmental equity along racial lines. Other factors that could be considered when identifying communities that deserve particular attention include income, education level, disability status, age, language, housing insecurity, gender identity, immigrant and refugee status, religion, unemployment rate, access to technology, and involvement in the criminal legal system.
- **Elevate consideration of historically overburdened communities. Determining whether the communities surrounding potential freight investments meet the definition of "overburdened"** is an important step for assessing the type and level of considerations

needed in planning and implementing a project. Overburdened communities typically face the highest barriers to engagement, suggesting the need for structuring engagement through community-based organizations, offering compensation, and other higher levels of effort. As an example, King County staff conducted in-language community outreach and visited individual local businesses near the South Park Bridge replacement site. Beyond engagement efforts, when affected communities are overburdened, infrastructure owners should ensure that project design and implementation integrate community benefits and mitigate potential harm.

- **Consider benefits and potential negative impacts to communities that are not geographically bound or easily identified with statistics. Case studies and interviews with FMSIB project sponsors identified many examples of community impacts that extend beyond the residents and businesses in immediate geographic proximity to a project site:**
  - Drayage and other truck drivers may benefit from reduced congestion and travel times. These individuals may be members of overburdened community groups. The City and Port of Seattle reported that drayage workers impacted by the Duwamish Truck Mobility Improvements project are often recent immigrants or refugees and often speak English as a second language.
  - Freight system workers often have low incomes and may have been displaced from living in areas in which they work. They may benefit from shortened commute times and improved transportation reliability as the result of freight infrastructure investments.
  - Tourists, workers who commute through the project area, and children who attend school near the project area may also benefit from congestion relief, safety enhancements, and air quality improvements.
- **Consider beneficial and potentially harmful impacts to businesses.** While the construction phase can be disruptive of business activity, case studies profiled in this report also demonstrate that area businesses often benefit from the increased reliability of transportation and freight deliveries following project completion.

Module 2: Describe Project Purpose and Potential Community Impacts

This module and the accompanying worksheet focuses on two key elements:

- **Describing the primary purpose** of the proposed project.
- **Identifying potential community impacts** during the construction phase and thereafter.

Key questions to consider are presented below and Worksheet 2 provides an opportunity to summarize this planning.

Primary Project Purpose

Any proposed infrastructure investment should be grounded in a clear understanding of the desired outcomes associated with the project. The creation of a simple case statement will focus thinking and lay the groundwork for speaking to funders, policymakers, partners, community members, and others about the project.

Key Questions to Consider

- *What specific benefits is the proposed project intended to provide?*
- *Who will receive these benefits, and over what time period?*

STRATEGIC RELEVANCE TO THE WASHINGTON FREIGHT SYSTEM

FMSIB focuses on strategic investments that enhance the movement of freight and strengthen the Washington economy. To score highly in the evaluation process, projects must be of strategic importance to the statewide freight system and must be designed with consideration of how they will interface with the surrounding community.

How will the project advance strategic freight mobility and support the Washington State economy?

Who will benefit, considering the freight workforce, businesses, consumers, community members, and residents of Washington overall?

We strongly recommend that project sponsors involve their senior leadership and policy makers in answering these questions. The *FMSIB Freight and Community Mapping Tool* can help provide evidence of the strategic importance of the proposed investment to the statewide freight network.

Community Impacts

A preliminary estimation of potential community impacts is an important step in defining a project's affected communities and giving participating community members and stakeholders something to respond to. Infrastructure owners should consider both immediate area impacts and potential ripple effects during the construction period as well as after the project is complete. Project teams may revisit community impacts and their definition of affected communities as they learn more through the process of engaging the community.

Identification of potential construction impacts will inform community engagement efforts and construction impact mitigation strategies. Construction may lead to economic opportunities for local communities, as well as disruptive and potentially harmful impacts.

Key Questions to Consider

- *What economic opportunities could be created for residents and businesses during construction?*
  - *Are there opportunities to hire local contractors or otherwise employ residents?*
  - *What requirements are in effect due to state or federal laws or stipulations of other funders?*

CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS ON THE FREIGHT SYSTEM

- *How will construction affect the flow of freight through the area?*
- *How will these impacts affect workers in the freight system?*

- *What are the likely community mobility impacts of full or partial road closures during construction?*
  - *Where would access be limited?*
  - *What pressure would be generated on alternative routes and how might that impact residents, businesses, and visitors?*
- *How far will construction-related noise and pollution travel?*
- *What other community impacts are likely to occur during construction?*

Note: Construction planning will also require proactive measures to protect waterways and sensitive environmental areas, manage on-site pollutants, address the safe disposal of waste, ensure construction site safety, and other critical topics. The *Toolkit* does not address these important factors as it focuses on infrastructure investments' impacts on community.

After construction is complete, the project will continue to affect the surrounding community on an ongoing basis, potentially providing both community benefits and negative impacts. It is important to consider these outcomes preliminarily before determining and engaging affected communities.

Key Questions to Consider

- *How will the project, as currently conceived, impact the community?* (We say 'as currently conceived' here because there will be an opportunity to refine the design, incorporating community input and consideration of community impact in the design and construction process.)
- *How might the project change the level of air pollutants? In what direction and how far will these impacts reach, given prevailing winds and other factors?*
- *How might the project change noise levels? In what direction and how far will these impacts reach, given prevailing winds and other factors?*

FREIGHT-RELATED IMPACTS

- *Will the project increase freight volumes through the area?*
- *Will the project affect congestion and/or idling?*
- *Will the project separate freight and non-freight traffic?*
- *Given anticipated changes in traffic volume, traffic flow, mode or fuel shift, and other factors, what will be **the net impact** on air, noise, water, safety, and other factors?*
- *Does the project advance climate goals by supporting freight transport mode shifts or the use of alternative fuels?*

FREIGHT WORKERS

- *How will the proposed project affect truckers and others who work in the freight industry itself?*

- *How might the project impact surrounding bodies of water or other environmentally sensitive areas? In what direction and how far will these impacts reach?*
- *How will the project affect mobility across the transportation network, considering all modes? How will the project enhance or reduce community access to nearby businesses and other destinations?*
    - *How will the project affect safety, including vehicular and non-vehicular safety and emergency response times?*
    - *Is technical modeling of potential air, water, noise, traffic, or safety impacts warranted?*

Ripple Effects

Before summarizing responses to the above questions in Worksheet 2, infrastructure owners should consider impacts that may affect populations who do not live, work, or travel close to the infrastructure investment site, such as:

- *How will changes affect the larger vehicular and active transportation network?*
- *How will changes affect freight system workers?*
- *How will changes affect businesses up and down the supply chain, including suppliers and consumers of products produced by businesses located near the project area?*

Worksheet 2: Primary Project Purpose and Potential Community Impacts

What is the primary purpose of the project? For FMSIB application, how will the project advance strategic freight mobility and support the Washington State economy?

How is construction anticipated to impact the community?

What post-construction impacts (economic, environmental, and other; intended and unintended; positive and negative) might the project have on the community?

Module 3: Review Project Context

Infrastructure investment projects occur within the context of the existing built and natural environment. They also occur within the context of the community's historical and existing relationship to the infrastructure system. This context is important to consider before infrastructure owners take steps to Understand Affected Communities or Engage Affected Communities.

Answers to the questions below can be summarized in Worksheet 3.

Built Environment

- *Is the project occurring within a developed or undeveloped area?*
- *What is the zoning and existing land use at and around the project site?*
- *Is the project building new infrastructure or expanding, improving, or replacing existing infrastructure?*

Natural Environment

- *What features in the natural environment might be affected by the project? What might community members perceive or be concerned about?*

INTERFACE WITH FREIGHT SYSTEM

- *What freight features would be affected by the project? Is the proposed project on a truck, rail, or waterway corridor? Does it affect a multimodal facility or a port?*
- *What is the location and shape of the project? Is it a single point, a corridor, or other geometry?* This information will be needed when using the *FMSIB Freight and Community Mapping Tool*.

Existing Community Relationships

- *What is the community's historical relationship to the infrastructure system in question?*
- *How does the community currently relate to the infrastructure system*?

Project Timeline

- *What phase is project planning in?*
- *How long is project construction anticipated to take?*

Worksheet 3: Key Elements of Project Context

Summary of Built Environment Conditions

Summary of Natural Environment Conditions

Summary of Existing Community Relationships

Project Timeline

Module 4: Understand Affected Communities

With a preliminary understanding of the project and its potential impacts, infrastructure owners can identify what communities are likely to be affected. This information will be essential as infrastructure owners Engage Affected Communities. Understanding affected communities may also cause infrastructure owners to refine their work in Module 2. Module 2: Describe Project Purpose and Potential Community Impacts

The *FMSIB Freight and Community Mapping Tool* can serve as a helpful resource for understanding the community composition of census tracts near a potential project. Infrastructure owners should consider the geographic extent of potential community impacts to define which tracts are reasonable to identify as part of the affected communities. However, while the *FMSIB Freight and Community Mapping Tool* uses the best available data, census tracts can be large, and data aggregated at the tract level may obscure the characteristics of sub-populations. Census data reflects who lives in an area, not who works there. **While Census-based tools and data are helpful, direct engagement is essential to fully understanding the shape and makeup of affected communities. Based on the input gathered during community engagement as described in the next section, it may be important to revise the definition and description of the affected community.**

Review Data

The *FMSIB Freight and Community Mapping Tool* facilitates access to the following topics and community characteristics. Worksheet 4 provides an opportunity to highlight what factors are particularly relevant to developing an appropriate community engagement plan.

Demographic Makeup

- Total population
- Population density
- Percent BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color)
- Limited English Proficiency
- Percent under 18
- Percent 65 and over
- Race and ethnicity
- Percent with no high school diploma

Community Burden

- Environmental Health Disparities rankings
- Diesel exposure
- PM2.5 exposure
- Proximity to heavy traffic
- Proximity to toxic releases (RSEI)
- Lead exposure
- Proximity to hazardous waste treatment & disposal
- Proximity to Risk Management Plan (RMP) facilities
- Wastewater discharge exposure
- High noise exposure

Economic Makeup

- Total jobs
- Job density
- Household income
- Population in poverty
- Unemployment
- Cost-burdened households
- Transportation expense

Health Makeup

- Cancer rate
- Asthma rate
- Cardiovascular disease rate
- Low birth weight rate
- Poor health outcome score

OVERBURDENED COMMUNITIES

If the *FMSIB Freight and Community Mapping Tool* or other Washington-specific tool indicates that members of the affected communities are overburdened, or if project will cause negative impacts that may cause the affected community to be scored as overburdened, **members of that overburdened community must be prioritized in engagement, design, and construction considerations.** As community impacts are cumulative, it is critical to consider the full burden, regardless of whether the burden is freight-caused.

Consider Other Potentially Affected Communities

In addition to the community characteristics displayed in the *FMSIB Freight and Community Mapping Tool* or other data sources, it is important to consider the nuances of affected populations that are not easily defined by Census tract or summarized by existing data sources. Consider at least the following groups:

- **Populations with specific needs**, including the unhoused, refugees and immigrants, individuals with different abilities, and those associated with schools and health facilities.
- **Business-related populations,** including employees and customers, and parties associated with affected parts of the agricultural supply chain.
- **Users of the local or regional transportation system,** who may be affected by the project either directly or indirectly.

An infrastructure owner's perception of who is affected by the project may differ from how people self-identify. Neighborhoods, community groups, and individual community members may self-select to participate in community engagement efforts or otherwise weigh in on a project's merits and design.

FREIGHT WORKERS

FMSIB is interested in the impact of projects on those who work in the freight system itself. Long- and short-haul truckers and others may see their livelihood, health, or quality of life positively or negatively impacted by changes to freight system infrastructure. As these populations may be overburdened, **it is important to consider potential benefits and harms to members of this group.**

Worksheet 4: Defining Affected Communities

Based on the review of the best available data and consideration of other factors, what communities will be affected by the project? What key community characteristics should inform Develop an Engagement Plan?

Are some members of affected communities classified as overburdened according to the state definition? Could the potential impacts of the proposed project cause a community to become overburdened? If the answer to either of these questions is yes, take particular care to design engagement to hear from members of these communities.

III. Engage Affected Communities

This section provides guidance for how to develop and implement an effective engagement plan.

Summary of Research Findings and Best Practices

Case studies and interviews contributed many best practices to the challenging and important work of community engagement.

Cultivate Community Interest Over Time

The MPOs/RTPOs interviewed reported that community attendance at meetings related to long-range planning is generally low, even when there are good relationships with community organizations. Engagement is much higher when specific issues directly affecting individuals or communities arise, such as funding prioritization or specific project impacts. MPOs/RTPOs named several strategies to attract community attention to longer-term planning processes:

- **Build on prior engagement efforts.** Before beginning an engagement process, infrastructure owners should review past engagement efforts to avoid duplication and to develop the community's trust by demonstrating that prior input has been heard.
- **Separate long-range planning work into sub-topics and engage deeply on those sub-topics.** Spokane RTC identifies and engages key community groups and stakeholders around several smaller planning efforts such as the Bicycle Safety Plan, Pedestrian Plan, Regional Safety Action Plan, Climate Resiliency Plan, Smart Mobility Plan, Congestion Management Plan, Commute Trip Reduction, and corridor plans. They find that completing the long-range planning work in smaller, more focused pieces means it is easier for the community and stakeholders to weigh in, and they can give planning the attention it deserves. Spokane RTC then integrates the findings of these smaller planning efforts into their long-range planning update and conducts additional outreach at that time.
- **Leverage topics that garner attention.** Interviewees noted that it is possible to engage people around topics that tend to attract a high level of attention and move their feedback forward into long-range transportation planning. Walla Walla Valley MPO mentioned that truck parking, bicycle and other multimodal infrastructure improvements, and any likely business operational impacts from road closures tend to receive disproportionate community attention that can be leveraged. Yakima Valley MPO noted that even seemingly unrelated topics, such as the ability for people with custody cases to travel to the court, can

be avenues to collect and move forward community input around transportation planning issues. Spokane RTC said that the topics that community members typically comment on the most are safety (especially for active transportation), congestion in certain areas, and needed public transit.

- **Emphasize practical and immediate project impacts.** All the interviewed MPOs and RTPOs said that highlighting impacts that people have experienced or will likely experience from transportation system changes helps to increase engagement. Cowlitz-Wahkiakum COG noted that it is crucial to connect long-range topics to potential impacts in people's backyards. Within long-range planning efforts, the Spokane RTC incorporates personal stories and visual elements, such as photos of people affected by transportation incidents, to illustrate the immediate consequences of the issues being addressed.
- **Overcome confusion about long-range planning efforts.** The interviewee from Yakima Valley COG noted that there is sometimes confusion from the community about what topics are included within different planning efforts and how to contribute. In addition to breaking planning up into more manageable pieces, the Spokane RTC found that establishing predictable communication practices (e.g., releasing press releases at specific times) can reduce confusion about participation and create a sense of reliability and structure in outreach efforts.

Tailor Engagement Approaches to the Community Needs and Priorities

- **Tailor engagement efforts to reach specific audiences.** Jurisdictions and organizations are more likely to successfully engage community members by adapting to their needs. Interviewees from the Spokane RTC and Yakima Valley Conference of Governments recommended making information accessible and understandable by simplifying language and translating materials where necessary. They also spoke to conducting direct outreach and relationship-building with communities, especially Limited English Proficiency groups, to overcome distrust in government and make these groups feel more comfortable engaging. This involves using appropriate channels for different demographics, such as attending culturally relevant community events and promoting engagement opportunities in-language via flyers and culturally relevant media. Other best practices include providing stipends for transportation and childcare and partnering with community-based organizations to recruit attendees and facilitate culturally competent engagement.
- **Conduct a blend of broad and targeted engagement, and engaging early, continuously, and substantially.** It is important to allow community members to truly have an opportunity to influence the project outcomes, including aspects not always discussed with community

members, such as project selection and options for project location and design. By providing ample notice to community members, infrastructure owners can cultivate a community's understanding of a project's impetus and lifecycle. A combination of intentionally broad and targeted engagement enables an infrastructure owners to offer engagement opportunities that meet the needs of specific community groups. For members of overburdened communities, it may take multiple opportunities and formats to overcome barriers to participation.

Spokane RTC integrates the following best practices in its work:

- Beginning engagement early, in the "discovery phase" of a new effort, using demographic data to identify and tailor engagement efforts to reach members of disadvantaged communities.
- Conducting general and targeted outreach across the local media, local agencies and governments, community organizations, the private sector, and area residents.
- Using specific planning efforts (e.g., bike safety and pedestrian plans) to engage stakeholders with focused interests.

- **Go beyond legal requirements when circumstances warrant.** Two case studies – the Bigelow Gulch & Forker Road Realignment and Walla Walla Myra Rd Improvements projects – involved right-of-way acquisitions of farmland. Both teams heard concerns related to loss of property value and changes to farming operations. Through iterative conversations with property owners, they were able to build trust and successfully reach agreements to acquire land.
- **Develop and implement a project and community specific engagement plan.** The Spokane RTC develops Public Participation Plans structured around guidance from the International Association for Public Participation (external link).

Elevate the Voices of Overburdened Communities

Contributors to this study emphasized that overburdened communities should have influence throughout the project process. It is important to tailor engagement strategies and participation opportunities to gain input from those who may be most impacted by a project, either positively or negatively. This enables infrastructure owners to focus community benefits and mitigation on the factors that are most important to these community members.

- **Reach overburdened communities through highly tailored engagement opportunities.** As described above, many members of overburdened communities face barriers to participation in broad based community engagement activities. When these communities were effectively engaged by case study project sponsors, they provided feedback to prevent

construction-related disruptions and/or advocated for project designs that would keep their communities intact. Successful engagement strategies featured in case studies projects included visiting businesses along the impacted section of the freight corridor, hosting community meetings for adjacent mobile home residents, providing translated materials, and engaging cultural groups through their faith communities.

The Yakima Valley COG places a strong emphasis on engaging Hispanic and Low English Proficiency populations. The organization has made significant efforts to build trusted relationships within these communities using bilingual materials and culturally sensitive approaches.

- **Partner with community-based organizations (CBOs) to reach overburdened communities.** This can create an opportunity to build on trusted relationships and proven expertise. CBOs may have strong existing community connections and know how to best reach community members in a culturally fluent manner. While building on the ongoing work of a CBO, such partnerships should be contracted and compensated to reflect the CBO's contributions and efforts.

  Spokane RTC has increasingly relied on partners to expand its reach and depth of engagement and to make it more efficient for the community to participate in government processes.

- **Provide compensation and other support for focus group participants, steering committee members, or other participants from overburdened communities.** Compensation may include gift cards or stipends, and the provision of childcare, transportation, and food can support and incentivize participation in engagement processes. State guidelines and promising strategies for implementing meaningful and productive compensation for participation are described in the section titled Guidance for Compensating Participants in the *Toolkit and Best Practices for Integrating Community Considerations in Infrastructure Investments*.

Module 5: Develop an Engagement Plan

Once infrastructure owners have identified and described the characteristics of the communities likely to be affected by the project, they can plan how to engage them in discussion of the proposed project.

Worksheet 5 is an engagement plan template designed to support this planning. Infrastructure owners will likely modify their engagement plan as they implement it, building on what works and learning as they go. They should not feel obligated to implement the plan with absolute fidelity to what is written on the page. However, they should refer back to the plan to ensure that changes during implementation are consistent with objectives and that engagement activities are appropriate for members of the affected communities.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS

FMSIB requires project sponsors to engage community members in considering the potential impacts of proposed projects.

Worksheet 5: Engagement Plan Template may be submitted directly to FMSIB or you can use your own format to respond to the funding request application.

FMSIB does not wish to create undue burden on project sponsors. If other funders require community engagement that is commensurate with FMSIB standards, no additional effort is required. Simply submit the Plan or other documentation that you developed to meet the requirement of the other funder and note this in your project application.

Worksheet 5: Engagement Plan Template

1. **Inventorying Engagement Assets and Resources** (see guidance for instructions on how to use this worksheet)

Past, Current, and Future Community Engagement

When	Engagement efforts
Past	
Current	
Future	

Resources and Constraints

Item	Notes
Timeline	
Budget	
Staffing	
Community relationships	

2. Determining Engagement Objectives (see guidance)

Item	Notes
Communication Objective(s)	▪ ▪ ▪
Information Gathering Objective(s)	▪ ▪ ▪

3. Identifying Desired Participants (see guidance)

Groups to Reach	Assets and Resources to Support Connection	Relationship Objective(s)	Other Notes

4. Selecting Suitable Outreach and Engagement Strategies (see guidance)

Desired Participants (individuals and groups)*	Objectives			Strategies	
	Communication Objectives	Information Gathering Objectives	Relationship Objectives	Outreach Strategies	Engagement Strategies

** Indicate if a community has been identified as overburdened or at risk of becoming overburdened.*

5. Planning Engagement Logistics (see guidance)

Schedule

-

Roles and Responsibilities of Key Staff or Engagement Partners

-

Resources and Materials Needed

-

1. Guidance for Inventorying Engagement Assets and Resources

Before developing a plan to engage a project's affected communities, it is important to take stock of the assets and resources that can be brought to bear. The following questions offer a guide through this thought process.

Past, Current, and Future Community Engagement

- *What other community engagement efforts can be leveraged, or should at least be referenced, when engaging the community? Consider engagement related to transportation planning, comprehensive planning, park planning, and other potentially useful sources.*
- *What has worked well for reaching and engaging community members in the past? What lessons learned are important to consider?*
- *What avenues of communication are open? Are there community representatives or organizations already engaged and participating in transportation and related planning processes in the affected area?*
- *What considerations or requirements do other existing or potential project funders put in place related to community engagement and consideration of community impacts?*

Resources and Constraints

- *Constraints will guide choices and help prioritize efforts. As noted above, if members of affected communities are overburdened or likely to become overburdened, they should be prioritized in engagement efforts.*
- *What is the health of existing community relationships? Are there key liaisons or community-based organizations that can serve as effective partners in engaging the community?*
- *How much time is available for community engagement?*
- *What level of staff capacity and budget are available?*

2. Guidance for Determining Engagement Objectives

This module will help infrastructure owners identify their overarching engagement objectives, including:

- **Communication Objectives:** information to be shared.
- **Information Gathering Objectives:** information to be gathered from interested parties.

Ultimately, these objectives may differ by group (as shown under Outreach and Engagement Strategies in Worksheet 5, Table 4) but it's helpful at this early stage to start with general ideas.

A key consideration is project phase, as Communication and Information Gathering Objectives will likely vary by project phase.

	Initiation Phase	Development Phase	Implementation Phase
Description from the FMSIB Funding Request Form	Project has, at a minimum, been identified in a planning study. Limited investment has been made towards further developing the project.	Design is at least 30% complete. Right-of-way needs are identified. Environmental approvals have been initiated. Project is identified in a local, regional, and/or state plan.	Design is at least 60% complete. Significant progress has been made towards right-of-way. Environmental approvals are underway. Project is identified in a local, regional, and/or state plan.
Potential Communication Objectives	Purpose of the project, including what freight and community benefits are anticipated. Project logistics, including partners and funding sources, project timeline, and opportunities for interested parties to provide input. Strategies that will be deployed to mitigate construction or operational impacts.		
Potential Information Gathering Objectives	Community concerns about construction or ongoing operation of the infrastructure. Priorities for community benefit.	Ideas for infrastructure design. Preferences for alternative designs.	Actual impacts experienced or perceived by community, including unanticipated impacts.

3. Guidance for Identifying Desired Participants

Infrastructure owners should identify what groups they want to reach and who they want to hear from by drawing on their understanding of:

- **Affected communities**, particularly if there are overburdened communities, or communities who may become overburdened due to the project.
- **Project context**, particularly if potential negative community impacts are anticipated.
- **Engagement assets and resources**:
  - Who can be reached directly?
  - Who would be best reached via partners or intermediaries, including community-based organizations?
- **Relationship Objectives.** Infrastructure owners should identify communities with which they seek to maintain an existing relationship, build or deepen an existing relationship, repair an existing one, or create a new one. Relationship Objectives may affect outreach and engagement strategy selection, as well as the overall level of resources invested in interacting with various communities. Infrastructure owners should consider opportunities to:
  - Build trust with community members directly.
  - Deepen ties with community representatives or community-based organizations.
  - Establish standing mechanisms or bodies, such as a Community Advisory Committee, to maintain an active, ongoing relationship with key communities, potentially including overburdened communities directly affected by the infrastructure system in question.

4. Guidance for Selecting Suitable Outreach and Engagement Strategies

An engagement plan will typically include both outreach and engagement strategies. It is often necessary to use outreach strategies to raise community awareness of opportunities to participate in engagement opportunities.

- **Outreach strategies** are used to communicate with or deliver information to communities.
- **Engagement strategies** encourage active participation, feedback, and involvement by participants.

The selection of outreach and engagement strategies is a cumulative step and infrastructure owners should align their plans with many previous considerations, including:

- **The characteristics of the project's affected communities.**
  - Community characteristics should drive outreach and engagement strategies, including race, ethnicity, language spoken at home, income and employment, and renter/homeowner mix.
  - Overburdened communities should be prioritized in outreach and engagement efforts.
- **Engagement assets and resources.**
  - Coordination with engagement activities related to other projects or initiatives within the same jurisdiction can enhance dialogue and reduce respondent fatigue.
  - Resource availability and constraints should constructively help to narrow and focus the engagement effort, which leads to more efficient use of limited resources and reduced respondent fatigue.
- **Objectives for communication, information-gathering, and relationships** as described in the previous subsection, Guidance for Determining Engagement Objectives.

Sample Outreach and Engagement Strategies

Outreach Strategies to Raise Awareness and Share Information	Engagement Strategies to Gather Input or Feedback
Website (with mailing list for updates)	Site visits
Posted public notices	Public meetings
Press releases and earned media in relevant outlets, including non-English media, when appropriate to the affected communities	Community events
Newsletter	Focus groups
Social media	Survey
Fact sheet with project map	Ongoing community member participation in advisory or planning body
	Workshop series
	Design charrettes

Ideas for Increasing the Effectiveness of Outreach Efforts

- Create project overviews and other brief materials in **simple English** and post in a format that allows for the use of online translation tools and screen readers.
- **Translate content** into languages other than English appropriate to the affected communities.
- Provide materials in **various formats**: images, video, timelines.
- Partner with community organizations (including ethnic media) to **share information with their members.**
- **Broadly message opportunities** for more in-depth engagement – getting more information and providing feedback.
    - Update at scheduled intervals to maintain awareness and allow people to plan for participation.
- **Celebrate** project completion and share outcomes and future considerations.

Ideas for Increasing Participation and Input in Engagement Efforts

- **Be transparent in how and when feedback will be considered**, including when project decisions will be announced and implemented and any further opportunities for input.
- Host events after work hours (6:00-8:00 pm) or on the weekends. If multiple events of the same type are held (multiple public meetings, for example), they should be held at different times to accommodate various **schedules**. Engagement leads can also bring messages to events and venues **where people already gather** or compensate community organizations to gather members to learn about the project and provide feedback.
- Offer **virtual events**, such as webinars with moderated Q&A. Ideally, engagement would involve a mix of virtual and in-person participation opportunities.
- Support participation at in-person events by providing:
  - **A welcoming location and atmosphere.** Meeting people where they typically meet, perhaps in a church, community center, local restaurant, or other location. This can be more effective than asking community members to meet at City Hall. Wherever an event is held, make sure it is welcoming to community members.
  - **Food**. Source hot food from vendors in the community. Advertising dinner, food trucks, or other exciting refreshments will be more enticing than grocery store snacks if the budget allows.
  - **Childcare** and/or activities that children can participate in.
  - **Free parking,** parking validation, or transit vouchers.
  - **Accommodations** for accessibility (ramps and wheelchair-accessible space features, captioning, interpretation, amplification, preferred seating, etc.), and advertise the **opportunity to request these in advance**.
- Provide **interpretation services** or **consider language-specific events**, such as a Spanish-speaking focus group.
- Offer **longer-term engagement**, such as participation in a working group, in addition to one-time events
- **Compensate individuals** for their time (see Appendix).

Additional Requirements and Considerations

Regardless of the outreach and engagement strategies chosen, infrastructure owners should consider requirements and best practices for the following:

- **American Disabilities Act accessibility:** Ensure that physical locations and documents are accessible to individuals with disabilities, providing features like access to ramps or elevators, accessible signage, and formats such as large print or digital documents compatible with screen readers.
- **Limited English Proficiency accommodation:** Provide language assistance services to individuals with limited English proficiency, including translation and interpretation, to ensure they can participate meaningfully in programs and services.
- **Public Meeting Act requirements**: Adhere to laws requiring public meetings to be conducted openly and transparently, with advance notice, opportunities for public participation, and accurate recordkeeping to foster trust and accountability.

5. Guidance for Planning Engagement Logistics

An engagement plan should include consideration of at least the following logistics:

Schedule

- What is the window for engaging with the community, given other deadlines and project milestones?
- What engagement phases might be effective, perhaps including early awareness raising followed by opportunities for providing input?

Roles and Responsibilities of Key Staff or Engagement Partners

- Who is responsible for each component in the engagement plan?
- How will the team stay coordinated during implementation?

Resources and Materials Needed

- What will be needed to implement the plan successfully?

Module 6: Summarize and Share Learnings

It is important to capture and share learnings from community engagement efforts so members of the project team can Design and Construct the project with attention to community considerations, and a summary report can be provided to the community.

In addition to more detailed meeting or event summaries, infrastructure owners should capture and report on input at a thematic level, ideally reflecting the key ideas of individual community groups or segments. It is important to be honest and transparent in reporting what was heard back to community members. Failure to do so will undermine trust and credibility.

Before moving to project design and construction in the next section, infrastructure owners should reflect on their determination of the geographic extent of the community that will be affected by the project. Community input, including self-identification as affected or unaffected by the project, may prompt changes to the definition of the affected community and require an updating of information collected in the **Understand Affected Communities** step.

Worksheet 6: Summary of Community Input

What themes summarize community input, with explicit reflection of where input varied by stakeholder or community type?

What would different communities or stakeholder groups like to see as outcomes of the project?

What concerns or hopes were expressed by different community or stakeholder groups about the construction phase?

How did members of overburdened communities engage, and what input did they share?

IV. Design and Construct the Project

This section helps infrastructure owners determine strategies to achieve project goals while maximizing community benefit and minimizing community harm.

Summary of Research Findings and Best Practices

Building on what is learned from community engagement efforts, intentional freight infrastructure design and construction can reduce negative impacts and maximize benefits to a community's surrounding projects.

Design for Community Benefits

- **Integrate community feedback in project design.** Case studies for this report identified various cases in which community engagement directly influenced project design.

  For the South Park Bridge replacement, King County collaborated with community members from the project's inception to identify a solution to the bridge's deteriorating condition and address community concerns. Community input meaningfully changed the project design, ensuring that the new bridge incorporated many elements of the old bridge and added new features such as a pocket park and rain garden.

- **Consider a wide range of potential community benefits that can result from community-informed and intentionally designed infrastructure improvement projects.** As noted elsewhere in this report, freight system improvement projects can provide a wide range of community benefits to local and regional stakeholders. Potential benefits include reducing congestion, improving vehicular and non-vehicular road safety, enhancing multimodal connectivity and mobility, reducing the likelihood of hazardous materials spills, improving emergency response times, supporting trade and economic development, reducing air and noise pollution, and providing community amenities including parks, green spaces, and art.

  Case studies provided many examples of improving safety and multimodal connectivity. Safety improvements come from the removal of conflict points, reduced vehicle speeds in key areas, and attention to infrastructure in poor condition. Reducing the likelihood of collisions indirectly also decreases the probability of hazardous material spills of freight cargo. Grade separations, such as those in Aberdeen, Kent, and Yakima, specifically sought to remove conflict points and improve safety, and most also included road improvements aimed at safety, such as turn lanes and roundabouts to reduce vehicle speed. The Kent and Bigelow Gulch projects created new underpasses, and the Aberdeen work included a new

overpass, which improved pedestrian and bicycle access and mobility. Projects like the South Park Bridge replacement also provided a safety benefit by replacing infrastructure before it failed.

Design to Minimize Negative Impacts

- **Mitigate potential environmental harms to host communities, particularly overburdened communities already experiencing disproportionate health impacts.** Best practices include strategies to reduce air, noise, or water pollution.

  Several projects in the case studies sought to decrease air pollution by reducing congestion and idling, including Lincoln Ave & MLK Jr Blvd Grade Separation (Yakima County) and I-5 / Port of Tacoma Interchange Improvement. The Kent and Myra Road project teams added above-code noise barriers in response to community requests.

- **Evaluate impacts to community mobility.** Due to their linear nature, freight corridors can be highly disruptive of non-freight mobility, including at the neighborhood scale. Community mapping, community engagement, and careful consideration of freight and non-freight travel patterns should inform placement of new freight corridors.

  The alignment of new road infrastructure was shifted based on community feedback in the Longview and Myra Road projects.

- **Evaluate impacts to adjacent and nearby land uses in determining potential impacts and mitigation strategies.** Such considerations may influence site selection, but some impacts can also be addressed through project design and regulation. For example, infrastructure owners can collaborate with local authorities to set hours of operation for truck operations that are close to incompatible land uses. They should coordinate specialized requirements and training needs such as hazardous materials handling, storage, or transportation with local law enforcement, fire protection districts, and road maintenance departments early in the planning process of freight developments and work with local law enforcement agencies to coordinate enforcement of truck route and weight limits.

- **Consider the impacts to access points and connections for all modes of transportation.** In some cases, this may include parking for freight employees and other vehicles associated with the freight-use area. When considering last-mile freight travel, local jurisdictions have typically focused on local traffic and parking regulations because these tools are clearly within the local authority. However, these regulations can be difficult to enforce if they are too restrictive. Rather than regulation, jurisdictions might instead consider management strategies such as consolidation schemes, which seek to reduce truck traffic by finding

ways to combine pick-ups and deliveries of different shippers or receivers. This can include combined pick-up locations, shared logistics spaces, and shipping consolidation centers.[5]

Maintain Communications During Construction

- **Raise awareness of the construction timeline, anticipated disruptions, and measures put in place to mitigate them**. It is also beneficial to describe the desired benefits from the project, particularly those that will benefit community members. This information can provide a sense of the anticipated return on construction-related disruptions. Case studies offer different ways and scales of providing community updates through the construction phase:
  - King County employed three in-house outreach staff and an external public engagement firm to involve the local community in bridge design and provide construction updates.
  - Spokane County held open houses prior to the start of construction of the Bigelow Gulch Corridor Safety and Mobility Project which offered an opportunity for the community to preview the construction schedule and impacts and work with the project team to adjust traffic control plans to reduce impact to property owners and the traveling public. The project team leveraged radio, news channels, billboards, and electronic signs to alert community members to traffic impacts. The County also prepared multilingual newsletters, translated letters, worked with English-speaking family members, and met with the local Light of the Gospel Church to engage Russian and Ukrainian families in the area. As a result of the county's multimethod engagement throughout the project, a greater proportion of the population was informed and able to provide input on route design, construction plans, and traffic impacts

Minimize Construction-Related Harms

- **Prioritize rapid completion of work that disrupts overburdened communities.** Infrastructure construction can have significant negative impacts on communities by disrupting mobility and access, and generating air, noise, soil, and water pollution that contributes to environmental health impacts. These impacts can be particularly harmful to overburdened communities, including businesses, who are less resilient to street closures and construction related pollution.
- **Implement incentive programs for timely construction delivery.** Mechanisms like increasing late fees for contractors can be a useful tool in reducing construction delays. It is also possible to encourage quicker project delivery. For example, infrastructure owners can

implement "lane rentals," which penalize contractors for each day that they close a highway, and "A+B bidding," which requires contractors to bid on both time plus materials, as well as on the number of days to complete a project.

- **Mitigate impacts to businesses located along or around construction areas.** Many case studies featured best practices for minimizing disruption to businesses and helping business owners cope with impacts to their operations. Some examples include:
  - The King County South Park Bridge project team supported patronage of restaurants around the bridge by offering community members coupons to those restaurants. Community amenities, including a temporary dog park, were also provided during construction.
  - The City of Kent worked closely with businesses to support their continued operation during a series of grade separation projects along South 228th Street. With close coordination between businesses and the project team, businesses were able to operate despite nearby construction.
  - The City of Longview's SR 432 project team engaged the business community during each phase of work. They identified opportunities to minimize construction impacts to business operations and select the preferred alternative. The City hosted interviews with representatives of five of the largest nearby cargo generators.
- **Carefully evaluate the costs associated with street closures and alternative options.** It is worth questioning the default assumption that it is better to keep streets open, or partially open, during construction. While this can maintain access to businesses and other destinations along the corridor, it may also extend the construction timeline, leading to extended disruptions and contributing to project costs. Some jurisdictions have found it more effective to close the street and invest in consultant and construction cost savings in ways that offset the economic impact of business disruptions. A related strategy can be to coordinate days of the week or times of the day for different uses of the corridor during construction.

Module 7: Develop Project Design

Design the Project

The project design phase creates the opportunity to act on thinking and information gathering to date. Infrastructure owners should consolidate the community considerations gathered from:

- Initial project team thinking about potential community impacts (Worksheet 2).
- Prior community engagement and plans that identify community priorities.
- Community engagement efforts conducted for this effort (Worksheet 6).

PROJECT DESIGN

To meet state requirements for considering community impacts of system investments, project sponsors must take the time to articulate and document potential mitigating strategies across potential impact areas. The table on the following page provides some examples.

Worksheet 7 may be submitted directly to FMSIB or project sponsors can use their own format to respond to the funding request application.

In developing project alternatives and designs, infrastructure owners should seek to achieve the project purpose while maximizing benefits and mitigating harms that community members have identified as most important. Not every negative impact can be avoided, given the constraints of budget, site or space limitations, and other factors. However, the design phase is an important opportunity to explore options from the perspective of community benefit and to acknowledge potential trade-offs between local impact and broader benefit. This is especially important in overburdened communities, which by definition bear a disproportionate share of the environmental or human costs of infrastructure projects.

The table below presents some project alternatives and design strategy considerations.

Potential Mitigating Project Alternatives and Design Strategies

Factor	Sample Mitigating Strategies
Air	Roadway design and logistics strategies (such as appointment and reservation systems and pricing) to minimize idling and reduce congestion. Decarbonization and mode switch to electric vehicles.
Noise	Installation of noise barriers. Regulating delivery or road usage hours. Mode switch to electric vehicles.
Water	Rain gardens. Green infrastructure elements and strategies, such as impervious pavement reduction.
Safety and Mobility	Relocating existing infrastructure to reduce conflicts with surrounding community. Safety improvements, such as grade separations and separating vehicles and foot traffic to minimize collisions and mode conflicts. Active transportation enhancements such as walkways, overpasses, or protected bike lanes to minimize collisions and mode conflicts. Connecting neighborhoods with community assets such as retail spaces, medical facilities, and other institutions and decreasing emergency response times.
Community Amenities	Green spaces and active or passive parks. Art and visually striking design elements with historical or community resonance.

Source: BERK, 2024.

Worksheet 7: Project Design

Factor	Anticipated Positive Impacts	Anticipated Negative Impacts	Geographic Extent of Negative Impacts
Air			
Noise			
Water			
Safety			
Mobility			
Other			

Summary of Project Design Strategies to Enhance Community Benefit and Minimize Harm

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-
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Module 8: Construct the Project

Infrastructure construction activity can produce economic benefits for a community in the form of employment opportunities, activity for local firms, and sales tax revenues for local jurisdictions. It may also lead to undesirable impacts, including access challenges to nearby businesses and other destinations, congestion and delays or pressure on alternative routes, air and material pollutants, and construction waste disposal needs. If the project site is in an active residential or commercial area, these impacts should be mitigated to the greatest possible extent.

Construction-related economic benefits

- *What opportunities and requirements exist for creating construction-related economic opportunities to residents and businesses?*

Communication considerations

- *How can we communicate construction schedules and anticipated disruptions to affected businesses and community members?*
- *What opportunities will we provide for community members to ask questions and share input before and during the construction period?*

Construction coordination

- *How can construction be scheduled to minimize net disruption to nearby businesses? Is it better to keep the street open, potentially extending the construction timeline, or close the street for a shorter period of time?*
- *How can we support businesses during the construction period?*
- *How can we maintain community mobility during construction?*

Worksheet 8: Project Construction

What opportunities and requirements exist for creating construction-related economic opportunities to residents and businesses?

What communication strategies will be implemented before and during construction?

What strategies will be implemented to streamline construction and minimize disruptive impacts on overburdened communities? What are the pros and cons of closing the street to shorten the construction cycle rather than seeking to maintain continuity of access? Who would benefit and be harmed by each approach?

What other strategies will be used to mitigate community disruption during the construction phase? How can we support affected businesses and maintain community mobility?

V. Learn

Project completion creates the opportunity for infrastructure owners to reflect on and learn from the experience. It is also a moment to capture information and establish plans for ongoing tracking of project outcomes.

Summary of Research Findings and Best Practices

This research report found that post-project community engagement and project outcome monitoring is generally lacking. Many organizations noted that once a project has finished, community members are no longer involved, and impact tracking is minimal and informal. While some larger organizations suggested that it would be helpful to create standardized, measurable ways for impact tracking across the state, many organizations, particularly those that are small or in rural areas, indicated that they do not have the financial or staffing resources to execute this kind of tracking and data analysis.

Evaluate Project Outcomes and Close the Loop with Affected Communities

- **Collect information to verify project outcomes, including feedback from communities.** It is important that a realistic approach is taken. Rigorous and defensible project outcome evaluation would require both pre- and post-project data collection. Direct impacts such as congestion relief or accident rates will be more readily available, and more readily attributed to the investment project than indirect impacts to regional mobility, dispersed environmental health exposures, or economic activity. Infrastructure owners should gather and learn from whatever data and qualitative inputs, including community observations, are available to them.
- **Impact evaluations should ideally be project-specific and co-designed with the community**. While it can sound appealing to apply a single set of criteria to assess project impacts, some interviewees suggested instead that community impact should be evaluated uniquely for each project because every project exists in a unique context. By including community members in the evaluation design process, the results can be more meaningful and relevant to the respective community.
- **Infrastructure owners should also engage communities, particularly representatives of overburdened communities, to verify positive project outcomes and learn from any negative experiences during construction and post-project completion.** It is important to

verify whether some communities experienced project benefits differently than others and to learn from community engagement successes and failures.

- **At minimum, infrastructure owners should close the loop with communities affected by the project and engaged in the project development process.** This creates an opportunity to report on project completion and to maintain relationships with community-based organizations and community members that will be valuable in future investment projects or other community development activities.

Module 9: Capture Data and Learnings

Learn from Engagement Efforts

The questions below will help infrastructure owners capture insights garnered through engagement efforts. Consider sharing these insights with the community members or groups that have been involved and ask if they have any additional feedback or takeaways. If possible, provide the contact information of a staff member whom community members can reach out to in the future.

- *Were communication, information gathering, and relationship objectives met? Why or why not?*
- *What strategies were most effective?*
- *Was the engagement approach adjusted over time? If so, why?*

Learn from Overall Project Implementation

Reviewing the design and construction phases of a freight improvement project allows infrastructure owners to capture valuable lessons learned, including successful strategies and areas for improvement. It is also helpful to learn from comparing actual ongoing outcomes to those that were expected, particularly if longitudinal data can be brought to bear.

CAPTURING FREIGHT SPECIFIC OUTCOMES

FMSIB encourages the longitudinal measurement of freight mobility, air, noise, congestion, safety, and other project-specific factors to determine the effectiveness of the project and the strategies deployed to maximize community benefit and minimize harms.

Construction Outcomes

- *Did predicted community impacts come to pass?*
- *What mitigation strategies were most effective to reduce construction impacts?*

Ongoing Outcomes

- *Did predicted community impacts come to pass?*
- *What community benefits were generated by the project? Who received these benefits?*
- *What mitigation strategies were most effective to minimize negative community impacts?*
- *What longitudinal data can be used to monitor community impacts?*

Worksheet 9: Reflections and Learning

Engagement Objectives

Contact information and summary notes about community partners and community members, including whether we have permission to contact them again in the future.

Construction Outcomes

Ongoing Community Outcomes

Appendix: Guidance for Compensating Participants

Providing compensation for focus group participants, steering committee members, or other community members is an important part of equitable community engagement. The Washington State Office of Equity's Community Compensation Guidelines[1] provide the following best practices for engagement compensation, including legal considerations and tax implications. This section summarizes some of the most important points from this guidance. For more information, see the full Community Compensation Guidelines report (external link).

Why Compensation is Important

Compensating community collaborators is a core practice of equitable engagement. It benefits projects and communities by:

- **Facilitating more equitable access to participation in engagement.** When we directly compensate participants, we demonstrate to community members that their input has value, and it helps people from different financial backgrounds to participate. This is central to ensuring that engagement reaches a more representative and/or intentional subset of the community, thereby strengthening the connection between the engagement findings and the community's lived experiences.
- **Building relationships that last beyond the project's end.** Compensation helps build sustainable relationships with individuals and community organizations, many of whom are being increasingly tapped for their input in projects

When and How Much to Compensate

- **Participation in a survey.** Compensation for survey participation entails compensating every survey participant rather than offering a raffle for a prize.
    - Recommended amount is $25 for one hour or less of time spent. Platforms like SurveyMonkey have options for a paid panel that compensates individuals who complete the survey.

[1] State of Washington Office of Equity. (2023). *Community Compensation Guidelines*. https://live-office-of-equity.pantheonsite.io/sites/default/files/2024-01/Community%20Compensation%20Guidelines%20-%20v1.1%20for%20Site%20Upload.pdf

- **Participation in an interview or focus group.** This can include online or in-person one-on-one interviews and group discussions.
    - Recommended amount is $25 for a one-time event of one hour or less. The easiest way to compensate participants for a one-time, low-barrier engagement is to give individuals a gift card after they complete the interview or focus group. Keep track of attendance at the focus group so attendees can be correctly compensated.
- **Providing feedback on a deliverable.** Deliverables at many stages of a project can benefit from community feedback. Common examples include having a community member or expert review the translation of project materials to ensure the translation reflects local use of the language or review a draft of a report.
    - Depending on the situation and the length of time the review takes, it may be best to ask for an invoice from the individual or group and treat this situation as a contract that includes a short scope of work and the expected number of hours to complete the task. This type of compensation is distinct from a "stipend" that may be earmarked for public agencies to use for workgroup members who have lived experience or are low-income.
- **Participation on a committee:** Compensation for committee participation is often offered hourly and can be provided both for time spent in committee meetings and time spent preparing and/or reviewing materials. *See below for additional guidance for agencies on compensating committee members.*
    - Recommended amount is $45 per meeting of one hour or less.

Guidance for Agencies on Compensating Committee Members

The Second Substitute Senate Bill (2SSB) 5793 (external link) states: "Subject to available funding, agencies may provide a stipend to individuals who are low income OR have lived experience to support their participation in class one groups when the agency determines such participation is desirable in order to implement the principles of equity described in RCW 43.06D.020 (external link), provided that the individuals are not otherwise compensated for their attendance at meetings."

The Washington State Office of Equity's Community Compensation Guidelines provides guidance for agencies who want to establish Class One (external link) groups, such as boards, commissions, task forces, committees, and workgroups. The page numbers below reference pages in the full report (external link).

- Eligible candidates for compensation serving on a workgroup must have lived experience (page 3) or qualify as low-income (page 4). Page 19 describes ways to verify a member's income eligibility.
- Additional guidance on page 6 focuses on keeping public records and working with undocumented individuals and youth volunteers.
- There is a ceiling (limit) of $200 per day on stipends but no limit on the total number or value of reimbursements that can be issued to a workgroup member over multiple days. If a workgroup member earns $600 or more in cumulative compensation in a calendar year, the agency or consultant must issue a 1099-MISC form (page 7).
- Page 31 provides reporting requirements for agencies, including information about this required reporting form (external link). Set up a system to track demographic and fiscal information before (page 16).

Working with Consultants

Many public agencies work closely with consultants when designing and building freight improvement projects. While public agencies are bound by restrictions and guidelines regarding compensation, as briefly outlined above, private consultants may be able to operate with more flexibility. If consultants cover compensation from their own expense budgets, they are exempt from the same reporting requirements and restrictions. However, consultants still must issue a 1099-MISC form if a workgroup member is paid more than $600 cumulatively in a calendar year and should still maintain thorough documentation of any compensation to community members.

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[1] Spokane RTC. (2022). "Equity Planning Framework." Equity-Planning-Framework_adopted_2022.12.08.pdf (srtc.org) (accessed July 2024).

[2] Spokane RTC. (2024). "SRTC Transportation Equity Working Group." Equity Working Group - SRTC (accessed July 2024). The charter is linked at the bottom of the webpage.

[3] U.S. Department of Energy. (2023). *About Community Benefits Plans*. https://www.energy.gov/infrastructure/about-community-benefits-plans#:~:text=As%20part%20of%20a%20whole,workforce%20training%2C%20and%20other%20economic

[4] Draklellis, E., & Richardson, J. (2023, September 25). *Community Benefits Plans: Driving Equitable Clean Energy Development.* RMI. https://rmi.org/community-benefits-plans-driving-equitable-clean-energy-development/

[5] Will County Center for Economic Development. (2017). *Community Friendly Freight Mobility Plan: Community Freight Development Best Practices and Checklist*. https://www.willcountyfreight.org/Home/FileId/3637