

Railroad Quiet Zone Public Engagement Plan



Communication and Public Engagement Objectives

- Public and elected officials have accurate information upon which to base opinions and decision-making.
- Authentic listening sessions and other public involvement mechanisms ensure that staff and decision-makers have heard all ideas.
- Citizen advisory panel members are comfortable with their role in the public engagement process
- Key stakeholders feel they have reasonable engagement opportunities.
- Awareness is increased about the preferred options for safety measures at the various crossings and the costs associated with the preferred safety options.

Communication and Public Engagement Strategies

- Identify key stakeholders, and communicate and engage with each group in ways that match needs and interests.
- Engage the Citizen Advisory Panel in identifying questions and communicating with their natural constituencies.
- Be clear up front on the purpose for engagement (how input will be used).
- Time outreach opportunities to coincide with the citizen panel recommendations
- Provide “big picture” context as well as detailed information for those interested in specific crossings
- Try to have staff present at presentations and discussion to ensure consistency of information
- Structure input so that it can be distilled into meaningful data for decision makers.
- Make it clear that the citizen panel’s recommendations are preliminary for public review and comment, and the panel will make a final set of recommendations to the staff and council after comments are received.
- Find opportunities to inform and engage broader audiences (e.g., community events, presentations to community groups, online input tools available via www.eugene-or.gov/quietzone); however, see comments about monolithic approaches, below.
- Create mechanisms to report back to stakeholders and the community on input received and decisions made.

Opportunities and Constraints

- Citizen advisory panel members represent a variety of constituencies that prefer to receive information in a variety of ways; monolithic outreach approaches will not work well.
- Citizen advisory panel members understandably are not comfortable representing an “official” point of view; rather, representatives prefer to approach outreach and messaging that will resonate with their constituencies.
- Engaging people early on helps people feel they aren’t being presented with a “done deal,” but the natural desire to respond to detailed information and recommendations requires input at a later stage in the process
- Railroad projects often take quite a bit of time to come to fruition; don’t promise quick results when it comes to the quiet zone.
- Care should be taken to not schedule public engagement activities during holidays.

Tactical Ideas

- Ask panel members to identify opportunities for meetings with key stakeholder groups
- Coordinate meetings for efficient use of staff resources.
- The project manager will continue one-on-one visits with directly affected residents and business owners
- Use web site to provide information to broader interest groups
- Schedule presentations with community groups such as neighborhood groups, downtown merchants, Downtown Rotary, League of Women Voters
- Hold a community open house, with scheduled presentations, maps and project fact sheets, a place where people could leave comments.
- Create a short video that could be taken to presentations and also placed on the project web site.
- Use social media (city has Facebook and Twitter) to send and receive information.
- Create an online survey and/or comment form to be placed on the project web site.
- Allow for written comments to be submitted.