NCDOT Issues guidance on Social Distancing during Public Meetings

We understand the concern and uncertainty over the COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak, and we are working to develop a Public Involvement plan that will be an alternative to a traditional public meeting or open house until further notice. The NCDOT takes the safety, health and well-being of our staff and the communities we serve very seriously.

That is why the NCDOT is introducing these three alternatives in lieu of face-to-face meetings. You can pick the alternative best suited for the project and your community’s needs.

1. Newsletter with pertinent information, along with a publicinput.com site developed so people can ask questions and submit feedback online or call or email a project manager.

2. Recorded video
   a. Develop public meeting materials
   b. Record video (PI staff, the Comms Officer, or the Project Manager)
      I. Introduce themselves
      II. Explain the project, where we are in the process, purpose of outreach, project schedule
      III. Describe the display boards, maps, and other materials
   c. Post video to the project webpage at ncdot.gov and/or publicinput.com. The Comms Office will promote it on social media.
      I. The public would provide feedback online (already common practice)
      II. Since most people have smart phones, we should be able to reach most citizens
      III. We can also offer to mail CD/DVD’s or hardcopies to citizens who do not have broadband access

3. Live, virtual public meeting using such apps as GotoMeeting, Facebook Live, ZOOM and WebEx.
   a. Public Involvement, project manager or consultant will host the live meeting, and we can set the ground rules for it.
   b. The public can ask questions via online during the live meeting/presentation.
   c. The recordings of these meetings can be posted online for those who were unable to watch or participate in the live session.
   d. Whether people watch it live or a recording of the session, they still will have an opportunity to submit feedback or ask questions via a publicinput.com site.

We will mail either the newsletter (first option), or a postcard announcing the other two options to those in the project area. Additionally, the Comms Office can promote the information on social media and, if necessary, via a news release. These alternatives will help keep projects moving toward development during this outbreak.

This plan has the following notes:
- The Federal Highway Administration has approved all three alternatives for a CE and an EA. (See attachment.) Options are being evaluated for EIS projects.
- The above alternatives cover state-funded projects as well.
- You may evaluate which alternative is needed on a project-by-project basis.
- The above alternatives do not prohibit holding a traditional face-to-face meeting when the coronavirus crisis passes.
If you have any questions about the plan or other ideas on how to hold alternative public meetings, please email Jamille Robbins at publicinvolvement1@ncdot.gov or call at 919.707.6085.

Christopher M. Werner, PE
Director of Technical Services
NC Department of Transportation
919.707.2540 office
cmwerner@ncdot.gov