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COVID-19 UPDATE AND NEWS

White House and Senate Reach Deal on \$2 Trillion Stimulus Package:

All – as you may know, the White House and Senate negotiators reached a deal last night on a \$2 trillion stimulus package package. A vote in the Senate is planned for today, and House Democrats are expected to support the deal with a vote to follow.

Details are slowly emerging -- the plan includes \$500 billion for loans and assistance to companies, including \$50 billion for loans to U.S. airlines, as well as state and local governments. It's also reported to have over \$350 billion to aid small businesses. For individuals, the package would provide direct payments to lower- and middle-income Americans of \$1,200 for each adult, as well as \$500 for each child. The bill would add \$600 per person per week onto the base maximum unemployment benefit for four months.

The bill includes \$150 billion to ramp up health care capacity. State and local governments would receive \$150 billion, with \$8 billion set aside for tribal governments. Any company receiving a government loan would be subject to a ban on stock buybacks through the term of the loan plus one additional year, and there would be limits on executive bonuses.

We'll get more information out to you as the bill text becomes available. We're also encouraged to hear that lawmakers are already talking about a 4th stimulus package, and specifically referring to infrastructure as a key component.

ACEC/NC Requests Clarification on "Stay-at Home" order by Mecklenburg County

Please Note: ACEC/NC is strongly advocating with the Governor and the State legislature to declare engineering an "essential service" should the State follow with a "stay-in-home" directive. We are also monitoring local public entities, but would advise that if you have contacts with your jurisdiction, please let them know how critical engineering services are to the local economy and combatting COVID-19. Feel free to utilize information we have published in our notifications to date. Thanks for your assistance.

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
 - Develop public meeting materials
 - Record video (PI staff, the Comms Officer, or the Project Manager)
 - Introduce themselves
 - Explain the project, where we are in the process, purpose of outreach, project schedule
 - Describe the display boards, maps, and other materials
 - Post video to the project webpage at ncdot.gov and/or publicinput.com. The Comms Office will promote it on social media.
 - The public would provide feedback online (already common practice)
 - Since most people have smart phones, we should be able to reach most citizens
 - 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.
 - Public Involvement, project manager or consultant will host the live meeting, and we can set the ground rules for it.
 - The public can ask questions via online during the live meeting/presentation.
 - The recordings of these meetings can be posted online for those who were unable to watch or participate in the live session.
 - 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.

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