

Canal Area Transportation Study Track II

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PLAN

Study background

In April 2002, the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC), the Metropolitan Planning Organization for New York City, Long Island, and the lower Hudson Valley, launched the Canal Area Transportation Study (CATS). This two-track study, conducted by NYMTC in conjunction with the agencies responsible for transportation infrastructure and services, stakeholders, and members of the general public, is designed to define solutions to problems in the Canal Street area.

Whereas the first phase (Track I) identified short-term, localized improvements, Track II will provide a more regional, medium and long-term view of the transportation issues affecting the area. The community outreach area for this phase has been expanded from Canal Street and its immediate environs to include other parts of the region that may be affected by study improvement options. A critical part of the success of CATS Track II will be an extensive and interactive community involvement program. This will help guide the Steering Committee, made up of representatives from national, state and local transportation and planning agencies, in their identification of improvements.

Purpose of community involvement

NYMTC and the study team are committed to engaging community members and other stakeholders in the outreach area in a continuing, inclusive, and productive dialogue. Extensive public participation will help ensure that issues and concerns of stakeholders and the public shape and inform the decisions and recommendations of the CATS Track II study. Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates, Inc. (HSH) will facilitate community involvement for this important second phase, which will help the study achieve its goals.

Goals of the community involvement plan

Successful realization of the community involvement plan will help develop a broad set of goals and strategies that will provide the basis for the improvements and solutions emerging from the CATS Track II study.

The goals of the community involvement effort are:

- To ensure that the *public is adequately informed* about the study and its implications for their communities.
- To convey NYMTC's and the study team's *commitment to community involvement*.
- To ensure that public *input influences recommendations and decisions* for the Canal Street area.

- To *build a consensus* between communities and agencies about issues of importance and workable solutions.
- To *create a shared vision* for transportation and land use improvements.

Objectives of the community involvement plan

Achieving the goals of the community involvement plan will require fulfillment of the following objectives:

- Creation of a *multi-faceted effort to advise the community* of the study progress and findings.
- *Meaningful dialogue* between a broad cross section of the population and the various agencies involved in the study.
- *Identification of the current transportation deficiencies* in the Canal Street area.
- *Community and agency commitment* to creating a workable vision for the future.
- *Identification of feasible solutions* to meet the area's needs.
- Provision of a *forum for community review* of alternative future scenarios and evaluation of findings.
- Creation of a *feedback mechanism* for the public to express issues and concerns.
- *Coordination with other studies* in the Canal Street area to avoid duplication of effort, share findings, exchange ideas, and build on successes.

Strategies & Techniques

The key to fulfilling the commitment to on-going meaningful community involvement is the fostering of communication between the public, the transportation agencies, and the study team. A variety of strategies and techniques will be employed to achieve the goals and objectives of the community involvement plan. Broadly, these strategies are to identify key groups and interests, enable face-to-face interaction, develop a comprehensive set of communication tools, and proactively publicize the study.

STRATEGY: Identify key groups and interests in the outreach area.

Key groups and interests will be identified early in the study to provide comprehensive representation of community issues and concerns. Particular attention will be given to finding those groups who traditionally do not participate in the transportation decision-making process

Techniques

- *Creation of a Stakeholder Committee.* Through active participation of its members, the Stakeholder Committee will provide an opportunity for community voices to be heard, helping to ensure that a wide range of opinions are considered throughout the study. A diverse cross-section of interests and organizations, representing constituents who may be impacted by any proposed improvements to the Canal Street area, have been invited to participate on the CATS II Stakeholder Committee including:
 - Elected officials (national, state, city, and Hudson county, NJ)
 - Community Boards (Manhattan, Brooklyn and Staten Island)
 - Business Improvement Districts
 - Chambers of Commerce
 - Auto Associations
 - Trucking Associations
 - Shipping Associations
 - Transportation Advocates
 - New York City Agencies
 - Uniformed Services
 - Community Organizations

- *Development of a mailing list* of up to 1500 organizations, interest groups, and residents for participation in public involvement activities. The study team will conduct research on the outreach area neighborhoods to identify important community leaders and organizations and encourage their participation in the study. The study team will also rely on input from the Stakeholder Committee, the Steering Committee, other studies in the area and local organizations to support this effort and enlarge the study mailing list.

STRATEGY: Enable face-to-face dialogue with the study team

Meetings, workshops, and open houses will give the public an opportunity to meet directly with the study team and help ensure that the community's opinions and concerns are being heard, understood, and addressed.

Techniques

- *Stakeholder Committee meetings* will provide an open forum for discussion, encourage interaction among key stakeholders, allow committee members to voice the issues and concerns of their represented constituencies to the project team, and give members information to take back to their constituencies. Up to six (6) Stakeholder Committee meetings will be convened during the study.

- *Joint meetings* with the Stakeholder and Steering Committee at major milestones will allow for public review and input on key decisions as they are made. This will provide an opportunity to influence decisions, promote changes where necessary, and help ensure public understanding of the study's recommendations.
- *Coordination meetings* with other organizations conducting studies in the Canal Street area will help avoid unnecessary duplication of effort and maximize the exchange of ideas and findings. Up to eight (8) meetings with groups such as the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC), the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA), and Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE) will be held.
- *Visioning workshops* will allow the general public to help identify problems for the Canal Street area. The workshops also will provide an opportunity for the project team to engage directly with the public. The result will be a dialogue to develop a full understanding of the current deficiencies, determine possible enhancements to the transportation system, and begin forging a consensus about a vision for the area. Two workshops will be held, in ADA compliant locations, one in the late afternoon and one in the early evening with a target of at least 200 participants.
- *Modeling workshops* will be facilitated to allow study participants to review and gain an understanding of the assumptions and the overall modeling procedures used to evaluate study improvement options. These workshops will help the public understand and keep them engaged in the process and provide a forum for the public to convey concerns. Two workshops will be held over the course of the study. The first will occur within the general timeframe of the visioning workshops to explain the process of analysis and forecasts. The second will be held near the conclusion of the study, where the study team will describe how the modeling process was applied in the overall evaluation of alternative scenarios.
- *Flexible small group meetings* will provide an opportunity for the study team to engage people and/or organizations who might not ordinarily participate in larger workshops. These meetings will be facilitated in smaller settings and/or involve the team attending community meetings already scheduled, initiating new meetings in the outreach area, or creating an informal meeting as an offshoot of another scheduled event.
- An *open house* meeting near the end of the study will educate the public on study findings and solicit feedback. This meeting will be scheduled from the late afternoon through early evening to allow for maximum participation. Board stations will be created, team members will be available for informal discussions, presentations will be given, and group discussions will be facilitated.

STRATEGY: Utilize a variety of communication tools

Recognizing the cultural, linguistic, and economic diversity of the outreach area, several communication tools will be used to ensure dissemination of information to the largest possible portion of the population.

Techniques

- *Fact sheets* will be developed for stakeholders and the public at the beginning, mid-point and end of the study. These facts sheets will describe the purpose, process, progress, and findings of the CATS Track II study. They will be available on the study Web site and at community meetings.
- A *study Web site* will become a focal point for the public and the media. The site will explain the CATS Track II study, provide up-to-date information and allow site visitors to provide comments to the study team. The web site will be updated regularly with current information and will include community involvement materials, the community involvement plan, meeting presentations, handouts, and summaries, and a calendar of events.
- *Translation services* will be available to allow the large segment of the outreach area's population, who do not speak English fluently, to engage in the community involvement process. Two Chinese dialect translations will be provided, if needed, at both visioning workshops, up to five of the small group meetings, and the final open house.
- *Graphical visual aides* including maps, graphics, slide presentations, and animations will further enhance communication to assist the public and stakeholders in understanding the proposals being put forward by the study team.
- *Handouts* will be distributed to participants at meetings and workshops. These handouts will include discussion topics, study updates and copies of presentation materials.

STRATEGY: Create a proactive program to publicize meetings and encourage participation

Integral to achieving public participation in the study will be a well-designed and effective media campaign to publicize the study and generate interest in its outcome among the public.

Techniques

- A *calendar of events* distributed at meetings and workshops, and on the study Web site will inform the public of opportunities to participate in the study.
- A *mailing list* will be used to publicize community meetings, and disseminate study information to the public. The list will contain approximately 1500 names and will include telephone, fax, and e-mail contact information. In addition, community organizations in the area will be used as a conduit for distributing information about the study to their members.
- A *media list* of local and regional outlets will be maintained by NYMTC to keep the media apprised of the study's progress and to provide information to the public. This effort will include press releases and special invitations to attend community events.

- *Email marketing* will be a way to send information about the study and upcoming events to those individuals who have indicated a preference for receiving such information electronically. Special care will be taken to protect the online privacy of all participants.

Preliminary Calendar of Events

2004	2005	2006	2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of Stakeholders • Coordination Meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder Committee Meetings • Joint Stakeholder and Steering Committee Meeting • Coordination Meetings • Two Visioning Workshops • First Modeling Workshop • Small group meetings • Fact Sheet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder Committee Meetings • Joint Stakeholder and Steering Committee Meeting • Coordination Meetings • Small group meetings • Second Modeling Workshop • Fact Sheet • Open House 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fact Sheet • Final plan
Development of mailing list (ongoing 2004-2007)			
Web site launch and maintenance (ongoing 2005-2007)			

All dates are TBD.

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