

CATS II Community Involvement Plan

Updated in April 2010

NYMTC and the study team remain committed to engaging community members and other stakeholders in the outreach area in a continuing, inclusive, and productive dialogue. Extensive public participation helps ensure that issues and concerns of stakeholders and the public shape and inform the decisions and recommendations of 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 corridor.
- 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.

Achieving the goals of the community involvement plan requires the 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 corridor.
- *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.

A variety of strategies and techniques have been employed over the course of Track II to achieve the goals and objectives of the community involvement plan. Broadly, these strategies identify key groups and interests, enable face-to-face interaction, develop a comprehensive set of communication tools, and publicize the study.

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

Key groups and interests are identified early in the study to provide comprehensive representation of community issues and concerns. Particular attention is 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 provides an opportunity for community voices to be heard, helping to ensure that a wide range of opinions were 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, are 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 organizations, interest groups, and residents for participation in public involvement activities. Research on the outreach area neighborhoods identifies important community leaders and organizations and encourages their participation in the study. The study team relies 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 give the public opportunities to meet directly with the study team and help to ensure that the community's opinions and concerns are being heard, understood, and addressed.

Techniques

- *Stakeholder Committee meetings* 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.
- *Coordination meetings* with other organizations conducting studies in the Canal Street area help avoid unnecessary duplication of effort and maximize the exchange of ideas and findings. Meetings with groups such as the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC), the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA), and Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE) are part of this effort.
- *Visioning workshops* allow the general public to help identify problems for the Canal Street corridor. The workshops also provide an opportunity for the project team to engage directly with the public. The result is 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.
- *Alternative scenario and modeling workshops* allow study participants to review and gain an understanding of the assumptions and the overall modeling procedures as well as study improvement options. These workshops help the public understand and keep them engaged in the process, and provide a forum for them to convey concerns.
- *Flexible small group meetings* provide an opportunity for the study team to engage people and/or organizations who might not ordinarily participate in larger workshops. These meetings are facilitated in smaller settings and involve the team attending community meetings already scheduled, or initiating new meetings in the outreach area.
- An *open house* meeting near the end of the study educates the public on study findings and solicits feedback. This meeting is envisioned to be scheduled from the late afternoon through early evening to allow for maximum participation. It is expected to include board stations where team members are available for informal discussions, a formal presentation, and facilitated group discussions.

Strategy: Develop a variety of communication tools

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

Techniques

- *A fact sheet* for stakeholders and the public at the beginning of the study. The fact sheet describes the purpose and process of the CATS Track II study. It is available on the study Web site and at community meetings.
- *A study Web site* as a focal point for the public and the media. The site explains the CATS Track II study, provides up-to-date information and allows site visitors to provide comments to the study team. The web site is updated with current information and includes community involvement materials, the community involvement plan, meeting presentations, handouts, and summaries, and a calendar of events.
- *Translation services* are 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.
- *Graphical visual aids* including maps, graphics, slide presentations, and animations are used to further enhance communication to assist the public and stakeholders in understanding the proposals being put forward by the study team.
- *Handouts* are distributed to participants at meetings and workshops. These handouts include discussion topics, study updates and copies of presentation materials.

Strategy: Create a program to publicize meetings and encourage participation

Integral to achieving public participation in the study is 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* available at meetings and workshops, and on the study Web site informs the public of opportunities to participate in the study.
- *A mailing list* is used to publicize community meetings, and disseminate study information to the public.
- *A media list* of local and regional outlets is maintained by NYMTC to keep the media apprised of the study's progress and to provide information to the public.

Email marketing is a way to send information about the study and upcoming events to those individuals who have indicated a preference for receiving such information electronically.

III-1 Community Workshops

A series of three community meetings for the Canal Area Transportation Study Track II (CATS II) provides the community an opportunity to provide input to the study team regarding the

vision for Canal Street, the study's Guiding Principles, relevant concerns to be addressed, and potential improvement options.

Attendees have the opportunity at the beginning of each meeting, to interact with the study team and review board stations covering the following topics:

- Study Overview
- Physical Characteristics
- Vehicular Traffic – Study Area
- Safety
- Canal Street – Main Street and Regional Link
- Land Use, Population and Employment
- Transit Service
- Parking
- Neighborhood and Community Places
- CATS Track I Accomplishments
- Preliminary Traffic Volume Flow Maps

The study team presents the draft Guiding Principles to the community and asks attendees for input, noting that public input is important in the development of these principles. These principles serve two main purposes –identify improvement scenarios to be progressed forward and then assist in the evaluation of these scenarios. The draft Guiding Principles are built on previous community input and the values and themes that have guided other related studies. The guiding principles are organized into the following five themes: quality of life, accessibility, mobility, safety, and implementability. They are refined based on the feedback received at the community workshops.

The workshops also involve a presentation on Neighborhood and Community Places that focuses on five main subjects:

- Neighborhood Character
- Neighborhood Connections
- “Architecture” of the Community Space
- Canal Street Character
- Safety and Comfort

Facilitated group discussion identifies numerous issues, concerns, and suggestions. The discussion is guided by asking attendees the following questions:

- What aspects of Canal Street work well and why? In other words, what would you like to preserve?
- Changes on Canal Street may have an impact on the regional transportation system. Let's consider the greater study area. What is working well in this larger region? In the evaluation of possible alternatives, what regional issues does the study need to take into account?

- What do you like and dislike about changes that are happening in the Canal Street area? What has gotten better, and what has gotten worse? How do you think these changes have impacted the region?
- Do you agree with the problems the study team identified? Are there others that we missed? Do you have different perspectives of the problems that we've presented?
- What long-term future do you currently foresee for the area?
- What would you like to see as part of NYCDOT's Canal Street reconstruction project?
- Are there changes to the pattern of development, such as land use/zoning, that you feel would improve the study area?

A summary of the discussions and feedback is made available at the NYMTC CATS website. The guidance received from the workshops is used throughout the study process in the development and evaluation of alternative improvements.

III-2 Community Open House

A public open house is conducted to educate the public on the findings, and listen to their feedback. This open house is scheduled for several hours from late afternoon through early evening to maximize community participation. The feedback is used in the formulation of recommendations. A summary of the feedback received at the Open House is prepared.