

## 5.0 Agency Coordination and Public Involvement

This chapter summarizes the framework for the outreach tools, methods and engagement opportunities developed for the I-95 Access Improvements Project. Documenting these activities is required by NEPA. It also documents compliance with other applicable federal rules and regulations, including Executive Order 12898, “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations,” and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Transparent two-way communication between a project sponsor, resource agencies and the public improves a project’s development and overall design and allows public input on a wide range of issues.

### 5.1 AGENCY COORDINATION

The I-95 Access Improvements EA is being developed in accordance with NEPA and the Maryland Streamlined Environmental and Regulatory Process, including coordination with federal, state, and local regulatory agencies. Outreach to these agencies has primarily been through regular Interagency Review Meetings, correspondence, and coordination.

The resource agencies that attend the Interagency Review Meetings typically include:

- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT)
- Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE)
- United States Environmental Protection Agency USEPA (Region 3)
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- United States Coast Guard (USCG)
- Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MDNR)
- Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE)
- Maryland Historical Trust (MHT)

Table 5-1 provides the dates and main presentation topic for Interagency Review Meetings (IRM) that were held to date.

**Table 5-1: Interagency Coordination Meetings**

Meeting Date	Topics of Discussion
10/19/16	IRM Presentation: Project team presented Element Options
4/19/17	IRM Presentation: Project team presented Alignment Alternatives

MDTA and BCDOT also have a standing, monthly meeting with FHWA, the federal lead agency. These regular meetings facilitate the exchange of information between the FHWA, MDTA, and BCDOT and expedite the resolution of any issues that may arise.

## **5.2 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM**

The purpose of a public involvement program is to allow all members of the public (residents, elected officials, government agencies, environmental groups, large and small businesses, media, and non-governmental organizations) to voice any questions/comments/concerns they may have on the proposed action within the specific study area throughout the NEPA process. Public involvement also provides the community the opportunity to become informed on the various elements within the project study area that are being considered, and allows the engineers and planning professionals to become more educated on the public's views and position on the proposed action. The public involvement plan provides a process and the tools to allow stakeholders and the larger public to engage in meaningful ways, giving feedback and input to inform the transportation decision-making process that can be responsive to varying needs within the constraints of budget and technical realities.

### **Outreach Plan**

Various outreach activities were conducted to increase the awareness of the project throughout the Baltimore City region, provide up-to-date project information, as well as create relationships, opportunities, and connections to sustain project feedback. Various materials, events, meetings, and gatherings were also held to obtain a better understanding and appreciation of the neighborhoods. More detailed descriptions of the outreach items are provided below.

### **Project Publications**

A handout/brochure was developed to provide attendees information about the Open House meetings held November 2, 2016 and November 5, 2016. The handout/brochure provided the following:

- What information they could expect to obtain from the meeting,
- Need for the study,
- What is NEPA,
- Project elements map,
- Project study schedule,
- Next steps after the open house meeting,
- Point of contact for any questions, comments and or concerns,
- Project website link,
- and other ongoing efforts within/near the project study area.

### **Virtual Meeting**

MDTA and Baltimore City DOT posted a virtual meeting on MDTA's website ([http://www.mdtamaryland.gov/Capital Projects/I-95 Access Study/Virtual Meeting.html](http://www.mdtamaryland.gov/Capital%20Projects/I-95%20Access%20Study/Virtual%20Meeting.html)) on January 6, 2017, for those who could not attend the two public open houses in November 2016. The virtual meeting shows seven brief videos of the display boards that were at the open houses with a voiceover explaining each one. They highlight the various elements that were being proposed for the transportation improvements to support existing and planned development in the Port Covington area. The material remains on the website and is still available to the public.

## **I-95 Access Improvements from Caton Avenue to the Fort McHenry Tunnel Environmental Assessment**

### **Media Outreach**

MDTA and Baltimore City DOT used a variety of media outlets to inform the community about upcoming open houses and general information regarding the I-95 Access Improvements Project. Ads were printed in various newspapers (Baltimore Sun, Baltimore Times, and the Afro) informing interested parties of the Open House Meetings throughout the City. MDTA, Baltimore City DOT Planning and the I-95 Access Improvements Project webpages presented the Open House meeting information. Baltimore Metropolitan Council of Governments (BMC) and Baltimore Regional Transportation Board (BRTB) distributed the meeting flyer internally, and gave verbal notice of Open House meetings at their meetings. Social media pages (Twitter and Facebook) for MDTA and Baltimore City DOT posted the meeting flyer. The meeting announcements for the Open Houses provided the reader the location, time, brief reason for the meeting, responsible parties for the study, where to obtain more information and or who to contact with further questions/comments.

### **Project Communications and In-field Outreach**

To promote the November Open House series flyers were distributed throughout the project study area corridor neighborhoods (Sharp-Leadenhall, Locust Point, Federal Hill, Riverside, South Baltimore, Cherry Hill, and Westport) with focus on schools, grocery stores, places of worship, recreation centers, museums, libraries, health care centers, and senior centers. In addition, 12,731 postcards were sent to residences within and near the project area neighborhoods (Sharp-Leadenhall, Locust Point, Federal Hill, Riverside, South Baltimore, Cherry Hill, and Westport).

### **Business/Stakeholder Meetings & Outreach/Project Briefings and Presentations**

MDTA and BCDOT meet with businesses, special interest groups, and governmental agencies in an effort to provide project updates, as well as to solicit comments. As new project details and updates become available, meetings are scheduled with these entities and coordinated. These are listed in Table 5-2 below.

**Table 5-2: Outreach Meetings and Presentations**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Presentation</b>	<b>Discussion</b>
11/15/16	ASHE Project Presentation	Project Overview and Element Options
11/22/16	Baltimore Regional Transportation Board Meeting	Project Overview and Element Options
1/11/17	Greater Baltimore Committee's Transportation and Mobility Committee Presentation	Project Overview and Element Options
1/11/17	Locust Point Civic Association	Project Overview
2/6/17	Baltimore City Council President Jack Young Presentation	Project Overview and Element Options

### **Project Webpage**

The I-95 Access Improvements website ([http://www.mdtamaryland.gov/Capital\\_Projects/I-95\\_Access\\_Study/Home.html](http://www.mdtamaryland.gov/Capital_Projects/I-95_Access_Study/Home.html)) provides the most up-to-date information on the project and announces any upcoming meetings and events. The website includes: downloadable study area map, no-build key map, summary of elements and options, details of Elements A – Element G, meeting information, contact information, and access to other projects in the study area.

### **5.3 OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC INPUT**

#### **Public Open House Meetings – November 2016**

The purpose of the Open House meetings was to allow the public the opportunity to learn and discuss the proposed transportation improvements being reviewed in the I-95 Access Improvements Study. Two Open House Meetings were held in neighborhoods that are near the project study corridor. The first meeting was held November 2, 2016 from 6:00pm – 8:00pm at Dr. Carter G. Woodson Elementary/Middle School at 2501 Seabury Road Baltimore, MD 21225, and the second meeting was held November 5, 2016 from 10:00am – 12:00pm at the National Federation of the Blind at 200 East Wells Street Baltimore, MD 21230. The venues are in the study corridor and accommodate at least 150 people. Both facilities were compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines and interpretation services were available upon request. Parking was offered via on-street, parking lots, and a parking garage. There were also opportunities to solicit input and feedback from low-income, minority, and Title VI populations.

A total of 43 people attended the Open House meetings: 19 people attended the November 2, 2016 meeting and 24 people attended the November 5, 2016 meeting. Attendees were provided a handout on the need for the study, what is NEPA and why is NEPA needed for this project, project elements being considered, the study schedule, next steps to come, and where to reach someone with any questions, comments, and or concerns. Eight text boards were presented at the Open House meetings that provided information on: purpose and need, overview of the study, timeline/schedule, ongoing environmental studies, how to stay connected and study information. Eleven element boards were present at the Open House meetings that provided information on the different elements being considered.

The comments were generally focused on: the NEPA process, including the types of analyses being conducted; project timeline; the traffic analysis; and, how MDTA and BCDOT would select the Preferred Alternative from the various options for each element. Another recurring comment or question was whether or not the project would have an impact on the existing I-395 / Hanover Street movement. Nearly all attendees were adamant that the Hanover Street ramp not be removed completely.

#### **Grassroots Outreach**

Over the course of the Preliminary Design, Planning and Analysis Phase, the MDTA/BCDOT project team informed residents and stakeholders about the project via door-to-door outreach, community meetings, and neighborhood association meetings.

#### **Public Hearings**

After the release of this EA, two public hearings will be held to present the findings of the EA and to obtain input and comments from the community. All comments received during the meeting and established public comment period will be considered, and all substantive comments will be addressed.