



RESEARCH SERVICES

OFFICE OF POLICY ANALYSIS,
RESEARCH & INNOVATION

TECHNICAL SUMMARY

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PROJECT COST:

\$698,000

Mn/DOT CONTRIBUTION:

\$111,920

Putting Research into Practice: Training to Support "Hear Every Voice"

What Was the Need?

Both the need for sustainable transportation system management and the public's insistence on being involved in transportation-related decisions have continued to increase over the years. In 1999, Mn/DOT produced the highly acclaimed *Hear Every Voice* handbook to guide employees' public involvement efforts. There was, however, still a need to translate the guidance of this handbook into best practices and tools that could be readily incorporated into everyday practices and Mn/DOT operations.

In 2006, Mn/DOT updated *Hear Every Voice* to re-energize the public involvement initiative and confirm compliance with [federal regulations](#). To fully implement the updated guidance, the contents of the handbook needed to be communicated and accessible to Mn/DOT staff and transportation partners.

What Was Our Goal?

The goal of this project was to design, develop, deploy and evaluate a training program to help implement Mn/DOT's public involvement process based on the *Hear Every Voice* handbook.

What Did We Implement?

Investigators used information from the updated *Hear Every Voice* and Mn/DOT Project 2006-069, "Collaborative Research Approach for Managing Conflict & Consensus Building Pilot Project," which in turn leveraged past Mn/DOT research, such as [Report 2006-24](#). Investigators used a curriculum developed by the [International Association of Public Participation](#) as the foundation for the core introductory course developed for this project.

How Did We Do It?

Investigators worked with a small initiative team and a public participation advisory group consisting of 38 representatives of Mn/DOT's divisions, districts, and key offices and functional areas to identify and prioritize the needs and interests regarding training and guidance within Mn/DOT. Based on this assessment, investigators created materials for 13 training sessions aimed at different audiences and covering different topics. Pilot training sessions were then conducted by an IAP2 certified master trainer.

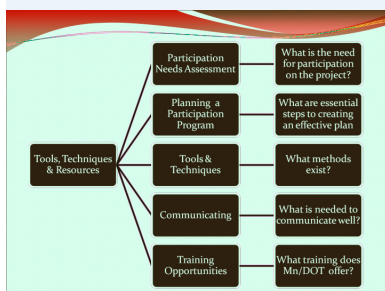
The scope of the project evolved to include usability tests of Mn/DOT's public involvement website. Investigators invited staff to test the functionality of the site, providing them with a series of questions, identifying whether users were able to find information quickly and easily and whether the site was useful to Mn/DOT project managers.

Finally, in response to Mn/DOT's increased focus on working effectively with businesses, investigators developed a series of presentation tools and peer discussions to support the emergent priority of minimizing construction impacts on small businesses.

What Was the Impact?

The 13 classes created for this project, each with its own curriculum, agenda and sup-

Investigators developed and administered a training curriculum on the core principles of Mn/DOT's public involvement guidance, designed to assist employees in the planning, implementation and evaluation of public and stakeholder participation.



One course presents Mn/DOT managers with a toolbox of public involvement techniques.

“The update to Hear Every Voice and the increased visibility provided by the training curriculum make a dramatic difference in enabling people to better understand and become better versed in the different tools, techniques and approaches available.”

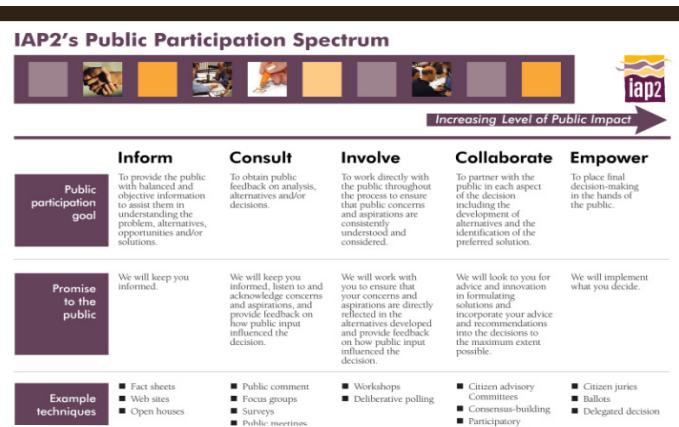
—Scott Bradley,
Director of
Context Sensitive
Design/Solutions,
Mn/DOT Engineering
Services Division

“Developing the ‘Minimizing Impacts to Small Businesses’ materials met an immediate need, providing Mn/DOT and the general public with a reference tool to answer the question ‘How?’ when it comes to public engagement.”

—Vanessa Levingston,
Public Involvement
Consultant, Mn/DOT
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International Association of Public Participation principles were used in the development of the Hear Every Voice training materials.

porting tools, were designed to support employees in the planning, implementation, evaluation and management of public and stakeholder participation. The following courses were delivered during more than 160 hours of face-to-face training sessions:

- *Introduction to Hear Every Voice.* Introduced the new “Hear Every Voice II” program, tools and benefits of the initiative.
- *Stop the Pain and Increase the Gain: Public Participation at Mn/DOT.* Covered the foundational principles of public participation and stakeholder consultation.
- *Effective Public Participation within Mn/DOT: Core Curriculum Overview.* Directed toward upper management and focused on understanding the training and support needs of personnel charged with engaging the public.
- *How to Determine the Need for and Level of Participation.* Designed to answer questions regarding the level of participation required and understanding of the key indicators that define risk within the public participation context.
- *How to Design an Effective Participation Plan within a Project.* Focused on learning the best practices for developing an engagement plan and applying them to case studies.
- *Overview and Selection of Participation Tools and Techniques.* Introduced more than 40 best practices tools and techniques with guidance for selecting the most appropriate technique to meet public participation objectives.

In addition, two peer exchanges were held based on the “Minimizing Impacts to Small Businesses” material. Thirty-five people attended the discussion and 108 people participated through remote online technology. This project also led to the organization and consolidation of tools and resources on Mn/DOT’s [public involvement website](http://www.lrrb.org/PDF/201033.pdf). From this site, transportation employees, stakeholders and community partners can now access Mn/DOT’s policies, the *Hear Every Voice II* handbook, outlines and handouts from past trainings, links to webinars and other resources.

What’s Next?

With a dedicated resource in place, Vanessa Levingston, Mn/DOT’s public involvement consultant and manager of the Hear Every Voice initiative, will continue to offer training for employees and stakeholders with the possibility of offering more courses on demand or through webinars. Investigators have provided a proposed schedule of course offerings for the remainder of 2010 and 2011.

This Technical Summary pertains to Report 2010-33, “Hear Every Voice Public Engagement Initiative,” published July 2010. The guide can be accessed at <http://www.lrrb.org/PDF/201033.pdf>.

Mn/DOT research leveraged for this project includes Mn/DOT Report 2006-24, “Developing a Simple System for Public Involvement Conflict Management,” which can be found at <http://www.lrrb.org/PDF/200624.pdf>. For information regarding Mn/DOT’s public involvement efforts and upcoming trainings, see <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/planning/publicinvolvement>.