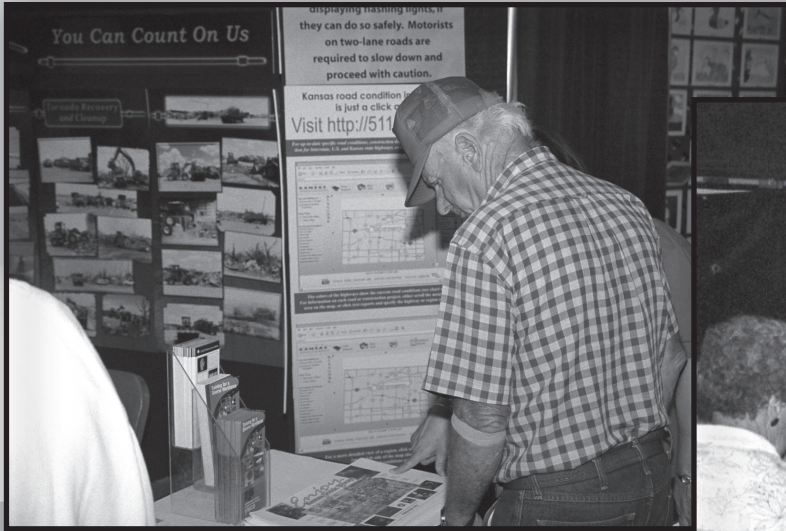


Public Involvement



PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

KDOT's Public Involvement Program was formally created in 1997, although KDOT has undertaken public involvement activities for many years prior to formalizing the process. The agency's public involvement plan, "Sharing the Future- Public Involvement in the Kansas Transportation System," was updated in May 2022. It provides policy direction and guidance for integrating public involvement in the agency's decision-making processes at the district and headquarters levels. KDOT's "Sharing the Future- Public Involvement in the Kansas Transportation System" document may be viewed online at:

<https://www.ksdot.gov/Assets/wwwksdotorg/bureaus/burTransPlan/pdf/SharingtheFuture.pdf>.

In the past, KDOT has updated the plan to reflect activities such as the approval of the statewide Kansas Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). For more information about the LRTP, including a link to the plan, refer to the Project Selection narrative that follows this discussion. The LRTP provides overall policy direction for KDOT and transportation programs within the State. KDOT updated the LRTP in May 2021 and recommended adding a virtual engagement process to all public involvement activities. The use of virtual public involvement (VPI) and virtual meetings

helped KDOT stay committed to offering opportunities to gain meaningful input and to advance equity in transportation.

-PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT MISSION & PROGRAM-

Today, people expect to have opportunities for meaningful participation in the kinds of decisions that affect their lives. To meet this challenge, KDOT must develop lasting relationships with stakeholders, and partner with them to provide Kansas a transportation system of which it can be proud and meets its needs. The mission of the Public Involvement Program is to foster effective two-way communication, facilitate citizen participation, and help KDOT and its customers work together to provide a statewide transportation system that meets the needs of Kansas.

A senior leader and Public Involvement Specialists oversee public involvement, guide the program statewide, and assist staff with public involvement for planning activities and project development. They also help address other agency community engagement needs. The program is strengthened by a district public affairs manager in each of the agency's six districts

(https://www.ksdot.gov/district_areas.asp), along with a public affairs manager located in the Wichita Metro Office and Kansas City Metro Office. The public affairs managers focus on proactive communication activities at the local and regional level. In addition, public affairs managers assist with public involvement for construction and maintenance projects, working with local news media, and fostering relationships with citizens and businesses. The public affairs manager also serves as a liaison with elected officials and local government staff to enhance KDOT's relationships with local governments and legislators.

-PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PURPOSE-

Public involvement can be used anytime there is a need to improve decisions, projects or programs. Public involvement also helps KDOT staff make informed decisions that address the interests, concerns, and issues of populations potentially affected by transportation projects. Public involvement can help identify and clarify important issues, help identify environmental constraints and possible mitigation, and help bring out potentially helpful ideas. Incorporating public input with current engineering criteria and a variety of other factors can provide a basis on which to develop or select alternatives. Thus, the public's participation contributes to the larger body of knowledge used to help make planning, programming, design, and construction decisions. KDOT includes pub-

lic involvement in its transportation planning and programming processes to provide:

- Early, continuous, and proactive public involvement opportunities throughout the transportation planning and programming process;
- Timely and complete information about transportation issues and processes to any interested citizens and groups affected by transportation plans, programs, and projects;
- In accordance with the Kansas Open Records Act, full public access to key decisions and reasonable public access to technical and policy information used in the development of the plan and Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP);
- Adequate public notice of public involvement activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including, but not limited to action on the plan and STIP;
- A process for demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input during the planning and program development process;
- A process for seeking out and considering the needs of traditionally underserved populations;
- Periodic review of the public involvement process so that the process provides full and open access to all and revision of the process as necessary.

Additionally, KDOT's public involvement efforts will support environmental justice while trying to balance public impacts, safety, design, costs, and the overall benefit on a regional or state level. (More resources about public involvement and environmental justice are available from FHWA at the following link <https://highways.dot.gov/>.)

-LOCAL CONSULTATION & PROJECT SELECTION-

The foundation of the Local Consult process is built on KDOT listening to Kansans. KDOT has used Local Consult multiple times in the past as an opportunity to obtain input on transportation priorities across the state. For the first time, Local Consult was written into the 2020 Eisenhower Legacy Transportation Program (IKE) legislation and is required outreach.

The process begins with regional meetings across the state (in-person and/or virtual) where KDOT consults with a wide range of stakeholders to get input on project priorities in each of KDOT's six districts. KDOT staff provides information on KDOT's current plans and programs. Local officials will be asked if they are aware of other needs on or off the state highway system. An attempt will be made to determine the priority of these needs from a regional perspective and what funding programs might be available to address needs. Prior to or following these regional meetings, local officials may be asked to prepare written comments regarding the

transportation needs affecting their community. These comments will be compiled by KDOT so decision-makers have ready access to local concerns. Additionally, opportunities for comments by local officials or others will also be provided through mail or email.

After the regional meetings, district staff will assign a local consult score from 1 to 20 for each modernization and from 1 to 25 for each expansion project (with 20 or 25 being best respectively) based on regional support, perceived safety, and system connectivity benefits. The scores are subjective and will be based on feedback from local officials and the District staff's firsthand knowledge of the state highways in their Districts.

The scores that come out of the Local Consult meetings factor into the project selection process. The weight of specific project selection factors (engineering data, local consult, and economic impact) varies by the type of project work being done. See the Project Selection Criteria narrative for the full discussion of these factors.

After the scores for modernization and expansion projects are calculated, maps and tables illustrating the results statewide and by region are developed and shared with stakeholders who are given an opportunity to provide additional comments. Once those additional comments are considered, KDOT produces a list of high priority projects by district and announces project pipelines to communities.

District and headquarters staff will meet with local officials to discuss a likely range of available funding and how the funding correlates to the scope and phasing of their high priority projects. Local officials will be asked to attempt to reach consensus on the scope of improvement for high priority projects in their region. As with earlier Local Consult efforts, opportunities will be provided to submit comments to KDOT staff by email or letter. This input will be considered by KDOT along with other factors including previous investments and commitments, local financial and political support, roadway continuity, and impacts to transportation in the state and region when making final selections.

Construction pipeline announcements will be widely publicized and KDOT officials will make efforts to contact local officials to discuss why projects in their area were or were not selected. Efforts will be made to discuss how project scope, local support or alternative financing could improve the chances for future selection.

Traditionally, KDOT has only reached out to LPAs and Kansas citizens with local consult meetings. However, KDOT is looking at ways to involve the DOD to ensure coordination in meeting the needs for military forces utilizing Kansas roadways and KDOT is in the initiation stage of developing a planning process that considers the needs of Federal Lands Highways projects in Kansas.

The next local consult meetings are scheduled for the fall of 2023. The projects of the IKE program may be viewed online at the following link <https://ike.ksdot.gov/>.

For questions about local consult and KDOT's Public Involvement contact:

Kansas Department of Transportation
Vanessa Lamoreaux
700 Harrison, 2nd Floor West
Topeka, Kansas 66603-3754
(785) 296-7449