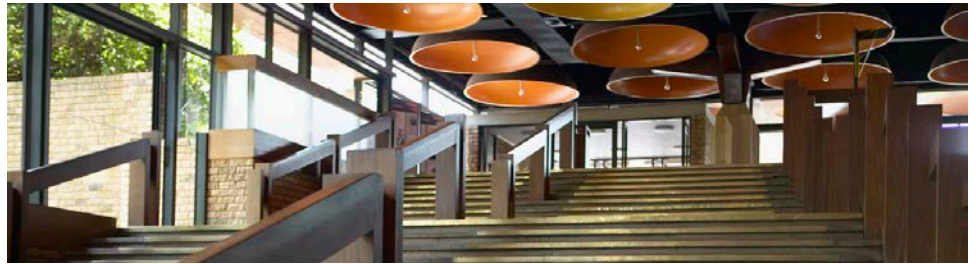


Case-in-Point 2015



Structured Approaches to Public Consultation for Large Infrastructure Projects

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Abstract

Large infrastructure projects that encompass a variety of different stakeholders can create an environment where traditional consultations methods often fall short on achieving their desired results. Using common engagement strategies, such as open houses, do little to address the different groups of stakeholders that are affected on different scales. Often large infrastructure projects rely on a broadcast approach that is revolved around infrequent large public sessions. It is important to recognize that projects can have varying degrees of effects on different groups and individuals. Consultation strategies should be framed around addressing the different groups according to what the effect of the project is on them.

Key Words

- Public Consultation
- Infrastructure
- Engagement
- Tiered Approach
- Stakeholders

The tiered approach to public consultation is based on identifying different stakeholder groups. Once groups have been identified, consultation strategies can be formed to ensure that each group is properly addressed. Groups with more severe effects require additional dialog and outreach to ensure they are included in the discussion from the onset of the project. Groups with less direct effects can be consulted with in more traditional means. The overall objective of this structure is to ensure transparency, diminish stakeholder opposition, and keep constant lines of communication open between residents and developments in the project. Planners, developers, politicians, and civil servants alike can benefit from taking generate a structured approach to consultation.



Introduction

Aside from the legal requirements, many administrations pay little attention to stakeholders engagement

Public engagement is a valuable tool for any type of planning process and in most cases is required by law. A common characteristic of the regulatory frameworks regarding planning processes and public consultation is the vague nature of the legal requirements. They are open to interpretation and often result in a complete lack of communication, transparency and collaboration with the general public. Holding a single open house, a method commonly used for transport planning in many jurisdictions, is the resulting engagement strategy. . Aside from the legal requirements, many administrations pay little attention to stakeholder engagement, because they believe professionals alone are best reserved to make this decisions (Cascetta & Pagliara, 2013). Public consultation in general should prioritize identifying and incorporating stakeholder concerns, needs, and values into the decision making process

(Cascetta & Pagliara, 2013). It functions as a two-way communication process that provides a mechanism for exchanging information and promoting stakeholder development with the project team and formal decision makers (Cascetta & Pagliara, 2013). Often stakeholders and the general public feel that the adopted engagement process is not meaningful because the project wasn't communicated clearly, project details were not easily absorbable and their involvement does not have the ability to influence decisions, and (de Luca).

Undertaking a consultation for a large infrastructure project can seem like a daunting task. Some common challenges include poor organization, issues of stakeholder equity, transparency, and accountability. Successful consultation strategies must be conscious of these potential issues and be structured in a manner that mitigates them as best possible

every project there is a degree of varied interest between stakeholders, whether the degree of interest is in a specific subject or different interests altogether. Individuals who are impacted on a more direct manner may feel entitled to a higher level of consultation (Toews, 2013).

Large infrastructure and transportation projects are often a public sector undertaking or feature a large private sector entity. Such groups can be cautious about public opinion regarding details of the project. Ensuring that stakeholders lack suspicious beliefs toward project transparency can eliminate potential controversy. Finally, these types of projects are typically funded through tax dollars and therefore subject to public scrutiny. Communicating project details to each tier of stakeholders gives them the ability to generate their own recollection of how they were engaged with and prevent feelings of objection to the project (Toews, 2013).

achieves this by identifying the different interests and groups or individuals associated with those interests as the first step. This can typically include landowners, jurisdictional authorities, NGO's, special interest groups, general public, and others (Toews, 2013). The next step involves detailing each of the identified stakeholders particular interest with the project and the degree to which they are impacted by it. For example, a landowner that faces potential expropriation has a higher degree of interest and impact in the project than resident in the area that faces no encroachment on their property. Similarly, a group or individual might have substantial interest in the project but experience a much lower or no direct impact.

Once the interest levels and degrees of impact are established they are sorted into two to four tiers based on the level of impact they are likely to encounter.

Stakeholders who will experience more direct impacts should receive greater effort in notification, engagement and follow up communication. Only when the list has been finally sorted can the

strategy on notifying and communicating commence. Each instance of communication between the project team and categorized stakeholders is recorded to ensure that no individual or group is left out of the process.

The case study that will be presented offered a unique situation in which the typical tiered system had to be altered in order to accommodate a consultation strategy.

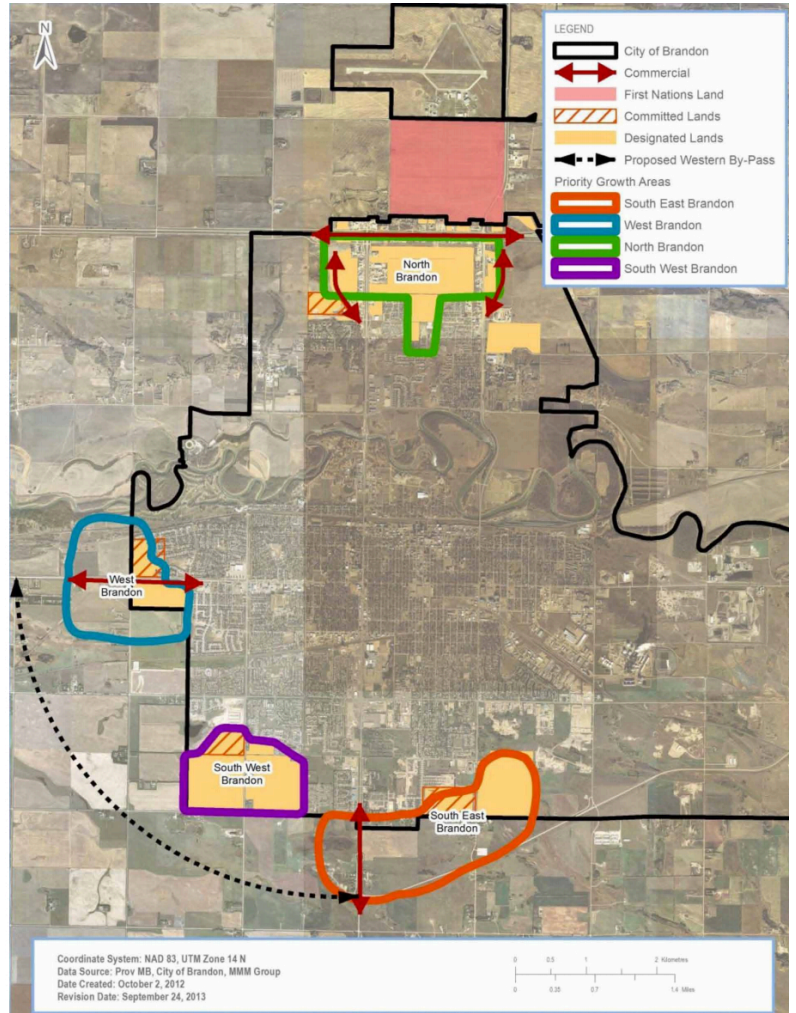
(left: Stakeholder tier chart, source, Donovan Toews)

	TIER CRITERIA	ENGAGEMENT/NOTIFICATION
TIER 1	Potential direct property impacts (i.e., potential acquisition) and/or has existing direct access to Route 90 section and/or governing jurisdiction (e.g., City of Winnipeg Departments).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Provide Information Letter with key project highlights, and an indication of property interests as applicable. Includes an invitation to a face-to-face meeting to discuss potential property impacts, mitigation efforts, etc. > Individual follow-up conversations with homeowners where property may be required.
TIER 2	Potential indirect property impact and/or business operations in the near vicinity of Route 90 section.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Provide Information Letter highlighting potential indirect impacts. > Include an invitation to attend an Open House event, with an opportunity for input/feedback. > Include contact number for further information. > Provide face-to-face meeting as requested.
TIER 3	No direct or indirect property impacts anticipated. Includes general interests or topic-specific interests. Includes non-jurisdictional governments or agencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Place newspaper advertisement in two newspapers, place mobile sign notice along the project route. > Include project scope and timing. > Include Open House information, with contact number for further information.

Case Study:

PTH 110 Extension

The Manitoba department of Infrastructure and Transportation (MIT) commissioned the PTH110 Extension project with Stantec and Landmark Planning and Design. Its objective was to generate an alignment option that would connect the existing PTH110 highway in Brandon, Manitoba to the TransCanada highway on the west side of the city. The route plan was forced to go through extensive private land and will require future expropriation when the extension is built. A plan to designate a route was the only objective of this stage of the project and the actual construction of the highway would not occur for anywhere between 10 and 20 years. The long delay meant that this plan would designate private land as a future route to greatly limit future uses. This way the corridor could be protected from development that would infringe on the future placement of the extension. The alignment will be adopted into the development plans for the RM of White and Brandon and Area Planning District to guide future development to not encroach on the route. To summarize, this stage of the project was merely a planning exercise.



Rational for the Project:

- Brandon and Area Planning District Area Growth Strategy targets the PTH 110 to use to complete the city's boundary
- To ensure appropriate planning and an efficient transportation network in the city
- The underpass of the CP mainline on PTH 1A, a current high traffic western route, is low clearance resulting in repeated collisions with truck traffic
- Extension is identified as necessary to meeting the future traffic and economic needs in the Brandon Area Road Network Development Plan

Initial Stakeholders List:

The initial compilation of stakeholders resulted in the following:

Jurisdictional Authorities:

- RCMP, Brandon Attachment
- Brandon Area and Planning
- City of Brandon, Public works and Council
- RM of Cornwallis
- RM of Whitehead
- City of Brandon Emergency Services
- Brandon School Division

Special Interest/Business Groups:

- Keystone Agricultural Producers
- Manitoba Trucking Association
- Brandon Chamber of Commerce
- CP Rail
- Economic Development Brandon
- MAFRI

Landowners:

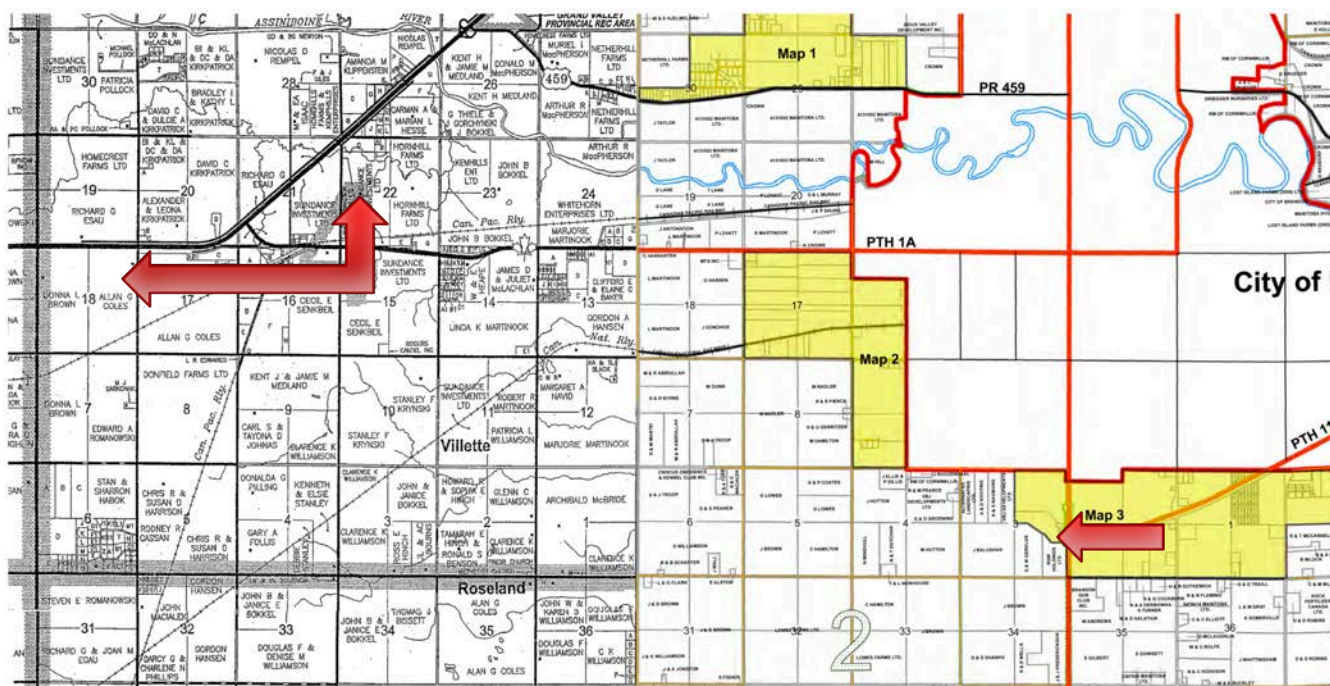
- Individuals
- Corporations
-

General Public:

- Brandon Residents (mainly)
- All other non-identified groups and individuals

(below: Map showing all of the landowners in the study zone, red arrows show existing PTH10 and area to connect to the Transcanda,

Source: Landmark Planning



Stakeholder Tier Chart for PTH110 Extension	
TIER 1 Stakeholders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Jurisdictional Authorities • Identified Special Interests • Identified Business interests • All Landowners in the study area 	Tier 2 Stakeholders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Public • Non-identified groups and individuals
Meeting Method: Invitation for face to face meetings in groups of 6-8, consisting of representatives of the identified groups, interests and authorities. Project presentation given followed by roundtable discussion with representatives to identify concerns, opinions, and possible constraints. Landowners invited to a private meeting in groups of 15-25. Project presentation followed by constraint mapping on paper maps and on ArcGIS geomapping platform. Surveys administered to attendees.	Meeting Method: Open houses held with posters outlining project details with project team staff present to answer any questions and record feedback.
Notification Method: Directly addressed letter or email to representatives of the identified groups, interests, and authorities. Phone calls made in cases where no response was made to letters and emails. Landowners given directly addressed letter containing invitation to private landowners meeting. Direct phone calls made in various cases.	Notification Method: Multiple advertisements in the local paper. Open house details available online.

A Unique Landowners Case:

In most cases where the tier system has been implemented, adjacent landowners to an infrastructure project are assessed on how directly they are impacted. A few blocks of neighborhood can have dramatic changes in the impact certain residents will encounter. Often it is only the landowners that are adjacent to a project that get categorized as a tier 1. The PTH110 case was unique in that all landowners within the study area were assessed as facing direct impacts. This was a byproduct of a consultation strategy that was employed in order to mitigate potential hostilities towards a project that would involve drastically changing land uses of private holders. The plan was to begin the consultation process without having established any potential alignment route. This approach was intended to foster a greater sense of fairness and deeper engagement with landowners by giving them a greater role in the alignment design. Going into a consultation session with hypothetically routes already planned could have caused conflict among the landowners, who would have assumed that our consultation efforts were superficial in nature. Having no predetermined route meant that the assumption had to be that any landowner could face the most direct effects. For this reason close to 70 different landowners had to be contacted and consulted with on a personal level.

Results:

The additional effort to taking a structured approach played a substantial role in mitigating the potential public opposition associated with a project of this nature. Taking the time to engage on a more intimate level greatly reduced the chance of encountering hostility and opposition at the public open house. Meeting with the jurisdictional, business and special interest representatives before hand and softened any political opposition that the project might have otherwise seen. One of the consistent comments we heard from landowners was their appreciation for the efforts we took in ensuring a fair process. There was still some obvious frustration from the ramifications the project could have on their properties, but the clear dialog enabled them to understand why this project was happening. The activities for landowners to identify constraints allowed them to feel included in the decision making process, while giving us detailed information on land parcels that otherwise would have gone unknown. This information included historic areas, cemeteries, community infrastructure that was not mapped, and a unknown ducks unlimited site.

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