

6.0 PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Public and stakeholder involvement are an invaluable facet of the I-20 East Transit Initiative and were critical to the identification of corridor transportation needs, project goals and objectives, the identification of transit alternatives, and the evaluation of these alternatives. As presented in **Table 6-1** below, the I-20 East Transit Initiative employed public involvement strategies at major decision points throughout the DCA process. Further information about public involvement in the I-20 East Transit Initiative can be found in Appendix C, the *I-20 East Interim Public Involvement Report*.

Table 6-1: Public Involvement

Public Involvement Technique	Audience	Purpose	Frequency
Initial Stakeholder Interviews	Elected officials, business leaders, neighborhood groups, major churches, individual citizens	To allow corridor stakeholders to identify major transportation challenges facing the I-20 East Corridor.	29 stakeholders in 22 interviews early in the study
Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC)	Interviews with elected officials, business leaders, neighborhood groups, major churches, individual citizens	To provide input on corridor needs, project goals and objectives, evaluation methods, transit alternatives, station areas	4 SAC meetings at major milestones throughout the study
Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)	Key federal, state, and local agency staff	To provide technical input at key project milestones	4 TAC meetings at major milestones throughout the study
General Public Meetings	The general public	To provide an opportunity for the general public to give input and feedback at key project milestones	3 rounds of public meetings at 3 locations each, for a total of 9 public meetings throughout the study
Project Webpage and Facebook Page	The general public	To provide project updates	6,107 website hits and 140 Facebook "likes" through April 2012.
Online Surveys	SAC members and the general public	To allow SAC members and the public to provide feedback on project alternatives	1700+ surveys taken at key milestones
Project Briefings	Stakeholders, neighborhoods organizations, agencies	To provide updates on the findings of the study	28 briefings in 2011

6.1 Advisory Committees

The I-20 East advisory committees contributed to the selection of the LPA many times over the course of the DCA. In its early phases, they established the project's guiding principles,

which would be used to evaluate alternatives during Tier 1 and 2 Screenings. Later, they developed the universe of alternatives which would enter Tier 1 Screening.

6.1.1 Stakeholder Advisory Committee

Following a set of 22 interviews with 29 stakeholders, which gathered information about the transportation needs in the corridor, a subset of stakeholders was appointed by MARTA to comprise the SAC. The establishment of the SAC allowed MARTA to build partnerships and share information with its major planning partners and stakeholders. Membership on the SAC was comprised of a wide variety of interests along the corridor including elected officials, business and community organizations, churches, and neighborhood associations. The SAC provided a continuing forum for direct input into the planning process.

6.1.2 Technical Advisory Committee

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was developed to guide the project team on key technical components of the study and to ensure technical proficiency during the process. This group was comprised of MARTA staff, city, county and state transportation engineering and planning staff, and federal agencies. The TAC was instrumental in conducting interagency coordination and provided a collective expertise helpful in developing and analyzing study alternatives. The TAC allowed planning partners an early opportunity to provide input on study issues and solutions.

6.1.3 Advisory Committee Meetings

The SAC and TAC met at each phase of the DCA. The committees held their inaugural meetings in September and October 2010, at which the project Need and Purpose was discussed and corridor issues were identified. At this phase, stakeholders identified several common themes, or characteristics, regarding new transit service, which they felt were essential to the success of a transit investment in the corridor. These common themes became the guiding principles for new transit service in the I-20 East Corridor, against which all project alternatives were evaluated. These stakeholder-identified guiding principles are listed below.

Stakeholder-Identified Guiding Principles

- Transit should be a rapid service to downtown serving commuters with few stops
- Dedicated transitway for entire length of project. None, or very limited, operation on surface streets in mixed traffic
- System must have a direct connection to MARTA heavy rail system
- There must be a way for riders to transfer to/from the BeltLine
- It is important to limit the number of transfers to reduce travel times
- The most desirable connection to downtown would be at the Five-Points/MMPT since it would provide a connection to the north-south and east-west MARTA rail lines without additional transfers

A second round of SAC and TAC meetings were held in December 2010, at which committee members confirmed the corridor needs and the goals of the project and identified potential alignment alternatives. These alignment alternatives were further refined and presented to the public, the SAC, and the TAC for comment as the Tier 1 Alternatives.

The SAC and TAC convened their third round of meetings in May 2011 to review the Tier 1 Alternatives. Tier 1 Alternatives are described in Section 5.2. TAC members preferred the Parallel I-20 among Mainline Alignments, and the Connection to Garnett and Five Points Stations among Downtown Connectivity Alignments.

During the fourth round of SAC and TAC meetings held in October 2011, the committees were asked to evaluate the six Tier 2 Alternatives based on cost, efficiency and transit technology. The committees were invited to consider the Tier 2 Alternatives and offer their input via online survey, detailed below.

6.2 Public Meetings

Public meetings allowed the public to provide input to the selection and refinement of the LPA. The purpose of the first round of public meetings, held in October 2010, was to provide information on the project, present initial study findings, solicit input on the transportation needs within the corridor, present the initial project Purpose and Need, and solicit input into study goals and objectives.

The second round of public meetings was held in May 2011, during the Tier 1 Screening. At this meeting, the stakeholder-identified initial transit alignments were presented for public feedback. Regarding the Mainline Alternatives, citizens attending the meeting held inside of I-285 preferred the Parallel I-20 Alignment, or the Connection to Edgewood Station, while members of the public attending meetings outside the I-285 Perimeter chose the Extension from Indian Creek Station. The most popular Downtown Connectivity Alternative was the Connection to Garnett and Five Points Stations. Lastly, the majority of those attending the public meetings preferred the Parallel I-20 Subalignment over the Snapfinger Road Subalignment.

During the Tier 2 Screening, a third round of public meetings was held in October 2011 to get feedback on the six alternatives being presented. The six Tier 2 Alternatives and the three transit technologies being considered, HRT, LRT, and BRT, were discussed. The public question and answer session highlighted the need to provide additional transit service both inside and outside the I-285 Perimeter within a reasonable timeframe. The public was directed to provide their input via comment card and online survey, as described below.

6.3 Online Surveys

To provide an additional opportunity for public support to be reflected in the narrowing and refinement of LPA, an online survey was developed to measure support for the various Tier 1 Alternatives. It was made available online from May 19 to June 20, 2011, and could be accessed from links on the project webpage and Facebook page. A majority of survey respondents preferred the Parallel to I-20 Mainline Alignment and the Connection to the Multi-Modal Passenger Terminal/Five Points Station and the Connection to the Garnett and Five Points Stations Downtown Connectivity Alternatives. A large majority preferred the Parallel I-20 Subalignment over the Snapfinger Road Subalignment. The levels of support alternatives received from the survey and public meeting input, and from the advisory committees, were translated into a score under the public involvement MOE in Tier 1 Screening.

A second online survey was prepared to gather input and feedback on the Tier 2 Alternatives. Survey respondents were asked to rate each Tier 2 Alternative on a scale of one to five, with one being least appropriate for the corridor and five being most appropriate. HRT1 and LRT1 were most preferred from respondents inside the Perimeter, while participants from outside the Perimeter believed HRT3 was most appropriate. BRT1 and HRT2 were the least supported by all respondents.