



## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN**

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**Highway 22 - Interstate 40**

Crawford and Sebastian Counties, Arkansas





## PROJECT OVERVIEW/BACKGROUND

This section was originally part of a larger corridor environmental study known as the “U.S. 71 Relocation.” The study extended from Highway 70 in DeQueen, Arkansas to I-40 near Alma, Arkansas, encompassing approximately 125 miles. The relocation of U.S. 71 in Arkansas is part of Congressionally designated High Priority Corridor 1, running from Shreveport, Louisiana to Kansas City, Missouri. A Final Environmental Impact Statement was prepared and a Record of Decision was issued in December 1997 that approved the general alignment of a new location, four-lane highway in western Arkansas.

In 2018, an I-49 Alternative Delivery Study was conducted which evaluated alternative project delivery methods and toll feasibility for the project. The study was adopted by the Arkansas State Highway Commission in November 2018 and determined that tolling was not a viable option.

The purpose of this project is to improve system linkage for a north/south national interstate corridor, accommodate safe travel, and improve modal connectivity.

Public involvement for this project began in April 2018 with a public involvement meeting in Barling, AR with approximately 200 attendees. Materials presented included the project location, schedule, potential environmental impacts, tolling, and project schematics. Overall, there were 63 comments received and a majority of the comments received supported this section of I-49.

This was followed by a second meeting in March 2022 held in Alma, AR with two hundred and fifty three attendees. Public involvement activities resumed in Spring 2021 with initial outreach to elected and public officials in the project area. A virtual public meeting option was also available on March 2022 to ensure public input could be collected while ensuring the safety of participants due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic

To publicize the meeting, direct mailers went out to a vast stakeholder list including elected and public officials, local residents and minority ministers. Advertisements were printed in *The Southwest Times* on Sunday, March 6 and Sunday, March 13.

PSAs advertising the meeting ran on local radio station La Raza 95.7 the week of the public meeting. Meeting information was placed on the local Chamber of Commerce online calendars. ARDOT placed information on the main website and on their Twitter account beginning Friday, March 11, and kept this information up and available throughout the public comment period.

A Project website, [www.ardot.gov/I-49](http://www.ardot.gov/I-49), hosted in English and Spanish, dedicated to information on the public meeting was put together and featured information on how to access the meeting as well as leave a comment. The public could also view an interactive map on the website to identify what properties may be affected.

## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN GOALS

This Public Involvement Plan (PIP) was developed in accordance with the ARDOT Public Involvement Handbook (2020), 23 Code of Federal Regulations §771.111 and the Department’s latest Virtual Public Involvement guidance. The purpose of the PIP is to document and outline the public involvement and outreach efforts that will be used to encourage stakeholder participation and solicit stakeholder feedback from both public and

private stakeholders through traditional and innovative means during the development of the proposed project. The PIP accomplishes the following:

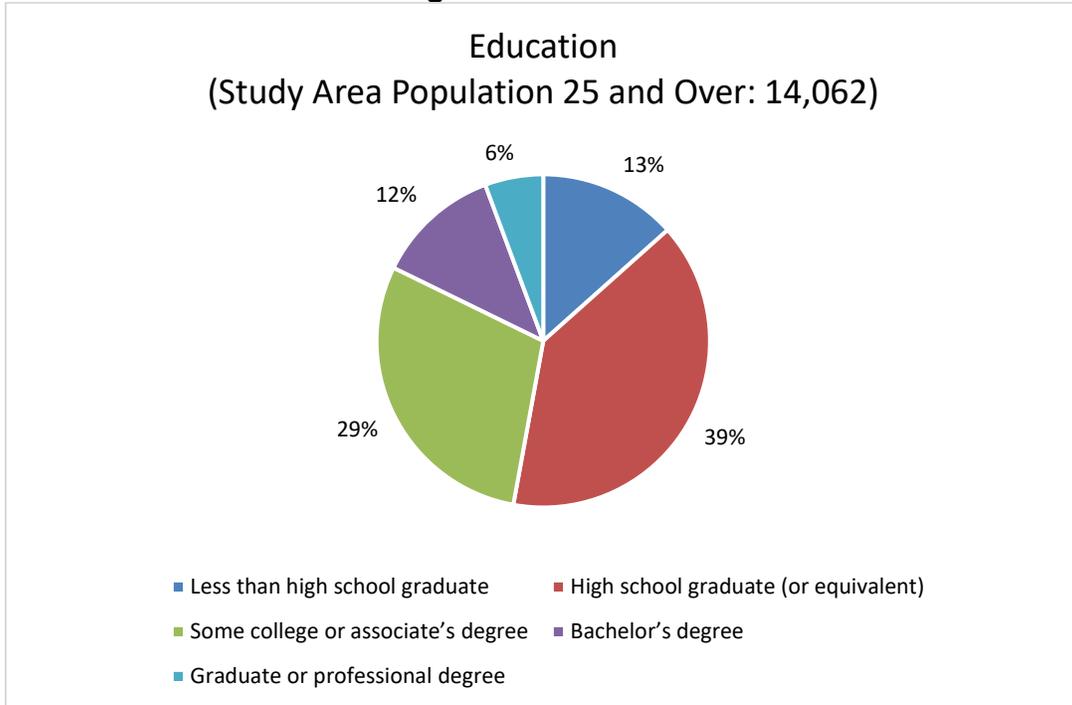
- Provide multiple options of public involvement to provide information and encourage feedback
  - Utilize a variety of tools to communicate to the public including traditional public meetings, social media, publications, a project website, and other methods as detailed in this plan
- Document the public involvement and outreach efforts that will be performed for the project
  - Create a database for cataloging public and agency comments and responses to those comments
  - Document each meeting/hearing
- Provide opportunities for participation by minority, low-income, non-English speaking, elderly, and disabled stakeholders, as well as other groups traditionally not involved in project development processes
  - Provide early and on continuous opportunities for the public to be involved and identify social, economic, and environmental impacts

ARDOT has identified the location of protected populations in the initial and refined study areas (see Project Area Population Demographics) and has identified and incorporated strategies to engage these populations. Throughout the study, ARDOT will continue to identify barriers to these populations' participation in transportation decision-making, identify strategies that may overcome those hurdles, and implement those strategies.

## **PROJECT AREA POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS**

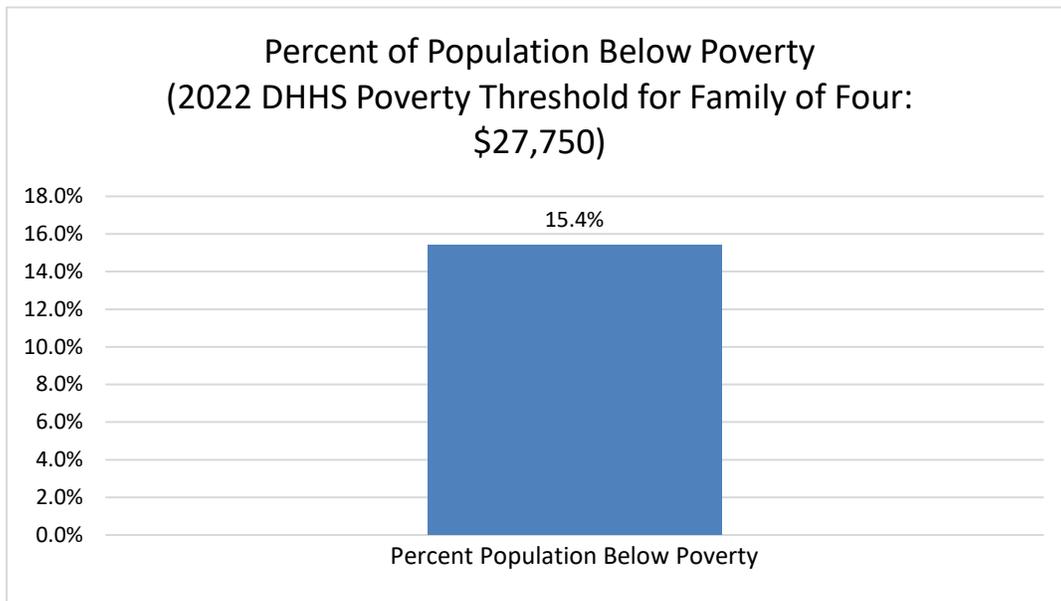
From reporting block groups, approximately 5,101 people live within the study area in both Sebastian and Crawford Counties. The community study area encompasses the project limits and was established as a 0.5 mile buffer from the centerline of the proposed project. The community study area was developed to include communities potentially impacted by the proposed project, including portions of the cities of Barling, Kibler, and Alma. It encompasses the residences along Clear Creek and Waterfront Roads and residences and businesses along I-40. The study area runs generally in a north/south direction and is located primarily in far north Sebastian County and Crawford County, Arkansas. The project team looked closely into certain factors that would impact outreach strategies, specifically those of education (**Figure 1**), income (**Figure 2**), minority populations (**Figure 3**), and Limited English Proficiency (**Figure 4**). This demographic data will determine specific outreach strategies and allow the project team to effectively engage the project area population.

**Figure 1. Education**



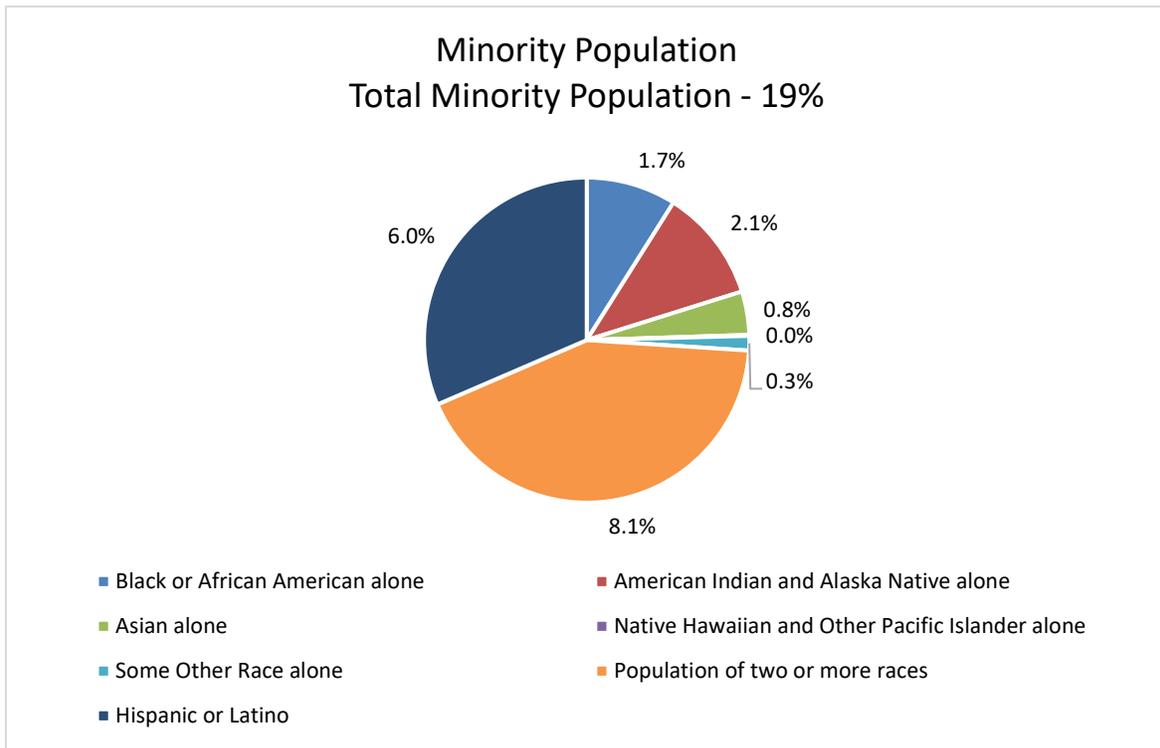
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B15003

**Figure 2. Income**



Sources: B17017 Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months by Household Type by Age of Householder, 019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

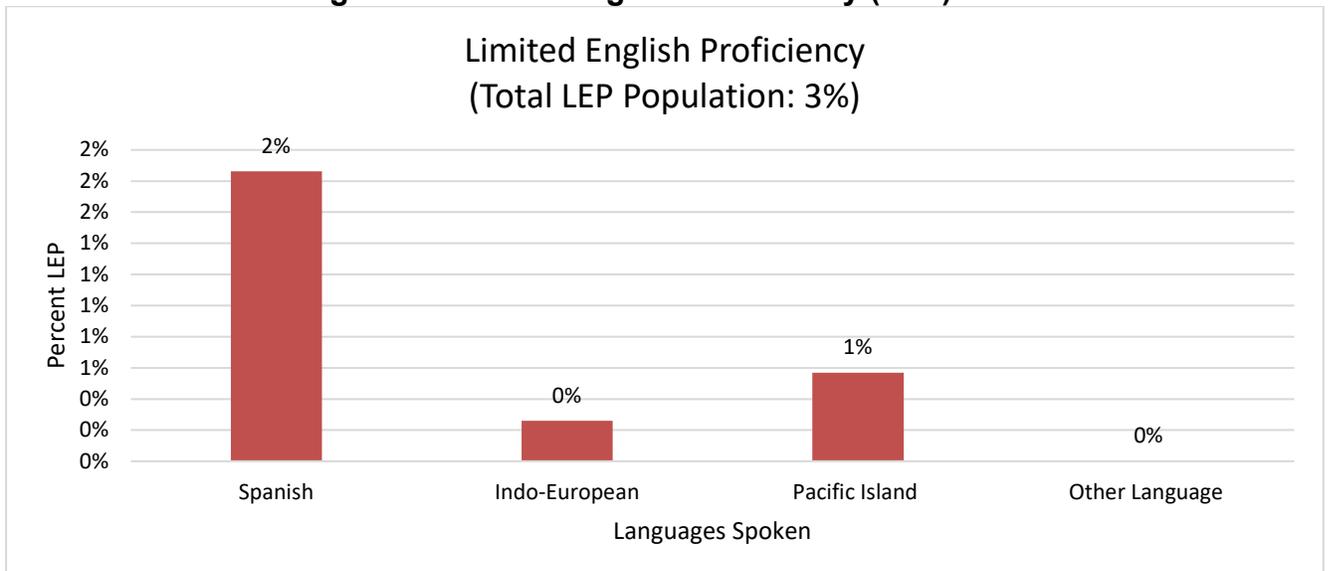
**Figure 3. Minority**



Source: P2, Hispanic or Latino, and not Hispanic or Latino by Race, Census 2020

Note: \* Census tracts 13.08 and 13.07 are 2020 designated Census geographies and are a single Census tract (Census tract 13.02) in 2019 designated Census geographies. Census tract 206.02 is a 2020 designated Census geography and is Census tract 2026 in 2019 designated Census geographies.

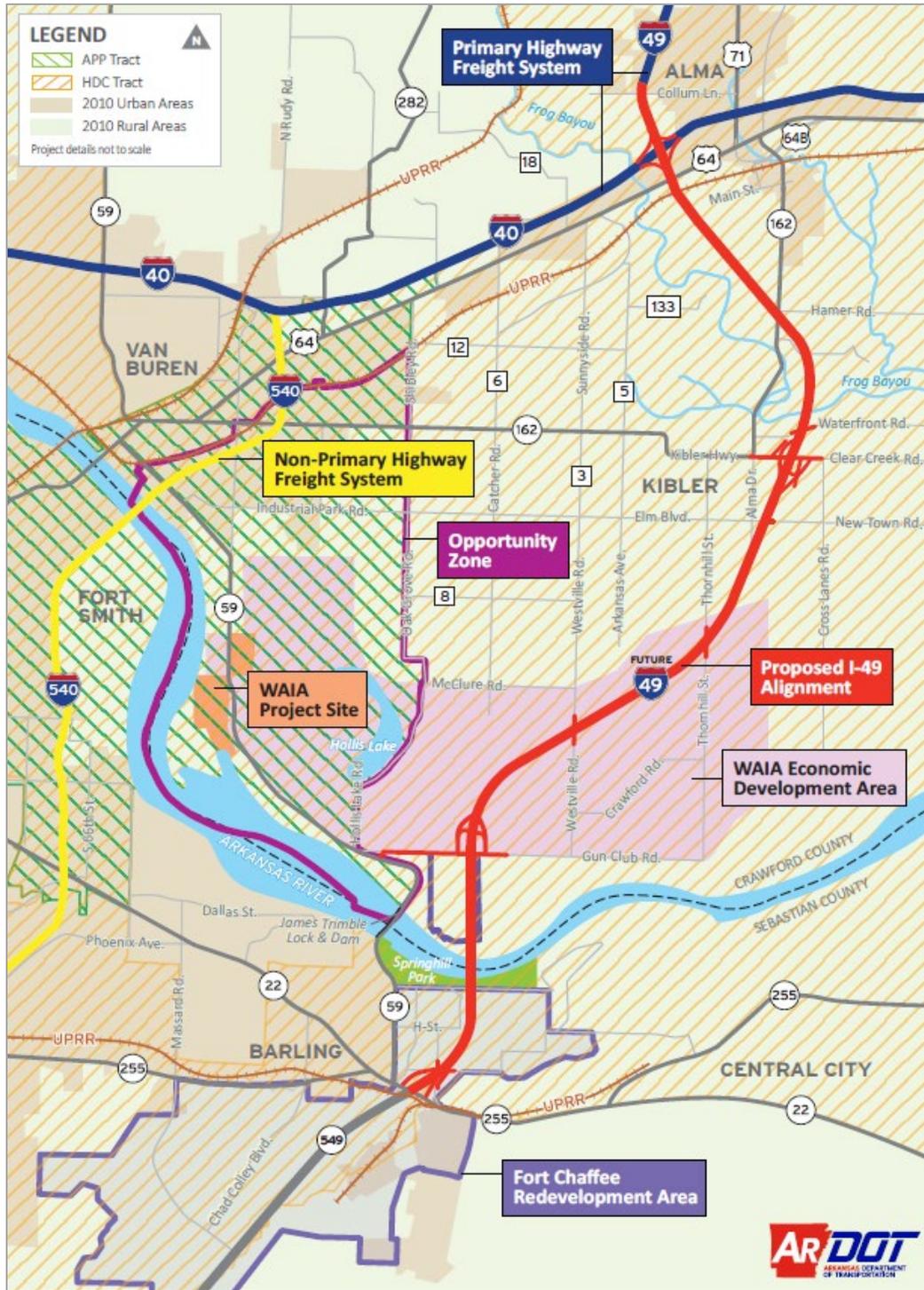
**Figure 4. Limited English Proficiency (LEP)**



Source: B16004, Age by Language Spoken at Home by Ability to Speak English for the Population 5 Years and Over, 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

The Project is located entirely within an Historically Disadvantaged Community (HDC) (US CT 13.02, 204.01, and 206 Sebastian County) and runs parallel to a designated Opportunity Zone and large swath of urbanized land designated as an Area of Persistent Poverty (APP) (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Areas of Persistent Poverty & Historically Disadvantaged Communities



ARDOT will provide guidance to the consultant team that will be responsible for

coordinating public involvement efforts relating to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). These responsibilities will include stakeholder engagement and preparing for a public involvement meeting and a public hearing in both virtually and in person. Public involvement efforts will be led by the Public Involvement contact (contact information below).

Public Involvement Contact
<b>Jonathan Gardea</b> Public Involvement Manager HNTB Office: 972-628-3042 Email: <a href="mailto:jgardea@hntb.com">jgardea@hntb.com</a>

The following details the public involvement activities and deliverables to be performed for this project:

**Stakeholder Mailing List** will be developed and maintained. This list will be used for distributing meeting announcements and Project information. The list includes contact information as available for the following (but is not limited to): elected officials, agency and public officials, minority ministers, major employers, chambers of commerce, advocacy and civic groups, local technical college, neighborhood and homeowner associations, and adjacent property owners. The mailing list is to be updated prior to each public involvement event. Community Resource List (**Table 1**) will be included in the stakeholder mailing list.

**Table 1: Community Resources**

Name of Facility	Type of Facility	Address
Fort Chaffee Maneuver Training Center	Military	Post Headquarters BLDG 1370, Ft. Smith Blvd. Ft. Chaffee, AR 72905
Barling Cemetery	Cemetery	203 12th St, Barling, AR 72923
First Baptist Church of Barling	Place of Worship	602 E Church St, Barling, AR 72923
Barling United Methodist Church	Place of Worship	308 E Church St, Barling, AR 72923
Barling Police Department	Police Department	304 E Church St, Barling, AR 72923
Barling Fire Department	Fire Department	304 E Church St, Barling, AR 72923
Barling Municipal & Sports Complex	Sports Facility	307 Fort Street Barling, AR 72923
First Assembly of God – Barling	Place of Worship	108 E Church St, Barling, AR 72923
Barling City Park	Park	307 Fort Street Barling, AR 72923
Springhill Park	Park	1700 Lock And Dam Road Barling, AR 72923
McAllister Cemetery	Cemetery	Barling, Sebastian County
Joe Smith Cemetery	Cemetery	522 Garland Ave, Fort Smith, AR 72901
Kibler Assembly of God	Place of Worship	127 W Kibler Hwy, Van Buren, AR 72956
Kibler United Methodist Church	Place of Worship	19 E Kibler Hwy, Alma, AR 72921
Kibler Baptist Church	Place of Worship	141 E Kibler Hwy, Alma, AR 72921
Kibler Police Department	Police Department	50 Oak Terrace, Van Buren, AR 72956
Crawford County Fire District 7	Fire Department	99-141 N Kibler Hwy, Alma, AR 72921
Pitcock Cemetery	Cemetery	Crawford County, AR
Food Distribution Center – Liberty Fellowship	Food Bank	5530 Alma Hwy, Van Buren, AR 72956

Name of Facility	Type of Facility	Address
H E Porter	Place of Worship	7145 Maywood Cir, Van Buren, AR 72956
Old Concord Cemetery	Cemetery	Van Buren, AR 72956
Grace Church of Alma	Place of Worship	410 E Main St, Alma, AR 72921
God's Harvest Pentecostal Tabernacle	Place of Worship	1919 S Cooper St, Arlington, TX 76010
Alma Fire Department Station 3	Fire Department	804 Fayetteville Ave, Alma, AR 72921
Alma Intermediate School	School	1220 Collum Ln W, Alma, AR 72921
Alma Heights Missionary Baptist Church	Place of Worship	638 Rudy Rd, Alma, AR 72921
Ridgeline Church	Place of Worship	330 Rudy Rd, Alma, AR 72921

**Elected and Public Officials List** will be developed and maintained throughout the life of the project. Elected and public officials will be notified via invitations or letters prior to any public involvement activity, including a public meeting and hearing.

**Minority Ministers List** will be developed and maintained throughout the life of the project. Minority ministers in the project area will be notified via mail or email prior to the public meeting and hearing.

**Adjacent Property Owners List** will be developed at the start of the project and updated prior to the public meeting and hearing. Addresses will be provided by the county assessors office. Notification letters will be developed prior to the public meeting and hearing and will be distributed via mail.

**Display Advertisements** are to be published in local newspapers twice (two weeks prior to the public meeting and hearing and again one week prior to the public meeting and hearing).

**Legal Advertisements** to be published in the local newspaper 30 days prior to a public hearing to inform citizens that they can review the environmental document at ARDOT District Office prior to the public hearing.

Newspapers will include: *The Southwest Times Record*

**Meeting Notification Flyers** will be developed to post on the Virtual Public Involvement (VPI) website as well as to distribute to anyone inquiring about the public meeting or hearing. These flyers will be distributed electronically via the stakeholders list, as well as to the community resources to print and hang at their locations to reach their audiences. These will be produced in both English and Spanish.

**Radio Public Service Announcement (PSA)** is a radio advertisement to reach a targeted audience whose attention may not be captured by the printed media. Radio PSAs will be developed prior to the public meeting and hearing. Radio stations will include:

- La Raza 92.3

**Community Calendars** Team will identify community organizations (radio stations, chambers, etc.) that have free community calendars and distribute meeting information to them.

## Presentations and Briefings

Team will provide presentations/briefings to elected officials, local boards, stakeholder groups, and interested organizations upon request. The project website will include a link to a request form. Any requests received will be discussed and the best person to deliver the presentation will be determined.

## Technical Work Group Meetings

Hold Technical Work Group Meetings including reserving meeting locations, coordinate logistics of venue and attend meetings. Invitees can include elected officials, agency representatives, business leaders and others as agreed upon by the Department.

Tasks also include scheduling meetings, preparing materials, presenting project information, attending and staffing each meeting and develop a summary for each meeting.

## Public Meeting

Conduct one public meeting in accordance with procedures outlined in the *ARDOT Public Involvement Handbook (2020)* and *ARDOT Virtual PI Guidance*.

- Develop Virtual PI Plan (use ARDOT template)
- Develop publication schedule
- Develop and distribute invitations
- Publish display ads (English and Spanish)
- Develop and run PSAs
- Develop social media content and schedule (English and Spanish)
- Develop content for the ARDOT Website (English and Spanish)
- Notify community calendars of event
- Organize meeting logistics and provide staff at the hearing (if in person)
- Develop materials for the event – exhibits will include a minimum of project location map, typical sections and “how to get involved” information
- Develop a written synopsis of comments received for inclusion in the environmental document as an appendix

## Public Hearing

Conduct one location/design public hearing in accordance with procedures outlined in the *ARDOT Public Involvement Handbook (2020)* and *ARDOT Virtual PI Guidance*.

- Develop Virtual PI Plan (use ARDOT template)
- Develop publication schedule
- Develop and distribute invitations
- Publish display ads (English and Spanish)
- Develop and run PSAs
- Develop social media content and schedule (English and Spanish)
- Develop content for the ARDOT Website (English and Spanish)
- Notify community calendars of event
- Organize meeting logistics and provide staff at the public meeting and hearing
- Develop materials for the events – exhibits will include a minimum of project location map, typical sections and “how to get involved” information

- Develop a written synopsis of comments received for inclusion in the environmental document as an appendix.

**Virtual PI (VPI)** Prepare and develop all text and material for the virtual public involvement website for one (1) public meeting and one (1) public hearing. All material will be developed in English and Spanish. All material will be posted online five days prior to the public meeting or hearing.

**Project Website** Prepare and develop website content in English and Spanish for one (1) public meeting and one (1) public hearing.

**Press Releases** Send to a media list ahead of the public meeting and public hearing.

**Script & PPT Presentation** Prepare and develop a script and presentation in English and Spanish for one (1) public meeting and one (1) public hearing, including recording the narration in English and Spanish for each meeting.

**Social Media** Prepare and develop up to 5 social media posts and graphics for each public meeting and public hearing. Posts will be developed in English and Spanish.

**Comment Form** Prepare and develop a comment form for one (1) public meeting and one (1) public hearing. Comment forms will be developed in English and Spanish. Comment form will be developed for both online and print.

**Pre-Public Meeting/Hearing Meeting & Sound Check** Coordinate a pre-meeting prior to scheduling the meeting and hearing to test the online functions of the Webex, website, video and other key components using the exact equipment that will be used for the live event. Another sound check 15 minutes before the meeting/hearing.