



# MEMORANDUM of MEETING

**Date:** March 23, 2020

**Date of Meeting:** March 4, 2020

**Meeting Location:** George Howard Building

**Work Order Number:** 32089-005

**Project:** Howard County Complete Streets

**Meeting Description:** Complete Streets Implementation Team Meeting #3

**Participants:**

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Jennifer White	Horizon Foundation	248.345.3030	jwhite@thehorizonfoundation.org

## **Introduction**

The purpose of the meeting was to provide members of the Howard County Complete Streets Implementation Team (CSIT) a brief overview of current public outreach procedures, collect feedback on public outreach procedures via small group exercises, and introduce the topic of project prioritization.

Jeff Riegner and Chris Eatough welcomed all attendees.

Members of the CSIT were provided a copy of the minutes from the February 5 meeting. The January 8 meeting minutes had been distributed at the February 5 CSIT meeting. The group unanimously approved both sets of minutes.

Jeff led the group through the presentation attached to these minutes. He provided a brief overview of the public outreach processes for the Office of Transportation (OOT), Department of Public Works (DPW), and the Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ) which were described in detail during the February 5 meeting.

## **Public Engagement**

Jennifer White provided an overview of community outreach & engagement best practices. A document detailing her recommendations for consideration is attached to these minutes. She noted the difference between outreach which is a one-way process, and engagement which is a two-way process. She restated the different types of outreach and engagement strategies utilized by OOT, DPW, and DPZ currently based on County Code and the presentation from the February 5 CSIT meeting.

Jennifer asked whether this process is tackling outreach or engagement. Chris agreed that conversation around terminology is critical, because often different people are conceptualizing terms differently. Currently, CSIT informational materials have been using the term outreach but they also include engagement activities. Bruce Gartner recommended using the term engagement as the umbrella term that includes outreach moving forward. Jennifer asked whether it is possible to develop a community engagement plan that would identify a vision, goals, and what success looks like. She raised six community engagement principles as useful to keep in mind moving forward. Those principles are:

- Balance using technology and in-person tactics
- Know who your target audience is and what they care about
- Plan and deliver as if you are the target audience
- Build relationships with community leaders and partner with them
- Always ask: is this working? If not, be willing to adapt
- Be inclusive and transparent

Jennifer also shared a chart that examines the costs and benefits of creative outreach, online outreach, and traditional outreach techniques that can be used to evaluate potential engagement techniques.

Jeff noted that a community engagement plan is a requirement of the policy that will be an outcome of this process.

Bruce noted that the document prepared by Jennifer will be useful to the group moving forward. Chris noted that the Complete Streets policy does use the term “community engagement” not “public outreach.” He also noted that the scope of this engagement will be transportation projects only. Jeff reminded the group that transportation projects include both public projects and developer driven projects, and each type of project require different public engagement processes.

Jennifer remarked that *Walk Howard* utilized a lot of best practice community engagement strategies. Christiana Rigby shared an idea for place-based public engagement, which involves posting yard signs at the location of a proposed project with a number that passersby can text with recommendations for the project. She noted that technique would engage people who do not traditionally attend public meetings and it would not require a huge time commitment to participate.



Jeff announced that the meeting would break into small groups to discuss further ideas and a vision for public engagement. Christiana asked whether we were brainstorming suggestions with budgetary constraints in mind or in an open ended way. Bruce noted that visioning without constraints first is important, but that the community engagement plan would be developed in consideration of budgetary realities.

Chad Edmondson asked where this public engagement process would fit in to the current process, manuals, code, etc. Jeff responded that would be determined based on the recommendations received.

Tom Butler stated that he thought community engagement was about collecting public feedback on changes to the Design Manual and was not project specific. Jeff clarified that the Complete Streets policy requires the County to set up new project-specific engagement procedures moving forward but also requires that the CSIT provide the public with regular updates about the implementation of the policy.

Tom expressed concern with logistics and budgetary constraints that would impact the realities of public engagement procedures. Jeff noted that fiscal impact of any changing policy will be considered. Tom said that one of their primary concerns is that many automated systems do not provide the public with a response making them very resource-consuming, especially regarding staff time.

Kris Jagarapu noted that he is concerned about whether information collected in more creative ways is helpful to actual project development. Christiana indicated she envisioned that creative efforts at public engagement would have to be specific and targeted.

The group then broke into small groups to answer the following questions regarding public outreach. The bullets reflect answers developed by each group which were edited and condensed for clarity.

1. In your opinion, what is working well now?

- There are opportunities to engage
  - Public meetings
  - SeeClickFix, Tell HoCo
  - Master planning process (charettes)
  - Town halls
  - Canvassing
  - Social media/Facebook
  - Coffees
- Open house format with dialogue
- “Pop-ups” at community events; especially programmatic things
- Working with HOAs and PTAs
- Website postings
- Email distribution chain or tree
- Workshop style: open house with exhibits and station get good attendance, held at preliminary and final design phases; comment sheets are collected at preliminary design; final design is informational only
- Meeting in the community
- Interactive approaches are better than presentations

2. What types of outreach improvements would be beneficial?

- Timing
- Push notifications (SeeClickFix)



- Increased response
  - Increased representation
  - Website navigation
  - More/larger/more legible signs
  - Advertising? Billboards? Radio? Mailings?
  - Community “ambassadors”
  - Working group/steering committee combined with public workshops
  - Better catalog outreach efforts – goal to avoid people who don’t find out about the project until the final design phase
  - Drive people to project websites
3. How do we measure the effectiveness of public outreach?
- Response (quantity)
  - Representative of community
  - Pre/post evaluation
  - No/few “surprise” phone calls during construction
  - How did you hear about this?
  - Variety of people who participate (not just “squeaky wheels”)
  - Attendance – is higher better or is lower better, reflecting less controversy?
  - Comments received
  - Survey after final design to measure user satisfaction
4. Who are the usual meeting attendees (groups, not individuals)?
- Older/empty nesters
  - People with time
  - Whiter
  - Wealthier
  - Able
  - PTA
  - HOA
  - CA
  - NOT non-native English speakers
  - NOT traditionally underserved populations
  - People impacted directly by a project
  - Advocacy groups: bicyclists, environmental, reps for various populations
  - Columbia Association
  - Business associations

- Other agencies
5. Who does not hear about meetings?
- Young people
  - Families
  - People without housing
  - People who are affected by a project/have standing
  - Children
  - People who care more about other things
  - Homeless
  - Maybe people without internet access; seniors?
  - Non-native English speakers
  - Those with accessibility issues
  - Seniors
  - Shift workers
  - Single parents
  - Hearing impaired
6. Who is not comfortable attending meetings whose opinions need to be heard?
- Shift workers
  - Disability community
  - People w/o available transit access
  - Recent immigrants
  - Minorities
  - People who think they lack relevant info/expertise
  - Workers/child care/scheme challenges
  - People who don't drive after dark
  - Cable access to public meetings
  - Transit-accessible locations
7. Who physically cannot attend meetings and how else can they provide input?
- Communication through trusted community resources
  - Long-term fixed exhibits with feedback mechanisms
  - One-on-one conversations with project managers
  - Web/digital workshop
  - Paper questionnaire
  - Work through other agencies/non-profits/churches
  - On-site comment box

- Tabling at events
- Standalone meetings combined with existing meetings

8. How can meetings be made more accessible?

- Email
- Phone
- Web
- Customer Service
- In community, localized
- Transit available in evening
- Child care at meetings
- Food
- Van to take people to meetings
- Progressive/mobile meeting (food truck?)
- WebEx with chat
- Facebook Live
- Get recommendations from community champions
- Sometimes timing of community events doesn't match project schedule
- Use multiple methods

9. Would an online option (live and/or recorded) be beneficial? How could it work?

- Online options (streaming) county sponsored?
- Will it quash online participation?
- Facebook/Facebook live is currently used by the County Executives Office for press conferences, often take comments from FB live
- Requires a full time social media manager
- Challenge of managing negative comments
- Video explaining workshop boards available online, incorporate questions from in person workshop

10. How could the County "meet people where they are" by going into communities, tabling at local events, etc.?

- Senior centers
- Libraries
- Schools
- Standing community calendar
- Problem meeting at religious community (email newsletter vs. specific religious meeting, separation of church and state?)
- Yard signs with "text ideas" option
- Push/text notifications

- Engage large employers near projects
- Apartment managers
- Schools for printed materials in Wednesday folders
- PTA newsletter
- Tabling/pop-ups
- Focus on building trust with community
- Council Members

After each small group shared their ideas with the entire room, Chris noted that the traditional way of doing public meetings is not free, for example, if the County can spend \$30 a month on a “text ideas” sign it may be more affordable than in-person meetings.

Jeff mentioned the idea of a public workshop toolkit that could be used by City staff or community leaders to engage people who do not traditionally attend meetings.

Christiana asked whether the CSIT will be asking these questions to people we consider community ambassadors. Jeff responded in the affirmative, noting that the CSIT will be taking this information and a public engagement plan draft to members of the public for feedback.

Jeff noted that public engagement procedures, maintenance procedures, and project prioritization process are items due by the end of September.

### **Project Prioritization**

Jeff noted the importance of establishing a quantitative project prioritization process since there are always more demands on capital funds than there are funds available. Prioritization helps narrow down the list of projects to fund. The Complete Streets policy calls for a quantitative and transparent prioritization process. Jeff referred to a flow chart included in the PowerPoint presentation to explain how an idea advances and becomes a project. Projects must be feasible, have a scope, and have a rough cost identified before they can end up in the “basket” of all potential projects to be prioritized.

Jeff acknowledged that the development of the capital budget is a time-consuming process that requires a lot of investment of staff resources. He noted that the consultant team is working with County staff to better understand the current process and how to best incorporate performance measures into that process. He shared the first draft of a project prioritization matrix based on the Complete Streets policy. The prioritization matrix is attached to these minutes.

Chris observed that the flow chart needs another branch to include projects that come up due to opportunity, i.e. a resurfacing project due to a pipe replacement allows for restriping the roadway and implementing a project that wasn't necessary a high priority project. This approach results in substantial cost savings to County taxpayers.

Bruce noted that it is important that the prioritization process considers geography since projects should be balanced among different constituencies. He noted that the prioritization process should be quantitative and transparent but avoid too much precision because any process will have inherent subjectivity. He recommended a tiered approach that identifies high-, medium-, and low-priority projects that also takes opportunity into account.

Christiana said she was recently looking at poverty rates by census tract and found that poverty is relatively evenly distributed across the county. She noted that using the Vulnerable Population Index will result in good distribution of projects, and that a more quantitative process will limit the prioritization of projects driven by “lobbying” and increase prioritization based on need, resulting in a more equitable process.

Kris asked how infrastructure need fits into the process and used the example of needing to replace traffic signals that are more than 40 years old. He asked how a replacement signal would compare to a new signal. Jeff responded that prioritization would have to consider community goals, conditions (via a condition assessment), and risk. Bruce noted that first priority could be system preservation/asset management. Sam Sidh said this example highlights the

need to maintain flexibility, noting that a point or scoring system may be overly restrictive. Jeff explained that the CSIT will run projects through a proposed prioritization system to see how it works before finalizing any process.

Christiana mentioned that formalizing the prioritization process will have a large benefit to internal operations and management, because it will allow for better communication with the public and make it easier to explain why money is going to a particular project, i.e. fixing a safety issue at an intersection over a new bridge.

### **Next Steps**

Jeff provided an overview of next steps, which include the preparation of a spring report to County Council, noting that the next CSIT meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 1 at 3:00pm.



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Jeffrey R. Riegner, PE, AICP, PTOE  
Vice President

**Community Outreach & Engagement Best Practices**  
**Complete Streets Implementation Team**  
*Horizon Foundation Recommendations for Consideration*

The uniqueness of complete streets in theory and practice requires jurisdictions to develop a community engagement plan that will yield informed consent, collaboration, and transparency. Complete streets requires designs that are safe and accessible for all users regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation. Developing and executing a well thought-out plan that goes beyond traditional approaches will renew the community's ability and interest to engage in processes that often disenfranchise many of its members. The recommendations below builds off existing outreach strategies and highlight community engagement best practices.

**Community Outreach**

**Outreach:** a one-way process designed to provide information to a target audience.

Howard County uses several strategies to inform the community about projects lead by the Office of Transportation, Department of Public Works, and Department of Planning and Zoning. There are opportunities to inform and improve each of these strategies to yield greater turnout at transportation project events.

Table 1. Current Howard County Outreach Strategies

<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Office of Transportation</b>	<b>Department of Public Works</b>	<b>Department of Planning and Zoning</b>
<i>County Website</i>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<i>Email</i>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<i>Social Media</i>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	
<i>County Press Release</i>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<i>Boards &amp; Commissions</i>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<i>Community Villages or HOAs</i>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<i>Council Members</i>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<i>Community Stakeholders</i>	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>
<i>First-Class Mail</i>			<b>X</b>
<i>Newspaper</i>			<b>X</b>
<i>Site Postings</i>			<b>X</b>

Table 2. Outreach Recommendations

Strategies	Recommendations
<i>County Website</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Include hyperlinks on all correspondence to the public to drive community members to County website and pages.</li> </ul>
<i>Email</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use an electronic sign-in at community meetings and events.</li> <li>- Build County complete streets email listserv by sharing sign-in sheets/attendance records interdepartmentally.</li> <li>- Send out an email to the county listserv (i.e., complete streets listserv) at least 30 days in advance of any meeting.</li> </ul>
<i>Social Media</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish a minimum radius (e.g. – 1-2 mile radius) from prospective project to geo-target social media outreach and community engagement.</li> <li>- Begin “boosting” geo-targeted social media posts (Cost: \$30-\$50/post) at least 30 days in advance of meeting.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Buy digital ads. Include gifs, memes, and other innovative media to attract attention.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Create a social media toolkit that is transferrable to all social media platforms.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Send out a social media toolkit to community stakeholders to post or cross post information directly from County agency social media pages.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<i>Community Stakeholders</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Post announcement to a list of targeted community stakeholders to invite and disseminate announcement to their networks within the targeted radius. (e.g. – churches, schools, businesses, cultural institutions, libraries, village centers, etc.)</li> <li>- Develop a list of all community stakeholders with networks that extend across Howard County.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Send announcements to a designated group of community stakeholders for each project regardless of location.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<i>Newspaper</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- For annual or special on-time only events, purchase print and digital ads in Howard County Times/Columbia Flyer</li> </ul>
<i>Site Postings</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Post ADA compliant signs at least 30 days ahead of meetings to ensure community members can see the signs while passing the project site.</li> </ul>
<i>Process Recommendations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Host meetings at times and locations that are convenient and accessible for community members (e.g. - evening meetings throughout the week, consider HCPSS schedule, federal and cultural holidays, etc.).                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Partner with key institutions in targeted area to host community events and meetings.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Develop a flyer that includes the following: who, what, when, where, and why.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Flyer should meet ADA standards.</li> <li>o Share announcements in targeted community at least 1 month in advance                                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Share weekly reminders leading up to the event</li> <li>▪ Share daily reminders the week of the event</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>- Send note of thanks and gratitude to individuals who attended the meeting.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Include project director contact information for ongoing feedback submission.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Send quarterly communications via email and social media with project updates, delays, challenges, etc.</li> </ul>



**Community Engagement**

**Engagement:** a bi-directional process designed to share information, generate feedback, and provide an opportunity for dialogue.

Howard County uses a variety of engagement tactics to gather community input. Building upon existing tactics and leveraging other practices can yield greater resident satisfaction and improve the overall quality of outcomes. To inform current tactics, a community engagement plan is highly recommended to outline a vision, goals, and outcomes.

Table 3. Howard County Community Engagement Tactics

Tactics	Office of Transportation	Department of Public Works	Department of Planning and Zoning
Public Meeting	X	X	X
Community Meeting	X	X	X
Open House	X		
Survey (e.g. - Priority Letter)	X		
Community Events	X		
Community Stakeholder Meetings (e.g. – Tabling)	X		

Effective community engagement is built upon a basic goal of creating inclusive, meaningful conversations that increase the quality of the outcomes and support from the affected communities. The basic principles of community engagement are illustrated in Figure 1.



Source: Toole Design Group. Six community engagement principles



**Engagement Recommendations**

- Develop a community engagement plan that include the following components:
  - o Community engagement timeline tied to the project
  - o A list of community stakeholders
  - o A list of meeting venues or locations
  - o Engagement tactics
  - o Desired outcome for each tactic
  - o Ways to expand upon required engagement
  - o Potential costs v. budget
  - o Identify a champion for the project
  - o How to mitigate typical barriers
- In addition to meetings, open houses, and participating in community events, use other tactics such as:
  - o Surveys, mailing inserts, resident intercepts, workshops and design, charrettes, demonstration projects, one-on-one conversations, walking or biking meetings, walk audits, etc.
- Make a commitment to conduct genuine engagement at *every* stage of a process (see figure 2)
- Use a variety of engagement tactics based on the stage and audiences
  - o Different tactics can be used for different project stages. In the example timeline below, light blue tactics may indicate social media or online engagement while the dark blue may indicate in-person opportunities such as meetings, open houses, workshops, and attendance at community events.
  - o The development of *WalkHoward* followed this approach in capturing community feedback in different ways throughout the process.

Figure 2. Community engagement timeline

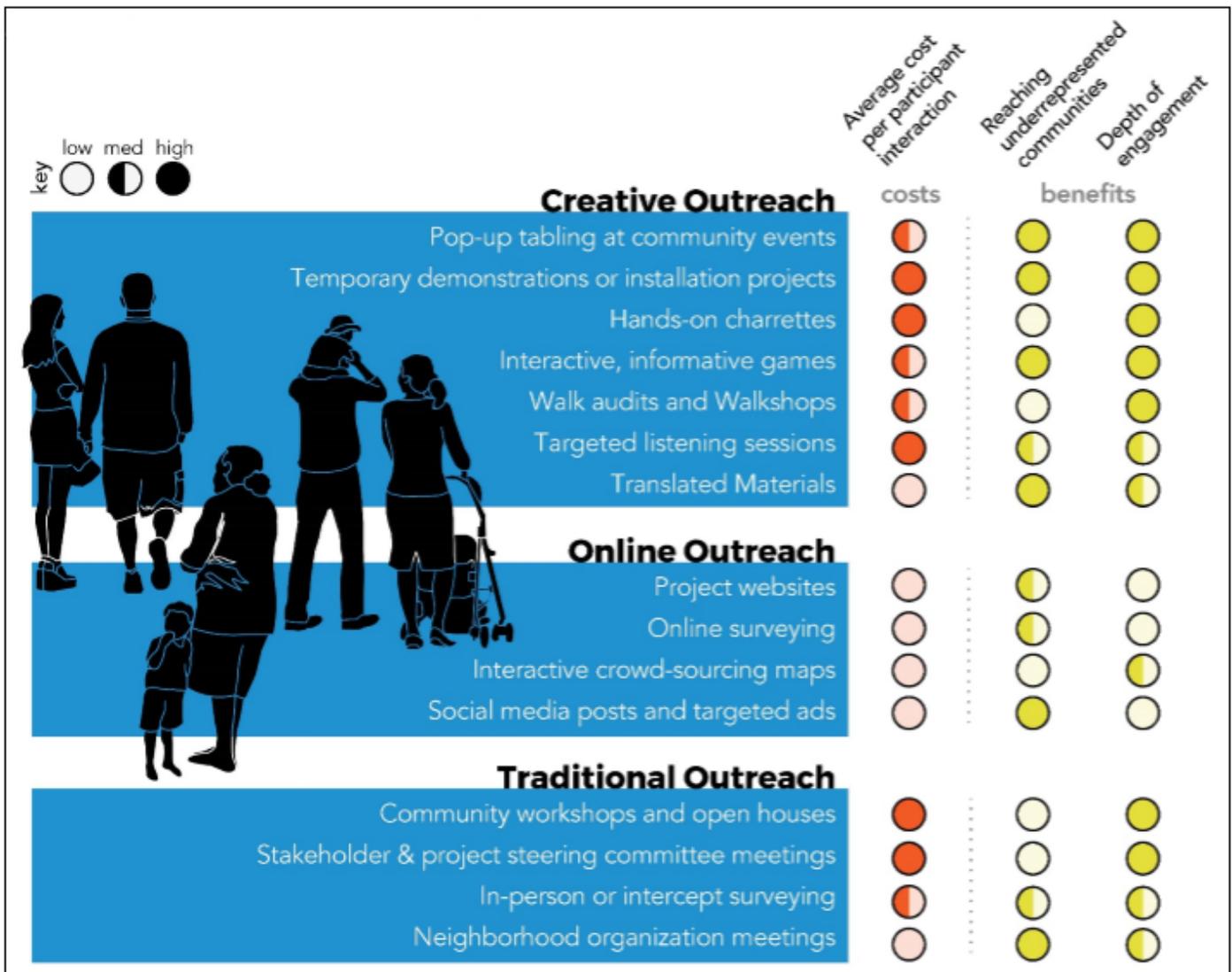
	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter	3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	5 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	6 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	7 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	8 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	On-going
Project milestones	Discover		Discuss			Design		Complete	
Engagement Tactic 1									
Engagement Tactic 2									
Engagement Tactic 3									
Engagement Tactic 4									
Engagement Tactic 5									

When deciding which engagement

process to use, it is important to consider what tactics have worked in the past, how affected community members can engage in activities, balancing technology versus traditional approaches, and cost. Figure 3 illustrates cost ranges and effectiveness for creative, online, and traditional tactics.



Figure 3. Comparison of Engagement Tactics Cost and Effectiveness



Source: Toole Design Group. Comparison of Engagement Tactics Costs and Effectiveness

**Resources**

Centering Community in the Public Engagement Process, <https://visionzeronetwork.org/centering-community-in-the-public-engagement-process/>

Guide to Online Community Engagement, <https://www.bangthetable.com/blog/practitioners-guide-to-community-engagement/>

Principles of Community Engagement, [https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/communityengagement/pce\\_principles\\_intro.html](https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/communityengagement/pce_principles_intro.html)



Performance Measure	Project Selection Criteria	Project Prioritization Criteria
Safety/Public Health: Number and location of fatalities by road type and mode of travel, and by age and gender as data are available	Project addresses demonstrated transportation safety issues (x points)	Project addresses demonstrated transportation safety issues (x points)
Safety/Public Health: Number and location of serious injuries by road type and mode of travel, and by age and gender as data are available	Project increases the miles of sidewalk, trail, and bicycle infrastructure available (x points)	Project installs or repairs sidewalk, trail, and bicycle infrastructure (x point per mile of infrastructure)
Access: Miles of sidewalk, trail, and bicycle infrastructure installed or repaired	Project addresses pedestrian accessibility (x points)	Project installs or repairs curb ramps (x point per curb ramp)
Access: Number of curb ramps installed or repaired	Project area includes transit stops (x points)	Project installs or repairs crosswalks (x point per crosswalk)
Access: Number of transit stops with sidewalk access installed or repaired	Project area includes transit stops (x points)	Project provides transit stop with sidewalk access installed or repaired (x point per stop)
Access: Percentage of transit stops with marked crosswalks within 150 feet	Project completes part of Bike Howard short term network (x points)	Project completes crosswalk within 150 feet of a transit stop (x point per crosswalk)
Access: Percent of Bike Howard short term network completed	Project completes part of Walk Howard network (x points)	Project completes part of Bike Howard Short term network (x points)
Access: Percent of Walk Howard network completed	Project increases access to the low-stress bicycle network (x points)	Project completes part of Walk Howard network (x points)
Access: Percent of the population with direct access to a low-stress bike network	Project area includes important destinations including schools, libraries, parks, community centers, village centers, social service centers, significant health care facilities, and government centers (x points)	Percent of the population provided access to the low-stress bicycle network (percent ranked and scored against other projects)
Access/Place: Connections to important destinations, including schools, libraries, parks, community centers, village centers, social service centers, significant health care facilities, and government centers	Project area includes employment centers (x points)	Project provides connections to important destinations, including schools, libraries, parks, community centers, village centers, social service centers, significant health care facilities, and government centers (x point per destination connected)
Access/Economy: Connections to employment centers	Project is in a priority community as defined by CS policy (x points)	Project provides connections to employment centers (x point per employment center connected)
Equity: Percentage of new roadway projects or roadway repairs in priority communities	Project feasibility study received outside funding (Federal, State, and/or private) to reduce cost to County taxpayers (x points)	Project is in a priority community as defined by CS policy (x points)
NO FUNDING PERFORMANCE MEASURE	Project feasibility study received outside funding (Federal, State, and/or private) to reduce cost to County taxpayers (x points)	Project construction leverages non-County funds (Federal, State, and/or private) to reduce cost to County taxpayers (x points)

