Public Involvement Plan
For the Environmental Process

June 2018 - DRAFT

Puerto Rico Department of Transportation and Public Works
Puerto Rico Highway and Transportation Authority
Environmental Studies Office
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List of Acronyms

CE- Categorical Exclusion
CFR- Code of Federal Regulations
EA- Environmental Assessment
EIS- Environmental Impact Statement
EPA- Environmental Protection Agency
EQB- Environmental Quality Board
ESO- Environmental Studies Office
FHWA- Federal Highway Administration
FONSI- Finding of No Significant Impact
IPRC- Institute of Puerto Rican Culture
NEPA- National Environmental Policy Act
PIP- Public Involvement Plan
PRHTA- Puerto Rico Highway and Transportation Authority
ROD- Record of Decision
SAFETEA-LU- Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act
SHPO- State Historic Preservation Office
1 Introduction

Public involvement is an integral part of the project development process in which the public input is considered in decision making, which helps to ensure that decisions are made in consideration of and to benefit public needs and preferences. This document provides guidance and procedures for meeting public-involvement requirements for the Federal and State funded highway projects during the environmental process phase. The public involvement starts early in the planning phase of projects; the early stages of this process are discussed on the “Public Involvement Plan for the Puerto Rico 2040 Long-Range Multimodal Transportation Plan.” Puerto Rico Highway and Transportation Authority (PRHTA), through the Environmental Studies Office (ESO), intends to involve the public by providing for early, continuous, transparent, and effective access to information and decision making. The type and extent of public involvement varies according to the type, complexity, and level of public concern for the proposed project. Public involvement for highway improvement projects that use Federal-aid Highway funds shall be consistent with applicable State and Federal law, which states that public involvement shall be encouraged as an important element of project planning. This process enables agencies to make better-informed decisions through collaborative efforts, builds mutual understanding and trust between the agencies and the public they serve, and obtains input from those directly affected by the decisions made regarding transportation projects.

Importance of Public Involvement (PI)

Effective public involvement through all phases of the transportation decision-making process is the key to developing an efficient transportation system where projects move forward smoothly. In addition, it leads to transportation improvements that meet
community needs and desires, provides for greater acceptance of projects, and enhances agency credibility. Public involvement builds credible and trusting relationships between agencies and with the community. These relationships, in turn, will minimize conflict and help resolve potential problems that may arise when implementing a project. The public is more likely to support and take ownership of a plan or project when given time and opportunity to review information, share ideas and concerns, and observe changes as a result of their input. Participation establishes trust and openness in the decision-making process.
2 Responsible Parties

Public involvement, depending upon the complexity of the project, can require a large team of professionals to achieve. The ESO is the office responsible for the environmental phase of project development. As part of this efforts, the ESO is responsible for actively engaging the public and soliciting input, developing and implementing appropriate public-involvement activities, maintaining a list of interested groups and individuals, and ensuring that public involvement activities complies with public involvements requirements, including laws, Executive Orders and regulations regarding civil rights.

The ESO coordinates public-involvement meetings; reviews public-involvement notices, summaries, and other information for compliance with environmental requirements; evaluates the data acquired from public hearings and/or informative meetings; and uses that input in collaboration with the project-development team to take it into consideration for the environmental review process, highway project design, construction, operations, and maintenance.
3 Compliance Overview

Early involvement and participation of the public on projects development is required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Also, public participation or public involvement is required to comply with the following Federal and State requirements:

- **SAFEFEA-LU- Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act.**
  This act gives emphasis on developing early public involvement in the planning and programming process to protect the environment, promote the conservation of energy, and improve the quality of life. Also, it calls for the use of visualization techniques to strengthen public participation and, specifically, to aid the public in understanding proposed plans.

- **23 CFR 450.210- Interested parties, public involvement, and consultation.** In carrying out the statewide transportation planning process, including development of the long-range statewide transportation plan and the STIP, the State shall develop and use a documented public-involvement process that provides opportunities for public review and comment at key decision points.

- **23 CFR 771.111 - Early coordination, public involvement, and project development.** This regulation requires early coordination with appropriate agencies and the public aids in determining the type of environmental review documents an action requires, the scope of the document, the level of analysis, and related environmental requirements.

- **Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as codified at 42 USC Sections 12131-12134-** Requires public accommodations to provide equivalent access to individuals with disabilities.
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- USC Title 23, Sec. 128 requires public hearings and consideration of environmental impacts as part of planning projects for Federally-aided highways.
- USC Title 23, Sec 135 requires participation by interested parties in the development of statewide and nonmetropolitan transportation planning.
- **Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as codified at 42 USC 2000**- Prohibits federally assisted programs from discrimination based on race, color, or national origin. Since public funds are comprised of contributions from taxpayers of all races, colors, and national origins, fairness requires that federal activities receiving such funds be conducted in a manner that discourages racial discrimination.
- **Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations**- Promotes access by minority and low-income communities to public information and public participation.
- **Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency**- Requires agencies to develop plans so that people for whom English is not their native language or who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English can have meaningful access to the services provided. Requires recipients of federal funding to also provide meaningful access.
- **Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act 36 CFR Part 800**- Federal requirements mandate undertaking public involvement specific to historic properties potentially affected by a project.
- **Regulation for the Evaluation and Processing of Environmental Documents of the Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board**
- **Community Impact Assessment**- an iterative process to evaluate the effects of a transportation action on a community and its quality of life. It is a way to incorporate community considerations into the planning and project development of transportation projects. Several Federal regulations, statutes, policies, technical advisories, and Executive Orders support the need for a process to evaluate impacts on the human environment.

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Puerto Rico Highway and Transportation Authority
4 Public Involvement Need

As a recipient of Federal funds, the PRHTA is required to comply with various nondiscrimination laws and regulations to promote inclusive public involvement.

Determining appropriate methods:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If the project involves...</th>
<th>Then public involvement might be...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minor improvements; no additional right of way; no closure of existing access, and other projects that meets the criteria for CEs listed on 23 CFR 771.117(c).</td>
<td>Usually none needed, but it may be considered. The public-involvement method will be selected by PRHTA, in coordination with FHWA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor improvements; minor amount of additional right of way; projects with minor design changes; temporary easements; and other projects that meets the criteria for CEs listed on 23 CFR 771.117(d).</td>
<td>Public participation as surveys, particular public coordination, or public meeting. The public-participation activity will be selected by PRHTA in coordination with FHWA after the corresponding evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple alternatives are being developed in an early phase.</td>
<td>At least a public meeting will be held. PRHTA, in coordination with FHWA, will evaluate the need for other public involvement activities, depending on projects and issues that may be addressed.</td>
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### Public Involvement Plan (PIP) for the Environmental Process

<table>
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<tr>
<th>If the project involves...</th>
<th>Then public involvement might be...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Added capacity improvements; no or minimal additional right-of-way needed, and other</td>
<td>At least one public participation activity during scoping process, and the opportunity for a public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activities that do not qualifies as CE’s and do not require the preparation of an EIS.</td>
<td>hearing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projects that typically may require the preparation of an EA to determine the significance</td>
<td>Public hearing and other public-involvement activities. Also, public input will be requested in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the environmental impacts.</td>
<td>defining the purpose and need and when selecting alternatives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roadway on new location, controversial projects, and projects where an EA would determine</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>the significance of the environmental impacts; or if it is clear the action is likely to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cause significant impacts on the environment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above lists standard projects. If a project has unusual circumstances or impacts, additional analyses and public involvement may be needed. Projects requiring Institute of Puerto Rican Culture (IPRC) and/or State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) coordination, appropriate local groups and individuals will be contacted. As indicated on the previous table, even in projects with no significant environmental impact, public-involvement activities may be required. The level of involvement depends on the environmental impacts, significance of the issues and controversy associated with the project.
5 Public involvement activities

As mentioned in the table of Section 4, the method of public involvement varies. The type of involvement depends on the type of project, level of impact, laws and regulations requirements, and specific situations.

- **Community awareness notice** – For the projects that require PI.
  - Flyer
  - Newspaper
  - Website
  - Social media

- **Surveys** - Questionnaires are prepared and customized to obtain the information needed from the public. The results of these surveys are used as input for the project. The questionnaire may be handed to the residents and collected at a future date, or filled out at a public meeting, or completed during visits to the impacted community. When available, surveys will be available through Project website.

- **Individual coordination meeting or community visit** - Sometimes the information that PRHTA wants to deliver or the information that PRHTA needs to obtain from the community requires a more personal approach. In those situations, a visit to the community is arranged and the residents are interviewed. Sometimes this activity includes the preparation of a questionnaire to obtain input from the community. Another approach includes presentation to the community and/or association.

- **Public meetings** - Meetings provide a time and place for face-to-face contact and two-way communication that helps the interaction between community and the agency. Public meetings present information to the public and obtain informal input from community residents. The location of the public meeting is usually coordinated with the municipality to use public facilities near the project area and in compliance with American with Disabilities Act (ADA). Meetings are announced using banners, flyers, municipalities and PRHTA website, Facebook and Twitter.
agency official pages or other communication alternatives that could be available, and a public notice in a major or regional newspaper. The meetings will be announced at least 15 calendar days before the meeting. In the announcement, agency contact information will be included. Coordination with the municipalities will be performed, to request their cooperation spreading the meeting information with their “tumbadoras” (vehicles with speakers), when available. The format of the meetings may be a workshop, an open house, or small group community meetings.

- **Public Hearings**- A public hearing is a more formal event than a public meeting. A hearing always includes a verbatim transcript of public input. Held prior to a decision point, a public hearing gathers community comments and positions from all interested parties for public record and input into decisions. 23 CFR 771. 123(h) indicates that whenever a public hearing is held, the draft EIS shall be available at the public hearing and for a minimum of 15 days in advance of the public hearing. The availability of the draft EIS shall be mentioned, and public comments requested, in any public hearing notice and at any public hearing presentation. If a public hearing on an action proposed for FHWA funding is not held, a notice shall be placed in a newspaper similar to a public hearing notice advising where the draft EIS is available for review, how copies may be obtained, and where the comments should be sent.

- **23 CFR 771.111(h)(2)** indicates that the State public involvement/public hearing procedures must provide for: (iii) One or more public hearings or the opportunity for hearing(s) to be held by the State highway agency at a convenient time and place for any Federal-aid project which requires significant amounts of right-of-way, substantially changes the layout or functions of connecting roadways or of the facility being improved, has a substantial adverse impact on abutting property, otherwise has a significant social, economic, environmental or other effect, or for which the FHWA determines that a public hearing is in the public interest.(iv) Reasonable notice to the public of either a public hearing or the opportunity for a public hearing. Such notice will indicate the availability of explanatory information. The notice shall also provide information required to comply with public involvement requirements of other laws, Executive orders, and regulations. (v) Explanation at the public hearing of the following information, as appropriate:
  
  o  **(A)** The project’s purpose, need, and consistency with the goals and objectives of any local urban planning,
  
  o  **(B)** The project's alternatives, and major design features,
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- (C) The social, economic, environmental, and other impacts of the project,
- (D) The relocation assistance program and the right-of-way acquisition process.
- (E) The State highway agency's procedures for receiving both oral and written statements from the public.

(vi) Submission to the FHWA of a transcript of each public hearing and a certification that a required hearing or hearing opportunity was offered. The transcript will be accompanied by copies of all written statements from the public, both submitted at the public hearing or during an announced period after the public hearing. (vii) An opportunity for public involvement in defining the purpose and need and the range of alternatives, for any action subject to the project development procedures in 23 U.S.C. 139.

- For the State process, the Regulation for the Evaluation and Processing of Environmental Documents of the Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board of 2010 established: “in order to determine whether an action or matter requires holding a public hearing, the following factors are taken into account:
  - the magnitude and nature of the foreseen environmental impact, the size of the investment, the nature of the geographic area and the impacts on natural resources from the proposed action;
  - the degree of interest that the public, and other government agencies have in the proposed action;
  - the reasonable expectation that information may be presented in the public hearings that can help achieve the most comprehensive understanding of the action involved and its impact;
  - the reasonable expectation that it will help the Proposing Agency to meet its environmental responsibility regarding the proposed action.”

The public hearing will be announced in a general circulation newspaper cite the time, date, and place of a hearing. The period between notice and hearing dates provides time for preparing comments for submission to an
agency. This period will be no less than 30 calendar days. If interested parties are identified, direct invitation to the public hearing, by email or regular mail or any other method, will be performed. The attendees to the public hearing provide written or oral input on the project and receive information on how to contact the PRHTA to obtain updates on the ongoing process. Those who contact the agency receive information by email or regular mail, according to their preferences.

- **Language:** The official languages of Puerto Rico are Spanish and English. Spanish is the dominant language of business, education and daily life on the island. All the public involvement activities are conducted in Spanish and accommodation to any non-Spanish speaker is provided, when requested as specified in the Public Notice. Documents are developed both in English and Spanish.

The template for the public notice, in Spanish and English, are included in the appendix.
6 Documentation

The appropriate documentation, depending on the type of meeting, will be collected, considered and included in the environmental document as an appendix.

- Public meeting - the presentation used at the meeting and public input/comments.
- Public hearing - For Federal-aid highway projects, 23 CFR 771.117(h)(2)(vi) indicates that “submission to the FHWA of a transcript of each public hearing and a certification that a required hearing or hearing opportunity was offered. The transcript will be accompanied by copies of all written statements from the public, both submitted at the public hearing or during an announced period after the public hearing.”

The comments from the public will be evaluated and properly addressed. A summary of the public comments and how they were considered in the project development will be included in the environmental document.

The following flowchart illustrates minimum public involvement typical for proposed projects. Nevertheless, there are specific situations that even if public involvement is not required the PRHTA would consider to perform public involvement activities to obtain input from the community or to inform the community about specific issues. Note, that the Listed CE path is applicable if the public is not impacted, there is no detours, acquisition or land owner’s impacts. As previously mentioned, for EIS, before drafting the EIS, per 23 USC 139, there should be an opportunity for public input/public participation defining the purpose and need and the range of alternatives.
7 Public involvement according to the type of environmental document

Public involvement is not determined by the type of document required for NEPA Compliance. For each project PRHTA will evaluate the public involvement required or recommended. The following is a description of each type of environmental document and the typical public involvement actions.

7.1 Categorical Exclusion (CE)

There are two types of categorical exclusions: Listed CE and Documented CE.

7.1.1 Listed CE

A Listed CE is used for actions that meet the criteria for CE according to 40 CFR 1508.4 and normally do not require any further NEPA approval by FHWA. This includes projects that are done in the same footprint, with no additional right of way and no close of existing access. Those actions are listed on 23 CFR 771.117 (c) and includes, for example;

- Construction of bicycle and pedestrian facilities
- Installation of noise barriers
- Modernization of a highway by resurfacing, restoration, rehabilitation, reconstruction, adding shoulders, or adding auxiliary lanes (including parking, weaving, turning, and climbing lanes), that meets the constraints in 23 CFR 771.117 (e).
- Bridge rehabilitation, reconstruction, or replacement or the construction of grade separation to replace existing at-grade railroad crossings, if the action meets the constraints in 23 CFR 771.117(e).

If a Listed CE is the appropriate environmental document, under normal circumstances, there is no need for public involvement, as long as the public is not impacted by the proposed project. If PRHTA, in coordination with FHWA, understands that if for any reason the community oppose the project, public-participation activity will be pursued to determine the context and extent of the objection(s).

7.1.2 Documented CE
On the other hand, a Documented Categorical Exclusion is required when there are specific conditions that require additional documentation to demonstrate that the criteria for a CE are satisfied and that no significant environmental impact will result. Those actions are listed on 23 CFR 771.117 (d). Examples of those activities are:

- Modernization of a highway by resurfacing, restoration, rehabilitation, reconstruction, adding shoulders, or adding auxiliary lanes (including parking, weaving, turning, and climbing lanes), that do not meet the constraints in 23 CFR 771.117 (e).

- Bridge rehabilitation, reconstruction, or replacement or the construction of grade separation to replace existing at-grade railroad crossings, if the action does not meet the constraints in 23 CFR 771.117(e).
For the projects that qualify as categorical exclusions, as illustrated on the following flowchart, public participation may be required. Depending on the scope of the project, the type of activity will be coordinated with concurred by FHWA.
Categorical Exclusion Process

Activity listed on 23 CFR 771.117 (c)?

- Yes
  - Listed CE
    - Is Public Participation needed?
      - Yes: Public Participation Activity
      - No: Appropriate Documentation

- No: Documented CE
  - FHWA concurrence
7.2 Environmental Assessment (EA)/ Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

According to 23 CFR 771.119, when the proposed project requires an evaluation to verify if significant environmental impacts will result from that action, an EA is prepared. As part of the EA process public participation is included. The public involvement is started at an early stage of the process; public meetings are coordinated as needed even before the EA draft is prepared. After sending the Draft EA to the interested agencies, organizations, and stakeholders, a public notice of availability, notifying the opportunity of a public hearing and where the EA will be available for review, is posted in an island-wide newspaper. The public has thirty (30) calendar days to review the EA draft and provide comments. The EA document will be distributed to the Major Office of the municipalities impacted by the proposed action, the public libraries of those municipalities, and the ESO Office. During the 30 days review period, if a public hearing is requested, a public notice indicating the date of the hearing is posted at least fifteen (15) calendar days before the hearing. There are projects that, because of their nature or due to the information obtained from the public on previous activities, PRHTA prefers to conduct a public hearing. On those cases a public notice for a public hearing is published in a major or regional newspaper at the same time as the public notice for availability of a draft EA for review.

Also, in some cases, the PRHTA and FHWA will consider the creation of a Citizen Advisory Group (CAG). This group will be involved in the development of the project, representing the community and organizations with special interest in the project. The CAG will not have the decision-making responsibilities.

After the process, if the evaluation results in no significant impacts, PRHTA should furnish a copy of the revised EA, as appropriated; the public hearing transcripts, where applicable; copies of any comments received and responses thereto; and recommend a FONSI. A FONSI usually completes the environmental process and will typically be
granted once the public-involvement requirements are met and final endorsement by FHWA is received. Per 23 CFR 771.121(b), “After a FONSI has been made by the Administration, a notice of availability of the FONSI shall be sent by the applicant to the affected units of Federal, State and local government and the document shall be available from the applicant and the Administration upon request by the public. Notice shall also be sent to the State intergovernmental review contacts established under Executive Order 12372.” Per 23 CFR 771.119(i), “If, at any point in the EA process, the Administration determines that the action is likely to have a significant impact on the environment, the preparation of an EIS will be required.”

For those projects that PRHTA, in coordination with FHWA, understand that public participation is necessary, a public hearing will be announced at the same time as the public notice of availability of Draft EA. The following flowchart illustrates the public involvement in the EA process.
Environmental Assessment Process

1. Begin Environmental Assessment Process
2. Prepare draft EA
   - Public participation
3. Send to agencies, organizations and stakeholders
   - Public meetings as needed
4. Public Notice of availability of draft EA and opportunity of public hearing
5. 30 day public review and comment period
   - No
   - Public hearing requested within the 30 day review period?
     - Yes
8. Public Notice of Public hearing at least 15 days before the celebration of the public hearing
9. 15 day public review and comment period
10. Celebration of Public Hearing
11. Continue EA Process
7.3 Environmental Impact Statements (EIS)

When it is known that the proposed action will result in significant environmental impacts, an EIS is required. Section 1319(b) of MAP-21 directs the lead agency, to the maximum extent practicable, to expeditiously develop a single document that consists of an FEIS and ROD, unless certain conditions exist. Those conditions are:

1. The FEIS makes substantial changes to the proposed action that are relevant to environmental or safety concerns; or
2. There are significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and that bear on the proposed action or the impacts of the proposed action.

As part of the EIS process, a Coordination Plan and schedule is required per Section 6002 of Public Law 104-59, Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users, (SAFETEA-LU) and the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, 23 U.S.C. 139(g). The Coordination Plan will define the public-participation activities that will be performed during the NEPA review and their schedule. This document is coordinated with and approved by FHWA prior to the scoping meeting and is presented to agencies and public. Even if public meetings are performed, a public hearing is required as part of the process. This hearing is coordinated when the Draft EIS is prepared and filed with EPA. A public notice notifying of this hearing is posted on a major newspaper at least 15 calendar days before the hearing. After the public hearing occurs, the public has a minimum of 30 calendar days to review the document and provide comments. The public has a total of 45 days for document review and comment. The public comments are considered and responded in the Final EIS. The FEIS/ROD is filed with EPA and a public notice of availability is published in Federal Register, and after a 30 day no action period, if there is no new information that could change the decision, the ROD will be final. The following flowchart illustrates the minimum public participation during the EIS process.
Environmental Impact Statement Process

Proposed Action has significant impact?
- Yes → Send Advance Notification Package (AN) to Cooperating and Participating Agencies
- No → Internal review and approval of preliminary draft

If separate FEIS and ROD is required, then FEIS is submitted to FHWA for approval and publication in the Federal Register. After a 30-day no action period if there is no new information that could change the decision, ROD will be signed and become final.

Scoping Process

Prepare draft EIS

File draft EIS with EPA and publish notice of availability in Federal Register

Minimum 30 days public review of draft EIS

Minimum 15-day waiting period before public hearing

Public Hearing

Final EIS FHWA approval

Internal review and clearance of draft final EIS

Consider and respond to comments

Proposed Action has significant impact?
- Yes → Federal Register Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare EIS
- No → Prepare EA

Publish Notice of Public hearing

Prepare EA

Prepare EA

Proposed Action has significant impact?
- Yes → Federal Register Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare EIS
- No → Prepare EA

If separate FEIS and ROD is required, then FEIS is submitted to FHWA for approval and publication in the Federal Register. After a 30-day no action period if there is no new information that could change the decision, ROD will be signed and become final.

Environmental Impact Statement Process

Send Advance Notification Package (AN) to Cooperating and Participating Agencies

Federal Register Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare EIS

Scoping Process

Prepare draft EIS

Internal review and approval of preliminary draft

File draft EIS with EPA and publish notice of availability in Federal Register

Minimum 30 days public review of draft EIS

Minimum 15-day waiting period before public hearing

Public Hearing

Final EIS FHWA approval

Internal review and clearance of draft final EIS

Consider and respond to comments

Proposed Action has significant impact?
- Yes → Federal Register Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare EIS
- No → Prepare EA

If separate FEIS and ROD is required, then FEIS is submitted to FHWA for approval and publication in the Federal Register. After a 30-day no action period if there is no new information that could change the decision, ROD will be signed and become final.
8 Other Actions Requiring Public Involvement

PRHTA as part of the NEPA and design process sometimes needs public involvement to make decisions that may directly impact individuals and communities.

**Work Zone Impacts**

Sometimes, the projects will not have any direct permanent impact on communities, but require that the public be informed if there will be important but temporary impacts during the construction phase. For example, if during any stage of project construction a road segment will be closed for a prolonged period, more than three (3) days, or if the access to an important place for the community will be affected, or any other particular reasons, as evaluated by PRHTA, public participation is appropriate. In those situations, a public meeting is held to inform the community about those impacts and to address any concern that they may have due to those impacts, including any impacts on the safety and accessibility of bicycle and pedestrian facilities through work zones.

**Noise**

FHWA’s noise regulations (23 CFR 772) and the PRHTA Traffic Noise Abatement Procedures provide broad authority and responsibility for evaluating and mitigating adverse effects of highway traffic noise. Therefore, PRHTA has the responsibility to include adequate noise abatement measures to comply with the standards developed by FHWA for mitigating highway traffic noise. As part of this process, public involvement is necessary to provide feedback from the individuals that will be affected by the construction of noise walls. Surveys, individual resident orientation, or public meetings
are used to inform the affected people. In general, public reaction to highway noise barriers is positive; however, specific reactions vary widely. Sometimes, residents prefer not to have the wall constructed even knowing that the noise will increase. Reasons for that decision vary from restriction of view, a feeling of confinement, a loss of air circulation, a loss of sunlight and lighting, etc. Detailed information on noise prediction, impacts, and abatement are included on the Noise Policy in the development and operation of transportation projects that was effective on July 13, 2011, and is currently in effect.

**Citizen Advisory Groups**

There are projects that, from the beginning of the planning process, PRHTA have the perception that may be controversial or have sensitive areas. On those projects after the corresponding evaluation from ESO, a citizen advisory group might be created to obtain input from those who represent the interest of the community. This group will have continuous advisory participation during the development of the project but is not part of the ultimate decision making.

**Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act**

Public notice and an opportunity for public review and comment on a Section 4(f) *de minimis* impact finding are required in accordance with 49 U.S.C. 303(d). Depending on the class of action, the NEPA reviews can be planned and organized to meet both NEPA and Section 4(f)-based public involvement requirements simultaneously.
9 Duration and Amendments

This plan will be valid during a five-year period from date of approval. An annual meeting with FHWA will be performed to discuss if an update is needed. If major changes are performed to the PIP, the amended plan will be published with a 30-day period for comments. After this period the Amended Plan will be approved by the FHWA and adopted by the PRHTA.
10 Appendix
PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC HEARING (OR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT MEETING)

<ENTER NAME OF PROJECT>

FROM <ENTER STARTING PROJECT LIMIT> TO <ENTER ENDING PROJECT LIMIT>

<ENTER MUNICIPALITY (IES)>, PUERTO RICO

<ENTER AC CODE>

The Department of Transportation and Public Works (DTPW), the Puerto Rico Highway and Transportation Authority (PRHTA), and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), hereby, notify private organizations, state and federal agencies, municipal entities and public the celebration of the Public <Hearing or Involvement Meeting> for the <Enter the action> in the Municipality (or Municipalities) of <Municipality (ies)>.

The Public <Hearing or Involvement Meeting> will be held on <Enter the date> at <Enter the time> in the facilities of <location including name and address>, of the Municipality (ies) of <Municipality (ies)>. The project consists in <In simple and easy-to-understand language and in three to five sentences, describe the proposed project, including the road number(s), project termini, total distance in miles, purpose, number of lanes or dimensions of bridge, and municipalities affected>

<Enter one or two sentences exposing the main purpose of the meeting>

Shall anyone need reasonable accommodation, please notify in advance by calling <Enter contact number>. If anyone wishes to present comments on relevant aspects relating to the project, please send them to:

<Enter Contact person>, <Enter contact person position>
Puerto Rico Highway and Transportation Authority
PO Box 42007, San Juan, Puerto Rico 00940-2007

Comments shall be received within <Enter number of days fifteen (15) or thirty (30) > calendar days from the Public <Hearing or Involvement Meeting> celebration date.

_______________________________
<Name of DOTPW Secretary>  
Secretary  
Department of Transportation and Public Works

<Name of PRHTA Executive Director>  
Executive Director  
Puerto Rico Highway and Transportation Authority

Puerto Rico Environmental Public Policy (LAW 416, September 22, 2004 as amended) and Environmental Quality Board Regulation for the Evaluation and Process for Environmental Documents of November 30, 2010 as amended.

Laws and Environmental Impacts and Related Procedures (23CFR Part 771), Section 4(f), Section 106, Federal Highway Administration
AVISO PUBLICO

<VISTA PÚBLICA O REUNIÓN DE PARTICIPACIÓN CIUDADANA>

<ENTRE EL NOMBRE DEL PROYECTO>

DE <ENTRE EL COMIENZO DEL PROYECTO> A <ENTRE EL FINAL DEL PROYECTO>

<ENTRE EL MUNICIPIO O MUNICIPIOS>, PUERTO RICO

<ENTRE AC CODE>

El Departamento de Transportación y Obras Públicas (DTOP), la Autoridad de Carreteras y Transportación (ACT) y la Administración Federal de Carreteras (FHWA, por sus siglas en inglés) anuncian a las organizaciones privadas, agencias estatales y federales, entidades municipales y público en general, la celebración de la <Reunión de Participación Ciudadana, o Vista pública> para el <Entre el proyecto a realizar incluyendo los límites>, en <el o los> Municipio<s> de <Entre municipio o municipios>.

La <Reunión de Participación Ciudadana, o Vista pública> ciudadana se celebrará el <Fecha completa> a partir de las <Hora> en las facilidades de <Localización, incluyendo dirección completa> en el <los> Municipio<s> de <Entre municipio o municipios>.

Este proyecto consiste en <En una manera simple y con un lenguaje fácil de entender en cinco oraciones o menos describa el proyecto propuesto, incluyendo el número de carretera(s), límites del proyecto, distancia total en millas, propósito, cantidad de carriles o dimensiones de la estructura y los municipios afectados>.

<Reunión de Participación Ciudadana, o Vista pública>

El propósito principal de <Reunión de Participación Ciudadana, o Vista pública> es <Entre una o dos oraciones exponiendo el propósito principal de la reunión>.

De alguna persona necesitar acomodo razonable, por favor, notifíquelo con antelación al <Entre número de contacto>. Cualquiera que desee someter comentarios sobre aspectos relevantes al proyecto, favor de enviarlos a la siguiente dirección:

<Entre nombre de persona de contacto>, <Entre puesto de persona de contacto>
Autoridad de Carreteras y Transportación
PO Box 42007, San Juan, Puerto Rico 00940-2007

Los comentarios se recibirán dentro de los próximos <Entre la cantidad de días (15 ó 30)> días calendario a partir de la fecha de celebración de la <Reunión de Participación Ciudadana, o Vista pública>.

________________________________
<Nombre del Secretario del DTOP>
Secretario
Departamento de Transportación y Obras Públicas

________________________________
<Nombre del Director Ejecutivo>
Director Ejecutivo
Autoridad de Carreteras y Transportación

LEYES Y PROCEDIMIENTOS RELACIONADOS CON IMPACTO AMBIENTAL (23 CFR PARTE 771, SECCION 4(f), SECCION 106) ADMINISTRACION FEDERAL DE CARRETERAS.