

Comments and Coordination

What's in Chapter 6?

Chapter 6 explains the ongoing coordination that has occurred with both the public and the agencies involved in the project. It includes a discussion of each of the meetings held and the methods of communication that were used to share information about the project. It also includes a discussion of what the next steps in the EIS process will be.

6.1 Public Involvement

A public involvement plan was created as part of this project to ensure a highly participatory public participation process with an efficient exchange of information. Additional information on this process can be found in the *Public Involvement Plan* report, dated May 2008.

Meetings

Scoping Meetings

A set of public scoping meetings were held for the project in October 2006. The first of these meetings was held on October 24, 2006 in Arlington County, Virginia at the Aurora Hills Community Center. The next meeting was held on October 25, 2006 in Washington, DC at the Amidon Elementary School. These meetings began with an open house, followed by a presentation, and a question and answer session. The meetings ended with a group activity that allowed participants to identify and prioritize problems within the Corridor.

What is a Scoping Meeting?

A Scoping Meeting is a public meeting held early in the planning process to gather ideas and allow the public to express their opinions on what alternatives should be considered and what environmental impacts should be studied during the Environmental Impact Statement process.

For the group exercise, meeting participants were presented with a list of ten major issues within the 14th Street Bridge Corridor. Each participant was given six stickers and asked to rank the issues by placing the stickers next to the ones they felt were the most important. Participants were allowed to place more than one sticker next to an issue to emphasize the importance of that issue. **Table 6.1** lists the ten issues, according to public ranking at both meetings, along with the number and percent of stickers placed by that issue.

Participants at both the Arlington, Virginia meeting and the Washington, DC meeting had comments regarding issues more specific to their portion of the study area. The public comments received from the Arlington, Virginia scoping meeting pointed out that a key aspect of the project should be the biking and walking communities. Their major concern is to ensure direct bicycle and walking access to the area parklands. Another major concern is the Crystal City Metro stop and how it interacts with the study area. It was suggested that since most of the residents in Crystal City work within Washington, DC, fixing traffic issues in this area will be a good way to ensure less confusion on the roads.

The public comments received from the Washington, DC scoping meeting were primarily from the residents whose major concern is minimizing the amount of cars and eliminating traffic in the District. The idea suggested to achieve such this goal is to set up visitor centers outside of Washington, DC, in Maryland and Virginia, to facilitate the use of the Metro and access into the city. The expectation of the residents is that the visitor's centers will lower the amount of traffic coming into the District, which will lessen the amount of cars and the driver confusion. The overall goal is to reduce traffic over the bridge by ten to 15 percent rather than to add more lanes to the bridge.

Table 6.1
Corridor Issues Ranked by the Public at the Scoping Meetings

Corridor Issue	Total	Percent
Improving transit, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities serving commuters, visitors, and recreation.	35	27.8%
Providing access to waterfront and to hiker/biker paths.	21	16.7%
Improving transportation system efficiency/enhance mobility.	16	12.7%
Protecting/maintaining parklands, wetlands, and the Potomac River.	16	12.7%
Improving safety and reducing motorist confusion.	13	10.3%
Providing clear and consistent signage to motorist.	10	7.9%
Enhancing gateway Corridor features, aesthetics, and appearance.	7	5.5%
Enhancing role as an evacuation route.	5	4.0%
Optimizing public investment.	2	1.6%
Addressing security issues of national concern.	1	0.8%
TOTAL	126	100%

The attendees of the Washington, DC meeting also tried to emphasize the necessity that their sense of community is kept intact. For instance, Banneker Overlook and L'Enfant Promenade are not to be altered; however, the surrounding areas could have improvements added. The residents are also against the idea of parking facilities, or the construction of a bus and tourist parking garage, because these facilities will add traffic to the community.

A major concern from both of the community meetings is driver confusion due to poor signage. Residents of the Arlington community stated that the traffic patterns are so confusing that even the residents get confused or are not able to comprehend the signals. Participants at both meetings were consistent in requesting a change to traffic signage to improve clarity throughout the study area.

The comments received at the scoping meetings were considered in the development of the project purpose and need. In some cases, the specific actions proposed for consideration were carried forward as Improvement Options.

Public Workshops

A set of public workshops were held on February 27 and 28, 2007 at Amidon Elementary School in Washington, DC and at Aurora Hills Community Center in Arlington County, Virginia, respectively. These meetings included an open house, a presentation of the existing conditions report, and an improvement concepts development activity. For the improvement concepts development activity, participants were divided into small groups and using maps, tracing paper, and markers were asked to come up with several improvement concepts that could help congestion and improve safety in the Corridor. These improvement concepts were then examined and organized by the project team to be presented at the public information meetings.

At each of the public workshops, attendees had the opportunity to participate in a question and answer session with the project team. At the workshop in Washington, DC, attendees commented and inquired about reducing congestion along Maine Avenue to 4th Street and between 4th and 7th Streets; the expansion of the Metro Navy Yard station; adding a goal of improving air quality to the project by considering congestion pricing options; and, concerns that building new roads will encourage more people to travel the area, leading to more traffic congestion.

Following the question and answer session, the Washington, DC workshop attendees participated in the workshop activity. Participants provided the following ideas and options to improve the Corridor:

- Add traffic islands or roundabouts/traffic circles (ex. G Street and 6th Street SW).
- Implement congestion charges.
- Implement a gasoline tax.
- Make South Capitol Street from I-395 to South Capitol Bridge a continuous roadway separated from surface streets.
- Add express bus lanes.
- Add new Metro line from Arlington to DC.
- Construct a pedestrian bridge over the Potomac River.
- Need better signage for lane drops
- Need more merge area at the George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP) interchange.
- Close the ramp at 14th Street and Maine Avenue.
- Maintain 7th and D Streets Metro entrance.
- Build a dedicated bicycle/pedestrian bridge.
- Add trolleys.
- Add acceleration lanes on I-395.
- Change the entrance ramp on 395 from 9th Street to a left hand merge.
- Tear down the SW Freeway.
- Create pedestrian bridges connecting the SW waterfront to East Potomac Park.
- Keep Water Street open.
- Extend the study area to include all of SW.
- Open Potomac Avenue to keep traffic out of residential areas.
- Have ramps to I-395 around 2nd Street SW and east of South Capitol Street.
- Create access to East Potomac Park from Westbound Avenue.
- Address the merge from 7th Street Ramp to I-295.
- Create a better pedestrian connection from the tidal basin to SW.

During the question and answer session at the Arlington, Virginia workshop, attendees commented and inquired about the bus and rail ridership numbers; the traffic impact from the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) and the growth of Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport; the areas of influence beyond the limits of the study area for considering traffic and land use impacts; the possibility of implementing non-construction improvements (signing, telecommuting, etc) prior to construction improvements; the development of an area Master Plan for bikes and pedestrians; and the long-term view of the Corridor.

As part of the workshop activity, which followed the question and answer session, Arlington, Virginia workshop participants provided the following suggestions for improving the Corridor:

- Add directional signage at Crystal City when exiting off I-395.
- Add a bicycle/pedestrian connection between North Tract and GWMP.
- Add bicycle lanes along Joyce Street that cross I-395.
- Add bicycle crossings at Fern Street, Eads Street, and Jefferson Davis Highway.
- Add a bicycle lane on 110.
- Upgrade the existing bicycle lane along 27.
- Increase transit throughout Corridor.
- Add a transitway on Jefferson Davis Highway.
- Add dedicated bus lanes.
- Add a stop sign at I-395 exit on to South Arlington Ridge Road.
- Need connection from GWMP/Mount Vernon Trail to North Tract Park.
- Add a bicycle/pedestrian bridge over the GWMP to North Tract Park.
- Improve signage.
- Allow three lanes of the bridge to go straight into 14th Street and another three lanes to go straight into I-395, for a total of six lanes traveling northeast from Arlington to Washington, DC.
- Have the Federal government limit access to the I-395 corridor during certain hours of the day.
- Convert the existing freeway into a different type of roadway, such as arterial (with stop controls, signals, and changes in access).

Public Information Meetings

2007 Meetings

The first set of public information meetings was held on October 9 and 10, 2007 at the Aurora Hills Community Center in Arlington County, Virginia and at the Amidon Elementary School in Washington, DC, respectively. These meetings included an open house, an update on project status, a presentation of the Improvement Options, a question and answer session, and an activity. The activity in these meetings was for the public to create alternatives by grouping the Improvement Options, developed with ideas from the public workshops, to create improvement alternatives to be studied in more detail through the EIS process.



Participants At The Public Information Meeting

Attendees at the Arlington, Virginia meeting commented that they would like to see improved transit operations and would like a public Park and Ride added near the Pentagon. During the activity, 50 percent or more of the participants were in favor of the following Improvement Options:

- Expand Metro cars;
- Improve pedestrian connections; and
- Construct a separated bicycle/pedestrian crossing.

Attendees at the Washington, DC meeting commented that they would like residents from Maryland and Virginia to pay a toll for entering the District; are interested in how this study will incorporate traffic from the new Nationals Baseball Stadium; and are highly opposed to the transit center at Banneker Overlook. During the activity, 50 percent or more of the participants were in favor of the following Improvement Options:

- Expand Metro cars;
- Construct separated bicycle/pedestrian crossing;
- Improve pedestrian connections in the Corridor;
- Create integrated (DC-VA-National Park Service [NPS]) bicycle system, including signing for commuters and other destination bikers;
- Improve pedestrian signing; and
- Implement signing modifications.

2010 Meetings

A second set of Public Information Meetings was held on May 25 and 27, 2010. These meetings included a review of the project status and a presentation of alternatives retained for detailed study. Each meeting provided the attendees with an opportunity to submit comments on the importance of each retained alternative. The May 25th meeting was held in Washington, DC at the Westminster Presbyterian Church on I Street Southwest. The meeting was attended by ten members of the public which included representatives from the Holocaust Museum, the US Navy, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), District Department of Transportation (DDOT), Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) 6D, Parson Brinkerhoff (PB), and three local residents. The May 27th meeting was held in Arlington, Virginia at the Walter Reed Community Center on 16th Street South. The meeting was attended by 11 members of the public which included representatives from Arlington County, WMATA, the US Navy, Department of Defense (DoD), and seven local residents.

Citizen Participation Panel

The 14th Street Bridge Corridor Citizen Participation Panel (CPP) consisted of four members, appointed by the Council for the District of Columbia and the Arlington County Board of Supervisors. The CPP was

convened to provide advice and input to the project team on the public participation process and outreach as well as the presentation of the assessment of alternatives.

The CPP was a working group of people who met consistently throughout the study, generally in advance of the public information meetings. This enabled the CPP to review proposed responses to prior public comment and to examine the materials intended for the next public meeting. The group was convened by invitation or appointment by invited organizations, not by general advertisement; however, interested non-members who asked to attend were welcomed and the meetings were open to the public.

The agenda of the CPP meetings focused on evaluation of materials for public distribution, display maps, and concept drawings prepared by the project team from a public perspective. Information materials were consistent with a “Working Session” format, as opposed to formal public meetings. All materials to be displayed were reviewed and approved by the Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division (EFLHD).

The CPP meetings were held as shown in **Table 6.2**.

**Table 6.2
Citizen Participation Panel Meetings**

Meeting	Date	Meeting Purpose
CPP Meeting #1	April 9, 2007	Overview of CPP, Summer Activities
CPP Meeting #2	September 24, 2007	Review Materials for October Public Meetings
CPP Meeting #3	June 30, 2009	Review List of Options Retained for Detailed Study

Methods of Communication

Advertisements

Newspaper notices were developed to announce the public information meetings. Notices were published a minimum of 15 days prior to the scheduled meeting date(s). The notices appeared in the newspaper “Metro” section as a minimum 3” x 5” size. Notices were run in the following newspapers:

What is the Citizen Participation Panel (CPP)?

The CPP is made up of four members appointed by the Council for the District of Columbia and the Arlington County Board of Supervisors. The CPP meets in advance of the public meetings to discuss and provide input on the materials to be presented at the meetings and on general project issues including alternatives.

- Washington Post newspaper – “District Extra” weekly edition
- Washington Post Express
- The Arlington Sun Gazette
- El Tiempo Latino
- The Southwester

Newsletter

A newsletter, called *Gateway Gazette*, was created for the 14th Street Bridge Corridor EIS Project. The newsletter announced upcoming events for the project and included discussions of the public information meetings and other relevant project news. Each newsletter also contained a project timeline and a message from the project manager. The newsletter was mailed to individuals, organizations, and businesses, many of whom requested to be placed on the mailing list. Summaries of the project newsletters are contained in **Table 6.3**.

Table 6.3
14th Street Bridge Corridor EIS Project Newsletter Summary

Newsletter	Summary
No. 1 February 2007	This first issue of the newsletter discussed the community kick-off of the 14 th Street Bridge Corridor planning study. The October 2006 Public Scoping Meetings were discussed. A preliminary project timeline was also included.
No. 2 May 2007	The second newsletter discussed the second round of Public Information Meetings which were held on February 2007. A summary of the project team field view was included. An announcement that the Existing Conditions report was available online was also included.
No. 3 September 2007	The third issue of the newsletter announced a third round of upcoming October 2007 Public Information Meetings which will introduce the potential alternatives to be studied. A general summary of the comments received from the public and responses was also included.
No. 4 March 2008	The fourth issue of the newsletter included a discussion of the October 2007 Public Information Meetings which introduced the potential improvement options to be studied during the EIS process. A summary of the License Plate Survey was also included.
No. 5 June 2009	The fifth of the newsletter discussed the alternatives that have been retained for detailed study as part of this DEIS. It also included a project snapshot and an updated project timeline.

Website

An interactive project website, www.14thstreetbridgecorridoreis.com, was designed to educate the public and to receive feedback on the 14th Street Bridge Corridor Project. The website is an important outreach tool for a wide variety of audiences interested in the Corridor and in transportation issues in general. The site includes a project overview, study area map, public meeting materials, newsletters and other resources, and information on the project team. An email link is also provided on the website for the public to ask questions and provide feedback.

6.2 Agency Involvement

Throughout the project process, Federal and State resource and regulatory agencies were encouraged to participate in the project development. Agency coordination included meetings, correspondence, presentations at agency meetings, and special field views of the study area.

Meetings

Steering Committee Meetings

Steering Committee Meetings were held periodically to gather together those members of the steering committee to review the status of the project and make project decisions.

The following meetings of the steering committee were held:

- July 19, 2006 – Kickoff Meeting #1
- September 6, 2006 – Meeting #2
- February 9, 2007 – Meeting #3
- March 7, 2007 – Meeting #4 – Field View
- April 24, 2007 – Meeting #5
- June 6, 2007 – Meeting #6
- August 8, 2007 – Meeting #7
- September 19, 2007 – Meeting #8
- November 13, 2007 – Meeting #9
- July 28, 2008 – Meeting #10
- April 15, 2009 – Meeting # 11
- February 2, 2009 – Meeting #12
- October 7, 2009 – Meeting #13
- April 21, 2010 – Meeting #14

Who are the Members of the Steering Committee?

- Federal Highway Administration
- Virginia Department of Transportation
- District Department of Transportation
- Arlington County
- National Park Service
- Department of Defense

Interagency Technical Group Meetings

Several meetings of the Interagency Technical Group were held throughout the planning phase of the project. The first Interagency Technical Group meeting was the Agency Scoping Meeting held on October 11, 2006. The second meeting was held on February 22, 2007 to present an overview of findings from the existing conditions report. The third meeting held on September 19, 2007 to present the preliminary concepts and initial screening process. The fourth Interagency Technical Group meeting was held on May 21, 2009 to discuss the designation of Bus Only Lanes and Shared Bus/High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV)/High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes on streets in the District of Columbia. The fifth meeting held on May 18, 2010 was to discuss the proposed alternatives for the 14th Street Bridge Corridor EIS.



Steering Committee Meeting

- HOT Lanes Coordination Meeting – September 27, 2007
- MWCOG Briefing – February 7, 2008
- Pentagon Meeting/Site Visit – June 20, 2008
- DOD, NPS GWMP, Arlington County Update Meeting – February 4, 2009
- VDOT Update Meeting – February 4, 2009
- DDOT Update meeting – March 3, 2009
- Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) Traffic Modeling Meeting – March 4, 2009
- MWCOG/TPB Technical Coordination Meeting – March 24, 2009
- WMATA Project Status Meeting – May 19, 2009
- DoD/Pentagon Meeting/Site Visit – August 26, 2009
- VDOT Briefing Meeting – January 28, 2010
- DDOT Briefing Meeting – February 18, 2010
- DDOT movable barrier meeting/Site Visit – May 21, 2010
- Holocaust Museum Meeting/Site Visit – June 3, 2010
- DDOT/WMATA Bus Prioritization Meeting – July 19, 2010
- NPS Traffic Analysis Meeting – September, 16, 2010

Bicycle/Pedestrian Workshop

The bicycle/pedestrian workshop was held on February 14, 2008. The purpose of this meeting was to gather input from stakeholders on:

- Current bicycle/pedestrian issues to be addressed in the EIS;
- Condition of existing bicycle/pedestrian systems in the study area;
- Future bicycle and pedestrian plans under study; and
- Recommendations for proposed bicycle/pedestrian improvements.

Participants in this meeting were invited to examine the project area display map to suggest what might be missing. Participants then separated into groups to discuss what they felt to be the primary problems within the study area and develop potential solutions.

Supplemental Meetings

Additional briefing meetings were held with individual agencies as requested to discuss issues that pertained to each of the individual groups. These meetings included:

- VDOT Briefing – August 20, 2007
- DDOT Briefing – September 6, 2007

Field Views

A field view of the project Corridor with the stakeholders occurred on March 7, 2007. Participants included 24 stakeholders and members of the project team. Numerous locations within the project study area were viewed including:

- East Potomac Park
- Pentagon
- US Air Force Memorial
- Navy Marine Memorial
- George Washington Memorial Parkway
- Southwest Washington, DC
- RFK Stadium
- Pentagon City
- South Eads Street
- 4th Street
- Benjamin Banneker Park
- L'Enfant Promenade
- 14th and C Streets
- Thomas Jefferson Memorial
- Potomac Park Exit to East Basin Drive



Agency Field View

This Page Intentionally Left Blank