

District 5–SR 46 East Comprehensive Corridor Study

Project Summary

Caltrans District 5 worked with MIG to provide strategic facilitation services to complete a Comprehensive Corridor Study for a critical east/west transportation corridor for local, regional, and interregional traffic in California's Central Coast. The resulting multi-agency collaboration featured a successful public engagement process that helped to identify interim and long-term corridor improvements, and was unanimously accepted by the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG) Board, SLO County and endorsed by the City of Paso Robles.



Project Success

The successful planning process has improved working relationships between Caltrans and local agencies, and was honored by the California Transportation Foundation as the 2009 Public Outreach Program of the Year.



Outreach Methods

- Project branding (logo and tagline)
- Project newsletter
- Project fact sheets
- Press releases
- Workshop announcements: postcards, door hangers, canvassing
- Speaking engagements at local Rotary Club and on radio
- Local media coverage



Public Involvement Tools

Stakeholder Interviews

MIG conducted stakeholder interviews with individual and institutional representatives suggested by Study Team members. These interviews helped MIG develop the overall public involvement process and provided a preview of issues to be addressed.

Large Group Discussions

MIG facilitated large group discussions to generate dialogue about the experience of driving on SR 46 East. Meeting attendees provided a user perspective of the highway, a complement to the technical Caltrans perspective. The large group discussion, driven by key questions developed by MIG and Caltrans, served as a powerful method for residents to discuss their personal experience on the highway and build a sense of common purpose among meeting participants.



Small Group Exercises

Small group exercises allowed participants to provide feedback on transportation improvement scenarios by making use of aerial photographs and graphic game pieces depicting various improvement options.



Comment Cards

MIG provided comment cards for participants who did not wish to speak publicly. Participants could fill out the cards and turn them in at the workshop itself or mail them afterward.

Spanish Translation

MIG created Spanish-language meeting materials to encourage participation from Latino community members.

Visualization Techniques

MIG utilized visualizations of the proposed transportation improvements alternatives to make it easy for meeting attendees to understand the available options and provide their preferred recommendations.

Deliverables

Community Engagement Plan
Stakeholder Interview Summary
Study Team Meeting Summaries
Community Workshop Summaries
Final Project Report

continued next page

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continued from previous page

Training Planners on Public Engagement Techniques and Strategies

The District staff partnered with MIG at every step in the process, and had the opportunity to discuss and implement a variety of successful public engagement techniques and strategies.

Project Website

The project website, www.46eastforthefuture.org, served as a virtual project portal. The site featured planning and background documents as well as a description of the Comprehensive Corridor Study (CCS) planning process and opportunities for public involvement. Project documents can now be viewed at www.dot.ca.gov/hq/tpp/offices/oasp/corridor-mobility-org/pages/d5-page.html. This project was featured as a case study at the April 22, 2009, Caltrans Planning Horizons. (See pages 23-27, www.dot.ca.gov/hq/tpp/offices/opd/past_files/PlanningHorizons_April22FINAL.pdf.)

Environmental Justice Community Involvement

MIG translated essential written materials into Spanish and coordinated with the Economic Opportunity Council, a local community-based organization and a local educator, to do outreach to the Latino community and youth so individuals would know they were welcome and would be able to fully participate in planning discussions. The Informational Workshop held on March 5, 2008, educated the public on the CCS process so that they could be better prepared to take part.



Results

The project resulted in greater agency partnerships and collaboration, increased public awareness of long-range, multi-jurisdictional transportation planning issues, integration of Caltrans policies (such as Context Sensitive Solutions) into the process, and the articulation of a long-term vision for the corridor, as well as improving Caltrans' image in the area.

The project demonstrated Caltrans' leadership on transportation and land use and improved relationships with key partners by developing a corridor study that accounted for Local Circulation patterns in conjunction with the development of the City of Paso Robles General Plan Traffic Circulation Element Update.

The final results of the process are reflected in the content of the Comprehensive Corridor Study and will be referenced in other local plans such as the Caltrans Corridor System Management Plan (CSMP) for State Route 46 and the SLOCOG Regional Transportation Plan.



Lessons Learned

Caltrans can successfully improve working relationships with local partners through ongoing dialogue and planning discussions at the strategic and technical level.