

# Session Two

## The Value of Public Involvement

### 1. Definition *the public*?

#### Who is *the public*?

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project team

internal

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citizen

future

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***The public* is any individual or group of individuals, organization, or political entity with an interest in the outcome of a project. These stakeholders may be, or perceive that they may be, affected directly or indirectly.**

Internal stakeholders (individuals who work for or with the decision-making organization) are also part of the public.

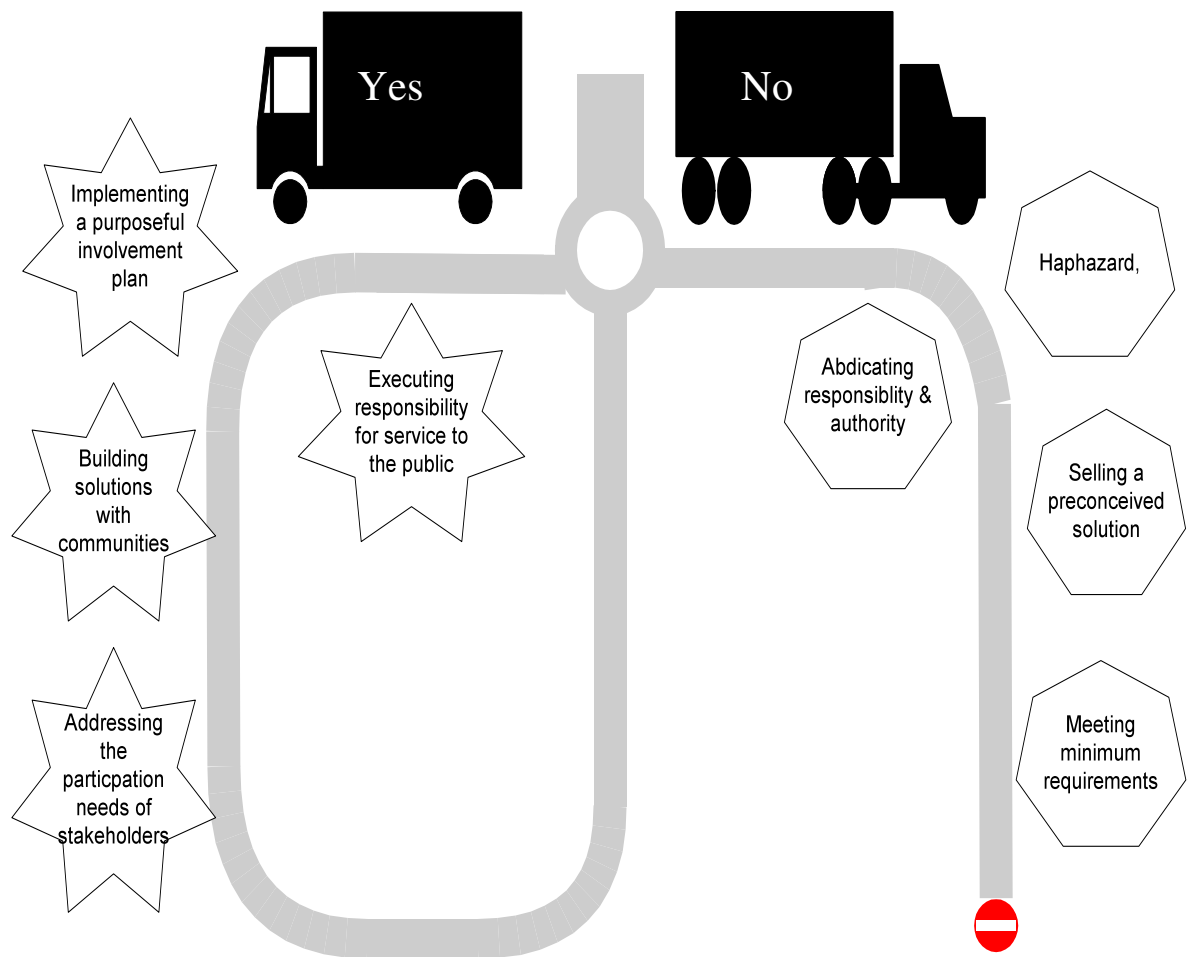
Three effective ways to identify *the public*, as well as issues to be addressed within the project are to:

- Consider the affects of the project and the individuals, groups and organizations that are likely to feel influenced. For example: An intersection redesign to accommodate greater semi truck turning radius will increase the distance from curb to curb. School children, senior citizens and persons with disabilities will require additional time to cross the expanse.
- Consider perceptions about the project. Stakeholders will include people who suspect they will be affected – whether based in fact or imagination. For example: “Air brake and other truck noise is going to be loud and disturbing all day and night, if the intersection is expanded. Even, in my neighborhood two blocks away.”
- List the people and groups that care about the decision and, their interests and concerns. For example: Obviously, property owners care about impacts. City elected officials care about their constituents’ issues. The Local Garden and Arborist Enthusiasts care about the loss of old growth trees. The DOT cares about improving safety and access through the intersection.

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### 2. What public involvement is and is not.



***Public involvement* is the purposeful planning and implementation of a program for engagement of potentially affected stakeholders and interested persons in projects and decisions.**

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### 3. Why do public Involvement?

#### Open Space Meeting - Technique

##### Explanation

**Open Space Meetings are a means of sharing responsibility for a meeting with participants, so topics of interest to multiple stakeholder groups can be covered simultaneously. The meetings tend to have a central theme. The steps to Open Space are:**

- 1. Verify that an Open Space meeting services the needs of the project P2 plan objectives and the needs of participants.**
- 2. Announce the meeting, the theme & describe the meeting.**
- 3. Start the meeting with a general session of welcome and purpose.**
- 4. Review the meeting theme.**
- 5. With the participants and the project team generate the topics to be discussed in small simultaneous groups. Identify if topics can be combined or need to be “stand alone”. NOTE: Consider the impact on the meeting objectives of having a multitude of very small groups. However, any topic that has significant interest should be included.**
- 6. Explain the next steps. Provide handouts that explain the process and give directions to the small group assignments.**
- 7. Post the topics on signs around the room – at a distance from each. Ask all those interested in a topic to congregate near their topic sign.**
- 8. Send each group off to a separate location to discuss the topic. Reinforce the small group assignment and the time to reconvene as a full session.**
- 9. Each group assigns a facilitator and a recorder. The groups conclude their discussion and prepare to take back their summary to the full session.**
- 10. In a final full session, a report technique is used to share information from all groups. Examples of feedback techniques include:
  - verbal small group reports,
  - poster summaries
  - panel report and discussion**
- 11. Open Space meeting close and next steps identified.**

**Examples of when the technique might be used during some decision steps. Using the technique for all examples within the same project is NOT recommended.**

#### **Step 1 - Scope - Identify problem**

**Use an early meeting with stakeholders to identify the problem and verify DOT’s responsibilities and identify other key decision makers (DNR, developer, county, etc.)**

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**Example of a theme:** What is the problem with the Hwy 8? **NOTE:** not a problem solving session!

**Example of topics:** Detail the problems of Congestion, Safety, Economics, Aesthetics

### **Step 3 - Determine Criteria**

Use as an early meeting with stakeholders to identify the needs, desires and expectations for improvements – or the preliminary criteria that the improvements to the Hwy will address.

**Example of a theme:** In concept, what would be different if the problems with Hwy 8 were addressed. **NOTE:** not a design session!

**Example of topics:** Identify notable differences that would occur in Congestion, Safety, Economics, Aesthetics

### **Especially Effective When...**

Used as a method to be inclusive all participants and give everyone a voice.

A meeting turns into chaos – multiple needs exist on the part of stakeholders.

A small group attempts to re-direct a meeting onto their own agenda.

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### Open Space Meeting Worksheet

#### Theme

##### Enhancing Benefits to Effective Public Participation

- Who benefits from effective public participation?
- What are the challenges to achieving the benefits?

#### Topics:

- What are the benefits of effective public participation?
- 
- 

#### Directions: Small Group Discussion

1. Appoint a facilitator on the basis of who owns the oldest automobile. Responsibility: manage the assignment & report back to the general session.
2. Appoint a recorder on the basis of who owns the newest automobile. Responsibility: summarize discussion key points on flip chart paper.
3. 15 minutes for discussion
4. Discussion 1: 5 minutes
  - Expand upon why and to whom your topic is a benefit of doing effective public participation.
5. Discussion 2: 5 minutes
  - Identify the challenges that exist to reaching the full potential of the benefit.
6. Prepare for report back. : 2 minutes
7. Return to the general session.

#### General Session – Report Back

Each group will have 2 minute to restate the benefit and identify the challenges that exist to reaching its the full potential.

#### Next Steps

The project team and the participants will discuss next steps.

#### Notes:

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### Why Do Public Participation?

#### ***A. Effective public participation acknowledges the desire for humans to participate in decisions that affect them***

- Provides a means for incorporating the public's values, interests, needs, and desires into decisions that affect their lives.
- Encourages the public to provide meaningful input into the decision process.

#### ***B. Effective public participation facilitates understanding***

***Both the public and the decision maker need to fully understand both the problem or opportunity and the available options if a solution is to be found. Depending on the approach implemented, it is possible to achieve the following outcomes:***

- ***A clear definition of the problem/opportunity***
- ***A forum for sharing ideas and concerns***
- ***Development of clear, understandable information***
- ***A comprehensible decision process and explicit decision criteria***
- ***Stakeholders working together to focus on the problem or opportunity and finding common ground***
- ***Incorporation of the public's issues (fears, concerns, needs, and desires) into the decision process***
- ***Clear, understandable rationale for the decision***

*Tell me, I forget. Show me, I remember.  
Involve me, I understand.*

*— Chinese proverb*



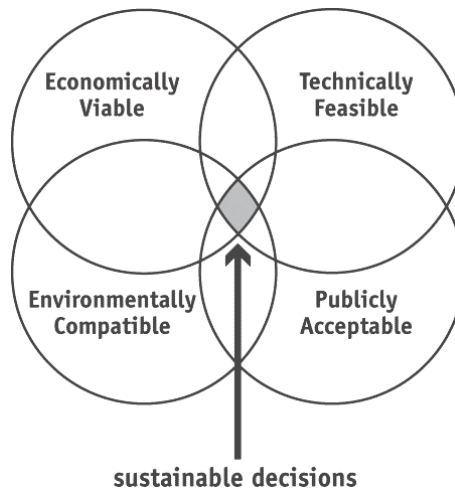
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### ***C. Effective public participation Improves decisions***

**Effective public participation includes all perspectives. Multiple perspectives contribute to a richer understanding of the scope of the decision and the problem or opportunity.**

- Effective public participation Improves decisions ...  
... by bringing all perspectives to the table***



**Sustainable decisions result when you find common ground. Project proponents, agencies, and technical staff know a great deal about the technical component. But they typically know much less about the social, cultural, and economic aspects of a proposed project. The public brings that knowledge to the process.**

**The best technical solution may not be sustainable because it doesn't address other aspects. It may be technically feasible but not economically viable or socially acceptable. Thus, it's not the best overall solution. Such a solution is not likely ever to be successfully implemented. Instead, it could be vetoed, overturned, sabotaged, remain unused, or result in ill will. Sustainable decisions combine all four elements: technical feasibility, economic viability, environmental compatibility, and public acceptability.**

Each person's view is a unique perspective on a larger reality.  
If I can "look out" through your view and you through mine,  
we will each see something we might not have seen alone.

Peter Senge, Senior Lecturer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology,  
Cambridge, MA, USA



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- ***Effective public participation improves decisions ...  
... by identifying critical issues early***

***For example:***

**As a result of working with the community, designers of a highway project discovered that a proposed highway would separate Orthodox Jewish community members from their temple — a problem, since these community members do not drive on the Sabbath. Because this conflict was identified early on, an underpass became a feature of the highway plan. Expensive redesigns were avoided and upheaval within the community was minimized.**

- ***Effective public participation improves decisions ...  
... by promoting opportunities for the building of understanding and  
balanced review of the problem or opportunity***

**As mutual understanding of issues, needs, and desires is built, all stakeholders have an opportunity to gain broader knowledge related to the project/initiative. Public consultation advances opportunities for all parties to participate in the debate that leads to decision making.**



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