



# **Wilmington Rail Realignment**

**New Hanover County**

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN**

**Prepared For:**

**City of Wilmington**

**Prepared By:**

**AECOM**

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

This Public Involvement Plan (PIP) has been developed to serve as a guide under applicable federal and state regulations for conducting and documenting agency coordination and public outreach efforts in support of the proposed project. It outlines and then describes in detail the key goals of the plan, methods to achieve the stated goals, appropriate steps for the successful implementation of the PIP, and overall schedule of planned activities.

This PIP is a “living” document that will be updated periodically to reflect the achievements, current status, and future events planned for the program. Approaches to methodology may vary during the life of the proposed project dependent on the outcome of initial meetings, comments received from project stakeholders, and in response to the measured success of outreach efforts as they occur. Copies of flyers, public notices, and other media coverage will be included. Meeting schedules, agendas, attendees, and summaries will be documented. An official record of each meeting conducted as part of the program will be appended to this document. The PIP will be available throughout the study process for public review, as requested.

*The Wilmington Rail Realignment will endeavor partner and community consensus for the creation of a successful NEPA document to then carry through to the ultimate construction and implementation of the project.*

## 1.2 PROPOSED ACTION AND STUDY AREA

The City of Wilmington is proposing a route to bypass the existing freight rail line between Navassa (Davis Yard) and the Port of Wilmington. The result would create a new freight rail alignment that would improve freight rail operations, regional mobility, and public safety.

## 1.3 APPLICABLE REGULATIONS

The Rail Realignment Project is subject to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended, Federal Railroad Administration Environmental Procedures, the North Carolina [State] Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), and associated regulations. As such, strict compliance with federal public involvement guidelines applies. An important part of North Carolina’s SEPA process, as applicable to transportation projects, is receiving timely and comprehensive input from federal, state, and local agencies and exchanging information with the general public.

Therefore, this PIP and all public involvement activities will operate in the spirit of these guidelines and work to utilize the appropriate measures therein, including those outlined by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).

#### *Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act*

Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, a surface transportation funding legislation from the federal government, requires that participating agencies and the public must be given the opportunity to comment on the project as early as practicable in determining the range of alternatives to be considered. The project development procedures in Section 139 are applicable to all projects for which an environmental impact statement is prepared under NEPA.

#### *Federal Railroad Administration Environmental Procedures*

Per the requirements of NEPA, FRA is committed to the examination and avoidance of potential impacts to the social and natural environment when considering approval of proposed rail projects. FRA's Procedure's for Considering Environmental Impacts (Federal Register, Vol. 64, No. 101), provide the agency's guidance for implementing NEPA. In addition, the FRA also uses regulatory guidance for implementing NEPA contained in [23 CFR Parts 771 and 774](#).

#### *Clean Water Act*

The Clean Water Act of 1977 (33 U.S.C. § 1251) establishes the basic structure for regulating discharges of pollutants into the Waters of the United States (as defined in 33 CFR Part 328.3) and regulating quality standards for surface waters. The US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is responsible for permitting discharges of dredged or fill material into Waters of the US under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 USC 1344), while NC Division of Water Resources issues a Water Quality Certification under Section 401 and NCGS Chapter 143 Article 21, Part 1).

#### *Rivers and Harbors Act*

The US Coast Guard (USCG) administers Section 9 of the Rivers and Harbors Appropriation Act of 1899 and the General Bridge Act of 1946, which regulate construction of new bridges or causeways or reconstruction/modification of existing bridges or causeways over navigable waters. The Cape Fear River and Northeast Cape Fear River are navigable waterways. USACE also has authority under Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act. Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors requires authorization from the USACE for the construction of any structure in or over any navigable water of the United States.

#### *National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)*

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) preserves historical and archaeological sites in the U.S. Section 106 of the NHPA requires agencies using Federal funds to identify historic properties and consider the effects of their projects on those historic properties. Under Section 4(f) found at 23 CFR Part 774, agencies of the US DOT must avoid use of historic sites. Final Section 106 Program Comment for Rail Rights-of-Way (published in the Federal Register on August 24, 2018) excludes

from the Section 106 consultation process routine activities affecting active transportation rights-of-way.

Section 110 also provides protection for National Historic Landmarks. Section 110 indicates that, "Prior to the approval of any Federal undertaking which may directly and adversely affect any National Historic Landmark, the head of the responsible Federal agency shall, to the maximum extent possible, undertake such planning and actions as may be necessary to minimize harm to such landmark, and shall afford the ACHP a reasonable opportunity to comment on the undertaking."

#### *The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)*

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) states that "no qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of a public entity." Sites for participation activities, as well as the information presented, must be accessible to persons with disabilities. ADA requires specific participation such as:

- Accessible formats and facilities
- The development of contacts, mailing lists and other means of outreach notification
- Consultation with disabled individuals
- The opportunity for public comment
- Public hearings
- Summaries of significant issues raised during the public comment period
- Ongoing efforts to involve persons with disabilities in planning

#### *Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964*

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, together with related statutes and regulations, provide that "no person shall on the grounds of race, color, and national origin be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal funds. The entire institution, whether educational, private, or governmental must comply with Title VI and related Federal civil rights laws, not just the program or activity receiving federal funds." Executive orders regarding environmental justice and outreach to persons with limited English proficiency are also regulated under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.

#### *Executive Order 12898*

Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, 1994, states that "each Federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations." Traditionally underserved groups such as low-income and minority populations must be identified and given increased opportunity for involvement in order to ensure effective participation.

### *Executive Order 13166*

Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency, 2000, requires that recipients of federal financial aid must ensure that the programs and activities normally provided in English are accessible to persons with limited English proficiency.

### *National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)*

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) preserves historical and archaeological sites in the U.S. Section 106 of the NHPA requires agencies using Federal funds to identify historic properties and consider the effects of their projects on those historic properties. Under Section 4(f) found at 23 CFR Part 774, agencies of the U.S. DOT must avoid use of historic sites.

Final Section 106 Program Comment for Rail Rights-of-Way (published in the Federal Register on August 24, 2018) excludes from the Section 106 consultation process routine activities affecting active transportation rights-of-way.

### *Railroad Noise Emissions Compliance Regulation*

FRA's Office of Safety is responsible for enforcing the Railroad Noise Emissions Compliance Regulation that sets maximum sound levels from railroad equipment and for regulation locomotive horns. FRA published the Train Horn Rule (49 CFR Part 222), providing the community an opportunity to create a quiet zone. Localities desiring to establish a quiet zone are first required to mitigate the increased risk caused by the absence of a horn.

### *Endangered Species Act*

Species with the federal status of endangered (E), threatened (T) are protected under provisions of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 as amended (16 USC 1531 et. seq.). Any action likely to adversely affect a species classified as federally protected will be subject to review by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

### *Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund*

Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act of 1965 (16 U.S.C. 4601-4 et seq.) applies to projects that may impact parks that have been developed or improved using LWCF grant funds. Such resources cannot be acquired unless no other reasonable and feasible alternative exists and requires coordination with the National Park Service (NPS).

### *US Department of Transportation Act of 1966, Section 4(f)*

Section 4(f) (23 CFR Part 774) applies only to federally funded or federally permitted transportation projects and the project's impacts on historic sites ("historic" sites are defined as those on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places/NRHP) or publicly-owned parks, recreation areas, and wildlife and waterfowl refuges.

### *Coastal Area Management Act*

North Carolina's Coastal Area Management Act of 1974 (NCGS 113A-100 et seq.) (CAMA) applies to 20 coastal counties and is regulated by the NC Division of Coastal Management (DCM). Brunswick and New Hanover Counties are coastal counties. The establishment of Areas of Environmental Concern (AEC) is authorized under CAMA and can include such areas as coastal wetlands; estuarine waters; Outstanding Resource Waters (ORWs); and Primary Nursery Areas (PNAs), among others. Once an area has been designated as an AEC, impacts to AECs will be considered when making development permitting decisions, and PNAs and ORWs that are designated as AECs require public notice and comment opportunities before making a permitting decision.

### *Floodplain Management*

Protection of floodways and floodplains is required under EO 11988, Floodplain Management; and USDOT Order 550.2, Floodplain Management and Protection. The intent of these regulations is to avoid or minimize encroachments within the 100-year (base) floodplains or regulatory floodway, where practicable, and to avoid supporting land use development that is incompatible with floodplain values.

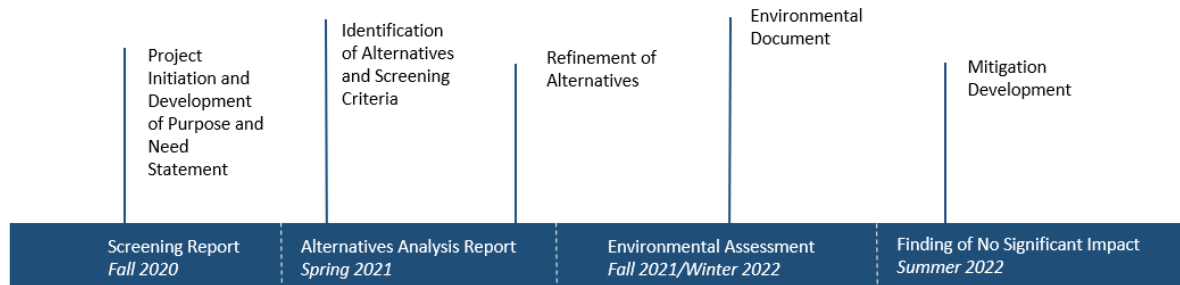
## **1.4 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION TIMEFRAME**

Public participation will be integral throughout the project duration but targeted at specific decision points during project planning. Project milestones and their accompanying public participation objectives are described below:

- **Project Initiation and Development of Purpose and Need Statement:** Solicit citizen goals and concerns to assist in the identification of specific transportation needs and on types of alternatives for evaluation with respect to feasibility.
- **Identification of Alternatives and Screening Criteria:** Develop alternatives that meet the stated purpose of and need for the project. In conjunction with comments, concerns, and goals received from stakeholders, establish screening criteria for evaluation/comparison of alternatives.
- **Refinement of Alternatives:** Enlist public participation to refine conceptual ideas of all alternatives.
- **Environmental Document:** Solicit comments on the consistency of the environmental document with the public participation record to date and determine issues that should be investigated.
- **Mitigation Development:** Develop measures to mitigate substantial adverse effects in a manner preferred by the affected public and accepted by the jurisdictional local, state, and federal agencies.



## Public Participation Timeframe



### 1.5 COVID-19 CONTINGENCY PLAN

In the event any of the public outreach methods described in the following sections must be held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic and various stay at home directives, the project team is well-equipped to adapt the public involvement process to use web-based meeting platforms to hold collaboration sessions with stakeholders or to hold virtual meetings with the public.

AECOM has recently launched the Virtual Public Meeting platform that has been used to host public meetings. These virtual platforms provide opportunity for visitors to “Stroll” through a meeting room and to “stop” at various boards to review information, see simulations of projects and to provide comments. Our team is in discussions with other federal agencies of how to support the legal public hearing requirements and will collaborate with the FRA and others to ensure compliance.

There are various other tools the project team can use or adapt to create the Wilmington Rail Realignment project. The key to any of these remote capabilities comes down to the technique – making sure the product is focused on the right audience and the messaging is clear and concise.

### 1.6 PUBLIC AUDIENCES

Based on data from the U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS) presented in the *Wilmington Rail Realignment and Right-of-Way Use Alternatives Feasibility Study* (June 2017), the population of the study area in 2010 was 43,223. Special populations within this number include:

- 30.6 percent of individuals live below poverty level; and,
- 37 percent are Black or African American;

Citizens residing, employed, commuting, or using public facilities within the study area boundaries will be targeted for inclusion during the public participation phases of the proposed project. Citizens will be identified by various methods including, but not limited to, using GIS resources, county tax maps, rental occupancy surveys, contacting local businesses to determine where

employees reside, and in-field reviews of the local area. Contacts will be updated during the life of the study with information received during workshops and small group meetings, and email and telephone correspondence.

Comments and concerns raised by local citizens will be documented and shared with the project team during scheduled meetings and with local government representatives during small group meetings targeting local officials.

The following groups have been identified as groups within the project study area that may have a stake and/or interest in the project and will be targeted for inclusion during the public participation phases of the proposed project. Representatives and contact information for each are included in Appendix B.

- Wilmington Chamber of Commerce
- Wilmington Business Development
- Cape Fear Realtors
- Environmental Groups – Cape Fear ARCH
- NC Coastal Land Trust
- River Pilots Association
- Cape Fear River Watch
- Historic Wilmington Foundation
- Historic Resource Property Owners
- USS North Carolina
- Front Street Industries
- South Front Apartments
- Eagles Island Coalition

### 1.6.1 SPECIAL POPULATIONS OUTREACH

Special populations identified in the study area include low-income and minority populations that have been traditionally underrepresented in public engagement efforts. These groups account for a high percentage of the population in the study area, which heightens the importance of ensuring these populations are engaged and consulted in the project's development. In an effort to address the unique needs of these populations, the following approach will be used as outlined below.

- 1) Identify Community Ambassadors – The project team has developed and will maintain a list of representatives and contact information for leaders engaged in the identified communities. This list shall be maintained in the [Stakeholder Engagement](#) spreadsheet.

It is acknowledged that communication and trust barriers must be overcome to engage these traditionally underrepresented communities. Because these individuals regularly engage their communities, they are able to serve as effective ambassadors to bridge trust barriers and to help the project team improve communication devices/materials so as to bridge communication barriers as well. After identified community leaders agree to serve as Community Ambassadors for this project, they will be engaged in upcoming milestone-based roundtable discussions (see #2 below).

- 2) Host Project Milestone-Based Community Ambassador Roundtable Discussions – In coordination with each project milestone identified in 1.4, the City of Wilmington will host a Community Ambassador Roundtable Discussion to engage community leaders in:
  - Appropriate project messaging
  - Feedback on community engagement materials
  - Identifying a community event roster/ambassador engagement commitments

During these roundtable discussions, the City of Wilmington will gain initial feedback on suggestions from community leaders with regards to bridging the communication gaps which have discouraged the participation of these special populations in the past. The City of Wilmington will also request assistance from the Community Ambassadors in engaging their communities directly with materials produced by the project team. The result of these discussions will include both a list of communication materials refinements to be addressed by the project team, and commitments from Community Ambassadors to leverage their trusted positions to engage their communities in the project's development.

- 3) Verify Engagement Commitments - After each Community Ambassador Roundtable Discussion, the City of Wilmington will verify commitments from each Community Ambassador to engage their communities in this stage of the project's development.
- 4) Prepare/Reformat Existing Engagement Materials\* - After each Community Ambassador Roundtable Discussion, the project team will review and revise engagement materials to improve communication/outreach impact with the identified populations. These materials can include:
  - Social media templates
  - Community presentations
  - Email templates

\*Note that the materials prepared for public outreach in 3.1 will be leveraged for these activities.

## 1.7 OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

This PIP is intended to support environmental documentation for the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project. This plan is the foundation of the public involvement program and, as such, will be an integral component of the overall project. The objective of creating and implementing this plan is to generate the best possible outcome for the project by involving the public as early and as often in the decision-making process as is practicable. In providing opportunities for citizens and organizations to participate in the project planning process, the City of Wilmington seeks to achieve the following goals:

- Goal A: Coordinated Messaging
  - Coordinate messaging efforts across the City, AECOM, and regulatory agencies to ensure cohesive, consistent information is equally available to all project stakeholders.
- Goal B: Multi-Pronged Stakeholder Engagement
  - Identify all relevant stakeholders and create outreach/engagement plans unique to each stakeholder group to customize to each set of unique needs (as is practicable).
  - Establish multiple outlets for providing feedback to ensure that public interests and concerns are captured.
  - Ensure that all populations affected by or interested in the outcome of the proposed project have convenient opportunity to do so.
- Goal C: Coalitions for Success

- Build a coalition of community support by progressively enriching the level of trust among stakeholders. This will include creating an open and ongoing dialogue with business, environmental, civic, and other groups that may be interested in the proposed project. Ensure important local issues and concerns are considered during the planning process.
- Diligently review the feedback received and incorporate said feedback into project planning as is practicable.
- Involve regulatory and environmental resource agencies as early and as often in the decision-making process as issues or situations occur that are relevant to them. This promotes transparency throughout the process resulting in building consensus amongst agencies who may have competing interests and streamlines agency reviews.

## 2 COORDINATED MESSAGING

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Many of the stakeholder groups identified in this PIP will be impacted by this project and will therefore be sensitive to understanding the nuances of these impacts. Therefore, messaging that is used to convey project aspects can have the power to incentivize stakeholder participation to assist the project's development. Conversely, if poor messaging is used, incorrect information can follow the project's development and create issues.

The PIP allows for proactive coordination to ensure any project messaging meets basic guidelines and QA/QC strategies to paint the project in the most accurate light possible for the stakeholders. Project messaging will evolve to pace with the evolution of the project's development, in particular messaging will be reviewed and messaging guidelines will be updated at the conclusion of:

- Screening Report
- Alternatives Analysis Report
- Environmental Assessment
- FONSI

In addition, a messaging debrief will be conducted as part of each Milestone-Based Public Outreach.

## 3 MULTI-PRONGED STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

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This PIP will facilitate designing an outreach/involvement program tailored to meet the communication needs of all stakeholders affected by the project. This PIP identifies all relevant

stakeholders and creates outreach/engagement plans unique to each stakeholder group to customize to each set of unique needs. The needs of each individual stakeholder group will be assessed, and a customized communication approach will be documented with regards to desired communication/ engagement formats/platforms, frequency, and a record of opportunities as they arise to address relevant concerns.

Iterative coordination with different stakeholder groups will be used to establish open lines of communication. In lieu of the "Comment Box" approach, individualized communications will be sought with those stakeholders with known interests in the project, as well as those who are unknown and later express interest.

### **3.1 PUBLIC OUTREACH METHODS**

Several methods will be employed to empower the public to voice their ideas and values regarding project issues, including the inclusion of bilingual materials. Copies of the public involvement materials distributed will be provided in the Appendices.

Alerting the public about current events and upcoming public involvement opportunities is a top priority when considering outreach methods. If citizens are not aware of what is going on and the actual logistics of participating, relevant comments and concerns about the proposed project cannot be received. A variety of methods of outreach to target all potentially affected citizens at different phases during project planning will be utilized and are described in the following section.

Different stakeholders noted in Section 1.4 will require different tools and approaches to public outreach based on the desired level of participation. The target audience identified for each level of participation is identified below.

Level 1: General public, project mailing list, all identified stakeholders

Level 2: Impacted communities/neighborhoods, public and private groups, identified stakeholders and special populations

Level 3: impacted communities and neighborhoods, impacted property owners, any impacted stakeholder requesting additional information

Table **1** lists various methods recommended for three levels of public participation, with Level 1 being the minimum amount of contact to Level 3 encompassing close and continuous coordination throughout project development. Each stakeholder is assigned a level based on their expressed level of interest and desired level of participation, and is noted in Appendices B and D.

**Table 1: Public Outreach Levels**

Public Outreach Methods	Public Participation Levels		
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Media Coverage	X	X	X
Project Website	X	X	X
Postcards/ Newsletters	X	X	X
Public Meeting Notices	X	X	X
Public Hearing Notices	X	X	X
Public Meetings and Workshops	X	X	X
Quarterly Email Updates		X	X
Notification Letters		X	X
Milestone-based Contact			X
Neighborhood Outreach Meetings/ Small Group Meetings			X

**3.1.1 MEDIA COVERAGE**

During project initiation and development of the purpose and need and Screening Report, news editors and directors of television, radio, and print media in the project study area will be contacted by the City of Wilmington. Media contacts will receive periodic news releases in order to keep the public informed about the study and to provide notification of upcoming public meetings and workshops.

**3.1.2 PROJECT WEBSITE**

A public website has been created and maintained for this project at <https://www.wilmingtonnc.gov/departments/city-manager/rail-realignment>. General project information, notices, comment forms and questionnaires, and summaries of public meetings/workshops will be submitted for posting on the website. The site will be updated at key project milestones and the web address will be posted on project materials. The website contains a feature that allows users to enter contact information and provide comments to the Team.

**3.1.3 POSTCARDS/NEWSLETTERS**

During the study process newsletters and/or postcards will be developed for distribution in the study area. It is anticipated that these cards will be distributed to schools, churches, community centers, various places of business, and residences within the study area. Postcards will be used as needed to announce upcoming meetings and workshops or to update stakeholders on



information pertaining to the project. Newsletters may include additional information concerning project schedule, updates to the study process, dates for upcoming public forums, and contact information for stakeholders to submit questions/comments.

Hardcopies of these notices will be mailed at the discretion of the City of Wilmington and all materials will be placed on the project website. A summary and copies of all newsletters and postcards will be included in Appendix E.

The project mailing list will include residents, property owners, civic and business groups, government officials, and those appointed to local planning and transportation boards. The list will be compiled and updated periodically by utilizing current tax records and GIS databases to list all property owners located within or directly adjacent to the project area. The project mailing list (documented in Appendices B & D) will be continually updated with the names of persons attending meetings and workshops; by contacting local agencies, applicable City of Wilmington staff and board members, or anyone from the consultant project staff; or submitted via the project website.

#### **3.1.4 PUBLIC MEETING NOTICES**

Notices for upcoming meetings will be advertised in local media sources such as newspapers, weekly shopper's magazines, and radio and television stations prior to each meeting.

A summary and copies of all meeting notices will be included in Appendix E.

#### **3.1.5 PUBLIC HEARING NOTICES**

Public hearings provide a forum for an open exchange of views concerning the need for the project, potential route locations, major design features, and the related potential social, economic, and environmental effects. Announcements for public hearings will be placed in local and regional newspapers. Other avenues for advertising may be utilized. Precise dates, times, and locations will be advertised at a minimum of 30 days in advance of each hearing.

#### **3.1.6 PUBLIC MEETINGS AND WORKSHOPS**

Public meetings provide a two-way dialogue between stakeholders and the project team. Public meetings may be held in a variety of settings to allow the majority of participants, including populations identified in EO 12898, 13045, and 13166, a meaningful opportunity to participate. Options for participation may be in-person or virtually (web or audio based). Displays and meeting materials will be prepared and made available for review, depending on the type of meeting held. As needed, interpreters will be provided for non-English speaking populations; however, advanced notification of this need is required.

The public will be encouraged to participate, review materials, interact with staff, and provide comments. The stakeholder comments and concerns recorded will be considered during project decision-making. All comments received by the project team are logged into a public comment

database created for the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project, documented in applicable Appendices B, C, D, and E.

A copy of the meeting materials and a summary of the comments received will be included in Appendix E.

### **3.1.7 QUARTERLY EMAIL AND COUNCIL UPDATES**

The City of Wilmington will release a quarterly project update via email including recent milestones, current tasks, and near-term goals and objectives of the project. The update will include the current project schedule and shared with key project contacts and the City Council. Information contained in quarterly updates will also be presented to the City Council in a public forum.

### **3.1.8 NOTIFICATION LETTERS**

The City of Wilmington will send letters to stakeholders in and within the vicinity of the project study area that may be directly or indirectly impacted by the project. The letters will notify the stakeholder of the project status and solicit feedback on their level of desired outreach. The letters will make the specific request to inform the City if a small group meeting is requested by the individual, organization, or community contacted.

### **3.1.9 MILESTONE-BASED CONTACT**

Milestone-based contact includes specific notification to identified stakeholders at key milestones throughout project development. These key milestones may include but are not limited to: project initiation, development of screening report, and publication of the environmental document.

### **3.1.10 NEIGHBORHOOD OUTREACH MEETINGS/SMALL GROUP MEETINGS**

Throughout the study, the City of Wilmington will be available to meet with interested organizations and civic groups for formal presentations and question and answer sessions. Generally, it is recommended that meeting dates with major organizations and groups will be arranged by mail and telephone during three critical time periods: (1) project initiation and Screening Report development, (2) alternative development, and (3) preparation of the environmental document.

The project team can arrange for subject matter experts to present information to both small and large group settings. For example, meetings with parent/teacher associations, adult learning programs, business organizations, environmental groups, civic clubs, and non-English speaking populations could help develop further participation and awareness of issues.

A summary of all neighborhood outreach meetings and meeting materials will be included in Appendix B.

## **3.2 PUBLIC COMMENT SOLICITATION METHODS**

All comments and concerns received will be documented and included in the official record. The following are a list of forums and solicitation methods that will be used on this project.

### **3.2.1 INFORMATION HOTLINE**

A bilingual English/Spanish toll-free telephone number (1.800.233.6315) will be provided for citizens wishing to contact the project team. Inquiries will be handled by responsible project personnel with expertise in the area of concern and will be coordinated with the City of Wilmington. Comments received from the hotline will be documented in the project database.

### **3.2.2 U.S. POSTAL SERVICE**

Written letters of comment or inquiry will be retrieved, reviewed, and responded to by responsible project personnel with expertise in the area of concern and will be coordinated with the City of Wilmington. Comments received via US Mail will be documented in the project database.

### **3.2.3 EMAIL**

Email comments or inquiries will be retrieved, reviewed, and responded to by responsible project personnel with expertise in the area of concern. Comments received via email will be documented in the project database.

### **3.2.4 MEETING COMMENT FORMS**

A standard comment form will be provided at meetings, open houses, and public hearings. As with all comments, each will be coded and recorded for the central public participation record for this project.

## **3.3 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT SUMMARY**

The methods presented in this document are designed to encourage public involvement early and often throughout the planning process. As a result, a comprehensive list of stakeholder needs and goals, identified critical issues, and contributions to alternatives guidance, as assembled during the study, will be analyzed and incorporated first into the purpose and need statement, continuing through alternatives analysis and the selection of a preferred alignment. In addition, efforts will be made to provide translations and interpreters for public outreach efforts when non-English speaking populations have been identified or it has been requested.

The availability of the project team through telephone, mail, and meetings should allow for an accurate flow of information and prevent minor issues from becoming major problems. Active listening sessions in the form of workshops and small group meetings, and extensive media coverage and contact will provide the widest possible dissemination of information about the proposed project.

## 4 AGENCY COORDINATION

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This section of the PIP serves as a guide under applicable federal and state regulations for conducting and documenting agency coordination efforts in support of the proposed project.

The objective of creating and implementing this plan is to generate the best possible outcome for the project by involving the agencies as early and as often in the decision-making process as issues or situations occur that may affect them. This promotes transparency throughout the process resulting in building consensus amongst agencies who may have competing interests and streamlines agency reviews.

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is the lead federal agency for the Project. The FRA will coordinate with agency representatives from various federal and state regulatory agencies during the planning process to maintain compatibility between the Project and resource protection regulations. These regulatory agencies include, but are not limited to:

- Surface Transportation Board
- Federal Transit Administration
- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- Federal Highway Administration
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration – National Marine Fisheries Services
- U.S. Coast Guard
- N.C. Department of Transportation
- N.C. Department of Environmental Quality – Division of Water Resources
- N.C. State Ports Authority
- N.C. Department of Environmental Quality – Coastal Resources Commission
- N.C. Department of Environmental Quality – Division of Coastal Management
- N.C. Department of Environmental Quality – Division of Marine Fisheries
- N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission
- N.C. Historic Preservation Office

In addition, efforts will be made to coordinate with local and state planning groups for input including, but not limited to representatives from:

- City of Wilmington
- New Hanover County
- Brunswick County
- Pender County

Town of Navassa  
Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (WMPO)  
Town of Belville  
Town of Leland  
Gullah Geechee  
Tribes  
Cape Fear Council of Governments  
Cape Fear Transportation Authority

A list of agency representatives and contact information for each are included in Appendix C.

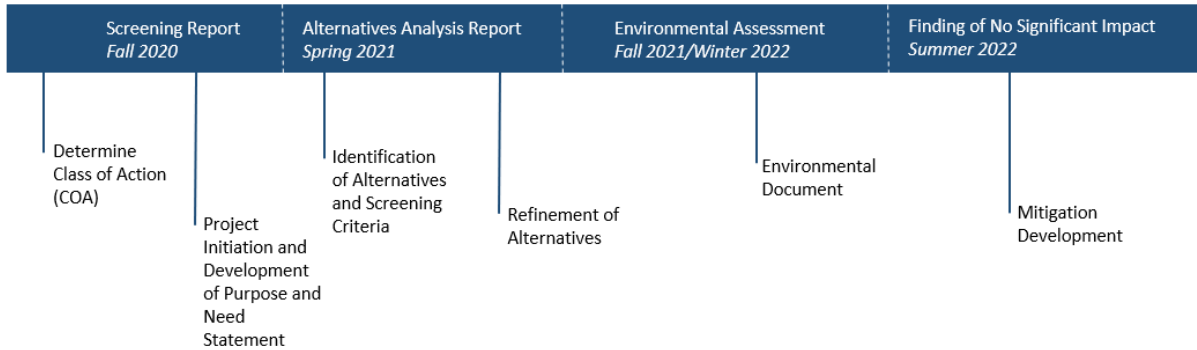
#### 4.1 AGENCY PARTICIPATION TIMEFRAME

Agency participation will be integral throughout the project duration but targeted at specific decision points during project planning, in the spirit of addressing NEPA and Section 404 permitting requirements concurrently to streamline decision-making.

Project milestones and their accompanying agency participation objectives are noted below:

- **Determine Class of Action (COA):** One of the initial steps in coordinating with agency partners will be to coordinate with the Federal Rail Administration to determine the COA for the project.
- **Project Initiation and Development of Purpose and Need Statement:** Solicit feedback and concerns from federal, state, and local agencies and other agency partners on the project study area, preliminary purpose and need, and feasibility of conceptual alignments by issuing a start of study email to all agency stakeholders identified.
- **Identification of Alternatives and Screening Criteria:** Solicit feedback from agency representatives on alternatives developed and the methodology for screening and refining alternative corridors. Solicit feedback from agencies on recommended screening criteria for evaluation/comparison of alternatives.
- **Refinement of Alternatives:** Solicit agency feedback to refine conceptual ideas of all alternatives.
- **Environmental Document:** Solicit comments on the consistency of the environmental document with the public participation record to date and determine issues that should be investigated.
- **Mitigation Development:** Develop measures to mitigate substantial adverse effects in a manner preferred by the affected public and accepted by the jurisdictional local, state, and federal agencies.

## Agency Participation Timeframe



### 4.2 AGENCY OUTREACH

Different stakeholders noted above will require different tools and approaches to agency outreach based on the desired level of participation. The target audience identified for each level of participation is identified below.

Level 1: All identified agency stakeholders

Level 2: Agency stakeholders with heightened level of interest

Level 3: Project partner agencies

Table 2 lists various methods recommended for three levels of agency participation, with Level 1 being the minimum amount of contact to Level 3 encompassing close and continuous coordination throughout project development.

**Table 2: Agency Outreach Levels**

Agency Outreach Methods	Agency Participation Levels		
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Postcards/ Newsletters	x	x	x
Public Meeting Notices	x	x	x
Public Hearing Notices	x	x	x
Start of Study Letter	x	x	x
Quarterly Email Updates	x	x	x

Agency Outreach Methods	Agency Participation Levels		
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Key Milestone Informational Meetings	x	x	x
Occasional Coordination/One-on-One Meetings		x	x
Regular Coordination/One-on-One Meetings			x

### 4.3 START OF STUDY LETTER

A start of study letter will be distributed to announce the start of the project development, environmental, and engineering studies for the proposed project. The letter will solicit comments on the proposed project will be sent to the local, state, and federal agencies identified above. Comments received will be provided in Appendix C.

### 4.4 AGENCY COORDINATION RECORD

Throughout the project, a record of all agency coordination activities will be maintained documenting key discussions, agreements, and comments made. A summary of the major agency coordination activities on the project, which may include meetings, email coordination, and key decisions are included in Appendix C.

## 5 COALITION BUILDING

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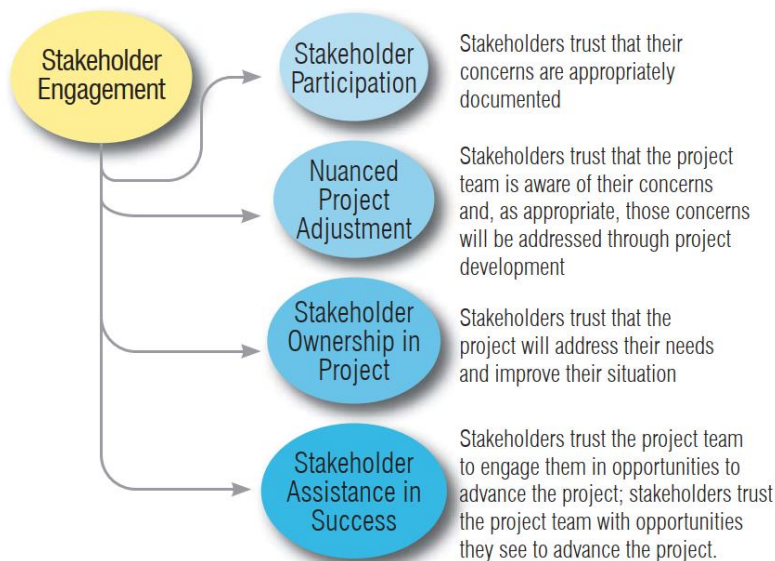
This PIP will assist in building a coalition of community support by progressively enriching collaboration between the project sponsor and stakeholders.

With successful public engagement and agency coordination, the roles that stakeholders see themselves playing in the ultimate success of the project will develop along with the project. In particular, stakeholders will be engaged and participate in one of four engagement levels at any point in the project’s development.

- **Stakeholder Participation:** Most stakeholders will start here. At this engagement level, stakeholders trust that they will have an opportunity to express their interests and concerns regarding the project’s development. Discussions, as well as the follow up analyses, will be appropriately documented.

- **Nuanced Project Adjustment:** The majority of stakeholders should move to this level of engagement early on in project coordination. At this engagement level, stakeholders trust that the project team understands their interest and feedback in the project’s development. These stakeholders also trust that the project team will address their feedback, as is appropriate through the project’s development.
- **Stakeholder Ownership in Project:** Several stakeholders will move to this engagement level as the project progresses. At this engagement level, stakeholders express that the success of the project is of particular importance to them.
- **Stakeholder Assistance in Project Success:** A select number of stakeholders will move to this engagement level, likely later in the project’s development. At this engagement level, stakeholders proactively engage the City with ideas and opportunities for their assistance in project success and implementation.

The following is a visual depiction of the four levels of stakeholder engagement described above:



Opportunities for coalition building will be considered explicitly at key stages of project development and are anticipated to evolve to pace with the evolution of the project. In particular, a Coalition Opportunities Record will be updated at the conclusion of:

- Screening Report
- Alternatives Analysis Report
- Environmental Assessment



- FONSI

In addition, a Coalition Opportunities debrief will be conducted as part of each Milestone-Based Public Outreach.

Updated and archived messaging Coalition Opportunity Records are documented in the Appendix F.

## **Appendix A: Messaging**

## **Appendix B: Stakeholder Group Coordination**

## **Appendix C: Agency Coordination**

## **Appendix D: Coordination with Interested Individuals**

## **Appendix E: Public Meetings/Agency Meetings**

## **Appendix F: Coalition Opportunities**