

Appendix C—Business Outreach Summary

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Communicating with Small Businesses About Transportation Construction

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) is seeking your input to help understand and mitigate the impacts of transportation construction projects on small businesses. Mn/DOT has identified you as the owner or operator of a business that is near a recently completed or ongoing transportation construction project. Mn/DOT is requesting that you share your experiences of doing business during construction. The information gathered in this survey will help us better understand the needs of small businesses. Improved communications with small businesses before and during transportation construction projects are expected to help reduce impacts of construction to businesses. Thank you for your valuable input.

1. Respondent Information - PROVIDING CONTACT INFORMATION IS OPTIONAL.
Personal and business names, email addresses, phone numbers and addresses (with the exception of zip codes) provided in responses to this survey are classified as private or non-public and will not be shared publicly. (Minn Stat.13.72 subd 14).

Name:

Business Name:

Title:

Address:

City/Town:

State:

ZIP/Postal Code:

Email:

Phone:

A. GENERAL BUSINESS INFORMATION

2. Business type:

Retail

Services

Wholesale/Distribution

Manufacturing

Construction

Other

If other, please specify

3. How many employees work at this location?

Full time:

Part time:

4. Do you lease or own your business space?

Lease

Own

5. How long have you been at your current location?

0-2 years

6-10 years

3-5 years

11+ years

EFFECTS OF CONSTRUCTION ON BUSINESS

6. Which of the following transportation construction projects has recently taken or is taking place near your business?

TH 36 Reconstruction - Maplewood & North St. Paul

TH 2 Major Reconstruction east of TH 38 - Grand Rapids

TH 2 Resurfacing west of TH 38 - Grand Rapids

La Crescent Highway Construction Project (Highways 16/61)

TH 65/TH 242/CSAH 14 Freeway Upgrade - Blaine and Ham Lake

TH 10 - Detroit Lakes

Crosstown, I-35W and Diamond Lake Road - Minneapolis

Lake Street Reconstruction - Minneapolis

Other (please specify)

* 7. Was your business impacted by the transportation construction project?

Yes

No

EFFECTS OF CONSTRUCTION ON BUSINESS, CONT'D.

8. Please indicate how your business was impacted by the transportation construction project.

BUSINESS LOSS

* 9. Did you experience a loss of business during construction?

Yes

No

BUSINESS LOSS, CONT'D. 2

10. Please indicate what you believe caused the loss of business during construction. (Please check all that apply):

- Loss of access
- Highway/road closures
- Ramp closures
- Detours
- Less traffic
- Length of project
- Lack of signs
- Poor signs
- Other

If other, please specify:

CONSTRUCTION BENEFITS

11. Has your business benefited from the results of the transportation construction project?

- Yes
- No
- Project still under construction
- Too soon to tell

12. If your business has benefited from the construction project, please indicate how.

AGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

13. Did you know what government agency was in charge of the transportation project?

Yes

No

14. Did you have a specific contact at the agency you could contact with questions?

Yes

No

15. Please indicate any other agencies or organizations you relied on for information about the project.

BUSINESS OPERATIONS DURING CONSTRUCTION

16. For the transportation project near your business, did you have enough information about the following topics?

	Yes	No
Timing or phasing of construction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Length of construction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Changes in parking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Changes in traffic routes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Changes in public access	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please add any other comments

17. Were adequate signs used during construction to direct customers to your business?

Yes

No

BUSINESS RESPONSE TO CONSTRUCTION

18. At anytime before, during, or after the project, did you coordinate with any of the following groups? (please check all that apply).

	Yes	No
Chamber of commerce	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community development agency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Economic development agency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marketing/business consultants	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other businesses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If other, please specify:

19. Did you have enough information to develop and implement an effective plan for operating your business during construction?

Yes

No

20. What actions did you take to better serve your customers during construction?

21. For your business, did your need for information change based on the stage of the project? (e.g., before, during, or after construction)

Yes

No

Communication Needs

Please answer the following questions based on your experience during a recent transportation construction project to reflect what you would like see happen on future construction projects.

22. What information would you like to receive:

before construction?

during construction?

after construction?

23. How frequently would you like to receive the information about transportation projects taking place near your business?

24. How soon in advance would you like to be notified for a transportation maintenance project (e.g., guardrail repair, crack sealing) or preservation project (e.g., resurfacing, restoration, or rehabilitation)?

less than 3 months

3 to 12 months

more than 12 months

25. How soon in advance would you like to be notified for a transportation reconstruction or construction project (usually requires new right-of-way)?

less than 3 months

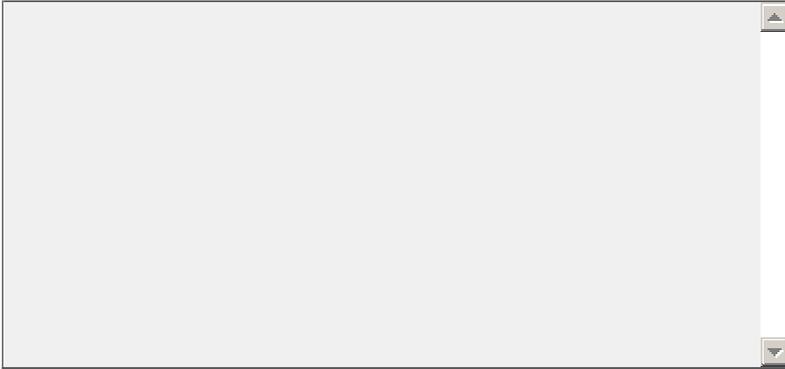
3 to 12 months

more than 12 months

26. Please indicate how you'd like to receive information about construction projects affecting your business.

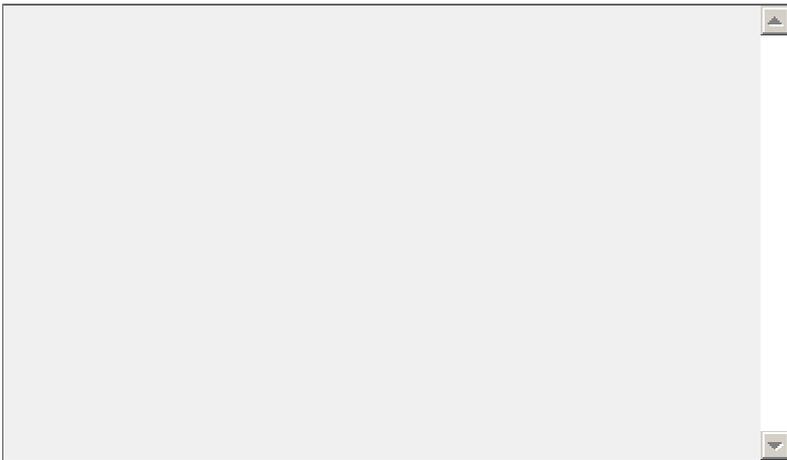
- Newsletters
- Email notices
- Public meetings
- Website updates
- Discussions with project staff

Other (please specify)



OTHER THOUGHTS

27. Please provide any other thoughts you have about how transportation agencies could better communicate with small business owners before, during, and after construction.



Small Business Assessment Form - Summary of Results		Total # of Surveys = 95	
		Totals	% or avg.
1/20/2009			
#2 - Business Type	Retail	45	47%
	Services	41	43%
	Wholesale/Distribution	4	4%
	Manufacturing	1	1%
	Construction	3	3%
	Other	14	15%
#3- # How many employees work at the location?	# Full time	845	8.9
	# Part time	443	4.7
#4 - Own or lease business space?	Own	61	64%
	Lease	32	34%
#5 - Length of time at current location?	0-2 yrs	8	8%
	3-5 yrs	3	3%
	6-10 yrs	15	16%
	11+ yrs	51	54%
#7 - Was business Impacted by the transportation construction project?	Business was impacted by transportation construction project.	72	76%
#9 - Experience a loss of business during construction?	Expreienced a loss of business during construction	59	62%
#10 - Indicate what caused loss of business during construction (check all that apply)	Loss of access	58	61%
	Highway/road closures	35	37%
	Ramp closures	7	7%
	Detours	31	33%
	Less traffic	35	37%
	Length of project	35	37%
	Lack of signs	12	13%
	Poor signs	12	13%
#11 - Business benefited from results of transportation construction project?	Benefited from Construction	8	8%
	Project still under construction	4	4%
	Too soon to tell	25	26%
#13 - Know what agency was in charge of the transportation project?	Had knowledge of the government agency in charge of the transportation construction project	52	55%
#14 - Specific contact at the agency that could be contacted with questions?	Specific Contact?	37	39%
#16 - Did business operator have enough information about the following topics for the transportation project near the business?:	Timing & phasing of construction	54	57%
	Length of project	50	53%
	Changes in parking	41	43%
	Changes in traffic routes	53	56%
	Changes in public access	47	49%
#17 - Were adequate signs used during construction to direct customers to business?	Adequate signs to direct Customer?	28	29%

Small Business Assessment Form - Summary of Results		Total # of Surveys = 95	
		Totals	% or avg.
1/20/2009			
#18 - Did business person coordinate with any of the following groups at any time (before, during, or after) during the project?	Chamber of commerce	13	14%
	Community development agency	7	7%
	Economic development agency	2	2%
	Marketing/business consultants	5	5%
	Other businesses	25	26%
	Other	6	6%
#19 - Did business person have enough information to develop and implement an effective plan for operating their business during construction?	Enough Info to develop & Implement plan during Const?	53	56%
#21 - Did business person's information needs change based on the stage of the project (e.g., before, during, or after construction)?	Need for info change over time?	35	37%
#24 - How soon in advance would business person like to be notified regarding maintenance projects?	Notification for maintenance - less than 3 months	42	44%
	3 to 12 months	40	42%
	more than 12 months	3	3%
#25 - How soon in advance would business person like to be notified regarding transportation reconstruction or construction projects?	Notification for reconstruction/const - less than 3 months	17	18%
	3 to 12 months	37	39%
	more than 12 months	34	36%
#26 - Preference for receiving information about construction projects affecting business.	Receive info by Newsletter	57	60%
	Email notices	37	39%
	Public Meetings	31	33%
	Website Updates	11	12%
	Discussions with project staff	25	26%

Community Outreach Meeting Summaries

Rochester Chamber of Commerce – December 5, 2008

ROC52 Design-Build Project in Rochester, MN

Communications

- Good communication practices; started early and lasted throughout the project, included:
 - Daily radio announcements
 - Regular press releases
 - Newsletters
 - 1-800 number
 - Project website
 - Design-Build Contractor hired a public relations firm; PR staff frequently followed-up regarding effectiveness of communications for community members

Coordination with Businesses

- Signs for how to get to specific businesses entrances; moved around as project changed
- Businesses worked together to develop incentives to shop during construction, e.g., Miracle Mile businesses did special sales during construction, in coordination with the Chamber of Commerce
- Some businesses incorporated the ROC 52 project logo into their advertisements
- After construction celebration at Miracle Mile at those business owners success

On the Corridor during Construction

- Changeable message boards
- Good signing of detours
- Lanes were kept open that allowed traffic to flow
- Traffic flow and good access kept people on the corridor during the project
- Highway helper in construction zone
- Speed reduction effort with state troopers at each end

Within the Community

- Reduction of construction period from 11 to 3 ½ years viewed as major benefit
- Community continually saw progress, which made the project more bearable
- Leadership Group that acted as “Project Ambassadors” within the Community
- Project brand and slogan of “We’re in this together”
- Constant coordination with Mayo allowed the organization to effectively communicate with staff and patients about changing project conditions
- Contractor education; this project was not to be “business as usual”

Oronoco, MN Design-Build Project (TH 52)

- Why were experiences in Oronoco different than in Rochester? It was difficult to obtain community buy-in about the project; this includes the buy-in of community leaders. Demonstrated the need for broad based community buy-in, not just individual.

Other/Lessons Learned

- Involve the entire community, not just businesses along the corridor
- Coordination with businesses to be affected by construction not always optimal, e.g., sound walls included in the project block business signs; these businesses weren't notified that matter was to be discussed at key project meetings
- Contractor provided incentives for hitting targets; may mean that the low bidder may not be the best selection
- Consider use of new technology when communicating, e.g., use of text messaging
- Get contractor input about the process
- Local governments should be allowed to carry-out design build projects

MetroNorth (Blaine, MN) Chamber of Commerce Focus Group – December 11, 2008

The Highway 65 corridor, specifically the 65/242 interchange project offers a very good case study of how to work with the business community before and during a construction project.

Highway 65/242 Interchange Project

This project is ongoing, with work entering the third phase of a three-phase project. The main interchange along with associated access roads (phases 2 and 1, respectively) are complete. Highway 65 overpasses will be built beginning in 2009.

A Unique Partnership of Business and Community

Early in project development, as the business community was learning of the project, one business owner became very active in planning for the project. This person's leadership resulted in a formalized organization of project partners, to the extent that three groups contributed funds to be used in a consolidated marketing plan. The funding partners included:

- 1) area businesses
- 2) MetroNorth Chamber of Commerce
- 3) City of Blaine (matched the contribution of the Chamber)

Another important partner in the work was the Anoka County Transportation Management Organization (TMO). The Anoka TMO has provided resources and informational handouts throughout project construction to maintain awareness of the project activities.

Coordinated Marketing Plan

Raised funds were used to develop a brand for the area businesses (the “Heart of Blaine”) and an advertising campaign that relied on businesses cross-marketing with each other – including promotions that offered prizes for patronage at business in the Heart of Blaine. The active leadership from an affected business owner was a critical driving force for gaining stakeholder buy-in on the efforts.

Postcards and electronic (PDF) documents with project updates were sent to community residents and businesses. These updates not only provided information to the community, but also armed businesses with information that they could distribute to their own clients, employees, and suppliers.

Outreach IN the Project Area

One aspect of success noted by the focus group was the use of affected businesses for project meetings. For instance, one of the restaurants impacted by construction was used for community meetings. For many of the small business owners, it is difficult to dedicate time away from the business to attend project update meetings. Holding meetings near their business was one means to increase accessibility. It was noted by the group that face-to-face communications are sometimes necessary to ensure project information is shared.

Other Lessons Learned

- Signing and visibility is a big concern. One successful outcome was noted where early project information allowed a business to plan for changes to their signing and work with the City of Blaine for the necessary variances to accommodate the signing. The changes were able to be made with no disruption in visibility caused by construction.
- Education about why the project is being done and how businesses can expect to benefit is especially helpful. A “Construction 101” informational guide describing anticipated work and timing and what businesses can generally expect would be helpful.
- Community (e.g. elected officials or community organizations) endorsement of the project is also important for maintaining enthusiasm for the project.
- The construction contractor should be recognized as an important partner in the process. They are closest to the action and are best positioned to notify project stakeholders about changes in schedule or project activities. The contractor also represents a business opportunity for impacted businesses – their patronage at the businesses would generate good will and offer direct information sharing with businesses.
- Getting information out too early, before project details are known, can be risky. On a different project, the project sponsors were planning a median closure. Details about the project were shared with the community as much as two years ahead of the scheduled work. When the project was constructed, many business owners were frustrated by the changes in the final project and associated unanticipated consequences.

Grand Rapids (TH 2) Survey Results

Results from the surveys distributed to Grand Rapids businesses are being compiled. Over thirty surveys have been returned to date, and another 15-20 are expected to arrive.

Initial observations from a review of the surveys indicate the following:

- **Signing and visibility continues to be a central concern** of businesses. In this case, there appears to have been a disconnect between Mn/DOT, the business owners, and the City of Grand Rapids as to what signing mitigations may be available. (Sounds similar to the TH 36 experience in North Saint Paul)
- Many people identified concerns about how contractor equipment or activities disproportionately affected access or parking availability. Some respondents also noted that the contractor served as a valuable source of project information.
- Among the pieces of information that people would like to have is the anticipated length/duration of project construction, and changes to that schedule as they are known.
- Perhaps not a Mn/DOT issue, but some business owners expressed a desire to have received property tax/assessment implications of the project.
- When asked if the project benefitted them, most business owners did not identify any real or perceived benefits of the project.