

Port and Freight Infrastructure Program Public Engagement Guide



Background

The California State Legislature enacted Governor Newsom's Port and Freight Infrastructure proposal through Senate Bill 198 (SB 198; Section 13 of Chapter 71, Statutes of 2022). The 2022-23 state budget included \$1.2 billion for a one-time Port and Freight Infrastructure Program to help ease supply chain congestion and increase the capacity to move goods in California. The program seeks to improve the capacity, safety, efficiency, and resilience of goods movement to, from, and through California's maritime ports, while also reducing greenhouse gas emissions and harmful impacts to communities adjacent to the corridors and facilities used for goods movement.

These improvements are critical to enhancing and modernizing the multimodal freight transportation system, growing the economic competitiveness of California's freight sector, promoting transportation equity, reducing freight-related deaths and injuries, and improving system resilience by addressing infrastructure vulnerabilities associated with security threats, climate change, and natural disasters. SB 198 provides policy direction for the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) to implement the Port and Freight Infrastructure Program (PFIP).

Public Engagement Guide Purpose

Freight is essential to California's and the nation's economy; however, communities near freight transportation facilities often bear the brunt of climate impacts and pollution stemming from goods movement and storage.

As outlined in the [PFIP Guidelines](#), PFIP awarded projects must provide a direct, meaningful, and assured benefit to priority populations, a term used to cover disadvantaged communities, low-income communities, and low-income households, consistent with the objectives of Senate Bill 535 and Assembly Bill 1550. PFIP applicants were also required to demonstrate how their proposed project was shaped by discussions around equity impacts as well as through robust and meaningful public engagement with communities adversely impacted by freight activities.

Port and Freight Infrastructure Program Public Engagement Guide

Public Engagement Smartsheet Summary Requirements

By March 31, 2024, PFIP awardees must submit a [Public Engagement Smartsheet Summary](#) for each submitted Project Programming Request (PPR). Awardees need to provide a high-level summary of planned and/or previously completed engagement activities for each project phase. This may include activities from earlier project phases that were completed prior to applying to the Port and Freight Infrastructure Program.

- For projects seeking construction funding, explain the project impacts to nearby communities from construction activities that will be avoided or mitigated. Project teams should consider the cumulative impact of other nearby construction projects occurring simultaneously, including traffic in residential neighborhoods, noise, light, or other adverse construction impacts.
- For projects seeking pre-construction funding, articulate how the public, including disadvantaged communities and priority populations, have been and/or will be meaningfully engaged in the project development process.
- Describe community input received and how the feedback was addressed. If feedback will not be incorporated into the project, please provide an explanation.

The PFIP Public Engagement Guide provides an overview of the basic concepts and strategies for conducting public engagement and should be used in conjunction with developing the Public Engagement Summary Smartsheet.

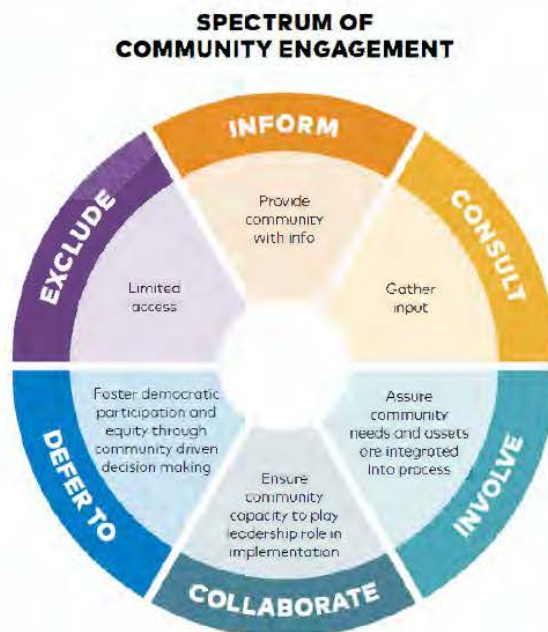
Title VI Requirements

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) assures that no person shall, on the basis of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance, as required by [Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#), as amended, the [Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987](#), and [Federal Executive Order 12898](#) (Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations).

Rationale and Spectrum of Community Engagement

PFIP Awardees must practice effective outreach and meaningful public engagement to ensure that project stakeholders and the involved communities are informed about how project activities may potentially affect them, share what benefits may be in store for them, and listen to what they have to say. Engagement seeks to ensure that diverse views are heard and considered, and where appropriate, incorporated throughout all stages of the planning, project development, and decision-making processes.

Community engagement can be conducted at a variety of levels, depending on the objectives for engaging and the outcomes sought. Determining the level of engagement involves a deliberate effort to consider how the plan or project may affect a community, why they should be involved, and the degree to which their involvement can influence decision making. The figure on the right, derived from Caltrans equitable engagement training, is an illustration of the Spectrum of Community Engagement.



For example, some projects may require keeping the public informed through newsletters or press releases. On the other hand, you may need to conduct a series of public workshops and/or launch an online survey to collect input and identify community priorities for a particular project. Articulating a clear purpose will help identify engagement objectives and help to determine the scope and depth of the engagement.

An effective engagement process is more than performance; it must be purposeful, open, and equitable in order to achieve good results.

Best Practices

Once stakeholders have been identified, the project team must determine the needs of their stakeholders. Needs of a group may be inferred by the demographics of the area, so researching who lives and works near the project area is a good first step. For example, if the project is in an area where there is a large Spanish-speaking population, the project team should be proactive about translating all materials into Spanish and having a Spanish interpreter at each meeting. The team will not be able to anticipate the needs of

Port and Freight Infrastructure Program

Public Engagement Guide

each individual stakeholder, so it is critical to employ a variety of strategies (such as a survey to get an idea of local stakeholder needs, a listening session, online or mailed comments) to provide a variety of opportunities and methods to participate.

Awardees are responsible for providing information in a variety of ways to meet the varying needs of project stakeholders as well as solicit feedback from these stakeholders. In other words, the community engagement process for each project should include a variety of strategies to maximize accessibility and participation in the process. For example, this may include providing materials online for those who cannot attend in person events. While previous engagement efforts do not need to be replicated, future activities should maintain consistency with Caltrans' standards. For a comprehensive overview of these standards, please review Caltrans' Standard Environmental Reference Volume 1, Chapter 3: Public Participation.

Summary of public engagement best practices:

- Distribute surveys/questionnaires (via web, text, calls, email, paper)
- Solicit comments (via web, text, email, voicemail, social media, paper)
- Host public meetings and workshops (in-person, live-streamed, recorded, hybrid)
- Hold virtual site tours
- Conduct pop-up events
- Provide language translation services/interpreters
- Distribute press releases (social media, web, voicemail, radio, television)
- Host an online discussion forum
- Distribute brochures and printed site designs (web, email, paper)
- Partner with Local Agencies
- Coordinate with Community-Based Organizations

Online and Virtual Strategies

Online and virtual strategies are an efficient and relatively low-cost method of facilitating public engagement. Attending in-person meetings can be difficult for residents who have competing priorities for their time such as caregiving or work. Online engagement can help to eliminate barriers that arise from transportation costs or mobility issues.

Some strategies are best suited with a combination of online and hardcopy circulation. For example, a press release will reach more stakeholders if it is published on a website, on social media, and in a physical publication. Surveys can be sent out via email and on social media and can also be put onto a flyer using a QR code or administered via phone or in person.

Port and Freight Infrastructure Program Public Engagement Guide

In-Person Events

Live events are a great way to get more honest feedback from stakeholders and gauge their perspective on a project. Live events do pose some barriers to entry due to time constraints and transportation issues, so the project team should schedule events for evenings and weekends as much as possible to accommodate a variety of work schedules. Additionally, the project team should seek to include themselves where residents may already be located. This could mean setting up a table at a farmer's market or on a local church or college campus. It could also include requesting time on the agenda for existing community meetings.

The project team should anticipate what services may need to be provided to meaningfully engage with stakeholders. Does an interpreter need to be hired? Perhaps the team should consider having a game or activities at their booth or meeting to entertain children while parents provide feedback. No project is complete without stakeholder input. While the Port and Freight Infrastructure Program is aimed at increasing the efficiency of goods movement, more broadly its aim is to better serve the people using those goods. Caltrans is committed to creating a safe, equitable, and environmentally conscious transportation system.

Printed Materials

While printed materials can add cost to engagement efforts, it is sometimes the only way to share information with community members and stakeholders who do not have access to the internet, radio, or television, or are unable to attend in-person meetings. Materials like questionnaires, brochures, project fact sheets, site plans, etc. can be shared at community events or strategically placed in locations such as community centers, churches, parks, and supermarkets. By sharing printed materials such as project fact sheets and site designs it can help ensure everyone has access to information about projects in their community. Community contacts can be leveraged to share information in the most effective places.

Unlike with digital materials, which can often be translated automatically on the user's device, it is critical to make sure that physical materials are available in multiple languages. Make sure to include a way for residents to provide feedback on the materials being shared.

Port and Freight Infrastructure Program Public Engagement Guide

Stakeholder Identification

Some projects may be of statewide significance and would have a much larger pool of stakeholders. When a project has regional or statewide significance, it is critical that the project team includes both rural and urban participants to ensure stakeholders are not disproportionately affected.

Examples of stakeholders:

- Ports
- Railroad operators
- Shippers
- Logistics firms
- Longshore workers
- Air quality management districts
- Warehouse owners and workers
- Community-Based Organizations
- Residents of nearby communities
- Truck drivers

Native American Tribal Governments

There are roughly 109 Indian [tribes in California](#), located in highly populated metropolitan areas and rural or remote areas. Native American concerns are a priority for the State and quality feedback and participation regarding Tribal needs may be paramount in some contexts. PFIP awardees should make specific efforts to solicit feedback from [Native American Tribes](#) in the project area. For additional information and resources about engaging with tribes, visit the [Caltrans Native American Liaison Branch webpage](#).

Disadvantaged Communities

The project team may also want to identify community demographics using a tool such as [CalEnviroscreen 4.0](#). This will not only help inform potential accommodations that will need to be made, such as translation services, but also will determine if the project is located near any priority populations and disadvantaged communities. More information can be found on Caltrans' website.