Environmental Justice

- Environmental Justice Overview
- Misconceptions and Lessons Learned
- Questions and Answers of Case Studies
- Roundtable Discussions and Report Out

Moderators:
Gloria Jeff, Principal Planner
Wichita Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

John Sherrill, Socio-Economic Specialist
Illinois Department of Transportation
Misconceptions and Lessons Learned

Scenario #1 -
The Department of Transportation has a railroad project located in Cook County. Currently, there is one set of tracks. The intent it to double track an area to handle 103 trains per day. The minority percentage in Cook County is 56.9%. In the specific Project Study Area, the minority population is 39.8%, of which 32.5% are Hispanic.

Misconception -
The Project Study Area will experience an impact; but, it has neither a minority population percentage greater than 50%, nor a meaningfully greater percentage of low-income or minority population. In fact, the percentage of minorities is less than Cook County; thus, there can be no disproportionate impacts within the Project’s Study Area.
Misconceptions and Lessons Learned, Scenario #1
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Correct Conception -
An Environmental Justice determination is based upon effects, not on population size; thus, there is no threshold population number.

Lesson Learned -
It is a misconception to conclude that if a project’s impacts are equally distributed to a minority population, there are no disproportionate impacts. If a project is located such that the area has a meaningful low income or minority population; then, a nearby reference community needs to be found.
Misconceptions and Lessons Learned

Scenario #2-
The Department of Transportation has a 13-mile, expressway reconstruction project located in Cook County, to relieve congestion. Cook County’s population is 5.1 million, of which 57% is minority. The plan is to add one new lane in each direction that will be tolled; plus, add one express bus-only lane. This 13-mile portion of the expressway was originally constructed 60 years ago.

Misconception -
The Project Study Area is defined as a one-half mile shaped area (as shown) that extends to the north and the south of the expressway. The Project’s Study Area has a population of 134,829 of which 67.8% are minority.
Misconceptions and Lessons Learned, Scenario #2

Primary Off-System Arterial Improvements

North Avenue (IL 64)

Madison Street

Roosevelt Road (IL 38)

Cermak Road

Secondary Off-System Arterial Improvements

Study Area

Primary Off-System Arterial Improvements

I-55 Express Toll Lanes
(I-355 to I-90/94)
Included in the Project Study Area were Origin & Destination studies from the expressway footprint to:
- O’Hare Airport: 4 miles
- Oak Brook: 5 miles
- Westfield / Fox Valley: 20 miles
- Hodgkins: 7 miles
- Chicago’s Central Business District: 2 miles
Lessons Learned –
Defining the Study Area requires several discussions and input from many entities. This project will affect an area well beyond one-half mile, and needs to account for employment centers, transit centers, and detours. Thus:

• Major employment centers in three counties were included, to evaluate if the project would enhance job opportunities for underserved populations.

• Traffic patterns to the off-system arterials roadways were included, to evaluate impacts from detours.

• A drainage area was included of Environmental Justice communities, to study local flooding.
Central Avenue Extension: Lessons learned from community action

Abby Harris
Tennessee Department of Transportation
Background

• Proposed roadway extension near downtown Chattanooga, allowing better mobility between Riverside Drive and East 3rd Street

• Predominately African-American residential neighborhood, Lincoln Park, to the east of the project area

• Extension would act as an I-24 connector, creating a heavily trafficked industrial corridor in the current residential area

• Proposed extension would cut through a park formerly classified as Lincoln Park
  – Founded in 1918, once Chattanooga’s only recreation center for African-Americans
  – Now owned by Erlanger Health Systems
• Public meetings early in project development
  – Purpose and need
  – Alignments and typical sections
  – Resource consideration

• Historic/architectural assessment showed Lincoln Park and neighborhood were not eligible as a historic resource due to loss of historic features and alterations

• *Coalition to Save Lincoln Park*, a group of concerned individuals, made a formal complaint and request to deny the allocation of Federal funds for the proposed project
• Formal complaint included:
  – The City of Chattanooga failed to meaningfully include the Lincoln Park community in planning and decision-making
    • Alternate routes
    • Greenspace
    • Future community renewal
  – The cultural significance of Lincoln Park within the African-American community was not considered
    • City’s first and only recreation center for African-Americans during segregation
    • First lighted softball fields for African-Americans in the Southeast
    • Willie Mays’ first professional baseball game and home to Negro League professional baseball teams
• Outcomes:
  – Typical section reduced from 4 to 2 lanes
  – Proposed posted speed limit was revised to 25 mph
  – Existing recreational features of former park avoided
  – Street lighting and pedestrian accommodations added to increased safety
  – Streetscape elements were added
  – City would acquire a portion of the former park from Erlanger Health System and work with the community to redevelop former Lincoln Park (future project)
  – Interested citizens and groups were provided an opportunity to participate in the Section 106 consultation process
**Misconceptions:**

- The loss of historic features and significant alterations to a resource does not necessarily equate to a cultural insignificance to a community
- The lack of negative EJ impacts now does not always mean a lack of impacts in the future

**Correct Conception:**

- Intentional, timely, and well-informed community collaboration is the key to understanding the past, present, and future needs of the citizens
Lessons Learned

• Do not underestimate the knowledge and resources of local residents
• Being underprepared can cost valuable time and resources

Residents were concerned about future impacts the roadway extension would have on their community; ease of access would allow for future growth in the area. Residents utilized their knowledge of the area and local resources to push designers to create project alternatives that would better meet their needs while maintaining the purpose and need of the project.
Public Involvement for Diverse Communities
Navigating Changes

Georgia Department of Transportation
Office of Environmental Services
Ryan Perry, Ph.D.
PI for Diverse Communities: Buford Highway Pedestrian Improvements

- Pedestrian Improvements on Buford Highway (SR 13) in DeKalb County, GA, Metro-Atlanta
- 47 ped-vehicle collisions in two-year period
  - 40 injuries, 7 deaths
- Six 11-foot travel lanes, 5-foot sidewalks
- Installation of Pedestrian-Hybrid Beacons and ped crossing islands
- Phase I: 2.27 miles
- Phase II: 2.6 miles
PI for Diverse Communities: Buford Highway Pedestrian Improvements

- Installation of medians → Need for P.I.
- Development of stakeholder list
- Identified community characteristics
- Who is the audience???
PI for Diverse Communities:
Buford Highway Pedestrian Improvements

Sources: US Census Bureau &
Modern Language Assoc.
PI for Diverse Communities: Buford Highway Pedestrian Improvements

• Needs Assessment
  – Face-to-face or phone interviews
  – Identification of additional stakeholders
  – Visual observation
PI for Diverse Communities: Buford Highway Pedestrian Improvements

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PI for Diverse Communities: Buford Highway Pedestrian Improvements

• Asian Business Population
  – North end of corridor
  – Chinese (Cantonese & Mandarin)
  – Korean
  – Vietnamese

• Hispanic community throughout

• Audience IDed

• Outreach Techniques

• Asian Community
  – Center for Pan Asian Community Services

• Hispanic Community
  – Latin American Assoc.
  – Plaza Fiesta
PI for Diverse Communities: Buford Highway Pedestrian Improvements

- Hispanic Community
  - Surveys
  - Flyers
  - GDOT Press Releases
  - Radio Public Announcements
PI for Diverse Communities:
Buford Highway Pedestrian Improvements

• Hispanic Community
• Multiple meetings on Sundays at Plaza Fiesta
  – Surveys focused on needs assessment and perceived median impact
  – 345 & 168 surveys returned for Phase I in Spring 2006
PI for Diverse Communities: Buford Highway Pedestrian Improvements

- Asian Community
  - CPACS IDed business owners
  - Face-to-face interviews
  - Focused on perceived impacts of raised medians
PI for Diverse Communities: Buford Highway Pedestrian Improvements

- Outreach results revealed different needs/concerns within different communities.
- Hispanic Community concerned with pedestrian operations and safety, number of crosswalks, vehicle speed, number of bus tops, etc.
- Asian community concerned with effects of medians on business operations, danger of U-turns, delayed emergency vehicle response.

- Context Sensitive Solution!
  - Medianettes from Shallowford Terrace to Clairmont Road
  - Median from Clairmont Road to county line***
  - Additional mid-block crossing between Clairmont Road and county line
  - Additional traffic signals
PI for Diverse Communities: Buford Highway Pedestrian Improvements

- Tremendous success with Phase I of project!
- Planned to duplicate outreach efforts
- Utilize CPACS and Latin American Assoc./Plaza Fiesta

Lessons learned from Phase I:
- Education needed for crossing at locations
- Involvement with students
- Non-profit org to assist with school involvement
## PI for Diverse Communities: Buford Highway Pedestrian Improvements

Comparison Between 2006-2010 and 2009-2013 Five-year Estimate Percentages

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PI for Diverse Communities: Buford Highway Pedestrian Improvements

- Increase in poverty
- Increase in reliance on public transportation for work
- Hispanic student population increased from 69 – 87% to 92 – 95% at elementary schools
- Middle school, increase from 64% to 83%
- High school, from 53% to 78%
PI for Diverse Communities: Buford Highway Pedestrian Improvements

Get High School Students Involved!

• Help from Anne Morris (LLC)
• Visual Arts Teacher from nearby High School contacted
• Shown examples of Miami-Dade MPO’s annual PSA contest
• Enthusiastic participation in PSA contest!
• Build students’ portfolios

• Teams of visual art students would compete for best PSA video
• Facebook, Twitter, etc.
• GDOT choose 5 PSAs, students vote on winner
• Loop in medical clinics, Community Centers
• Voice overs in target languages
• 5 area newspapers, 5 TV stations, 16 radio stations
PI for Diverse Communities: Buford Highway Pedestrian Improvements

- February, 2017 headlines:
  - Decaturish.com: “Immigration attorneys report ICE raids on Buford Highway”
  - 11Alive: “Panic After ICE Raids Across Metro Atlanta”
  - CBS46: “‘They just grab you’: Metro Atlanta residents living in fear after rash of ICE raids”
PI for Diverse Communities: Buford Highway Pedestrian Improvements

• School’s concerns over student safety most important

• Student school attendance plummeted

• Schools cut off coordination with GDOT and our consultants
PI for Diverse Communities: Buford Highway Pedestrian Improvements

- Misconceptions
  - Repeating prior outreach efforts
  - Our perception that previous techniques would be effective
  - Public trust

- Lessons Learned
  - Interactions with immigrant communities dependent on current events
  - Adapt outreach efforts in light of insecurities within the communities
  - Research/Reach out to other DOTs and MPOs
PI for Diverse Communities:
Buford Highway Pedestrian Improvements

• Adaptations:
  – Find out from communities how they prefer to interact with DOT
  – Kiosks w/ incentives at community/cultural events
  – Change to public comment cards (no address/identifying information)

• Form lasting partnerships with community organizations

• Let the community take lead of education efforts

• SUGGESTIONS FROM MPOs???