

## **I-96 Interchange Access Improvement Study: A Look at the Public Involvement Process on an MIS**

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### **Abstract**

This Major Investment Study (MIS) is an ongoing study aimed at identifying transportation investments which will best serve the needs of present and future residents in the East Howell area of Livingston County. An integral part of the study centers on the Public Involvement Process. The importance of a productive and inclusive public process is stressed in the guidelines for conducting MIS, and for good reason. With today's scarcity of tax dollars for transportation improvements, it is imperative the public be informed about projects affecting them, and their support obtained before federal, state and local agencies move forward with implementation.

This paper will illustrate to conference participants how the above "vision" for conducting a public involvement process can actually be implemented on a relatively controversial interchange access project. The various techniques and tools used will be discussed including: the development of a formal Public Involvement Plan; the creation of a Community Resource Council; outreach activities designed to draw out "closet" opinions which may have negative consequences if "buried" until late in the study; establishment of a telephone "hotline"...pre-recorded message versus a real live person; as well as stakeholder and citizen focus group interviews. These are all familiar tools and techniques for involving the public, but as we all know, what works well on one project may not on another.

We'll take a look at "Lessons Learned" in terms of what worked well and what didn't work so well. These lessons can then be readily applied to other situations when the controversial subject of improving, removing, or building new interchange access comes up in your city or town-ship...and it probably will!

