

FAIRFIELD COUNTY ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION AND OPEN SPACE PLAN

Communications Plan

1.0 Introduction

The purpose for creating the Fairfield County Active Transportation and Open Space Plan (Fairfield County Plan) follows three developments that have occurred in Fairfield County; publication of the *Fairfield County Development Strategy and Land Use Plan*, a Healthy and Smart Development project from the Fairfield County Health Department, Community Health Development and two applications to the Safe Routes to School Program. Significant events are occurring in Fairfield County that further drives this plan; the City of Lancaster comprehensive bike trail, the City of Pickerington's trail along Diley Road, and the City of Pickerington's Comprehensive Bikeway Plan.

This Plan will be a major accomplishment of regional collaboration between local governments as well as those agencies responsible for development, recreation and transportation within the county. The Plan, prepared in response from the Fairfield County Regional Planning Commission, will develop an overall planning and policy ethic for Fairfield County identifying goals, policies, and objectives for the future of the county. The Plan will also provide a benchmark for guiding planning related decisions and as a point of reference for more detailed plan implementation action by responsible officials and agencies.

The Plan will be dynamic and subject to continuous examination and testing in order to achieve its defined Goals and Objectives. It will also require local action and citizen support. Existing local plans and policies will be modified, where appropriate, reflecting the County's decision and support.

2.0 Purpose

The purpose of the Communications Plan for the Fairfield County Plan is not only to inform and educate but also to engage stakeholders and the public in the process, the analysis, and outcomes that will affect them and their community. Early involvement with the community will increase public interest in and ownership of the Fairfield County Plan. The involvement of concerned community leaders will enhance the effectiveness of the recommended strategies and establish trust and confidence in the decision making process.

3.0 Public Involvement Goals and Objectives

The goal of the Communication Plan is to produce a plan of activities that is:

- Comprehensive
- High-performance oriented
- Inclusive of the wide variety of public sectors/stakeholders
- Communicating factual information about the Fairfield County Plan providing consistent layers of communication and various opportunities to participate

The project team envisions executing a Communications Plan that is both comprehensive and high-performance oriented. Objectives that illustrate these qualities include:

1. Ongoing coordination, collaboration and communication with the Fairfield County Regional Planning Commission staff.
2. Generating participation, interest and support possible from all and within budget.
3. Forming the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) consisting of members from the Fairfield County Regional Planning Commission, Fairfield County Economic Development, Fairfield County Historical Parks, Fairfield County Engineer, Parks and Recreation, Fairfield County Health Department, Fairfield County Soil & Water Conservation District, Violet Township, Safe Routes to School, Rails to Trails, Franklin County Metro Parks and Fairfield County Utilities.
4. Forming the Stakeholders Advisory Group (SAG) consisting of members from the City of Lancaster, Fairfield County Chamber of Commerce, Fairfield County Township Trustee Association, Fairfield County Farm Bureau, ODOT, Bloom Township, Consider Biking, Heritage Trail Association, Mayors of all cities and villages in Fairfield County and residents.
5. Identifying key opinion leaders for one-on-one communication that will minimize public's/stakeholders' discord and promote awareness.
6. Conducting preliminary outreach in the study area to assess the level of knowledge, interest and areas of concern to area residents regarding the study.
7. Producing a factual awareness about the study area and its components among public sectors/stakeholders.
8. Providing a variety of mechanisms for continuous input and feedback; e.g., the Internet and public meetings. Preparing presentations, conducting meetings and distributing material to advise the general public of the plan.
9. Designing supportive printed materials for education and promotion of the Fairfield County Plan recommendations.
10. Identifying unanticipated opportunities.

The first task in the Communications Plan is to provide a strategy to communicate with the public sectors/stakeholders.

4.0 Public Involvement Audiences

The Communications Plan for the Fairfield County Plan will be developed to encourage participation from a variety of audiences and will provide the community with multiple vehicles for obtaining information and providing feedback. A variety of outreach and communications forums will be employed to engage the public and facilitate discussions with numerous audiences. Such audiences include:

schools
businesses
neighborhood and civic associations
parks and recreation departments
public agencies
news media
community groups
design centers

faith-based organizations
area residents
economic development corporations
legislative representatives
transit authority
disabled community
city council
emergency services

5.0 Public Involvement Activities w/schedule

Coordination

The project team will conduct regularly scheduled meetings with representatives of TAG and SAG.

All printed materials, articles, handouts and displays will display the Fairfield County Regional Planning Commission's name and logo, the project sponsor.

Outreach

Various communication methods and tools will be used to encourage public involvement in the study. Outreach to the public sectors/stakeholders located in and near Fairfield County as well as audiences who are interested in or have an interest in the plan will include but not be limited to the following efforts:

Public Forums

- Stakeholders Advisory Group (SAG). An advisory committee will be formed from this audience of stakeholders that will include the Fairfield County Township Trustee Association, City of Lancaster, Fairfield County Chamber of Commerce, Violet Township, Bloom Township, Parks and Recreation, Franklin County Metro Parks, ODOT, Consider Biking, Safe Routes to School, Rails to Trails, Heritage Trail Association and residents. The advisory committee will meet after each milestone has been accomplished. Milestones will include, but not be limited to the completion of the policies, goals and objectives, preliminary draft and study recommendations.
- One-on-one community leaders meetings
One-on-one meetings will be scheduled with the Fairfield County Commissioners, Fairfield County Regional Planning Commission members, Fairfield County Chamber of Commerce and the Heritage Trail Association to explain the purpose and need for the plan, identify needs in the planning area and to seek assistance on proposed outcomes and recommendations.
- Open House Meeting (All)
A public open house on the proposed recommendations will be conducted in the planning area. Data, maps, graphics and other printed material will be displayed and distributed.

Internet Website

A dedicated project website will be created for the plan. The site will provide, among other information, maps, graphics, updates, notices, contact information, on-line comment forms and e-mail link. The website will also link from the Fairfield County Regional Planning Commission website. Once the plan is completed, it will be archived at the Fairfield County Regional Planning Commission's website.

Media

Press releases and news articles announcing public meetings will be drafted and forwarded to Fairfield County Regional Planning Commission for final review and distribution to the media. Contact persons for all media inquiries will be R. Brooks Davis, Director, Fairfield County Regional Planning Commission.

Printed Material

Printed material will display the Fairfield County Regional Planning Commission's logo and name. Information on the plan, meetings, and web address will be developed by the project team and distributed at meetings and to businesses, libraries, recreation centers and other public places in the planning area.

6.0 Comments and Recording

Stakeholders and members of the public will have various opportunities to participate, comment or provide input into the Fairfield County Plan, and include the following:

- Neighborhood Leaders Meeting
- Stakeholders Advisory Group (SAG)
- One-on-One Meetings
- Open House Public Meeting
- Internet Website/E-mail
- U.S. Postal Mail

The project team will respond to all stakeholders and public project comments/questions within fifteen working days. If appropriate, the comment/question may be referred to the Fairfield County Regional Planning Commission. If the comment/question is referred to the Fairfield County Regional Planning Commission, the individual/s will be notified.

The project team will document all written comment/question along with the response and include each in an appendix to the final document.

7.0 Documentation – Final Report of Communications Plan

A final report on the Communications Plan along with applicable appendices will be delivered to the Fairfield County Regional Planning Commission. The plan will include all communications, written materials, maps, graphics, attendance sheets, press releases, and news articles developed for and during the course of this study.

8.0 Schedule

The schedule outlining the tasks with anticipated duration is attached.