

## CHAPTER 7: PROJECT COORDINATION

This Chapter describes the project's public involvement program. Major features of public and agency involvement employed during the preparation of the DR/DEIS/Draft 4(f) and the FDR/FEIS/ 4(f) have included:

- Public involvement activities conducted during the STC/BOH Major Investment Study (MIS) (1998);
- Public Scoping for the DR/DEIS/Draft 4(f);
- Consultation with the Project Steering Committee and Citizens Advisory Committee;
- Consultation with regulatory agencies;
- On-going meetings and presentations for large community groups, environmental organizations and other interested parties;
- Establishment of a Public Information Office.
- Creation and distribution of a Project Newsletter;
- Establishment of a project website;
- Press briefings, notices, and other media activities; and
- Establishment of a DR/DEIS/Draft 4(f) public comment period including public hearings.

The following sections summarize each of these activities. Public notices issued as part of the process and correspondence received from regulatory agencies are presented in **Appendix P – Public Comment and Response**.

### 7.1 Major Investment Study

NYSDOT's 1998 MIS for the STC/BOH Project involved an overall public and agency involvement process for formulating locally preferred alternatives to progress to a NEPA FDR/FEIS/4(f). This involved establishment and consultation with a series of committees, including a Technical Working Group (TWG) and a Community Liaison Committee (CLC). The TWG consisted of representatives/staff of approximately twenty-five economic development, transportation, and environmental agencies/organizations and elected officials for purposes of providing technical and policy guidance in completion of the study. The CLC included several community and private/not-for-profit interest organizations and interested members of the public. Contacts and coordination arising out of the MIS process served as a basis for the establishment of review committees for this FDR/FEIS/4(f).

As discussed in Chapter 1, locally preferred alternatives arising out of the 1998 MIS were carried forward to a Public Scoping Process for a DR/DEIS in 1999. Comments and concerns expressed during this process prompted NYSDOT to refocus the overall objectives and scale of the project. In February 2001, NYSDOT issued a report documenting this change in scope, entitled the



*Southtowns Connector Statement of Purpose: A Re-focusing of Effort.* The report identified the project objectives that were advanced in the DR/DEIS. This change in objectives was documented in GBNRTC's 2025 Long Range Transportation Plan.

## 7.2 Public Scoping

A Notice of Intent (NOI) was issued on September 13, 2001 stating that the project had been refocused and that community concerns expressed would be used to guide new project alternatives and the preparation of a DR/DEIS/Draft 4(f). The NOI also announced that a new Public Scoping Process would be initiated to document public concerns and issues associated with the revised project objectives. Letters describing the revised scope of the project and soliciting comments were sent to appropriate federal, state, and local agencies. In addition, a project Fact Sheet was produced and distributed to roughly 750 citizens/organizations that had previously expressed interest in the project.

A Draft Scoping Report was prepared outlining the preliminary list of issues to be covered in the DR/DEIS/Draft 4(f), as well as the preliminary scope of project alternatives. This was distributed to regulatory agencies and made available via the Project Website. NYSDOT conducted a series of formal NEPA Public Scoping Meetings to receive comments on the Draft Scoping Report and/or other issues of concern related to the project. These meetings were held at the following locations and times:

- Monday, September 24, 2001, 5:00 pm, NYSDOT Public Information Office – 50 Lakefront Boulevard;
- Tuesday, October 2, 2001, 6:00 pm, Tifft Nature Preserve Visitor's Center, 1200 Fuhrmann Boulevard; and
- Thursday, October 4, 2001, 6:00 pm, Lackawanna Senior Center, 230 Martin Road, Lackawanna.

Meeting notifications were published in local newspapers and press releases, and were mailed directly to over 700 people on the project mailing list. Following the scoping meetings, a written comment period was established, during which agencies and the public could submit comments on the scope of issues that would be addressed in the DR/DEIS/Draft 4(f). Comments received from the scoping meetings and written comment period were tabulated in the Final Scoping Document (January 2002).



### 7.3 Steering Committee and Community Advisory Committee

A Project Steering Committee and a Community Advisory Committee were created to oversee the development of conceptual and refined alternatives. They also served as an on-going forum to receive feedback on the project.

The Steering Committee consisted of representatives derived from the TWG under the 1998 MIS, including staff from affected municipalities, Erie County, economic development agencies, and elected officials (see **Table 7.3-1**). The Citizens Advisory Committee was derived from membership on the CLC under the 1998 MIS and included representatives from community associations, businesses within the project area, local and regional environmental, transportation, and community interest groups, as well as individuals that have expressed continued interest in the progress of the project (see **Table 7.3-2**).

**Table 7.3-1 Steering Committee Members**

City of Buffalo	City of Lackawanna
Town of Hamburg	Erie County Department of Environment and Planning
Erie County Industrial Development Agency	Empire State Development Corporation
Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation	Buffalo Niagara Partnership
New York State Thruway Authority	Development Downtown, Inc.
Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council	Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, Niagara District	New York State Assemblyman Brian Higgins' Office
US Congressman Jack Quinn's Office	New York State Assemblyman Dick Smith' Office
US Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton's Office	New York State Senator William Stakowski's Office

**Table 7.3-2 Citizens Advisory Committee Members**

Friends of the Buffalo and Niagara Rivers	Tift Nature Preserve
Old First Ward Association.	Committee to Save the Old First Ward
Hickory Woods Homeowners Association	Citizen's Rapid Transit Corporation
Industrial Heritage Committee	Seneca-Babcock Community Association
Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy	Partners for a Livable Western New York
Green Party of Erie County	Bflo & Erie Co. Botanical Gardens
Gateway Trade Center	St. Mary's Cement
Bethlehem Steel Corporation	Individuals Expressing Interest in the Project



Meetings with the Steering Committee and the Citizens Advisory Committee were held at key points in the formulation of the DR/DEIS/Draft 4(f), including:

- During the formulation of revised project goals, objectives, and criteria used to develop and evaluate the feasible alternatives presented in this FDR/FEIS/4(f) (See Chapter 5).
- During the drafting of conceptual alternatives for components of the project build alternatives and screening of these components to identify feasible alternatives (See Chapter 3);
- During the analyses of traffic and transportation implications of the feasible alternatives (see Chapters 2 and 3); and
- Following completion of key environmental analyses (e.g., wetlands/water bodies survey, coastal zone management consistency, cultural resource evaluations, etc.).

These committees also served to provide the STC/BOH Project team with on-going information on the progress of projects being advanced by other agencies and organizations within the project area that could have implications on the STC/BOH Project itself.

#### 7.4 Coordination with Federal, State, and Local Regulatory Agencies

Meetings and correspondence were conducted with various regulatory agencies potentially having jurisdiction over aspects of the project. Early in the 2001 Public Scoping Process, agencies were contacted to inform them of the change in the overall scope and objectives of the project. In addition, over the course of the development of the FDR/FEIS/4(f), various agencies were contacted to inform them of the status of project alternatives and to seek advice/guidance in the preparation of various technical aspects of the project. **Table 7.4-1** lists the agencies and organizations that were contacted during the course of the preparation of the FDR/FEIS/4(f).



**Table 7.4-1 Regulatory Agencies Contacted During Preparation of the DR/DEIS**

US Army Corp of Engineers, Buffalo District	US Environmental Protection Agency, Region II
US Coast Guard, 9 <sup>th</sup> District	U.S. Department of the Interior, US Fish and Wildlife Service
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation	U.S. Department of the Interior, National Parks Service
NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation, Region 9, Regional Permits Division	NYS Department of State, Division of Coastal Resources
NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation, Region 9, Hazardous Waste Division	NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, Historic Resources Bureau (State Historic Preservation Officer)
Erie County Health Department	Erie County Department of Environment and Planning

The following meetings and/or letter correspondence occurred during the course of the STC/BOH Project.

- Correspondence dated October 9, 2001 from the US Department of the Interior, US Fish and Wildlife Service, in response to the revised Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare a DR/DEIS/Draft 4(f) for the STC/BOH Project.
- Correspondence dated March 15, 2002 from the United States Environmental Protection Agency, Region 2, in regard to review of the scoping document for the DR/DEIS/Draft 4(f).
- Meeting with NYSDEC and USACE on December 19, 2002 to provide an update on the progress of the STC/BOH Project and potential wetlands and water bodies that could be affected by the project.
- Meeting with NYSDEC occurred in March 2003 to discuss issues that may be associated with the proposed project and proximity to existing inactive hazardous waste sites. Issues discussed included the proposed alignment of the project in relation to Voluntary Cleanup of Republic Steel; Buffalo Outer Harbor ROD; Radio Tower Area cleanup; Voluntary Cleanup of Subparcel 1 of Hanna Furnace facility; and proposed cleanup of Shenango Steel Mold.

## 7.5 On-Going Public Involvement Activities, Meetings, and Presentations

In addition to the project meetings with the Steering/Citizens Advisory Committees, regulatory agencies, and general public meetings discussed above, a series of on-going meetings and



presentations were conducted over the course of the development of the FDR/FEIS/4(f) to various units of local government, interest groups, and the general public. Many of the meetings involved discussions of a particular policy issue or concurrent project. Others involved participation in large regional events highlighting current infrastructure, transportation, and waterfront access projects. Dates and participants in these meetings and presentations are as follows.

- March 6, 2002 – Presentation at City of Buffalo *State of the Waters* Conference
- April 4, 2002 – Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority regarding progress on the cleanup and redevelopment of the NFTA Outer Harbor Lands
- April 10, 2002 – Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation, on the progress of the Union Ship Canal Redevelopment Project
- April 20, 2002 – Presentation at City of Buffalo *Downtown Summit III*
- April 22, 2002 – Town of Hamburg Public Works, on the potential implications of the project on the Woodlawn community and plans for a Lake-Milestrip truck access road
- April 25, 2002 – Presentation to the Buffalo Common Council Waterfront Subcommittee
- May 7, 2002 – Presentation to Buffalo Niagara Partnership Waterfront Action Committee
- May 8, 2002 – Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning, Division of Planning, Comprehensive Plan Update Staff, on the implications of the project on the South Buffalo and Buffalo River Planning Communities
- May 13, 2002 – Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning, Local Waterfront Redevelopment Plan (LWRP)/Waterfront Initiatives Program, on the implications of the project to local waterfront policies being developed for the City's LWRP
- September 9, 2002 – Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council, on refinements to the regional travel demand modeling for the project Null and Build Alternatives
- November 13, 2002 – New York State Thruway Authority, on the implications of travel demand forecasts on the operations along I-90 and I-190
- November 20, 2002 – City of Lackawanna and Lackawanna Development Corporation, on the implications of the project on redevelopment initiatives at the Bethlehem Steel site and around the Route 5/Ridge Road interchange
- November 21, 2002 – Town of Hamburg Public Works Department regarding progress on the conceptual alternatives affecting the Town of Hamburg
- December 10, 2002 – Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority, regarding transit user components included in each of the Build Alternatives



- December 18, 2002 – Erie County Department of Environment and Planning, regarding on-going economic development projects being advanced by the county
- May 2, 2003 – Meeting with Steelfields, Inc. (Cleanup Contractor for LTV/Republic Steel Site), regarding components of the approved voluntary cleanup plan
- May 5, 2003 – Erie County Department of Environment and Planning, regarding the implications of the project on the then-planned “E-Zone” entertainment facility at the NFTA Outer Harbor Lands
- May 15, 2003 – Public Information Meeting on Refined Project Alternatives at Tifft Nature Preserve Visitor’s Center, 1200 Fuhrmann Boulevard
- May 24, 2003 – Presentation of Refined Project Alternatives at *City of Buffalo Waterfront Conference*
- September 8, 2003 – Office of Strategic Planning/Downtown Development Inc., regarding the overall implications of each of the Build Alternatives and potential phasing of improvements
- November 2004 – May 2005 – consultation, meetings, and coordination with State Historic Preservation Officer regarding identification of and affects to cultural resources (archaeological and architectural)

## 7.6 Public Information Office

During the MIS and DR/DEIS/Draft 4(f) process, a public information office (PIO) was maintained and staffed by the NYSDOT at 50 Lakefront Boulevard. The PIO has been the location of all project information and served as the repository location of all project report originals. The office was open to the public daily during normal business hours.

In July 2003, the PIO was moved to NYSDOT’s Region 5 Design Group Division at the General Donovan State Office Building in downtown Buffalo.

## 7.7 Project Newsletters/Fact Sheets/Website

Four editions of *Connections*, the Project newsletter, were produced and distributed at key decision points in the study process to individuals included in the project mailing list. Individual “Fact Sheets” were also prepared and distributed to the general public at information meetings. The Fact Sheets provided the public with updates on project progress and information on specific topic areas such as the environmental review process.



All pertinent project information can be accessed by the public for review through the completion of the environmental review process by clicking on the “Southtowns/Buffalo Outer Harbor Project” link website at:

<http://dot.state.ny.us/r5pc.html>

## 7.8 Public Comment Period – DR/DEIS/Draft 4(f)

A public comment period was established for receipt of comments on the DR/DEIS/Draft 4(f). Public comments were accepted from July 1, 2005 through August 31, 2005. The public comment period commenced with the publication of the Notice of Availability of the DR/DEIS/Draft 4(f) on July 1, 2005 in the Federal Register and subsequent publications in local newspapers and on the project website. The public comment period included two public hearings conducted on the dates and at the locations listed below.

- August 10, 2005 at Erie Community College, City Campus
- August 11, 2005 at the Lackawanna Senior Center

The Public Hearings commenced with a project information session. Project information was presented via presentation boards, table-top displays, fact sheets, and large format design drawings. Representatives of NYSDOT and the design consultant team were present to discuss questions one-on-one with attendees. Comment sheets/cards were distributed to gather further input from the public regarding the alternatives.

Following the informational session, representatives of the NYSDOT and design team consultants presented a history of the project along with specific details about each alternative. During the public hearing session, attendees were invited to verbally present their comments regarding the project and the specific alternatives. All comments were recorded by a court reporter. Attendees who desired to have their comment entered into the public record, but preferred not to speak in front of the larger audience, were given the opportunity to meet individually with the court reporter in a private setting to provide comment. These written comments accepted at the Public Hearings were also made part of the public record.

**Appendix P: Public Comment and Response** contains transcripts of the public hearings and include oral statements given. The Appendix includes copies of all letters received during the public comment period, including written comments received during the aforementioned public meetings. NYSDOT responses to comments from the public are also included in **Appendix P**.

