

Public Involvement Master Plan

August 2012

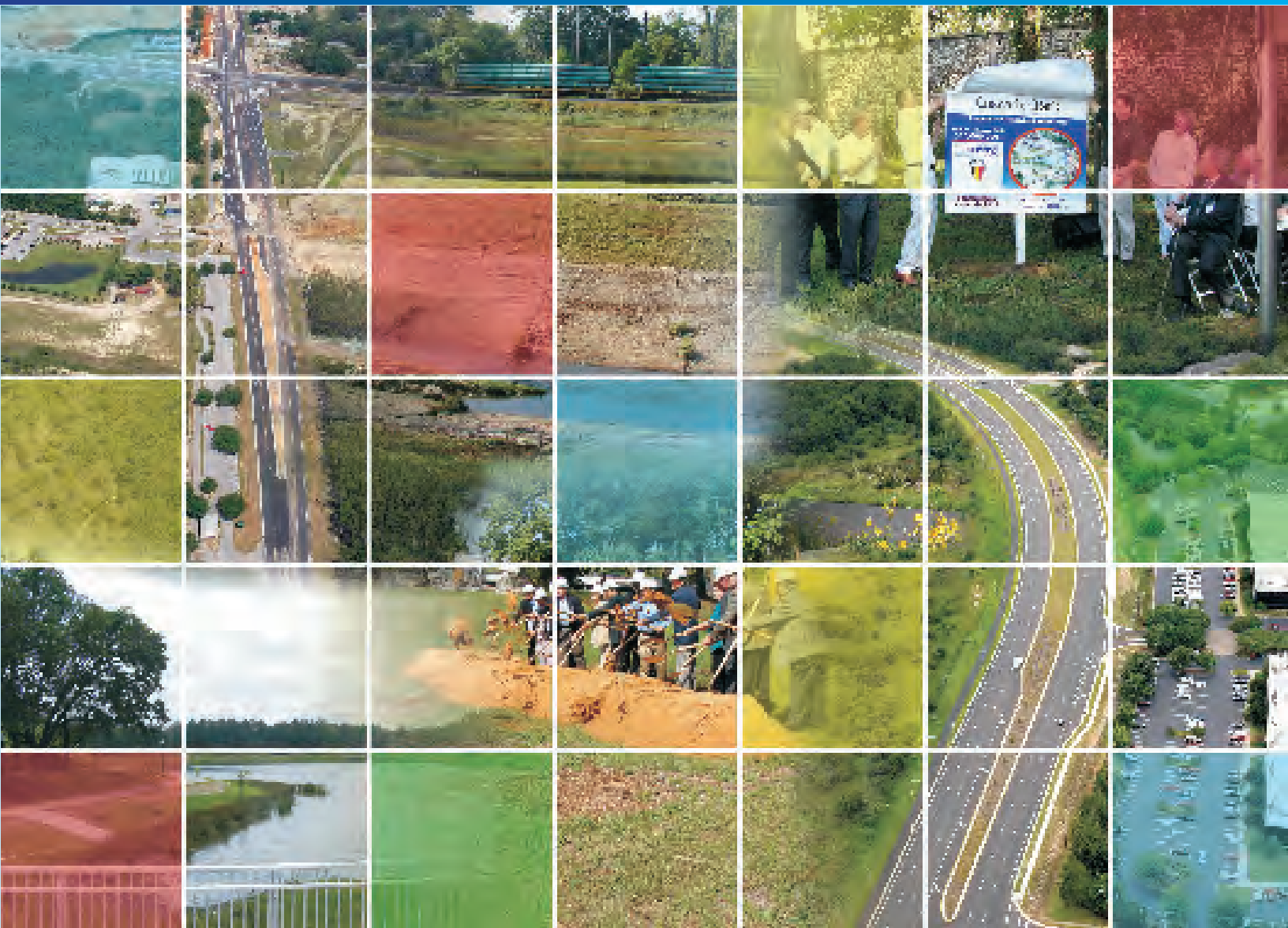


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Introduction

Blueprint 2000 seeks to provide opportunities for interested citizens and organizations to participate in the transportation and greenway planning process, as well as recognizing that the success of any project is dependent on a successful public outreach program.

This public involvement plan outlines the components that will be utilized on all Blueprint 2000 projects and emphasizes the importance of early and on-going public involvement, as well as providing ideas for strategies, techniques, goals, and objectives. As such, it is committed to conducting a pro-active Public Involvement Plan that focuses on soliciting community interaction throughout the project development process.

Purpose

Public Involvement is the foundation of every successful corridor improvement project. A process of open and accessible public involvement is essential to the success of Blueprint 2000 projects. It is the legal and ethical responsibility of any public agency. There is no magic formula for meeting the needs and expectations of the public, nor is there only one way to encourage participation. The process of soliciting, listening and responding to citizen input can be challenging, complicated, and often an intimidating process for all involved. It makes good sense from a practical viewpoint, to avoid misunderstandings and anxiety that might be founded on misinformation and suppositions. When done well, it can be a meaningful and rewarding experience that leads to better decisions on issues of important public opinion.

The goals and objectives of Blueprint 2000 is to increase community awareness and understanding by keeping the public informed and involved in the transportation and greenway planning process. This involvement starts during the planning phase and continues through design and into construction. In addition to its informative roles, the goal is to build a consensus of support and foster an environment of accurate information so the public will feel free to voice their ideas and concerns. To accomplish these goals and objectives, it will be an essential part of this program to ensure that the public has been provided with adequate and meaningful opportunities to engage in the decision making process.

Goals of Blueprint 2000:

- Continue the vision of “maintaining and improving mobility by providing a safe, environmentally sensitive transportation and greenway system”.
- Ensure that the public is not only involved, but also encouraged to participate, in the decision-making process.
- Include a “proactive” public involvement process that provides up-to-date information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continuing involvement of the public in the development of each project.

Outreach Efforts

Public Involvement throughout the planning process will assure the gathering of meaningful information from the public through public participation. Engaging the public will be a catalyst for building support for Blueprint 2000 projects. By conducting interviews, creating focus groups, distributing surveys, and providing a variety of forums for feedback, Blueprint staff will be able to understand and define the issues that affect the community and the general public. As a result, Blueprint 2000 will be able to incorporate public needs and desires into the planning process, and complete projects that address the community's needs as well as their quality of life. The following are ways to build a meaningful relationship among people in the community.

- Build awareness, interest, and support in the general public and decision-makers by using innovative media techniques.
- Provide and encourage opportunities for direct citizen involvement from the early stages of the planning process.
- Develop methods to collect input from citizens who cannot attend meetings, such as web-based input strategies providing "everyone" a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed plan.
- Provide the public with timely notice and reasonable access to technical information used in the development of the plans.
- Engage the public in a proactive effort by going to civic and cultural groups, churches, neighborhoods, organizations, and other citizen committees.
- Show consideration and response to public input during the planning and development process.
- Meet with community leaders such as church ministers, heads of civic groups, and other key groups where the traditionally underserved meet or participate in-group functions.
- Sharing information and gathering input at community events.

Additional Efforts to Reach Traditionally Underserved Populations:

Blueprint 2000 recognizes that additional efforts must be made to involve traditionally underserved segments of the population in the transportation and greenway planning process, these include minorities, those of low income, the elderly, and/or persons with disabilities. The goal of Blueprint is to ensure that all citizens regardless of race, color, religion, or income status, have an equal opportunity to participate in the decision making process. This will lead to planning that reflects the needs of everyone's interest and input. The following steps will help with these efforts:

- Work with all media including minority media outlets.
- Present information at community group meetings.
- Conduct meetings at community centers within traditionally underserved areas at convenient times.
- Provide easy access to information for the disabled.
- Identify key community groups in underserved areas.

- Use people-oriented facilitators identified by community leaders.
- Be sensitive to diverse audiences.

Public Involvement Objectives

Informing the Public:

Engaging the public early and often in the planning process is critical to the success of any program and is required by numerous state and federal laws. It is the intent of this program to fully inform and involve all interested public officials, stakeholders, and special interest groups in the development of the Blueprint projects.

To offer access to information and provide timely public notice, as well as to educate the public about the planning process, stakeholders, as well as local, regional, state, and federal agencies will be kept apprised of significant study developments, notified of all public meetings, and encouraged to provide feedback and comment regarding Blueprint 2000 projects.

Public notification is one of the primary functions and responsibilities of this agency. Typically, under Part 1, Chapter 2 of the PD&E Manual, notice of a Blueprint 2000 project will be provided to the following agencies:

- FEDERAL**
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
 - Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
 - Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)
 - Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)
 - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (U.S. ACOE)
 - U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Center for Environmental Health and Injury Control - Center for Disease Control
 - U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
 - U.S. Department of the Interior – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
 - U.S. Department of the Interior – Bureau of Land Management
 - U.S. Department of the Interior - U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)
 - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
 - U.S. Department of Agriculture Southern Region - Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)
 - U.S. Department of Commerce - National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)
 - U.S. Department of Interior - National Park Service (NPS)
 - U.S. Department of Commerce - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
 - U.S. Department of Interior – Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)

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- STATE**
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), Northwest District
 - Florida Department of State Historic Preservation Office, Division of Historical Resources
 - Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC)
 - Florida State Clearinghouse in the Department of Community Affairs (DCA)
 - Florida Transportation Commission
 - Florida Department of Transportation – Environmental Management Office
 - Florida Marine Fisheries
- REGIONAL**
- Northwest Florida Water Management District (NFWFMD)
 - Northwest Florida Regional Planning Council (NWRPC)
 - Capital Regional Transportation Planning Agency (CRTPA)
- LOCAL**
- Leon County
 - City of Tallahassee

Elected and Appointed Officials:

- FEDERAL**
- Marco Rubio, US Senate
 - Bill Nelson, US Senate
 - Steve Southerland, US House of Representatives, District 2
- STATE**
- Rick Scott, Governor
 - Charles S. "Charlie" Dean, Sr., State Senator, District 3
 - Bill Montford, State Senator, District 6
 - Marti Coley, Florida State House Representatives, District 7
 - Alan B. Williams, Florida State House Representatives, District 8
 - Michelle Rehwinkel Vasilinda, Florida State House Representatives, District 9
- LOCAL**
- Tallahassee – Leon County Intergovernmental Agency
 - Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)
 - Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC)

Public Involvement Techniques

Several techniques for expanding public awareness of transportation and greenway planning issues have been identified. This section gives an overview of these techniques. Consideration of these techniques assists decision-makers, planners, and consultants in selecting the optimal techniques to maximize the goal of public outreach while still being mindful of cost considerations.

- Outreach to organizations and to individual stakeholders through direct mailing.
- Outreach to the general public through media, radio, television, newspapers, brochures, website, flyers, newsletters, and signage to raise awareness issues, to schedule meetings, and to provide opportunities and outlets for review and comment.
- Outreach efforts through the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), the Intergovernmental Agency (IA) and the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC).

Invitational and Informational letters – Letters will be sent, as needed, to jurisdictional agencies and elected and appointed officials to provide information about the study and to announce public meetings.

Public Notices – Legal/display notices will be published in the Tallahassee Democrat prior to public information meetings and public hearings.

Direct Mail List – The following will be contacted by direct mail in order to obtain input into the project development process and/or in order to provide project information:

- All individuals owning property within at least 300 feet of the centerline of the proposed facility (as required in F.S. 339.155).
- Members of the Blueprint 2000 committees
- Local elected and appointed public officials
- Local, regional, and state jurisdictional agencies
- Individuals who request to be placed on the project mailing list
- Public and private groups, organizations, agencies, or businesses that request to be placed on the mailing list for Blueprint projects

Outreach Activities

Media:

Any form of media may be used for the public notice of informational meetings (local newspapers, public service announcements on radio and television, flyers, and invitational letters to property owners and officials). Advertisement of a meeting should be a paid advertisement in the classified section of the local newspaper. The content of the newspaper ad should include:

1. Purpose of the public meeting;
2. Outline of the topics to be covered during the meeting;
3. Project description (use of a location map is suggested);
4. Date, time, and place of meeting;
5. Name and telephone number of contact information for information on meeting and accommodations of disabilities under ADA;
6. Address where written comments can be directed;

The following identifies the mass media used to carry public notices, news releases, public service announcements, news items, and interviews:

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NEWSPAPERS

Tallahassee Democrat
TaMaryn Waters - Local
Government Reporter,
tlwaters@tallahassee.com

County Link
Jon D. Brown - Director of
Community and Media
Relation,
BrownJon@leoncountyfl.gov

Rebeccah Cantley – Local Desk
Editor, rcantley@tallahassee.com

RADIO

Cumulus Broadcasting (WHBT-
AM 1410, WHBX-FM 96.1,
WBZE-FM 98.9, WWLD-FM
102.3, WGLF-FM 104.1)

Opus Broadcasting
(WEGT-FM 99.9, WAIB-
FM 103.1, WHTF-FM 104.9,
WUTL-FM 106.1)

Clear Channel Communications
(WNLS-AM 1270, WTNT-FM
94.9, WFLA-FM 100.7, WXSJ-
FM 101.5, WTLY-FM 107.1)

WTAL – AM (1450)

WFRF-AM – FM (105.7)

WFSU – FM (88.9) – Public
Radio

TELEVISION

WCOT - CHANNEL 13
Tom Bronakoski.- Station
Manager
tom.bronakoski@talgov.com

WCOT - CHANNEL 13
Message Board
Tanya Herron - Assistant
Station Manager
tanya.herron@talgov.com

WTXL ABC
(Channel 27 – Cable 7)
Kisha Wilkinson – Assistant
Director
kwilkinson@wtxl.tv

WCTV CBS
(Channel 6 – Cable 9)
Triston Sanders – News
Director
triston.sanders@wctv.tv

The following are techniques available to inform the public about the various Blueprint projects.

Project Newsletters/Fact Sheets:

Project newsletters/fact sheets will be distributed throughout the study to property owners in the project study area:

Elected and appointed officials;

Media and other organizations requesting information on a particular project.

Web Site:

Web sites are an excellent tool to reach a broader cross-section of the public. Using a web site as a public involvement tool can also be cost effective. Through surveys and online dialogue, the Internet is not only convenient, but facilitates interactive communication. Typically, working with this medium to gather feedback from the public can be as effective as other communication forms. The Blueprint 2000 website address www.blueprint2000.org should be included on any letters and on all printed material.

The web site will contain current information on all projects. Project web pages will be developed with information about the scope, schedule, and project components. Public meeting information, and renderings or project progress photos will be part of the project related web pages. In addition to the general information about the program, citizens will be able to sign up for email notifications, register for mailing lists, and provide feedback via surveys or email.

Web sites should at a minimum, contain the following information:

1. Contact Information (mailing address, phone, fax, and e-mail);
2. Public Involvement person's contact information (name and e-mail);
3. Meeting calendars and agendas (notice of public hearings, workshops);
4. Brief descriptions of current projects;
5. Public Involvement section (brief synopsis of PI plan);
6. Links to related agencies (FDOT, CRTPA, etc.),
7. Mechanism to track activity;
8. Comment/Question/Survey Form.

Public Meeting Criteria

All public meetings will be closely coordinated with Blueprint Public Involvement staff. For selection of an appropriate meeting site:

- Preview the site with disabilities in mind.
- Review all display materials and handouts before each meeting.
- Review room layout for tables, chairs, and display placement.
- Review the need for and placement of directional signing, meeting specific signing, and room set up / take down.
- Determine need for signs advertising public meetings on project corridor.
- Conduct easel needs inventory.

- Get confirmations on project team/officials for nametags.
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Site Selection Checklist:

- ✓ Auditorium Scheduling/Coordinating
- ✓ Sufficient room capacity
- ✓ (ADA) accessibility requirements
- ✓ Adequate, convenient parking
- ✓ Proximity to project study area
- ✓ PA System
- ✓ Audio-visual equipment
- ✓ Lighting
- ✓ Security
- ✓ Screens
- ✓ VCR/computer equipment/projector
- ✓ Microphones

Meeting Materials Checklist:

A review of all meeting graphics, presentations, boards, handouts, and agendas by the Blueprint Project Manager and the Blueprint Public Involvement Manager is required two weeks prior to the meeting date. Additional reviews may be required based on the amount of media being provided at the meeting. An inventory of the following materials will be conducted to assure they are ready.

- ✓ Agendas
- ✓ Evaluation forms
- ✓ Graphics
- ✓ Maps/aerials/posters/displays
- ✓ Informational brochures/ handouts/comment forms/fact sheets
- ✓ Sign-in sheets
- ✓ Speaker cards
- ✓ Directional boards/interior signage
- ✓ Comment/questionnaire box

Supplies Checklist:

- ✓ Refreshments
- ✓ Sign in table
- ✓ Name tags for staff and officials
- ✓ Pens/pencils/markers
- ✓ Tape (masking/duct)
- ✓ Easels
- ✓ Extension cords
- ✓ Scissors
- ✓ Hammer
- ✓ Tape recorder/blank audio tapes
- ✓ Paper clips
- ✓ Tablecloths

Project Team Checklist:

- ✓ Staff assigned to specific roles
- ✓ Greeters
- ✓ Presenters
- ✓ Court reporter (if appropriate)
- ✓ Meeting minutes
- ✓ Photography

Set-up should occur at least 2 hours before advertised time. All staff should be ready for the public 30 minutes before advertised time.

Create a Project Involvement Notebook that contains items that were publicized and/or used for the Public Meeting/Workshop.

Providing Opportunities for Public Comment

Database:

A project database will be developed and maintained by Blueprint 2000 staff for all the Blueprint 2000 projects. Notifications, public comments/responses, and minutes from meetings with stakeholders will be entered into the database. Consultants are responsible for forwarding to Blueprint staff, information such as meeting minutes or direct citizen contact information for inclusion in the database. The database will be a useful tool, available to both Consultant and Blueprint staff for organizing and maintaining information and comments received about a project.

Public Review and Comment Procedures

In addition to informing stakeholders, the goal of Blueprint 2000 is to provide the opportunity for the public to give their input and comments about transportation and greenway issues. A period for public comment will be provided for all of the projects in the Blueprint program. The public is also welcome to make comments regarding issues to a Blueprint staff member and/or Consultant at any time.

The Blueprint Project Manager, and the Consultants Project Manager will review all comments. An appropriate member of the Blueprint staff will document and draft responses to comments received. It is the responsibility of the Consultant to collect and forward the sign in sheets and comments received after the public meeting to an appropriate Blueprint staff member.

Response to Comments Received

Prompt response to comments demonstrates that citizen views and opinions have been reviewed, considered and documented. In an effort to foster a strong base of citizen participation a response will be given to all comments received by a Blueprint 2000 staff member that are appropriate, substantive, and pertinent to transportation and greenway issues.

Documentation of Public Input:

Blueprint 2000 will document all input received from the public. This provides a record that the comment was received and assists the staff and/or Consultant in reviewing public input, which can be used in developing and implementing the plans and program. All contact information and correspondence are kept in finite detail in the database. Reports are generated to the Consultant/Project Team on a regular basis.

All comments submitted in writing will be summarized and/or compiled, reviewed, and documented by the appropriate Blueprint staff.

If a comment is received by telephone, it will be summarized and forwarded to the Blueprint Project Manager for review, action if necessary, and incorporated into the database.

Public Meetings and Committee Meetings

The following public meetings will be held, and contacts made, to involve the public and interested agencies in the project development process and to inform interested parties of the status of the Blueprint 2000 projects:

Public Kickoff Meeting: To be conducted as a way of ensuring that all members of the public have the opportunity to become informed about a project at its onset. Topics covered at these meetings will include the objectives of the project, the need for the proposed improvements, the background of the proposed project, the schedule of the project by phase, and most importantly the opportunities for public involvement that will be part of the process.

Alternative Public Information Meeting: To be conducted using the open house format, this meeting presents the alternative design concepts that will be developed for achieving the objectives of a study. The open house will feature a continually running audio-visual presentation to orient members of the public. There will be no formal presentation; instead, members of the Blueprint 2000 Project Team will be available to discuss the alternative in a more personal, one-on-one setting. In addition to the audio-visual presentation, the open house will include detailed maps of the project, alternatives, and extensive related materials.

Public Hearing: To be held in a formal format, with an open house component. In compliance with the Florida Department of Transportation's Project Development and Environmental Manual, 23 CFR 771, and F.S. 339.155, a public hearing will be held.

- **Public advertisement:** Two Legal and Display Advertisement ads will be noticed in the Tallahassee Democrat. The first, 15 days prior and the second, 7 days prior to the public meeting.
- **Letters of invitation:** Letters will be written to all property owners, as required by Florida Statue 339.155, to local government officials, and to individuals and groups who have been placed on the project mailing list in order to notify them of the upcoming public hearing, received at least 20 days before the public hearing.

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- **Document availability:** Public notice will be provided by mail and/or by newspaper advertisement as to where the study's environmental and engineering documents are located for public review.
- **Hearing preparation:** Tape recording, audiovisual presentations, graphics, and handouts will be prepared to supplement the oral public hearing presentation.
- **Format:** A formal hearing will be held, with a period of informal open house preceding.
- **Transcript:** A transcript of the public hearing will be developed, to include written comments received at the hearing and written comments received within ten days after the hearing.

Public Hearing Follow Up:

The following procedures will be undertaken after the public hearing:

- **Responses:** Responses to all questions and comments not answered at the public meeting will be made in writing and documented in the database.
- **Recommendation Notice:** A legal notice announcing approval of the final document and recommendations will be published in the Tallahassee Democrat. In addition, news items detailing the study recommendations will be provided to the local media.

Committee Meetings: (Meetings) with the Intergovernmental Agency, and the Blueprint 2000 committees is an especially important part of the public involvement plan. Meetings will be held with the following groups to get approval, show progress, receive input, and get feedback on Blueprint 2000 projects.

- Intergovernmental Agency (IA)
- Blueprint 2000 Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC)
- Blueprint 2000 Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)

General Presentations: (Presentations) may be conducted to obtain input and to respond to concerns of local governments, interested groups, and permit agencies. Presentations will be determined through coordination with Blueprint 2000 after preliminary analysis of a projects impact on the community is undertaken. Individual citizen meetings may be scheduled at the discretion of Blueprint staff as necessary.