

PASSAIC COUNTY

Sixth Avenue Bridge Replacement over the Passaic River

*City of Paterson, Borough of Prospect Park and
Borough of Hawthorne, New Jersey*

Public Involvement Action Plan



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I N T E R N A T I O N A L

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1. INTRODUCTION

A Public Involvement Action Plan (PIAP) is a dynamic guideline for public outreach, evolving as the project progresses. The goals of public outreach are to

- provide clear, concise information on how the public can be involved in the project development process and where they can learn about its progress;
- provide an effective mechanism for input and feedback from the public;
- obtain public input and feedback throughout all phases of project development; and
- consider public concerns and interests from project inception and throughout project development.

The PIAP is designed to actively seek input so improvements can be developed that address community needs and public concerns, as well as build support for proposed transportation improvement projects. It aims to provide multiple opportunities for public comment regarding the identification and development of proposed improvements.

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Sixth Avenue Bridge over the Passaic River (Structure No. 1600-012) carries Passaic County Route (CR) 652 over the Passaic River, connecting the City of Paterson with the Boroughs of Hawthorne and Prospect Park. The project limits for the Preliminary Engineering Phase of this project includes a 500 foot set-back from the end of each side of the Sixth Avenue Bridge over the Passaic River. The County of Passaic is the lead agency administering the contract and working in coordination with the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) and the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA). The project will be managed by the Passaic County Division of Engineering and supported by their Department of Public Works.

The Passaic County Sixth Avenue Bridge is a critical transportation connection for the communities on both sides of the Passaic River including businesses, residents, and commuters. The 300-foot-long bridge provides an important transportation connection for residents and commuters in the City of Paterson with Boroughs of Prospect Park and Hawthorne serving a major transport route for large manufacturing facilities of the Bunker Hill Industrial District.

A Local Concept Development (LCD) Study using Federal funding was completed in Spring 2018 through the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) with Passaic County as the project sponsor. During this phase, a well-defined Purpose and Need Statement was developed, focusing on the need to improve safety and maintain the current crossing over the Passaic River. A number of sensible and practical conceptual alternatives were developed to meet the project goals and objectives.

Upon completion of an alternatives analysis, and in coordination with the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT), the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA), Local Officials, Community Stakeholders, and permitting agencies, it was agreed that the recommended Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA) to address the structural deficiencies was to replace the bridge with a new structure. Resolutions of Support were passed by the City of Paterson, Borough of Prospect Park, Borough of Hawthorne and the Passaic County Boards of County Commissioners.

Passaic County is the lead agency with jurisdiction for the operation and maintenance of the Sixth Avenue Bridge. The County has advanced the design for replacement of the bridge to the Local Preliminary Engineering (LPE) phase, which is anticipated to be completed in the Spring of 2026. The LPE phase includes additional engineering data collection, preliminary design work, community involvement, public outreach meetings, and environmental studies as required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) with continued coordination with NJDOT, NJTPA and permitting agencies.

3. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT TOOLS & INITIATIVES

The tools and initiatives used for public outreach efforts are implemented in coordination with the engineering, design, environmental and cultural resource activities throughout the project.

a. Project Team Status Meetings

Community outreach will consistently be an agenda item for Project Team status meetings. Overall strategy for the development and presentation of information to the public will be reviewed and steps to coordinate the public involvement efforts proposed for the LPE phase will be discussed.

The Project Team consists of representatives from the following:

- Passaic County Department of Engineering
- New Jersey Department of Transportation
- North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority
- Michael Baker International consulting team

b. Project Stakeholders Lists

A stakeholder is an individual or group with an interest or investment in the way an issue is resolved. During the Local Concept Development (LCD) Study, the Project Team developed project stakeholders lists. The lists will be enhanced and maintained during the Local Preliminary Engineering (LPE) phase as new individuals are added and others asked to be removed. The lists will continue to be updated in the next project phases as pertinent groups or individuals are identified to be added or no longer active and removed. These lists are used to distribute project-related information and meeting notices via mail and email.

Stakeholders for this project include:

- Property owners, businesses, and residents within 500 feet of the project limits
- Chambers of commerce, business organizations and businesses
- Public and private schools, school districts and colleges
- Medical centers, healthcare providers and healthcare facilities
- Religious, cultural and civic organizations
- Environmental and historic preservation organizations
- Utility companies with service lines within the project limits
- Government officials and organizations

- Passaic County Administrator, Passaic County Board of County Commissioners, Department of Engineering, Sheriff's Office, Office of Emergency Management, Department of Public Works
- City of Paterson Mayor, City Manager, City Engineer, Department of Public Works, Police Department Traffic Safety
- Borough of Prospect Park Mayor, Borough Administrator, Borough Engineer, Department of Public Works, Police Department Traffic Safety
- Borough of Hawthorne Mayor, Borough Administrator, Borough Engineer, Department of Public Works, Police Department Traffic Safety
- US Legislative Representatives, State Senate and Assembly Representatives
- Federal and State Agencies
 - US Coast Guard, 1st District
 - US Army Corps of Engineers, New York District
 - US Environmental Protection Agency
 - NJDEP Department of Land Resource Protection
 - NJDEP Historic Preservation Office
 - NJDOT Local Aid District 1
 - NJDOT Bureau of Environmental Program Resources
 - NJDOT Bureau of Safety, Bicycle & Pedestrian Programs
 - NJTPA Local Programs and Project Development
 - NJ TRANSIT

c. Community Input Survey

During the LCD Study, Community Input Surveys were distributed via mail and email. Completed surveys provided the Project Team with information about community issues and interests and helped to identify additional Community Stakeholders. The surveys also included details to help the Project Team plan and schedule outreach meetings to maximize community participation. A summary report of the survey results was created and shared at the Community Stakeholders and Public Information Center Meetings held during the LCD Study.

d. Outreach Meetings

Local Officials Meetings: The Project Team shares information about the project status and development in meetings with Local Officials and also obtains input about community needs, concerns, and interests. Local Officials Meetings are arranged via email and telephone. The Project Team provides an agenda, meeting facilitation, a meeting summary and a list of action items. Future Local Officials Meetings are anticipated to be online via Microsoft Teams meeting link.

Community Stakeholders Meetings: In Community Stakeholders Meetings, representatives of various community interests learn about the project status and share information, questions, and concerns with each other and the Project Team. Using the project stakeholders lists, meeting invitations are distributed via mail and email. The Project Team prepares an agenda for each meeting and the Community Involvement Facilitator monitors communication to ensure balanced participation and clear understanding of information by all participants and observers. The Facilitator records issues and provides

meeting summary reports. The Community Stakeholders Meeting for the LPE phase will be held online via Microsoft Teams meeting link, in coordination with the Local Officials and the Project Team.

Public Information Center (PIC) Meetings: Public Information Center (PIC) Meetings are held to provide information and plans to the general public, address questions and obtain input. Notification to the public will be made at least 14 days in advance of the meeting via mail, email, and public notice to be in legal postings of at least two newspapers recommended by Local Officials. (LCD Study PIC Meeting notices were published in *The Star-Ledger* and *The Record*.) The PIC Meeting Notices are also provided to the Municipalities and County to post to their websites. Mail and email notification lists are created from the project stakeholders lists, attendance lists from prior meetings, and additional mailing address or email information provided to the Project Team.

PIC Meetings during the LCD Study were conducted in an open house format held in person, with sign-in tables, handouts and display boards for the public to view. For the LPE phase the PIC Meeting will be held online via Microsoft Teams meeting link, whereby display materials are provided electronically for viewing or can be downloaded from the website to print. After Project Team introductions and opening remarks from the County, a PowerPoint presentation will be conducted, followed by a Q&A session with support staff available to answer questions in the remaining meeting time. The Community Involvement Facilitator monitors communication to ensure balanced participation and clear understanding of information by all participants and observers. The Facilitator notes issues and provides a meeting summary report.

Written public comments are encouraged and may be submitted within the 30-day public comment period after the PIC Meeting has been held. Comments may be submitted via the “Contact Us” feature on the project website, the project email address, or by mail to the Passaic County Project Manager. PIC Comment Forms will be emailed with the meeting notice and will be available as a printable PDF on the project website.

e. Project Website and Email Address

To maintain open lines of communication throughout the project stages, a public-facing project website (sixthavenuebridge.com) was developed during the LCD Study phase. It provides information about the project status, ongoing work, and upcoming public meetings. Through the website, the community has access to project documents such as maps, display boards, meeting presentations and meeting summary reports. In addition, an online form is available for the public to submit questions or comments about the project and/or request addition to the project mail and email distribution lists.

For the LPE Phase, a project-specific email address (contactus@sixthavenuebridge.com) will be created to create a consistent channel for communication. This allows the Project Team to more effectively obtain and track comments, questions and input from stakeholders and the general public. This project email address will continue to be active through the Final Design and Construction phases.

4. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND PIAP IMPLEMENTATION

The PIAP is organized by project phase because the scheduling and facilitation of public outreach meetings requires integration with the engineering and environmental efforts involved in each phase. This coordination allows the Project Team to present information at the appropriate times for effective input

from the community and the general public. The plan will be amended as necessary to indicate outreach activities held in each phase of the Local Capital Project Delivery process:

- Local Concept Development
- Local Preliminary Engineering
- Final Design
- Construction

Public involvement will be on-going throughout the project and will be implemented to present the public with a seamless process.

a. Local Concept Development (LCD)

LCD denotes concept development by a local entity (Metropolitan Planning Organization, County, or Municipality). The purpose of the LCD phase, or LCD Study, was to identify and compare reasonable alternatives and strategies that address a well-defined and well-justified Purpose and Need Statement and to recommend a Preliminary Preferred Alternative (PPA).

The LCD Study phase involved internal and external stakeholder coordination, data collection, and analysis of alternatives. Along with the PPA, key products that were produced in this phase include the Purpose and Need Statement, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Classification, and the Local Concept Development Report. Resolutions of Support for the Sixth Avenue Bridge PPA were obtained from the City of Paterson, the Borough of Prospect Park, Borough of Hawthorne, and the Passaic County Board of County Commissioners at the end of the LCD Phase.

The public outreach efforts conducted during the LCD Phase were as follows:

	LCD Initiative	Date	Purpose
1	Community Input Survey	Fall 2016	▪ Identify potential stakeholder representatives ▪ Develop and maintain contact information for Community Stakeholders, Local Officials, and agencies ▪ Identify community issues and interests regarding the bridge
2	Project Website	On-going since Fall 2016/Winter 2017	▪ Disseminate project information to the general public ▪ Gather feedback from the public ▪ Announce public meetings and project milestones

	LCD Initiative	Date	Purpose
3	Local Officials Meetings*	Meeting No. 1 – October 19, 2016 <i>with Paterson, Prospect Park and Hawthorne</i> Meeting No. 2 – December 6, 2017 <i>with Paterson, Prospect Park and Hawthorne</i>	- Introduce the Project Team - Present project status and schedule - Obtain input on community interests associated with the bridge - Review project status and schedule - Review conceptual alternatives - Discuss proposed PPA - Prepare for upcoming PIC Meeting
4	Community Stakeholders Meetings*	Meeting No. 1 - February 13, 2017 Meeting No. 2 - September 26, 2017	- Introduce the Project Team - Present project status and schedule - Obtain input on community interests - Review project status - Present Purpose and Need Statement - Discuss conceptual alternatives - Obtain input on benefits and impacts of each alternative
5	Public Information Center (PIC) Meetings*	Meeting No. 1 - February 23, 2017 <i>Prospect Park/Hawthorne, 2-4 P.M.</i> <i>Paterson, 6-8 P.M.</i> Meeting No. 2 - January 30, 2018 <i>Paterson, 2-4 P.M.</i> <i>Hawthorne/Prospect Park, 6-8 P.M.</i>	- Inform the public of the condition of the bridge - Solicit input and comment toward project purpose and need - Inform the public of the Purpose and Need Statement - Solicit input and comment on conceptual alternatives and PPA

*All LCD Phase outreach meetings were held in-person.

b. Local Preliminary Engineering (LPE)

The Sixth Avenue Bridge project is in the Local Preliminary Engineering Phase, which is anticipated to be completed in Spring 2026. The PPA preliminary engineering design plans will be further developed, with public involvement outreach meetings held to address any interests and develop context sensitive solutions. The Community Stakeholders and agency lists will continue to be updated, as necessary.

The tasks conducted during the LPE Phase consisted of:

- Technical environmental studies (including Section 106 and Section 4(f) Evaluation)
- NEPA Document (Categorical Exclusion)
- Development of design level base plans
- Utility discovery, verification, and preliminary relocation design
- Geotechnical studies (soil boring and analysis) for foundation and pavement design
- Horizontal and vertical roadway geometry design to determine proposed impact limits
- Preliminary traffic control and staging design to determine temporary impact limits

- Preliminary traffic signal, traffic signing and striping, and bridge lighting design
- Preliminary drainage design work
- Structural studies that document the structural selection process and the recommended structure and aesthetic treatments
- Access impact evaluation
- Development of Right-of-Way cost estimates and project cost estimates

By Spring of 2026, it is anticipated that the environmental documentation and LPE Report will be approved and the LPE phase completed.

The public outreach efforts held during the LPE phase are as follows:

	LPE Initiative	Date	Purpose
1	Project Website and Email Address	Website: - On-going since Fall 2016/Winter 2017 - Updated Winter 2025 Email Address: - Added Winter 2025	▪ Disseminate project information to the general public ▪ Gather general feedback from the general public ▪ Announce public meetings and project milestones
2	Access Letter	July 8, 2024	▪ Notify property owners about field crews working in the area
3	Notification Letter	Spring 2025	▪ Introduce the LPE phase
4	Local Officials Meetings*	Meeting No. 1 – Spring 2025 <i>with Paterson, Prospect Park and Hawthorne</i> Meeting No. 2 – Fall 2025 <i>with Paterson, Prospect Park and Hawthorne</i>	▪ Present project status and schedule ▪ Identify issues and concerns ▪ Review input from Community Stakeholders Meeting and brief for PIC Meeting ▪ Present bridge replacement design, traffic staging, and environmental studies conducted
5	Community Stakeholders Meeting*	Spring 2025	▪ Review project status and schedule ▪ Present bridge replacement proposed improvements ▪ Obtain stakeholders' comments
5	Public Information Center (PIC) Meeting*	Fall 2025	▪ Review project status and schedule ▪ Present bridge replacement proposed improvements ▪ Obtain public comments

*All LPE Phase outreach meetings will be held online.

c. Final Design (FD)

During the Final Design phase of the project, the design details of the bridge replacement and approach roadway improvements will be completed. Input obtained through the public involvement efforts of the LPE Phase will be taken into consideration to provide a transportation improvement solution that satisfies the project Purpose and Need and continues to have support by both Municipalities and Passaic County. With the footprint of the bridge replacement established from the LPE Phase, additional engineering details of the project will be developed during the FD phase, such as lighting, signage, landscaping, and more detailed bridge construction and traffic staging plans.

The details for the public involvement initiatives during the Final Design phase will be provided once the bridge replacement project plans have been advanced.

d. Construction

Notifying the public about traffic patterns and potential delays due to construction will be important prior to construction of the bridge replacement. Providing this information in a timely manner will facilitate the formation of positive public perception towards both the project and Passaic County. There will be continued community and public involvement efforts to maintain on-going awareness and communication through the construction activities needed for the bridge replacement and associated approach roadway improvements.

At the start of the Construction phase, a Local Officials Meeting may be held to introduce the Resident Engineer and present the final design plans, traffic staging plans and the dissemination of traffic advisory notices as needed. A pre-construction PIC Meeting will be held at the appropriate time to introduce the Construction Project Team, the Contractor, and to present final design plans with further information on construction staging and traffic management information. This PIC Meeting will inform all Community Stakeholders how future coordination, communication and information exchange will be shared with the local communities and general public regarding construction activities and any travel advisories for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.

The details for the public involvement initiatives during the Construction phase will be provided once the bridge replacement project has been advanced and awarded for construction.

5. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT DELIVERABLES

It is important to use clear and accessible communications and a variety of media to reach all segments of the community. The public outreach process for active participation via project information sharing and community involvement includes the following public involvement deliverables:

Project Information Sheet: A project information sheet was prepared and distributed at the initial Local Officials, Community Stakeholders, and Public Information Center Meetings during the LCD phase. The project information sheet will continue to be updated as the project progresses to reflect the most accurate information available and now is posted on the project website for viewing. Approval from Michael Baker International and Passaic County is required before distribution or posting to the project website.

Project Portfolios: Project documents created during the LCD phase were printed and assembled as Project Portfolios, which were distributed to provide clear and consistent information to Project Team members, Local Officials, key agency representatives and to meeting participants at Community Stakeholders Meetings. The materials included a list of Project Team members with contact information, a map of the project study area, project schedule, project information sheet, meeting agendas and meeting reports. For the LPE phase and future Final Design and Construction phases, the Project Portfolio documents are available on the project website and can be downloaded and printed. The files will be maintained and updated through each phase.

Display Boards: Display boards may be utilized as needed for any in-person meetings. Depending on the phase of the project, displays may present project deficiencies summary, environmental constraints screening map, Purpose and Need, conceptual alternatives (including the PPA), proposed detour or traffic staging maps, proposed improvements, project aerials or renderings, final project configuration, or other project information. The display boards can be converted to PDF files for use in PowerPoint presentations and to post to the project website.

Comment Forms: Blank comment forms are provided in Public Information Center (PIC) Meeting notice mailings, at in-person PIC Meetings (LCD phase), and at the Local Officials Meetings so on-going public comment and input can be submitted and shared with the Project Team through all phases of the project and distributed to the County or Municipality as directed or requested. PIC Meeting comments can also be submitted online via the website or the project-specific email address.

Public Outreach Meeting Reports: For the Community Stakeholders Meetings and Public Information Center (PIC) Meetings, summary reports are drafted, circulated for review by the Project Team members and finalized as PDF files upon approval by Michael Baker International and Passaic County. Final reports are posted to the project website.

PIC Meeting Mailing List: For each PIC Meeting mailing, a PDF containing the cover letter, PIC Meeting notice, comment form and mailing address labels will be provided to the Municipalities, County, and Project Team members for their records.

Meeting Notices: Meeting notices for public outreach meetings are distributed by mail, email and posted to the project website. Notices will also be sent to the County and Municipalities in PDF format for inclusion on their websites and social media postings.

Project Website and Email Address: Project information has been posted to a project-specific website as approved by Passaic County and the Project Team. The website was developed to facilitate sharing of project information and to obtain input via online submissions. The website includes information such as a project overview, project documents and maps, meeting summary reports, FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions), and helpful links. There is also a "Contact Us" page through which the public can submit general comments or questions or sign up for the project mailing lists. Google Translate is located at the bottom left of each page to allow translation to any language. A project-specific email address will be created as an additional method for obtaining stakeholder and public input and to respond to comments and questions received during the LPE phase and will continue to be used during the Final Design and Construction phases.

The project website address is www.sixthavenuebridge.com and the project email address is contactus@sixthavenuebridge.com.