

7.0 PUBLIC RELATIONS

We are in an age of ever-increasing public participation in the decision-making and oversight process of matters affecting construction projects. People are demanding the right to be involved in the conduct of work that affects their community. As a result, the Construction Manager should expect to be involved in matters of public relations and should be prepared to perform public relations activities in a manner that is consistent with DDOT policies.

The most effective public relations tool is to conduct oneself in matters involving the public in a professional manner. Courtesy is of prime importance and every member of the public and their representatives must be treated with courtesy and respect. The Construction Manager and staff must not respond negatively to provocation but should remain calm and respectful at all times.

7.1 ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION (ANC) AND RESIDENCE COMMUNICATIONS

The goals of ANC and Residence Communications are to provide accurate, timely information to the community during the construction about activity in the neighborhood and to enable neighbors to plan accordingly for any potential disruptions. These channels also create opportunities for residents and other stakeholders to ask questions or raise concerns about activity, and require DDOT to provide accurate, timely responses.

The Construction Manager should be committed to a high level of communication with the community and implement several proactive initiatives to demonstrate that commitment and begin the process.

Steps that the Construction Manager must take include:

- Retaining the services of a leading communications consulting firm, and other communications agencies to support the needs of the project.
- Creating a new project website with prominently featured activity updates, 'Contact Us' functionality, the ability to subscribe to direct email notices.
- Promoting a dedicated phone number where residents can reach community affairs specialists to receive, log and forward requests for information or service to appropriate team members.

A member of the CM team will be responsible for maintaining a calendar of upcoming activities and their potential effects on the community. That calendar will be shared and discussed during the weekly status meetings, and the activities identified on the calendar will drive the content of communication to the community. By distributing notifications for the activities listed below and others as needed, the community can plan accordingly to lessen the impacts and voice concerns to the project team. Notifications for short-term activities, such as utility disruptions and temporary lane closures, will include estimated durations. Pertinent information and notifications will be distributed through various mechanisms, may include the following:

- “Activity Updates” on project website.
- Twitter announcements via DDOT PID about Activity Updates.
- Email blasts to neighbors who have requested notifications.
- Leaflets, flyers or door hangers distributed through Community Office.
- Updates to Frequently Asked Questions section of website, to reflect emerging issues of community concern.
- Publicity in local and regional news outlets (traffic reporters, neighborhood bloggers, etc.).
- Community meetings.
- Regular attendance at meetings of ANCs, neighborhood HOAs, business improvement district (BID) board meetings and other neighborhood groups upon request.
- Other means as necessary.

7.2 MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS

If contacted by the media, the CM team and staff should decline comment and refer them to the DDOTPID and immediately contact the DDOT team leader. The CM team should not provide any written documentation to the media unless it is requested in writing by the DDOT team leader.

When highway construction information must be conveyed to large numbers of highway users, including those who commute regularly over a particular route and those who use the route only occasionally, contact the public information officer early in the project. The public information officer will use print and social media, radio, internet, and television to publicize the upcoming work.

Another helpful method of promoting good public relations is to use District personnel as speakers at meetings of the local chambers of commerce and service clubs. Resident Engineers so inclined might consider joining a service organization. Frequent notices and progress reports in the local media are also common and effective methods of keeping the public informed of changing project conditions.



If someone from the media asks for information, refer them to the DDOT PID. Unless specifically instructed to speak to the media, politely refer all questions to the appropriate public information officer. Sometimes the public information officers will be the only ones who may respond for DDOT about an issue. The PID may arrange for site visits for the media and will inform the construction engineer of the scheduled visit. Inform the contractor of these scheduled visits. In the case of a traffic event, an emergency, or other incidents that prompt unscheduled media visits, inform the public information officer immediately.

Project personnel should always keep in mind that they are representatives of DDOT and District of Columbia Government. As such, they are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that will earn respect, add value to the organization, and pass along vital information to the public.

7.3 CITIZENS' CLAIMS PROCEDURES

Upon receipt of a claim by a citizen asserting damage incurred as a result of construction activities, the CM team will forward the claim to the Contractor. The CM team will follow-up to ensure the Contractor investigates and provides a written response on the disposition of the matter within two weeks.