



### **3. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT & PROJECT COMMUNICATION**

Community involvement was identified as a key component of the Uptown Transportation Study. Therefore, an aggressive multi-pronged community involvement plan was developed and approved by the Implementation Partners (IP) and Advisory Committee (AC) of the Uptown Transportation Study. The approved plan can be found in the “Community Involvement Documentation” binder – Section A.

The community involvement plan was designed to provide maximum flexibility while incorporating multiple layers of community involvement techniques. The process outlined in the plan engaged interested and affected parties in dialogue, providing multiple opportunities for them to share information and feedback about project issues, as well as express their concerns, opinions and other pertinent ideas regarding the study. At the same time, the plan was sensitive to local considerations and issues.

Communications activities are also a mandated component of the environmental analysis and documentation processes as outlined by the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) of 1969.

The information in this section details strategies and activities that were utilized in extending the study’s public reach. The community involvement efforts went beyond typical public involvement activities by establishing a satellite office with a computer and written materials for people to learn more about the study; hosting walk around tours and attending monthly community council meetings. Additionally, a direct mailing was made to over 22,000 addresses in the study area for the final public meeting.

A progress sheet was created at the beginning of the study and updated thereafter detailing all community involvement events and progress throughout the study. This progress sheet can be found in the “Community Involvement Documentation” binder – Section B.

#### **3.1. Implementation Partners and Advisory Committee**

Uptown consists geographically of Avondale, Clifton, Corryville, East Walnut Hills, Evanston, Mt. Auburn, North Avondale, Walnut Hills and Clifton Heights, University Heights and Fairview (CUF).

The Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI) was the lead agency on this project. However, there were a total of six identified partners that committed funds or services toward this project including: the City of Cincinnati, the Uptown Consortium, SORTA (Metro), the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), OKI and The AMOS Project. These partners served as the Implementation Partners (IP). The IP guided and made decisions on the content and final recommendations of the study. The IP met monthly approximately 30 times from January 2004 to November 2006.

The Advisory Committee (AC) was established to advise the IP on the key elements of the study and to act as a conduit for the flow of information between the agencies which they represent and the IP. The AC met five times over the course of the study on February 17, 2005, June 30, 2005, November 3, 2005, May 18, 2006 and October 17, 2006. Advisory Committee members include the following: African American Chamber of Commerce,

Alliance for Regional Transit, The AMOS Project, Avondale Community Council, Baptist Minister's Conference, Central Clinic, Cincinnati Association for the Blind, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, Cincinnati Park Board, Cincinnati State Technical and Community College, Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber, Citizens for Civic Renewal, City of Cincinnati, Clifton Heights Business Association, Clifton Heights Community Urban Redevelopment Corporation, Clifton Town Meeting, Community Redevelopment Group, Corryville Community Council, Corryville Community Development Corporation, Corryville Economic Development Corporation, CUF Neighborhood Association, Deaconess Hospital, East Walnut Hills Assembly, Environmental Protection Agency, Evanston Community Council, Federal Transit Administration, Hamilton County Department of Environmental Services, Hamilton County Engineer, Heights Community Council, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, League of Women Voters, Local Initiatives Support Corporation, Mt. Auburn Community Council, NAACP, North Avondale Neighborhood Association, ODOT District 8, SORTA, State Representative Catherine Barrett, Union Institute and University, United States Congressman Steve Chabot's Office, United States Senator George V. Voinovich's Office, United States Senator Mike DeWine, University Heights Community Urban Redevelopment Corporation, University of Cincinnati, University of Cincinnati Student Government, University Village Association, Uptown Business Association, Uptown Consortium, Uptown Crossings Community Urban Redevelopment Corp., Urban League of Greater Cincinnati, VA Medical Center, Walnut Hills Area Council, Walnut Hills Business Association, Women's Chamber of Commerce and Xavier University.

Also established was a Communications Subcommittee whose primary purpose was to review and provide suggestions on communication pieces developed for public review. Subcommittee members included representatives from: The AMOS Project, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, Cincinnati Zoo, City of Cincinnati, Uptown Consortium, ODOT and SORTA.

### 3.2. Stakeholder Interviews

During June and July of 2004, interviews were conducted between Robert Koehler, Study Project Manager, and key stakeholders. A summary of these interviews can be found in the "Community Involvement Documentation" binder – Section C.

### 3.3. Public Meetings

Public meetings served as forums to both inform and gather input from those directly affected by the Uptown Transportation Study. Over the course of the study, three public meetings were held. The first meeting was held on March 3, 2005 and had an attendance of 95 with 28 comment sheets received. The second meeting was held on November 16, 2005 and had an attendance of 114 with 42 comment sheets received. The third meeting was held on October 17, 2006 and had an attendance of 80 with 28 comment sheets received. In total, 289 people attended the public meetings and 98 comment sheets were collected.

The meetings were open house style with formal presentations and were held from 4 – 7 p.m. The three meetings were spread throughout the study area: the first being in Avondale, the second in Mount Auburn and the third in Clifton.



The meetings occurred at key times throughout the study process and were widely publicized through several tactics. Notices appeared in the Cincinnati Enquirer, Cincinnati Herald and Spanish Journal. Press releases and newsletter articles were distributed to the media and local community papers and newsletters. Flyers announcing the public meeting were sent to addresses in the study database as well as to the OKI Board of Trustees and the Intermodal Coordinating Committee. The AMOS Project distributed approximately 2,000 flyers for each public meeting. Information was posted on the project website and several of the Implementation Partners websites. Flyers were sent and emailed to Advisory Committee members. For the final meeting, additional tactics were utilized including a direct mail piece to every address in the study area which totaled over 20,000 addresses. Also, SORTA installed posters on each of their 400 buses with information about the meeting.

At the meeting, the public was surveyed on their thoughts and ideas and asked to rate how they felt about the conditions of Uptown including goals, existing conditions, alternatives and recommendations. They provided insight as to what issues were important and needed to be focused on. They also gave information about themselves to illustrate how Uptown directly or indirectly affected them. Summaries of the public meetings as well as the comment sheets collected can be found in the “Community Involvement Documentation” binder – Section D.

### 3.4. Media Relations

An aggressive media relations campaign was established to further publicize study information and developments. The media was kept up to date throughout the course of the study through press releases, media advisories and newsletter articles. Study updates were typically sent to: AMOS, Your Metro Neighbors, Uptown News and Walnut Hills News, Evanstonian, East Walnut Hills Assembly Communique, NANA News, CUF Neighborhood Association Newsletter, Mt. Auburn Town Crier, The Networker, Avondale Newsletter, Hamilton County’s Planning Newsletter, The Community Press, The Spanish Journal, The Cincinnati Herald, The Cincinnati Enquirer and The Cincinnati Post. Media relations documents can be found in the “Community Involvement Documentation” binder – Section E.

### 3.5. Website

The Uptown Transportation Study utilized a website throughout the study process: [www.UptownTransportationStudy.org](http://www.UptownTransportationStudy.org). This website address appeared on all study related materials. This site contained updated information relative to study activities. The site also provided interactive opportunities to make comments about the study and direct links for visitors to ask questions and request additional information. All Advisory Committee and public meeting presentation materials were listed on the website for public review. From February 16, 2005 to November 2, 2006 the website received over 100,000 hits.

### 3.6. Satellite Office

A satellite office with information on the Uptown Transportation Study was set up at the Avondale Community Pride Center. During the months of August and September 2006 from approximately 10 a.m. until 6 p.m., a volunteer from The AMOS Project was present to



assist guests, answer questions and receive input. Information on the study was available through a dedicated computer and packets of handouts were distributed.

A press release and newsletter article announcing the opening of the office was sent out to local community newsletters including AMOS, Your Metro Neighbors, Uptown News and Walnut Hills News, the Evanstonian, East Walnut Hills Assembly Communique, NANA News, CUF Neighborhood Association Newsletter, Mt. Auburn Town Crier, The Networker-Community Development Corporations Association of Greater Cincinnati, Avondale Newsletter, Hamilton County's Planning Newsletter, The Community Press, The Spanish Journal, The Cincinnati Enquirer and The Cincinnati Herald. Additionally, The AMOS Project distributed information about the office to their 40 member congregations.

There were a total of 87 visitors to the satellite office and over 40 comment sheets were gathered. A summary of the comments received from the satellite office can be found in the "Community Involvement Documentation" binder – Section F.

### **3.7. Public/Agency Comments**

Throughout the study process, the project team responded to letters, emails, phone calls and other forms of communication from the general public. A record of each piece of correspondence is included in the "Community Involvement Documentation" binder – Section G.

### **3.8. Community Council Meetings**

A representative from OKI attended all monthly community council meetings in the study area. In total, over 145 community council meetings were attended through April 2005 until December 2006. At these meetings, presentations and announcements were made by the study representative and informational packets were distributed with an introduction to the study, goals for the study and project updates. The representative answered questions and gathered input from the meeting attendees. Also, eleven presentations were given by study representatives regarding the Early Action Suggestions. These presentations occurred through the dates of November 2005 and April 2006.

Several social events held by the community councils were attended by the study representative. Informational packets were distributed and community input was gathered. All pertinent information from the community council meetings and social events was reported back to the project partners. Meeting report forms can be found in the "Community Involvement Documentation" binder – Section H.

### **3.9. Speaker's Bureau and Presentations**

Study representatives sought out opportunities to present study information to interested groups and organizations. This provided an additional way to update the community as well as receive feedback and suggestions. Presentations were given to the following community groups: Baptist Minister's Conference, the NAACP, Urban League, Uptown Consortium, the Uptown Consortium Transportation Subcommittee, the OKI Intermodal Coordinating Committee and the OKI Board of Trustees.

### **3.10. Walk Around Tours**

Over the course of the project, walk around tours were conducted in Avondale and Corryville. The Avondale walk around tour was held on August 9, 2005 and was led by Avondale Community Council trustee Ishaq Nadir. The focus of this walk around was on the residential and commercial areas adjacent to Martin Luther King Drive at the intersection of Reading Road. The Corryville walk around tour took place on August 24, 2005 and was led by the Corryville Community Council president Dan Schimberg. The focus of this walk around was on the Short Vine Street business district area.

The tours provided the opportunity to meet and greet those who live and work in the area and for project partners to hear their concerns and suggestions as well as respond to any questions. Pictures from the walk around tours can be found in the “Community Involvement Documentation” binder – Section I.

### **3.11. Additional Outreach**

Over the course of the study, supplemental pieces were developed as needed to communicate study progress. One such piece was the *Uptown Update* newsletter. The newsletter was released in summer/fall 2006 and again in the fall of 2006. It contained statistics of the study area including population size and accident rates, activities currently underway and possible improvements to the regions’ roadways and interstate access. The newsletter was widely distributed to OKI and AMOS mailing lists as well as the database developed over the course of the study. The newsletter was also distributed to community councils in the study area. A phone line was established with information on the study and to answer any questions one may have. In addition, 22,000 post cards were mailed to those in the Uptown area announcing the third public open house. Signs were also placed in buses on every route with information on the third public meeting.

Additional pieces developed included: a Question and Answer sheet, Early Findings, Early Action Suggestions and direct mail postcards. These documents can be found in the “Community Involvement Documentation” binder – Section J.