Navigating the Quickly Changing Public Engagement Process Through In-Person and Digital Platforms

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Laura Stevens, AICP
Environmental Manager
Parrish and Partners, LLC
AIRPORT PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

- Guidance:
  - Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Advisory Circular 150/5050-4A, “Community Involvement in Airport Planning”

- Goals:
  - Engage local community and other stakeholders in discussions of airport planning or development objectives
  - Establish a forum for public input on the objectives and how they can be achieved
  - Ensure a smooth transition from planning to later project phases of project development
Myrtle Beach International Airport MPU

PROJECT: Master Plan Update (MPU)

- What is a Master Plan Update?
  - Strategy for airport development
  - Describes the need for and timing of airport improvements over next 20 years
  - Required by FAA for all commercial service airports
- Master Plan Update (MPU) Components:
  - Existing Conditions Inventory
  - Aviation Activity Forecasts
  - Facility Requirements
  - Alternatives Development & Analysis
  - Implementation Plan
  - Reports & Drawing Set
ORIGINAl PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT SCOPE

- 5 Technical Advisory Committee Meetings
- 2 In-Person Public Information Meetings

PIVOT

- Initial Public Meeting was scheduled for March 18, 2020, the very beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak
  - All in-person meeting materials were ready when decision made to postpone
  - Master Plan was placed on hold by FAA due to impact of COVID-19 pandemic on aviation industry
  - With November 2020 start-up, Public Involvement needed to be completed before Master Plan could advance
PLAN B

- Several online meeting formats were reviewed
- Based on type of project (early stages of planning study), Meeting Website was preferred format

STEPS

- Meeting Displays converted to PowerPoint online “meeting” slides
- Script created to explain slides
- Videographer on-site to tape Welcome from Director of Airports
- To further “personalize,” Assistant Director read Script to PowerPoint presentation
- Airport website consultant used slides/audio to create 10 “clickable” mini videos (tabs) that explained the project, schedule, and next steps
- Final tab was an online comment form
- Publicized meeting through social media, public service announcement to local media outlets, including radio
WEBPAGE DESIGN

- Clickable Tabs on left sidebar allowed for approximately 14 minutes of information to be provided in short segments
  - Helped maintain participants’ interest
  - PowerPoint allowed for various Animations and Effects to better explain information being discussed
  - Downloadable graphs and figures were also linked to the appropriate tab/page
  - Web designer included aircraft occasionally crossing page for added interest and consistency with overall website look

2020 Master Plan Re-start
Leisure travel improves MYR’s resiliency

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on aviation worldwide, MYR is seeing signs of recovery.

Since June, Myrtle Beach has been significantly surpassing the national recovery for airline travel. While the timeframe for recovery is uncertain, the response of MYR activity week-to-week has been encouraging.

Featured in this video:
- Air traffic recovery is a faster pace than the rest of the country
- Traffic recovered from post downturns in aviation and COVID-19 will be no different
Aviation Forecasts

What is the 20-year activity outlook?

In order to plan for and properly size future facilities, aviation forecasts were prepared for a wide range of airport activity types, including passengers, aircraft operations, freight, based aircraft, etc.

In response to uncertainties associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, forecast study years (2023, 2028, and 2038) have been translated to Planning Activity Levels (PAL 1, PAL 2, and PAL 3), which will allow MYR to properly time future improvements based on actual airport activity.

**MPU Study Information:**
- Passenger Enplanement Forecast
- Airport Operations Forecast
- Freight Forecast
- General Aviation Based Aircraft Forecast
WINS

- Airport took ownership with welcome video and audio
- Website consultant created an online experience that was consistent with the MYR brand
- Over 1,000 unique “views”
  - Database of participants to target for next meeting
  - Increased outreach database for future use
GOALS FOR NEXT MEETING

- Focus on previously uninvolved community members
- Formulate more specific comment requests = receive MPU-specific input
  - Majority of comments received during 1st meeting involved airline service
- Include question to assist in measure of public involvement success
PROJECT: Supplemental Environmental Assessment for Runway 10-28 Safety Enhancements Program

- Consisted of several improvements associated with the runway safety areas
- Required NEPA and public involvement to be completed in 4 to 6 months
- Proposed improvements would enhance runway safety, increase the amount of usable runway length available for takeoff, and minimize or eliminate weight restrictions on current airport operators
- Project impacts include removing tree obstructions in both approaches to Runway 10-28 and closure of a segment of Bethlehem Road
ORIGINAL PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT SCOPE

- 1 In-person Public Meeting to be conducted

PIVOT

- Online and In-person Options offered

ONLINE

- PowerPoint presentation with audio prepared
- Public to request call-in phone number
- FAA to moderate discussion following PowerPoint presentation
- 0 participants
IN-PERSON MEETINGS HELD

- Meeting displays with members of Project Team to answer questions and discuss project
- First hour spent with property owners directly affected by removal of tree obstructions or potential future acquisition of their property
- Comment form drop box, mail-in, or email comment options
- COVID-19 safety precautions followed
- 86 in-person attendees
 STATESVILLE REGIONAL AIRPORT

WINS

- Kept project moving forward during COVID pandemic
- Meeting with affected property owners prior to open public forum allowed Project Team to focus on their specific issues
- Local community able to voice their concerns face-to-face
- Online Option was available for public not comfortable with meeting in person due to COVID-19 concerns
Lessons Learned

- Plan for both in-person and digital public involvement components for all projects when possible

- When receiving online comments, include an automated response and monitor comments
  - Provides public with instant feedback; comment was received, voice has been heard
  - Monitoring of comments allows for potentially unhappy public to be addressed before negative comments get elevated on social media

- Encourage client/sponsor to add personal message to online format
  - Gives project a “face”