

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN

NORTHEAST-SOUTHWEST ARTERIAL CONNECTOR PROJECT

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Since the 1997 Fort Ord Base Reuse Plan ('BRP'), a Northeast-Southwest rural arterial connector (formerly known as Eastside Road and Eastside Parkway) has been part of the Fort Ord transportation network. It was envisioned to "serve as a primary southwest-northeast corridor" to "reduce demand along State Highway 1, 12th Street, and the Del Monte/2nd/General Jim Moore Boulevard corridor" (BRP Volume II, pg. 297-8).

This Community Engagement Plan ("CEP" or "Plan") summarizes the strategies to engage the public and other interested parties in the design and environmental review processes for the proposed Northeast-Southwest Arterial Connector project ("NE-SW Connector" or "proposed project"). The implementation of this CEP for the NE-SW Connector is the responsibility of the Fort Ord Reuse Authority ("FORA"). This Plan is intended to guide the efforts of FORA and the project consultants. Goals and guiding principles for community engagement and outreach are described below, followed by a summary of specific outreach methods to be used during the design and environmental review processes. The community engagement and outreach program may evolve and change from that published in the Final Plan at FORA's discretion to meet the project needs and accommodate varying circumstances.

2.0 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN OVERVIEW

2.1 Purpose

The purpose of the engagement and outreach strategies and activities presented in this Plan is to provide local communities, residents, stakeholders, interested parties, and other affected agencies and/or individuals with opportunities to become actively involved in the NE-SW Connector project and the evaluation of associated environmental issues. The public engagement and outreach program in this Plan will assist FORA in both providing timely information to and receiving input from interested parties during the project design and environmental review processes.

2.2 Community Engagement Plan Goals and Guiding Principles

The goal of this CEP is to provide a robust opportunity for public participation in the environmental review process. The rationale for the goal includes the following principles:

- Awareness and Information – Provide information so that stakeholders can be aware of the design and environmental review processes and provide informed public participation in addressing interests, concerns, and process and project requirements. Input – Provide opportunity for utilization of stakeholders’ knowledge and perspectives to assist the project team in verifying and/or expanding upon available information.
- Open and public process – Public participation is a mandated and essential component of CEQA. Public Resources Code Section 21000 *et seq.* and Title 14, California Code of Regulations Section 15000 *et seq.* contain regulations and guidelines that prescribe a number of mandatory public participation requirements. Compliance with the public participation requirements of CEQA aid in providing transparency in the decision-making process.

FORA additionally adopted a set of guiding principles to bolster community outreach and participation: ACCORD (**Figure 1**). ACCORD is FORA’s commitment to provide the opportunity for public input with respect for the diversity of views expressed and to consider suggestions and concerns. ACCORD utilizes various methods of communication to assist in providing timely, comprehensive, substantive, and accurate information in responding to comments and inquiry. Outlined below, the principles from our ACCORD with all stakeholders:

1. **Acknowledgement** of diverse views and voices, remaining sensitive to public concerns.
 - Integrating community issues with the design of the project.
 - Gauging and responding through communication and education.
2. **Communication** with the community and stakeholders to address community issues.
 - Schedule Public Meetings updating community members on the progress of the project and answering community members’ questions.

- Provide opportunities for public comment on project documents such as the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and technical studies.
 - Develop information fact sheets to benefit community awareness, understanding, and education.
 - Send fact sheets, newsletters, and relevant documents to electronic/postal lists.
 - Post materials concerning the project to the project webpage at fora.org/connector.
 - Inform the public about meetings, events, document review, and public access via Facebook ([FB.com/FortOrdReuse](https://www.facebook.com/FortOrdReuse)) and Twitter ([Twitter.com/FortOrdReuse](https://twitter.com/FortOrdReuse)).
 - Use of local media outlets and organizations to inform the public about upcoming events, documents for review, and other community-related events and activities.
 - Inform local community groups about the project.
3. **C**omprehensive outreach to educate the public on the project and information about opportunities for public input.
- Develop and distribute newsletters and fact sheets to community groups.
 - Work with community members to identify ways to engage the public and expand the stakeholder base for the project.
 - Distribute materials to local media such as meeting and public comment notices, availability of documents for review and comment, and articles and interviews on the design and environmental review processes.
4. **O**pportunity for the community to participate, be heard, and review and comment on documents developed and produced during the course of the project.
- Publicize document availability for public review. The availability of documents will be announced at the start of the required review period to allow sufficient time for review and comment.
 - Conduct public sessions where documents can be discussed and questions can be answered.
 - Address comments and concerns at public meetings and events.
 - Explain technically complex documents in public meetings.
5. **R**esponsive to personal communication, inquiries, and comments about concerns and issues relating to the proposed project.

- Accessible to the public through phone and email for the public to receive project updates and leave questions.
 - A website to provide project fact sheets and informational updates that can be downloaded at fora.org/connector.
 - Provide written responses to written comments made by the public.
 - Coordinate with the local governments and regulatory agencies in their corresponding public meetings and other community activities.
 - Available to speak to local community groups about the proposed project.
 - Respond to inquiries for specific information about the proposed project.
6. **Dedicated** to implementing a comprehensive, collaborative, and responsive CEP.
- Regularly inform stakeholders and political leadership about the project.
 - Frequently review program goals and ACCORD principles.
 - Identify ways to expand the outreach and engagement process within the proposed project's contract limits.

2.3 Plan Implementation

Throughout the CEP, FORA will employ various methods to track and evaluate process effectiveness. Such methods include documenting, tallying, and responding to calls, emails, and public comment; documenting and posting comments and responses to comments; and documenting impact metrics, such as community meeting attendance, social media engagement, website analytics, newsletter open rates, and print/electronic media publications. Community members and stakeholders are encouraged to share CEP experiences and suggest potential improvements with the project team.

Inevitably, differences in opinions will emerge during the EIR process. FORA and the project team will communicate information and respond to concerns and views.



Figure 1. FORA's ACCORD Principles

3.0 DESIGN AND ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESSES OVERVIEW

Projects typically need a level of design or definition in order to assess their impacts. The tentative project schedule, **Figure 2**, shows a brief overview of the environmental review processes for the proposed project and how these processes connect to the outreach activities that are addressed in more detail in Section 6.

3.1 Design Process

The design process consists of designing and engineering the project from conception to construction. It will occur concurrently with the environmental review process, as each process informs the other. The design process is an iterative process informed by technical studies, environmental analysis, public comments, professional engineering standards, and plan review.

3.2 Environmental Review Process

FORA will prepare an EIR that will disclose potential environmental impacts that may result from implementation of the NE-SW Connector project, provide a reasonable range of alternatives that may reduce the impacts, and provide mitigation measures to avoid or reduce significant impacts. As noted above, the EIR will be prepared concurrently with the design process. The environmental review process is summarized as follows:

- Environmental Scoping – During this period, the lead agency (FORA) will release a Notice of Preparation (“NOP”) announcing the initiation of an environmental review process and requesting input on the scope of the environmental document from agencies, stakeholders, and the public.
- Draft EIR – Based on the draft project description, FORA will analyze the potential impacts of the project, disclose those impacts, and identify mitigation measures to avoid or reduce significant impacts. In addition, FORA will analyze potential alternatives to the project consistent with CEQA requirements.
- Public Review of Draft EIR – FORA will release the Draft EIR for public review and request agencies and the public to review and provide written feedback to FORA on the analysis, disclosure of the environmental issues, and feasible mitigation measures of the proposed project.
- Response to Comments – FORA will provide written responses to comments received on the Draft EIR.
- Certification of Final EIR – FORA will develop a Final EIR and the FORA Board of Directors will consider whether to certify the Final EIR, which will include the Draft EIR, Responses to Comments, and changes in the Draft EIR that may have been necessary to respond to comments.

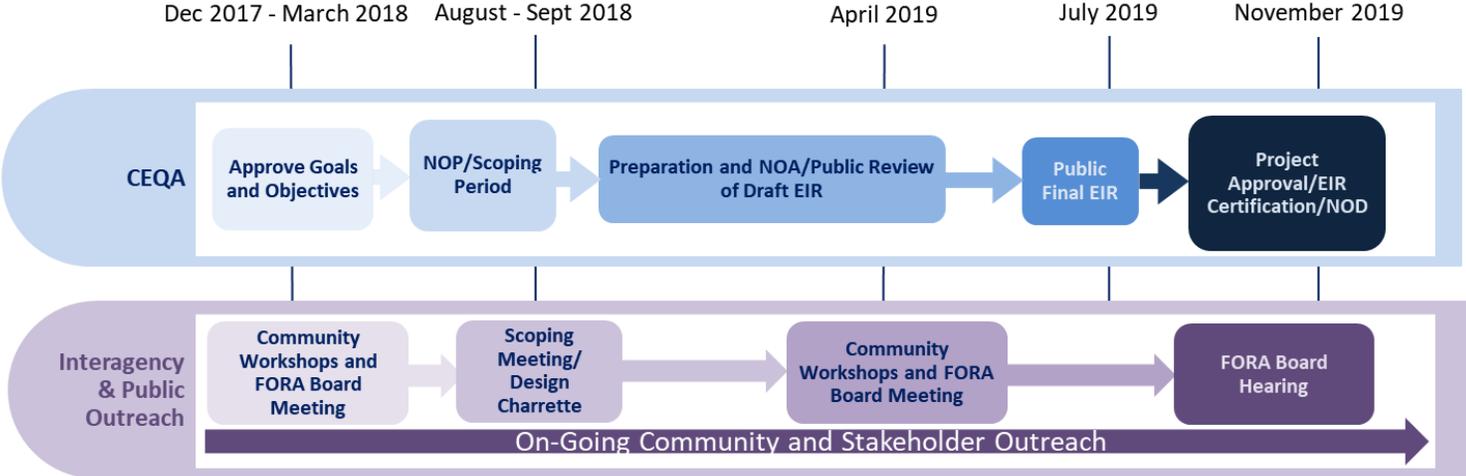


Figure 2. Tentative Project Schedule

4.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT REQUIREMENTS

4.1 FORA Community Engagement Principles

As outlined in Section 2.2 above, FORA has developed a set of guiding principles related to community outreach and participation (**Figure 1**). These core principles will be followed during the proposed project's design and environmental review processes.

4.2 Environmental Impact Reports

When preparing an EIR, CEQA requires the lead agency to notify the public at distinct stages of the process. CEQA also requires the lead agency to provide opportunities for public comment. The goal of these requirements is to fully inform the public, affected government agencies, and other interested parties of the environmental effects of the project and to provide opportunities for public comment on the impact conclusions, mitigation measures, and alternatives analysis. Public involvement in the CEQA process aims to ensure that the public has a voice in the review process prior to decision-making by the responsible lead agency. Specifically, public concerns about environmental issues and the potential effects of the project on the physical environment are addressed prior to project approval. The legal public notification and commenting requirements associated with the EIR are outlined in Section 6 of this Plan.

5.0 GENERAL OUTREACH INFORMATION

5.1 Outreach/Engagement Coordinator

The role of the Outreach/Engagement Coordinator will be to serve as a central contact for the public and the stakeholders for the project and EIR. For this project, the Outreach/Engagement Coordinator is also the Project Manager and will participate in and help coordinate all facets of the implementation of the Community Engagement Plan for the proposed project and EIR. Anyone seeking information on the project or EIR should contact:

Jonathan Brinkmann, Principal Planner, FORA, at (831) 883-3672 or connector@fora.org

6.0 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH PROGRAM

The CEP focuses on addressing issues and community concerns related to the NE-SW Connector. On December 6, 2017, FORA staff and project consultants held a community meeting to seek public input on project goals and objectives. The project goals and objectives were subsequently discussed and approved at three FORA Board meetings on January 12, February 9, and March 9, 2018. In addition, a number of letters have been submitted to FORA regarding the proposed project. Generally, stakeholders and other interested parties expressed criticism of the process, concerns about the conceptual roadway alignment, reasons why the improvement was needed, and gave input for specific goals and objectives (<http://www.fora.org/Board/2018/Packet/020918BrdPacket.pdf>).

The six ACCORD principles outlined in Section 2.2 (Acknowledgement, Communication, Comprehensiveness, Opportunity, Responsiveness, and Dedication) will be implemented through the specific methods of communication, participation, and outreach activities described below. In this way, FORA is committed to helping the public to quickly and easily identify ways to become informed about or involved in the project design and environmental review processes. Each method listed below includes a brief description along with an estimate of the following timing/project milestone indicator:

- **Timing/Project Milestone:** Indicates the best estimate of target date(s) or project milestone(s) of the design and environmental review process in which the method will be used.

6.1 Stakeholder Notification List

FORA has researched potential stakeholders and has compiled an initial contact list from existing resources. The notification list will be used as a means to notify interested parties of upcoming events and of postings of new materials on the project website. Persons will be added to the notification list throughout the design and environmental review process and may sign up by sending a request to the Outreach/Engagement Coordinator by emailing to connector@fora.org or calling (831) 883-3672.

- **Timing/Project Milestone:** Notification list will be updated on an ongoing basis

6.2 Environmental Impact Report Notices

FORA will prepare all California environmental process notices to alert the public and stakeholders at critical points in the environmental review process. The notices shall comply with CEQA and will be filed with the State Clearinghouse and/or Monterey County Clerk, as appropriate. The State Clearinghouse sends notices to State agencies, departments, boards, and commissions for review and comment; additionally, FORA may have particular agency contacts who have been working more closely with FORA. Where possible, FORA will send the notices directly to those contacts. The required EIR notices include the following: Notice of Preparation (“NOP”), Notice of Completion (“NOC”), Notice of Availability (“NOA”), and Notice of Determination (“NOD”).

- **Timing/Project Milestone:**
 - NOP – August 2018
 - NOC and NOA – April 2019, when the Draft EIR is released for public review

- NOD – November 2019 filing of the NOD with the Monterey County Clerk and State Clearinghouse upon approval of a project and certification of the Final EIR

6.3 Meetings and Public Hearings

6.3.1. Scoping Meeting

The scoping meeting is an opportunity for agencies and members of the public to learn about the project and EIR process and provide input to FORA on topics of environmental concern that should be addressed in the EIR. The scoping meeting provides an opportunity for face-to-face communication early in the environmental review process. This proposed project scoping meeting will also include a charrette portion to solicit input on project design alternatives and additions, and facilitate creative problem solving.

- Timing/Project Milestone: September 2018, after the NOP has been released, during the Environmental Scoping period

6.3.2. Community Events

To engage with members of the public who are unable to attend formal meetings or are unaware of the project, FORA may set up a booth or table at community events to disseminate information about the project and the environmental review process, and to gain input.

- Timing/Project Milestone: As needed

6.3.3. External Stakeholder Meetings

FORA staff will consult a broad group of stakeholders throughout the area. These meetings could include representatives of public agencies, business organizations, environmental conservation groups, and other interested parties. FORA is available to respond to requests to provide information.

- Timing/Project Milestone: Ongoing

6.3.4. Community-wide Public Meetings

FORA will conduct public meetings during the design and environmental review processes wherein members of the public will be able to receive up-to-date information and provide input. Meetings will be designed so the community can actively engage in discussions regarding project design and environmental concerns, and may include open houses, question-and-answer sessions, break-out sessions, and other techniques. FORA will provide information, encourage discussion, answer questions, and be on hand to discuss issues of importance to the local community. FORA will announce these meetings via the FORA weekly electronic newsletter, project webpage (fora.org/connector), Facebook ([FB.com/FortOrdReuse](https://www.facebook.com/FortOrdReuse)), Twitter ([Twitter.com/FortOrdReuse](https://twitter.com/FortOrdReuse)), and press releases to the stakeholder notification list. Please note that these meetings are not a substitute for required formal public comment meetings for the proposed project under CEQA.

- Timing/Project Milestone:
 - April 2019 – the public meeting will be held prior to or during the public review period of the Draft EIR

6.3.5. FORA Board Meetings

FORA staff may present to the FORA Board of Directors in one or more public meetings to provide information during the design and environmental review processes and receive Board and public comments/feedback prior to formal public hearings.

6.3.6. Public Hearings

The FORA Board of Directors will hold a public hearing on the Final EIR. The hearing will proceed in accordance with FORA’s public hearing requirements and will be announced via a local newspaper, the FORA weekly electronic newsletter and social media, as well as notification on the proposed project’s webpage and an electronic mail notification to the stakeholder notification list (per Section 6.1 above). The public will be invited to comment during the public hearing.

- Timing/Project Milestone:
 - November 2019 – FORA Board public hearing on the Final EIR and consideration of project approval and EIR certification

6.4 Engagement Tools

6.4.1. Project Webpage

FORA staff will develop a page on FORA’s website dedicated to the proposed project and the EIR process to provide pertinent proposed project details. Interested parties will be able to sign up for the email notification list, view proposed project documents, and find contact information to send comments and suggestions. Background information, maps, reference documents, and other information will also be available on the webpage. The website address is: fora.org/connector.

- Timing/Project Milestone: Ongoing

6.4.2. Electronic Mail Notifications

Using the stakeholder notification list (see Section 6.1 above), FORA staff will send email updates at key milestones in the design and environmental review processes. Information will also be available on the project webpage (fora.org/connector).

- Timing/Project Milestone: Notifications and postings at least a week prior to meetings, the day a document is released for public review, and prior to the close of comment periods

6.4.3. Electronic-format Newsletters

At significant steps of the design and environmental review processes, FORA staff will prepare articles on the proposed project to distribute in FORA’s electronic-format weekly newsletter, “This Week @ FORA,” to update the public and interested stakeholders on important NE-SW Connector developments.

Newsletter information will include updates on project status, the achievement of major project milestones, notification of documents for public comment, public meetings, and other project-related topics. Newsletter updates will be posted on the homepage of the FORA website (fora.org) and distributed to all FORA contacts. Identified stakeholders and community members on the stakeholder notification list will be added to the recipient list as needed.

- Timing/Project Milestone: As needed

6.4.4. Fact Sheets

Fact sheets will be published as necessary to either address specific community concerns or provide information about specific design and environmental issues. Fact sheets will also contain “Frequently Asked Questions” to address questions from stakeholders and other interested parties. Fact sheets will be posted on the project webpage (fora.org/connector), made available at community events, and distributed to identified stakeholders and community members via the stakeholder notification list (see Section 6.1 above).

- Timing/Project Milestone: As needed

6.4.5. Media Information

Media alerts/releases will be circulated to announce public meetings and public hearings.

- Timing/Project Milestone: Contact media/releases prior to major milestones in the design and environmental review processes, such as meetings, workshops, hearings, community events, document releases, public review periods, etc.

6.4.6. Social Media

FORA will use the social media sites Facebook ([FB.com/FortOrdReuse](https://www.facebook.com/FortOrdReuse)) and Twitter (twitter.com/FortOrdReuse) to alert followers of outreach activities, share outreach materials and project relevant information.

- Timing/Project Milestone: As needed.

6.4.7. Community Group Involvement

Many local community groups have an interest in the NE-SW Connector. Some of these groups have a recreational interest in how the proposed project will affect their activities. FORA is committed to providing robust and diverse community group involvement at the former Fort Ord. To that end, FORA will seek to provide information throughout the environmental review process to religious organizations, business organizations, environmental and economic interest groups, recreational groups, cultural organizations and such other organizations that may wish to participate.