

1.10 ENGINEER RELATIONS

1.11 WITH PUBLIC

Project engineers are among the most important individuals in development of good public relations. Located throughout the state, they can contribute toward a better understanding of the highway program and construction operations by volunteering to appear before local civic organizations. Acquainting the public with interesting details of highway construction is a proactive approach and usually avoids criticism.

Residents Along Construction Projects

Project engineers and their staff should contact residents and businesses along the road that will be under construction. Before work is started, an effort should be made to advise residents and businesses of upcoming construction and discuss the probable effect on their operations. This gives them an opportunity to arrange their operations to fit the construction schedule. Both the project engineer and contractor have a large interest in promoting local goodwill. Sometimes construction schedules can be arranged that will result in the least inconvenience to local residents and businesses.

Highway construction operations may cause a major change in daily traffic patterns of residents and business people. Most are unfamiliar with road construction problems but may accept some inconvenience for the welcomed improvement.

Occasionally, project engineers may encounter individuals critical of construction inconvenience. Understanding a critical viewpoint helps with patiently handling demands and criticisms. Give these individuals a chance to state the problem. Sincere and courteous consideration could avoid development of resentment and anger.

Services

Many services (mail delivery, school buses, fire protection, etc.) may require special attention. People in charge of these services should be advised of upcoming construction and, where possible, arrangements made to provide a detour or access across or through the project for services that must be continued during construction.

News Media

Good relations with news media can help develop and maintain good public relations. While reporters may be unfamiliar with road construction, they are well known by local residents and may influence attitudes of people living along or otherwise affected by the construction project. News media contacts should be professional and positive to maintain a good public image for the Department of Transportation.

The project engineer represents a public agency spending public money and is not entitled to withhold this information from public press. The Freedom of Information Act of 1983 opens most of our files to public scrutiny. Sensitive material should be cleared with the DOT General Counsel Division prior to release to the public or outside attorneys.

Information should be presented in as favorable and factual form as possible. Project engineers should confine remarks to those areas over which they have personal control.

Any questions directed toward DOT policies or public criticism of their superiors should be politely declined.

1.12 WITH CONTRACTOR

Under the contract system used in highway construction, contractors aim to perform the work contracted and engineers see that the work performed is according to project plans and specifications. Since these aims are essentially the same, engineer-contractor relations should be conducted in a spirit of mutual cooperation within the framework of the specifications and with the best interest of both contracting parties. Establishing a cooperative and collaborative working relationship with contractors may result in improved quality and fewer unresolved contract issues.

Contractors should do no less than required by contract, nor should they expect compensation for work done that was not required.

Good contractor relations can be promoted by keeping an open line of communication and advising contractors of unacceptable work before such work is completed.

In general, relations with the contractor should be fair, firm, courteous and based on sound judgment under the guidance of specification requirements.

1.13 WITH FHWA & OTHER OUTSIDE AGENCIES

FHWA representatives have the right to examine any phase of work, including methods of testing, project records, material reports, etc. to review performance of state inspection personnel assigned to the project and compliance of work with plans and specifications. Their responsibility or authority does not extend to supervising or directing the project engineer or contractor forces.

Reports covering their inspections are forwarded to the Office of Construction and then made available to the District Construction Engineer and project engineer.

Relations with FHWA personnel should be conducted in a spirit of cooperation and courtesy, extending any assistance or facilities available. The FHWA engineer should be informed of anticipated plan changes or extra work, as well as any other pertinent features of the project.

Inquiries from other state or government agencies should be given prompt and courteous consideration.

1.14 EMPLOYMENT OF CONSULTANTS FOR CONSTRUCTION ENGINEERING AND INSPECTION

From time to time, various governing bodies hire consultant services. Governing bodies could be cities, counties, or the state.

Agreement Responsibilities

Responsibilities of a consultant may be limited to providing professional advice to the governing body on the best means of satisfactorily accomplishing the work. This may include specific project level engineering and/or inspection responsibilities. These guidelines will address engineering and/or inspection responsibilities. The construction engineering agreement should define respective authorities and responsibilities of the full-time publicly employed project administrator in charge of the project and consultant's staff.

Under federal-aid regulations, however, prime responsibility for general supervision of construction remains with the governing body. The state (county or city under agreement with state) cannot be relieved of its responsibility to insure that work is performed in accordance with project plans and specifications.

Project Administrator

When a consultant is engaged to provide engineering and inspection services, a project administrator designated by the governing body should also maintain working knowledge of the project. Federal-aid projects require assignment of a professional engineer or a designated representative as project administrator. Consultant inspection of federal-aid projects under control of any governing body within the state falls under these requirements.

Project Administrator Responsibilities

The designated project administrator shall be a full-time public employee. A portion of their duties includes the responsibility of being thoroughly knowledgeable of day-to-day operations of both contractors and consultants providing the construction inspection/engineering services.

Knowledge of day-to-day operations is construed to mean:

- Knowledge of current project status
- Awareness of qualifications, assignments, on-the-job performance, etc. of consultant's project staff
- Involvement in decisions relative to conditions which require change orders or supplemental agreements
- Involvement in authorization of progress payments, even if consultant furnishes measurements or computation of quantities
- Making periodic inspections, visits, or on-site reviews of project. Frequency is dependent upon magnitude and complexity of the project.

Evaluation of Consultant's Performance

The person responsible for administering a contract for inspection services shall evaluate the consultant's performance by completing an evaluation form in accordance with PPM 300.12. The evaluation forms and instructions can be obtained from the Department's consultant contract coordinator in the Office of Design. The completed evaluations are submitted to the consultant contract coordinator.

In-Depth Construction Monitoring

Federal-aid projects involving consultant inspection services should be included in the selection process for annual construction monitoring programs. Programs such as project improvement reviews and traffic control reviews should be conducted on consultant inspected projects periodically in proportion to number and work complexity.