



EXPECT

Stakeholders' Expectations and Perceptions of the future Road Transport System

Stakeholder Perceptions and Expectations Report on consultation meetings

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Executive summary

The aim of this task of Work Package 2 was to investigate methods for national road authorities to improve understanding of stakeholder's needs and expectations in relation to highway asset management. The objectives of this project were to:

- Design a guide to observe and monitor discussions at the meetings and a pro-forma to interview selected participants after the meeting.
- Identify and attend up to 2 consultation meetings (in different countries) with the aim of assessing the achievements of the meetings in terms of improved communications and improving understanding of the issues involved.
- Interview selected participants after the meeting.

The method used was observation. Three different consultation meetings were attended (two in Sweden and one in the United Kingdom) by the researchers and observed using a detailed observation guide.

The results from the observation were summarized and a number of detailed recommendations provided to enable an effective consultation meeting. In short the results suggested a number of key requirements which can be summarized as follows:

- Send out invitations well in advance and provide relevant information prior to the meeting.
- Invite participants as early as possible in the process.
- Ensure that the people running the meeting genuinely want to listen and learn from participants and not only achieve public acceptance.
- Chose a location which is easy to get to.
- Provide a clear understanding of the objectives of the meeting (using for instance visual aids).
- Employ an experienced facilitator to encourage participants to express their opinions and to maintain focus on relevant topics.
- Increase the involvement in further meetings by providing feedback after the meeting.
- If possible invite people to a follow up meeting.

This document also contains the results and a discussion of the focus groups carried out with decision makers as an addendum to the main Work Package 2 report (EXPECT WP2 deliverable, 2011).

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1 Introduction

Traditionally highway assets are managed on the basis of engineering requirements. However there is growing recognition that effective management of the road network requires understanding of stakeholder's needs and expectations.

To involve stakeholders in this work will not only make the planned actions more acceptable but also more appropriate to the needs of the citizens. Risser and Lehner (1997) listed three main reasons for involving the public:

- **Participation reflects a basic democratic principle:** Within the notion of democracy lies participation. In order to achieve this principle the process needs to be transparent and open for discussions. This could then serve two purposes; one is to inform the other is to receive feedback.
- **It helps to avoid conflict:** a continuous exchange of information and a willingness to alter priorities in the face of changed circumstances. Help to convince the public of the credibility of the system which in turn helps to avoid conflicts.
- **Participation can be seen as a down-to earth source of practical assistance:** Something that is often forgotten is that the population can provide some valuable information as a complement to what practitioner and experts already know.

The purpose of public participation is to involve individuals and groups that are affected by a specific action and as the IAIA pointed out, it is essential for good governance.

Public participation in consultation meetings with road authorities can therefore provide valuable information as a complement to what practitioners and experts already know. However, the results of such meetings depend on how and when the meeting is conducted, the performance of the facilitator and the commitment of the participants.

Studies of consultation meetings have shown that participation depends on how motivated the citizens or stakeholders are (Gilbert, 1987). Studies have found that the enthusiasm was usually greater amongst those who took part in a meeting for the first time (Strobl & Bruce, 2000; Wänström, 2009). In the study by Wänström (2009) participants often became disappointed when they realized that they were unable to modify the proposal. Burton (1994) also found that participants were rather pessimistic concerning their expectations of what would happen to their views. It could therefore be argued negative experiences of consultation could result in that fewer people attend, which in turn can have a negative effect on decisions made. Some would perhaps argue that it is not possible to satisfy everybody, but according to Strobl and Bruce (2000) people would not necessarily expect that all views are being considered.

In order to increase involvement it is also important that consultation is taking place at every stage of the process. Thus it is important to call a meeting at the initial phase of the project, before important decisions have been made (IAIA; Strobl & Bruce, (2000). Thus, Strobl and Bruce (2000) suggested a two-phase process. The aim of the first phase would be to provide information and discuss the main issues. At the second phase a draft of the proposal is presented and discussed and then amended accordingly.

In the study by Strobl and Bruce (2000) interviews with facilitators showed that they were unsure about how to use the different comments. Some of them would ask for a more structured approach and a method which could quantify, or at least help them to prioritize the different responses. They also wanted to make sure that the expressed views did reflect the population, thus geographic and demographic data was wanted.

Unfortunately, the views expressed at meeting are not always representative. For instance,

Faith-Ell et al. (2010) pointed out that public meetings tend to be dominated by men and that the average age is usually high. One important aim of Faith-Ell et al. (2010) study was therefore to look at different methods which can be used to increase equal participation. One way to attract more people would be to arrange them at a more convenient location; close to their work places, schools or leisure activities. Everybody does not own a car, thus selecting a place which does not necessitate the use of a car was also proposed.

During the meeting itself participants can be encouraged to speak if a list of speakers are arranged and strictly adhered to. It is assumed that people who take part in a meeting are interested in the topic. Faith-Ell et al. (2010) therefore suggested that the facilitator should walk around in the audience and try to involve people even if they only look like they want to speak.

Public participation through consultation is important, not only because it is a basic role of good governance but also that decisions made through consultation can lead to better management and in the long run a greater public acceptance (IAIA). However, to plan and conduct a consultation meeting is not easy and the aim of the following study was therefore to assess the achievements of consultations meetings and then present some recommendations which could help in improving the outcome of these meetings.

2 Method

Based on a literature review and a pilot study a detailed observation guide and two surveys were developed prior to the meetings. The pilot study consisted of attending a consultation meeting locally. The guide was provided in order to ensure that all important aspects of the meeting were being noted. However, the researcher was also encouraged to take his/her own notes. The surveys was structured using a seven point scale and the first one was aimed at the researcher to summarize the meeting itself and the other was aimed at a selection of participants to get their views about the meeting and how satisfied they were, see Appendix.

Three different consultation meetings (two in Sweden and one in the United Kingdom) were attended. During the meeting the researcher were quiet and completed the observation guide. After the meeting some of the participants were either asked to complete a survey or take part in an interview.

3 Consultation meetings

3.1 Findings from Sweden; Case study 1

3.1.1 Methodology

Participants: Five people took part in the meeting

- A=a consultant working for a large company in charge of asset management,
- B=civil servant responsible for asset management within the road authority,
- C=a person who worked in the social services mainly with home help to the elderly,
- D=a person who worked for the ambulance service and
- E= a person who worked for the local bus company).

(The different letters will be used when referring to the participants).

The consultant has a five year contract to maintain roads on the island including the areas beside the road such as resting areas. The group met on a regular basis, approximately twice a year, and discussed their experience of asset management.

Before the meeting A and B had sent out an agenda to the participants.

3.1.2 Results

Start of the meeting

The people were seated around a rectangular table, three on one side of the table and two on the other. The person from the road authority B and the one in charge of asset management A sat at opposite sides of the table.

The meeting agreed on the agenda and no additional points were added. B described the main aim of the meeting which was to learn more about stakeholders views about work carried out by the Road Authority and the consultant. B added that it was very important to listen to their opinions.

During the meeting

B asked about the last winter. After that B explained what their aims had been with regard to maintenance, that is level of service provided and how well the consultant had maintained the roads. He stressed that the aim was not that all roads should be cleared immediately and he added that despite this it had been good.

C asked if the Authority had some form of priority list and in that case when shall smaller roads be cleared. She sounded very unsure and did not insist on an answer. Despite this it was obviously something which concerned her and she returned to this topic later in the meeting. A more general discussion about winter maintenance followed.

B then interrupted and summarized the discussion so far. To avoid the problems with communication between contractors and stakeholder C stated that the emergency services should be more involved with communication between actors. C also added that poor maintenance had prevented her from visiting clients.

C stressed that communication is the most important thing so stakeholders know beforehand if some roads are closed but added that in the main accessibility had been good.

The next topic concerned road surface. B turned to the person from the bus company (E) and asked about his opinion. This was the only time when B tried to engage participants who were less active.

E answered that they had had problems with poor visibility due to high hedges. A took some notes and B explained why this was the case but also that he failed to see the problem. B argued that there are many opinions but that they shall try to listen. He added that change take time.

During the meeting B sticks to the agenda and the atmosphere was open. He gave the impression that he was pleased with the work of the Authority and if it was a problem he argued that it was difficult to change everything.

E raised a problem with layout at a specific location. He argued that very soon there would be an accident, D agreed. B took note of this and stressed that he would contact the right people. This was then followed by other problems being discussed.

The first hour of the meeting B was rather dominant. After about one hour the participant started to become more active and the conversation was not only between B and the participant but also between themselves.

B then gave feed-back about what had been done in the region and how suggestions from previous meetings have been followed up. B expressed a satisfaction with the work and C agreed. At this point A became less involved and started to look at his mobile phone. B talked about different problems they have tried to solve, but also problems related to finance. With regard to what had been done A was not well prepared and had to give it some thoughts before he could contribute.

The group was very relaxed.

C raised the problem with junctions and B expressed his opinion about the same. C questioned his explanation. B was able to take the criticism without becoming irritated.

D wanted bus stops to have a concrete surface. A took a note of this but added that it was the responsibility of the council and not the Road Authority. When it turned to problems with a specific bridge, which was their responsibility, A tried to get the group to accept the work carried out. He highlighted positive aspects and with regard to problems he argued that they were very difficult to solve. He finished this conversation by adding that they would do as well as they could.

End of the meeting

After this discussion B summarized and pointed out what action they should take. He added that it was limited and that a lot of things were acceptable or, as he added, the participants where very kind.

Summary

In summary, it can be stated that the aims and objectives of the meeting were clear. The facilitator also referred to what had been done since the last meeting which should have increased their motivation. He also summarized the discussion providing some structure to the meeting. People who were invited to the meeting had great experience of asset management but were also dependent on it for work purposes. The atmosphere at the meeting was very relaxed and the tone of voice low and agreeable. No real conflict of opinion was expressed. The facilitator managed to be in control of the meeting but it could be argued

that he controlled it too much. For instance, after asking a question he himself would present an answer before anybody else which invariably was positive about the work carried out by the consultant. This could indeed discourage a conflict of opinion. At other times he could intervene before the participants got too involved.

The group meet on a regular basis which could be a strength but it could also result in something known as “group think” (Janis, 1997). According to this the purpose of the group is to maintain a good relationship, preventing members from being too critical:

“The more amiability and esprit de corps among members of a policy-making in-group, the greater is the danger that independent critical thinking will be replaced by groupthink. The social constraint consists of the members’ strong wish to preserve the harmony of the group, which inclines them to avoid creating any discordant arguments or schisms” (p 237).

If that was the case then the risk is that the decisions made in the group will not result in creative improvements and positive outcomes.

3.2 Findings from Sweden; Case study 2

3.2.1 Methodology

Participants: Ten people took part in the meeting:

- A and B= two production managers working for a consulting firm
- C= a local manager working for the same consulting firm as above
- D= a consultant working for the Swedish Transport Administration
- E= a coordinator from the Swedish Transport Administration and also the facilitator of the meeting
- F= a representative from a haulage contractor company
- G= a representative from the home care
- H= a traffic planner from the community
- I= a representative from the post office, a rural postman
- J= a lorry driver
- K= a bus driver
- L= a representative from a social services who also served as the accountant for the community
- M= a motorcycle driver.

(The different letters will be used when referring to the participants).

The group started to meet in 2005. Thereafter they have met on a regular basis, approximately twice a year, and discussed asset management. An agenda is always sent out before the meetings.

3.2.2 Results

Start of the meeting

The meeting started with lunch to welcome the participants. At the onset the atmosphere in

the group was very relaxed.

During the meeting

The people were seated around a table and the meeting started with a presentation of the participants. Several of the participants did know each other previously. The facilitator then gave a review of the previous meeting and explained what actions had been taken as a consequence of this meeting. After which the facilitator encouraged the participants to raise questions regarding asset management.

The aim of the meeting was to make the participants more involved in the work carried out by the Swedish Road Administration.

The facilitator informed the participants that this meeting would be their last one since a new funder had taken over and they will now be responsible for asset management.

An agenda for the meeting was established and no changes were made.

A special guest was invited to the meeting; a community planner. He presented the Swedish Road Administrations organization and the investment plan for 2011. He also informed the group about all reconstruction steps taking place around the area.

A short review regarding winter maintenance and the costs for the same were discussed.

The participants discussed some of the main problems during the previous winter, one of which was cracking in the road which had caused some injuries. They also discussed speed limits, road signs, road layout and pedestrian crossings. The discussions and questions mainly concerned specific areas which the participants were familiar with.

(F) Asked about a cross-over and told the management that the residents were very dissatisfied. An accident with a car driving straight ahead over the cross-over was mentioned. (G) Asked if the traffic intensity had increased on roads and mentioned that the traffic stood still on a particular road. (H) Was pleased with the winter maintenance and added that none of the residents had complained. (I) A special road between two small communities had been very tricky during the winter season, both rough and slippery. (J) A parking place along a road was problematic and he wanted to see some improvement. (K) Clearance by a new stop on road 31 was wanted because of the view. (L) A bad bank in a curve by Sjöstorp had received some complaints from residents. A reconstruction of the road in Stockaryd had been very good but a longer distance had been desirable.

The group discussions and their comments were written down and the facilitator promised to follow it up.

A sum of 50.000 Swedish Crowns had been set aside for implementation of some of the suggested changes and improvements. One special maintenance project was discussed and the participants agreed upon one specific road which was in great need of repair.

End of the meeting

The facilitator from the Swedish Road Administration ended the meeting and thanked the participants for their co-operation over the years. The meeting ended with participants having a cup of coffee and some more informal discussions. A number of the participants hoped that these kinds of meetings would continue with the new funder.

Summary

The atmosphere at the meeting was very good and the discussions held between the

Swedish Transport Administration and the participants were congenial. The suggestions put forward at previous meetings had been implemented and if anything of them remained it was clear that they would be completed. It was evident that the participants had a high confidence in the work of the Swedish Road Administration and that their views had a major impact. Representatives at the meeting were from the same professions but the same people would not always take part. However, this did not have any negative effect on the mood of the group. It would appear that everybody was able to express their views and several of the participants were very familiar with the issues raised.

3.3 Findings from England

3.3.1 Methodology

The meeting took place between the operator of a part of the trunk road network run under a Design Build Finance and Operate (DBFO) contract. Present were representatives of the overseeing NRA as well as representatives from the following stakeholders:

- Police
- Fire and Rescue
- Local Authorities (LA)
- Highways Agency Traffic Officers (HATO)

Sixteen people took part in the meeting (excluding those observing for the purpose of this study). An agenda had been circulated beforehand and all attending were aware of the purpose of the meeting.

This was the first meeting of an intended biannual event.

The attendees were organised in a circle so that everyone would be able to contribute and respond to other attendees.

3.3.2 Results

The facilitator began by reiterating the purpose of the meeting, explaining that the intention was to work with all stakeholders to share information and identify mutually beneficial safety improvements. The aims as stated in the agenda were:

- To establish and review a list of core members.
- Share network performance data and intelligence.
- Improve reliability and reduce delays on the network.
- Reduce collisions and minimise casualties.
- Identify measures to mitigate the number of accidents on the network and adjoining routes.
- Identify areas for working in partnership.

The facilitator presented a review of recent accident statistics to highlight the areas in which improvements may be made, then asked each of the attendees in turn to describe their particular strategies for achieving the stated goals.

- LA: Described the work they are doing to reduce accidents on their road network through education and work with local communities.
- Police: Discussed a programme to improve the quality of accident statistics.
- Police: Described speed checking programme.
- Police: Described the use of a database of minor offenses and warnings.

- DBFO: Suggested a corridor approach to look at journeys from beginning to end.
- LA: Noted the poor effectiveness of local drink driving campaigns versus the more successful national campaigns and how this influence their decision to use funds elsewhere in future.
- Police: Highlighted the concept of 'sign blindness', the profusion of signs causing people to ignore them.
- NRA: Stated that this type of forum is important to allow them to be informed of the issues. Otherwise they are not aware of them.
- LA: Suggested using social networking for target advertising to certain groups.
- DBFO: Stated that the RUSS (Road User Satisfaction Survey) was not necessarily targeted at those who use the roads.
- NRA: Pointed out that it is possible to add questions to the RUSS to investigate particular areas of interest.
- LA: Educational work at schools.
- NRA: Will continue to fund controlled motorway speed enforcement.
- Fire and Rescue: Described their education initiatives with schools, extraction demonstrations, promotional material and presentation stands in rest areas.
- NRA: Emphasised that "We need to know who to talk to"
- LA: Explained how their current focus is on accidents involving cycles and buses.
- HATO: Described their activities to improve movement and accident management, and improvements to telephones, control centres and VMS messages.

Detailed minutes were taken of the meeting and a number of actions agreed. Meeting minutes were later emailed to all attendees.

3.3.3 Interview after the meeting

Four people involved in the discussion were interviewed briefly after the meeting to determine how effective they felt the meeting was at achieving its stated aims. The four were:

- Police
- Fire and Rescue
- Adjoining trunk road network operator
- Adjoining Local authority

All those interviewed agreed that the meeting had been effective. The facilitator was open to suggestion and showed a genuine interest in the views of the audience. Each person was given an appropriate amount of time to make their contribution and questions were invited to stimulate discussion. The only area that the interviewees felt could do with improvement was the use of technical terms. Although all the attendees were present to discuss a common theme (safety) and were well informed on the subject, there were a number of technical terms and acronyms used that were particular to certain industries and unfamiliar to others.

Data

Data collected using checklist at each meeting.

- Attendees were seated in a circle
- The presentation used a combination of a computer presentation and paper hand-outs.
- This was the first of a series of meetings and the plan was to continue holding them and learning from each one.
- The plan was very detailed.
- One question was asked during the initial presentation and it was answered immediately and comprehensively.
- There was no discussion between members of the audience during the initial presentation.
- After the initial presentation questions were invited from all those present.
- There was friendly discussion between members of the audience.
- The facilitator was receptive of ideas and prompted for further data sharing.
- Twelve people took part in the discussion.
- The facilitator encouraged input from those who had not yet contributed.

Qualitative judgements of the meeting (1-7, where 1 = strongly agree, 7 = strongly disagree)

- The facilitators were open to suggestions from the audience (1)
- The facilitators made the people to feel at ease (1)
- The facilitators reacted positively to critic (N/A)
- The facilitators used too many technical terms (5)
- The facilitators showed a genuine interest in the views of the audience (1)
- The facilitators encouraged people to ask questions (1)
- The facilitators encouraged the audience to come up with alternative solutions (1)
- The facilitators allowed each person enough time to ask questions (1)
- The facilitators allowed each person enough time to present alternative solutions (1)
- The facilitators allowed each person enough time if they wanted to criticize the plan (1)
- The audience was already well informed (1)
- The audience was not pleased with the plan (7)
- The facilitators explain what people can do if they after the meeting have more complaints/comments
- How is the atmosphere when the meeting ends? (Friendly)

Questions to ask some of the participants after the meeting (1-7, where 1 = strongly agree, 7 = strongly disagree)

- How important is it that the council*(DBFO) arranges consultation meetings? (1)
- The facilitators were open to suggestions from the audience (1)
- The facilitators made you to feel at ease (1)
- The facilitators reacted positively to critic (1)
- The facilitators used too many technical terms (4)
- The facilitators showed a genuine interest in the views of the audience (1)
- The facilitators encouraged people to ask questions (1)
- The facilitators encouraged the audience to come up with alternative solutions (1)
- The facilitators allowed each person enough time to ask questions (1)
- The facilitators allowed each person enough time to present alternative solutions (1)

- The facilitators allowed each person enough time if they wanted to criticize the plan (1)
- How well informed were you about the plan before the meeting? (1)
- How well informed are you about the plan after the meeting? (1)
- How satisfied were you with the plan before the meeting? (1)
- How satisfied are you with the plan after the meeting? (1)
- How satisfied are you with the meeting itself? (1)
- Have you been to a consultation meeting before? (Yes)
- Will you attend another meeting in the future? (Yes)

Summary

Since this was the first meeting of its type it is difficult to judge exactly how effective the process will be in achieving the aims of the forum, but from an observers point of view the meeting itself did seem to be very effective. All those present wanted to be at the meeting and were all aware of the purpose. Many subjects were discussed with interaction from all sides. Notes were taken during the meeting and later forwarded to all participants including the actions that had been agreed.

4 Summary

The aim of this work package was to investigate methods for national road authorities to improve understanding of stakeholder's needs and expectations in relation to highway asset management.

4.1 Recommendations

Before the meeting

Be clear about whom the target groups are and discuss how to reach them.

Call the meeting well in advance, usually more than once is needed: use different media when informing about the meeting including social network. If a particular group tends to be underrepresented find out more about this group in order to target both the message and the source better.

The information about the meeting needs show that the Authority is interested in having a dialogue with stakeholders. Pictures can be used to attract attention but it is important that it is relevant for the topic being discussed and not just a decoration.

Be clear about the topic to discuss so people can prepare themselves. Participants should be able to get access to all relevant information. Inform how to get hold of it but do not only refer to a website. In the invitation add the location and include a map. Describe how to get there by different modes of transport. Make sure that the people can get in so contact appropriate staff before-hand, making sure somebody is in charge.

Vary the location according to the target group and try to include people who tend to be underrepresented at these kinds of meetings.

Ensure that the participants are involved at an early stage of development, before major decisions have been made.

Start of the meeting

Welcome everybody and explain the general aims of the meeting, rules, procedure and expected outcomes of the planned process. Make absolutely clear that the opinions of the audience are important but also how this information is going to be used. If the meeting is small (10 people or less) and if they do not know each other, ask the participants to introduce themselves. Only by name and what stake they have in the matter being discussed. Make sure that the introduction is very short. Start with somebody from the organization who can provide a good example.

Present the agenda of the meeting and ask if people are pleased with this or if they want to add any more points.

Presentation

Present the matter to be discussed and be clear about the aims of the process and at what stage the project is. Do not use jargon if the participants are lay people. The risk is otherwise that people do not understand and become intimidated and do not dare to ask any questions.

During the meeting

The facilitators should be open to comments made and should only posit the questions. Preferably the facilitator should be independent and have no vested interest in the work carried out by the Authority. His or her aim is to encourage the participants to get involved but also to not deviate from the topic discussed too much. This can also make it easier for participants to express their opinions and reduce tension.

Furthermore, it is important to keep an open mind and to not get defensive. The facilitator should allow conflicting views to be expressed. A fear of confrontation could prevent important issues from being raised.

In addition to talking at the meeting, provision could be made for writing things down.

If the meeting is large then the participants can be divided into smaller groups.

In order to provide some more information the participants can be asked to quantify or prioritize their views. This could be done in groups or individually.

End of the meeting

Summarize the meeting and ask if it is correct.

Explain what the next phase in the project is going to be and how they can be kept informed. Provide information about where to turn if they want to participate in the progress of the work. This of course depends at what stage the project is at.

After the meeting

Evaluate the results from the meeting and amend the proposed draft. This will include both the presented suggestions and who participated. If any group were underrepresented a further meeting might be necessary. In some instances it might be appropriate with focus groups, in addition to consultation meetings.

Follow up communication is essential if Road Authorities should be able to motivate stakeholders to take part in future meetings. This could be in the form of another meeting or in print.

4.2 Conclusions

Public participation can provide the stakeholders in charge of asset management with invaluable information. However, the results of such meetings depend on how and when the meeting is conducted, the performance of the facilitator and the commitment of the participants. To ensure that consultation meetings are carried out successfully there are a number of key requirements which can be summarized as follows:

- Send out invitation well in advance and provide relevant information prior to the meeting.
- Invite participants as early as possible in the process.
- Ensure that the people in charge of the meeting genuinely wants to listen and learn from participants and not only achieve public acceptance.
- Chose a location which is easy to get to.

- Provide a clear understanding of the objectives of the meeting using for instance visual aids.
- Employ an experienced facilitator to encourage participants to express their opinions and to maintain focus on relevant topics.
- Increase the involvement in further meetings by providing feedback after the meeting.
- If possible invite people to a follow up meeting.

5 Acknowledgement

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EXPECT WP2 Deliverable (2011), *Stakeholder Perceptions and Expectations Report on the Focus Group interviews*, Deliverable No. 2, ERA-NET

7 Appendix A: Observation Guide

Date of meeting _____

Place of the meeting _____

Topic of the meeting _____

No of people in the audience _____

The role of the audience (i.e. residents, shopkeepers) _____

No of facilitators _____

The professional role of the facilitators (try to be very specific) _____

Start of the meeting

How are the people seated?

Cinema seating In a circle other

If other please state how they were seated _____

Presentation of the material

Materials used to present the plan:

Power-points OH Sheets of paper other

If other please state
what they used

The status of the plan presented

More or less complete, been approved by all the relevant parties and the consultation meeting is the last stage before it should be officially decided upon.

Yes

More or less complete, been approved by people directly involved in the work but not any of the official bodies

Yes

Work in progress

Yes

A rough idea

Yes

Not explained at the meeting

Yes

Other

Yes

If other please state _____

The presentation of the plan itself

Very detailed Not very detailed

Very informative Not very informative

Is previous knowledge of the site itself necessary in order to understand the presentation?

Yes

No

Is both pros and cons regarding the plan presented?

Yes

No

Participation and interaction during the meeting: (If more than one person are involved indicate this with a letter before the time (A=2min; B=3min; A=4min). For the facilitator use the same letters but add if there are more than one facilitator (AA=5min is response from the first facilitator to the first person; AB=4 min, response from the first facilitator to the second person; BA=5min, response from the second facilitator to the first person)

During the formal presentation itself
1. Questions from the audience regarding the plan itself
Response by the facilitator(s)
2. Person(s) in the audience criticize the plan
Response by the facilitator(s)
3. Person(s) in the audience present an alternative plan
Response by the facilitator(s)

Discussion between people in the audience Yes

Friendly Unfriendly

Response by the facilitator(s) _____

How many different people took part in the discussion during the formal presentation?

_____ (if possible state if they were residents or not)

Further comments:

Discussion after the more formal presentation	
1. Questions from the audience regarding the plan itself	
Response by the facilitator(s)	
2. Person(s) in the audience criticize the plan	
Response by the facilitator(s)	
3. Person(s) in the audience present an alternative plan	
Response by the facilitator(s)	

Discussion between people in the audience Yes

Friendly Unfriendly

Response by the facilitator(s) _____

How many different people took part in the discussion after the formal presentation?

_____ (if possible state if they were residents or not)

Further comments:

Quantitative judgements of the meeting

The performance of the facilitator(s), if more than one facilitator make more than one mark but give them different labels i.e. A for the first one and B for the second.

The facilitators were open to suggestions from the audience

Strongly agree Strongly disagree

The facilitators made the people to feel at ease

Strongly agree Strongly disagree

The facilitators reacted positively to critic

Strongly agree Strongly disagree

The facilitators used too many technical terms

Strongly agree Strongly disagree

The facilitators showed a genuine interest in the views of the audience

Strongly agree Strongly disagree

The facilitators encouraged people to ask questions

Strongly agree Strongly disagree

The facilitators encouraged the audience to come up with alternative solutions

Strongly agree Strongly disagree

The facilitators allowed each person enough time to ask questions

Strongly agree Strongly disagree

The facilitators allowed each person enough time to present alternative solutions

Strongly agree Strongly disagree

The facilitators allowed each person enough time if they wanted to criticize the plan

Strongly agree Strongly disagree

The performance of the audience in general

The audience was already well informed

Strongly agree Strongly disagree

The audience was not pleased with the plan

Strongly agree Strongly disagree

Further _____ comments:

Ending the meeting

The facilitators summarize the meeting but do not include the response from the audience

Yes

The facilitators summarize the meeting and include the response from the audience

Yes

The facilitators explain what will happen after this meeting regarding the plan itself

Yes

The facilitators explain what people can do if they after the meeting have more complaints

Yes

How is the atmosphere when the meeting ends?

Friendly Unfriendly

Further comments:

Questions to ask some of the participants after the meeting

How important is it that the council* arranges consultation meetings?

Very important Not important at all
*replace if necessary

The facilitators were open to suggestions from the audience

Strongly agree Strongly disagree

The facilitators made you to feel at ease

Strongly agree Strongly disagree

The facilitators reacted positively to critic

Strongly agree Strongly disagree

The facilitators used too many technical terms

Strongly agree Strongly disagree

The facilitators showed a genuine interest in the views of the audience

Strongly agree Strongly disagree

The facilitators encouraged people to ask questions

Strongly agree Strongly disagree

The facilitators encouraged the audience to come up with alternative solutions

Strongly agree Strongly disagree

The facilitators allowed each person enough time to ask questions

Strongly agree Strongly disagree

The facilitators allowed each person enough time to present alternative solutions

Strongly agree Strongly disagree

The facilitators allowed each person enough time if they wanted to criticize the plan

Strongly agree Strongly disagree

How well informed were you about the plan *before* the meeting?

Very well Not at all

How well informed are you about the plan *after* the meeting?

Very well Not at all

How satisfied were you with the plan *before* the meeting?

Very satisfied Very unsatisfied

How satisfied are you with the plan *after* the meeting?

Very satisfied Very unsatisfied

How satisfied are you with the meeting itself?

Very satisfied Very unsatisfied

Have you been to a consultation meeting before?

Yes No

Will you attend another meeting in the future?

Yes No

Age of the participant

Role of the participant (i.e. resident, shop owner etc.)

Sex of the participant

Male Female

Further comments:

8 Appendix B: Focus Groups with Decision Makers

Subsequent to the focus group interviews carried out in Work Package 2, the opportunity arose to perform an additional focus group with the stakeholder group 'decision makers' (civil servants and politicians in local government). The results of this focus group are reproduced here with interpretation of the information gathered.

8.1 Method

One focus group interview, taking 60 minutes, was carried out in Sweden. The attendees consisted of three civil servants and 2 politicians. The discussion was based on a semi-structured interview guide allowing some structure but at the same time allowing for unexpected findings by introducing additional questions. The meeting started with a short introduction by the moderator of the group explaining the aim of the project. A tape-recorder was used and after the session the material was transcribed.

The interview guide dealt with the following topics:

1. What would you consider to be especially important with regard to asset management?
2. Can you give some examples of good and bad asset management?
3. Is there anything which you would regard to be unacceptable?
4. Could you explain why?
5. How are decisions made?
6. Is there anything which could make the work easier?
7. Who are the main stakeholders with regard to asset management?
8. How are they informed?
9. Is this enough?
10. What value have these meetings for you in your work?
11. At what stage in the process do you inform others?
12. How easy is it for stakeholders to influence the decisions made?
13. How do you handle possible conflicts?

8.2 Results

What would you consider to be especially important with regard to asset management?

"Keeping a standard so that people are pleased and that the roads are accessible. From a financial perspective, making sure that everything works. The inspectors need to be well trained. The road surface is important since it is linked to road safety Bus stops should be swept so it is possible to feel the tactile tiles" (Civil servant 1).

"Safety first and then the quality of the road surface" (Civil servant 2).

"Important to clear the snow where schoolchildren shall walk. Not leaving snow drifts since it makes the road very narrow. Do not allow children to stand in large piles of snow and expose themselves to danger when cars drive past" (Politician 3).

“Snow removal even if it's "expectations curse," everyone expects that the snow shall be cleared when they go to work” (Politician 4).

“With regard to the public it's the small things that are the problem. With regard to this we need to inform them that we cannot do everything, we need to concentrate on the big things. The information has to be clear about what to expect” (Civil servant 5).

Can you give some examples of good and bad asset management?

“People would be annoyed if they cannot get to work. Why is it not ploughed here? But you cannot plough all the roads at the same time. This is a problem.” (Civil servant 1).

“For me, road maintenance may be more important than anything else. If you have paved a street a year before one expects it to last a while” (Politician 4).

“Safety is important, that the road surface is not dangerous” (Civil servant 5).

Is there anything which you would regard to be unacceptable?

“We have to make sure that people can get to work but there is about 12 000 people who travel by bus to LKP every day” (Civil servant 1).

“If my road connects to a larger road then I have to wait 6 hours or at the end of the snowfall, before that I cannot take out my car, people have to understand that” (Civil servant 2).

“Everyone in Sweden knows that it's snowing. Complaint, if they cannot get out with a Zimmer frame. If that person has to get to an appointment at the health centre then it is important, otherwise not” (Politician 3).

“It is a problem if people cannot get to work because the water pipe has burst again. Then this is not acceptable” (Politician 4).

“It should not be dangerous” (Civil servant 5).

Could you explain why?

“You use the resources where you get the most out of your money. Those living in rural areas have to wait” (Civil servant 1).

“I would hope that the contractor clearing the area around me would be faster” (Civil servant 2).

“If it is poor conditions and miserable then a re-think is needed. One doesn't need to get out every time when it has been snowing” (Politician 3).

“Economic factors have to decide which area should be cleared first” (Politician 4).

“Somehow one would like to have a change of heart when the condition is poor then people have to take it easy and leave enough time. They have to lower their expectations. This is something the whole society needs understand” (Civil servant 5).

How are decisions made?

“We do not argue but we have to describe what is needed. In the early 90's the budget was about 2 million a year, today a great deal more” (Civil servant 1).

“When we need to save, money previously allocated to asset management is sometimes reduced” (Civil servant 2).

“Last winter, we did what was necessary without looking too much at the budget. This year it has to be different” (Politician 4).

“Resources first, and then the needs, we need to prioritise. Responsible economic perspective is important, to put resources first so you don’t spend more than you have. We do not have limitless source of resources. It might be even tougher in the future. We have a lot of other costs we have to bear” (Civil servant 5).

Is there anything which could make the work easier?

“A major project, you cannot do everything at once” (Civil servant 1).

“More money” (Civil servant 2)

“More money” (Politician 4)

“More money” (Civil servant 5)

Who are the main stakeholders with regard to asset management?

“Cyclists believe themselves to be very important” (Civil servant 1).

“We prioritize public transport users and cyclists. It is our policy to prioritize bicycle lanes. Private property owners are also important.” Civil servant (2).

How are they informed?

“We focus mostly on internet” (Civil servant 1).

“We have a bike/walking/bicycle coordinator in the municipality that has the responsibility for information and captures their groups views and opinions” (Civil servant 2).

“It takes some time before it spreads. At the same time, when we do something on a large scale we have a notice board. Eg. “Listen, we do this and so on. Here, we build cycle paths out to Tokarp and it will be ready in June”” (Politician 3).

“If I have been informed then I am prepared and know what to expect” (Politician 4).

“Important to inform - heavy snow all people understand that they have to take it easy. However, large potholes in the road or something like that then they need to be warned. We set up cones so the information is available on the site” (Civil servant 5).

Is this enough?

“Perhaps not. I wish there was some sort of device that could warn people. That it is dangerous to cross the road or making the centre line visible” (Civil servant 2).

“I think many are happy with the information. It would be good if people knew why a digger has started to dig in a particular area. We are good at informing but to get the information people need to use the internet which of course everybody won’t do” (Politician 3).

“You can always do more. We really try to make sure that information is provided well in advance” (Civil servant 5).

What value have these meetings for you in your work?

“Different stakeholders sometimes walk around the area and make sure that it is safe. It

could be engineers but also landlords, the church and the police” (Civil servant 2)

“Meeting with a particular stakeholder group a couple of times every year and then they can express their views” (Politician 3).

At what stage in the process do you inform others?

“I believe that many are satisfied and those who are not might only want to let off some steam” (Civil servant 1).

“We have information on our web page and every year it gets a bit better. We want to communicate with everybody because everybody is affected by asset management. We have also developed a page where they can inform us about problems” (Civil servant 2).

“It is not possible to collect peoples’ views about asset management. It would not be possible, it would be too much” (Politician 3).

“No consultation meetings with regard to asset management” (Politician 4).

“The only time we got a lot of answers was when we were going to build a park, then we got 1400-1600” (Civil servant 5).

How easy is it for stakeholders to influence the decisions made?

“We must do something, even if it's a small operation. One can clearly see who complains the most” (Civil servant 1).

“We cannot ignore citizen who wants to get involved. Obviously, we must do something. It does not mean that some neighbourhoods do not get anything. There is always a lower level. We who work with asset management have consultation meetings with different stakeholders including public transport” (Civil servant 2).

“You cannot call us and say "I want Blomgatan or Örngatan re-surfaced because it is bad." If it is a pot hole then it will be fixed. Difficult to get people to attend meetings but it depends on what is being discussed. Easier if it is about playgrounds or if a school is going to close then many will attend. Participation is important” (Politician 3).

How do you handle possible conflicts?

“Cooperation between politicians and civil servants works very well. Public transport operators are also very helpful. We have identified important areas on a map where it might be difficult for buses to pass. For instance it is icy then we go out and put some grit down. Easy things which have developed out of co-operation, we have also placed boxes with sand for the bus driver to use” (Civil servant 2).

“Politicians are often in the community meetings. We know what the problem is. We discuss the problems with the civil servants who provide us with information. Sometimes we have allocated some extra money to a particular group if needed” (Politician 3).

“It is the same money that will be used to repair and maintain roads. One should also consider what to do with the money” (Politician 4).

“Public participation is important. Our mission is to simplify things for people. When you work in such an organization, it's exciting and fun when there is some tension between the parties. There should be some differences between the different parties, it provides us with different perspectives” (Civil servant 5).

Other comments

“If we had a lot of money then the allocation of money might be discussed more. But now it is as it is. You have to do what residents demand most” (Politician 3).

“We allocate too many resources in relation to what we get out of it. Actually, we do not get a great deal from it. We often say "it's only water we remove". Snow removal is nothing lasting which we can show when spring arrives, but it must be done” (Politician 4).

8.3 Summary

The comments received from this group of decision makers reinforced the findings of the focus groups with road users, that expectations and requirements are influenced by experience. Road users prioritised their needs in terms of provision and performance of assets and decision makers prioritised the management of the available resources with a focus on financial management. Meeting stakeholders expectations and ensuring safety are important factors to politicians and civil servants. The decision makers agreed with road users that that unsafe roads are not acceptable and suggested that having a larger budget would make the task of maintaining the asset easier.

Managing road users expectations is seen to be a challenge. The decision makers feel that some user groups have high expectations which are difficult to meet. Some groups are more informed than others and the dissemination of information about asset management activities favours only those with the greatest time and interest being involved in the process. All agreed that the process for dissemination was inadequate.

The decision makers gave the impression that they were making decisions based on their own personal interpretation of user requirements and were making assumptions about user expectations i.e. they had a limited understanding of user expectations or needs. For example, users are aware of budget restraints but politicians thought that users were making unreasonable demands.

These comments have highlighted the importance of communication – to have methodologies in place to gather user requirements and establish better communication between decision makers and the ultimate service users.