

# Meeting Summary

Project:	I-81 Susquehanna
Subject:	Public Meeting
Date:	Nov. 8 – Dec. 8, 2021
Location:	Virtual On-Demand Meeting Website, Online In-Person Open House, Susquehanna County

## Meeting Overview

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) held a public meeting for the I-81 Susquehanna Project. The public meeting was held both online (virtually) and in-person. The online meeting was comprised of text, graphics and videos that provided a project overview and explained the project purpose and need, project design, proposed funding, traffic studies, environmental studies, comment process and next steps. The same information was shared during the in-person public meeting in an open house format.

The online meeting website provided a comment form that allowed individuals to submit their comments directly within the virtual public meeting. The website also noted other ways in which comments could be submitted, including the comment form on the general project website, project phone number, project email and a physical mailing address. The virtual public meeting and comment period began at noon on Nov. 8 and ended at 11:59 p.m. on Dec. 8, 2021.

At the in-person public open house, comment forms were provided for individuals to submit their comment. The in-person public open house was held on Monday, Nov. 15, 2021, from 4 to 7 p.m. at Blue Ridge High School in New Milford, Pa. In project outreach and on the virtual public meeting website it was noted that participants could request translation services.

While the comment period for the public meeting has closed, the online meeting materials are available for reference via the project website's resource side bar at the link below.

[www.penndot.pa.gov/i81Susquehanna](http://www.penndot.pa.gov/i81Susquehanna).

## Meeting Outreach

Prior to and during the public meeting, the project team executed several outreach strategies to maximize public participation in the public meeting during the official comment period.

Outreach Type	Number of Recipients	Type of Recipients	Date Sent
Postcard	10,032	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>General Public</li><li>Mailed via Every Door Direct Mail Service</li><li>Sent to all postal routes within the direct project area and along the diversion route, including in NY</li></ul>	Mailed week of 11/1
Stakeholder & Public Mailing List Email	184	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Key stakeholders, legislators and those who requested to be put on the project's mailing list.</li></ul>	11/8

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Email with information about the virtual public meeting and in-person open house.</li> </ul>	
Knowledgeable Parties Email & Flyer	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowledgeable parties identified in EJ analysis</li> <li>Email with information about virtual and in-person meetings, along with a flyer to be distributed in the community and copies of social media art for sharing</li> </ul>	11/8
News Releases	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sent to area media to distribute via news stories and calendars of events for the general public.</li> </ul>	11/8 11/15
Public Officials Briefing	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invited public officials to a pre-launch briefing to get a first look at the materials to launch in the virtual public meeting</li> </ul>	11/8 at 9:30 a.m.
Diversion Route Workshop Follow Up Briefing	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invited diversion route workshop attendees to attend a follow-up briefing to review the proposed diversion route improvements included in the public meeting materials.</li> </ul>	11/8 at 10:30 a.m.
Social Media Posts	27,667 people reached	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social media posts on PennDOT social media regarding how to participate in the public meeting and comment period</li> <li>407 engagements across 3 posts</li> </ul>	11/8 11/15 12/6

## Meeting Participation

Statistics regarding public participation in the public meeting are below (*data as of close of comment period on Dec. 8*).

Public Meeting Metrics	
Total Virtual Public Meeting Unique Website Visitors (11/8-12/8)	429
Total In-Person Public Open House Attendees	87
Total Meeting Comments (11/8-12/8)	179

Based on the comments received during the public comment period, 35 percent of individuals who visited the public meeting website or attended an in-person meeting submitted a comment. The project team is evaluating and considering this feedback as the Categorical Exclusion Reevaluation environmental document is completed.

### Common Comment Themes:

- Several commenters indicated their **opposition to tolling**. Reasons included:
  - Existing Turnpike frustration
  - Tolls causing traffic issues
  - Financial

- Against tolling in rural areas
- Several commenters indicated concern for **toll avoidance** or plans to avoid tolls themselves. Comments included information on:
  - Drivers planning to avoid the bridge if a toll is placed
  - Concern for traffic avoiding the tolls and diverting through local communities
- Several commenters shared **general dissatisfaction** with the project. Comments indicated this was due to:
  - Pennsylvania already pays the highest gas tax
  - Opposition to paying additional fees for road usage
  - Economic hardship
- Several commenters indicated **concerns for traffic congestion**. Concerns included:
  - Existing traffic, collision, and maintenance issues in the area
  - Toll diversion traffic causing heavier congestion on secondary roads
- Several commenters indicated **financial concerns**. Their concerns included:
  - Frustration over high gas tax
  - Economic hardship caused by tolls
- Several commenters suggested **other means of raising money**. These included:
  - Trim overhead budget
  - Federal infrastructure bill
  - Only charging tractor trailers/large trucks
  - Change state police funding
  - Support user fees, managed lanes, tax increases or registration fee increases
- Several commenters were **requesting information** or to be added to the mailing list
- Several commenters indicated that they were **against tax increases**. These included:
  - There are too many road-related taxes between tolls and the gas tax
  - Frustrated by additional taxes on roads built with taxpayer money
- Other comment themes that appeared in a smaller number of comments included:
  - General Support
  - Supportive of Tolls
  - Business Interruptions
  - Technical Issues
  - Construction and Related Traffic Detours
  - Bridge Safety
  - Non-Gas Vehicles Not Paying Share
  - EJ Issues
  - Mitigation/Toll Discount
  - Tourism/Economy
  - Air Quality & Noise
  - Geographic Equity
  - GPS Tracking Concerns
  - Pandemic Related Hardship Concerns
  - Property Takes or Business Displacement
  - Website Criticism