The Nassau Hub Study

Alternatives Analysis/ Environmental Impact Statement

Public Involvement Plan

FINAL

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Prepared For:

Nassau County

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Version	Date	Document Name	Revision description and why it was needed
1	May 2010	The Nassau Hub Study AA/EIS Public Involvement Plan	Initial Version

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Study Overview

The purpose of the Nassau Hub Study Alternatives Analysis/Environmental Impact Statement (AA/EIS) is to identify potential transit options that will help reduce congestion and support economic development within the Nassau Hub. The Study will build on the work previously conducted for the 2006 Nassau Hub Major Investment Study (MIS). The Alternatives Analysis will define and detail the reasonable transit alternatives within the study area to be evaluated and presented in the Alternatives Analysis Report, and select a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA). The preparation of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as well as the requirements for the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), will identify the potential environmental consequences and necessary mitigation required for implementation of the LPA and other alternatives that may be selected for EIS evaluation. With issues raised in the DEIS addressed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and a Record of Decision (ROD)/SEQRA Finding Statement issued, the process for the Nassau Hub Study AA/EIS will be completed.

Working in close partnership, Nassau County and the FTA are responsible for directing and overseeing all aspects of the Nassau Hub Study AA/EIS. A significant outreach effort will be conducted throughout the Study and will involve an on-going exchange of information between Nassau County and the public to appropriately identify solutions that are likely to carry public support.

Working for the County and the FTA, and selected through a competitive bidding process, are two teams of consultants:

- Jacobs Engineering and a number of specialized consultants (the study consultants) are preparing the necessary technical analyses and documentation required throughout the study, and supporting Nassau County in its public outreach program.

- PB Americas, Inc. and a number of specialized consultants serve as the County's Program Management Contractor (PMC).

Nassau County and its consultants constitute the Study Team.

1.2 Document Purpose

The purpose of *The Nassau Hub Study AA/EIS Public Involvement Plan* (PIP) is to document the procedures that will be used to engage regional agencies, municipalities, stakeholder representatives and the general public throughout the AA/EIS process. The PIP also provides mechanisms for disseminating information and receiving constructive feedback to be considered in the AA/EIS' technical studies, the public outreach process itself, and study decision-making. An important element of the PIP is to provide multiple methods for the public to learn about the study and express their viewpoints.

This PIP was prepared to be consistent with the FTA and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Environmental Review Process Final Guidance on SAFETEA-LU 6002 issued

November 15, 2006 (URL: www.fhwa.dot.gov/hep/section6002/index.htm), and will be updated throughout the study to account for any new guidance.

The current Study (AA/EIS) will build upon the MIS which was previously conducted for the Nassau Hub. A Public and Government Agency Involvement Plan was utilized throughout the MIS process to involve public and private stakeholders in that planning effort. The stakeholder representatives included in the public involvement process for the MIS represented a broad cross-section of transportation agencies, other regulatory agencies, elected and appointed officials, the business community, civic and community-based organizations, residents and other interested parties. The stakeholder representatives identified through the MIS will form the basis for the AA/EIS stakeholder committee, which will then be expanded, as necessary.

The AA/EIS public involvement process will build upon the public process conducted for the MIS. It is designed to ensure that the community is provided with information throughout all phases of the study and that there is ongoing opportunity for the community to identify concerns and issues early in the study so that they can be adequately addressed during the evolution of the study.

Effective public outreach involves a two-way exchange of information. The idea of enhancing and expanding Nassau transit options, while welcomed by some, is bound to be met with skepticism by others. A primary goal of the public outreach effort will be to provide detailed information to the public on what the actual need for enhanced and expanded transit options is, and what the benefits and impacts are of the alternatives being studied. This will allow everyone involved to have the information they need to participate in and effectively contribute to the decision-making process. In order to facilitate this process, the study team will undertake an open and transparent process that collects and documents public feedback for incorporation in the AA/EIS studies. The feedback will enable the Study Team to examine trends in public opinion, assess the status of the outreach effort, and adjust the focus of upcoming outreach efforts or refine the outreach strategy.

This PIP will serve as a working document that outlines the steps, techniques, and activities to be carried out throughout the Study. The PIP will clearly guide the process, while remaining flexible to address issues as they emerge. The PIP includes a schedule of outreach activities, which will evolve as the Study progresses. As a result, it is likely that the PIP will be updated as the Study moves forward to incorporate new information gained along the way and account for new guidance and regulations.

The design of this outreach program will transition the Study from the previous MIS to the current AA and through the future EIS process, ultimately leading into the design phase and, finally, to implementation.

2. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Nassau Hub Study AA/EIS requires an on-going exchange of information between the Study Team and the public to appropriately identify solutions that are likely to carry public support. The public in this case is defined as: area residents, employees, civic groups, neighborhood and homeowner associations, environmental and other interest groups, business interests, governmental agencies, educational, medical, religious, and other institutions, the media and elected / appointed officials.

To accomplish the Study's public involvement goal to *"establish and continue thorough, responsive, open and transparent communication with the public during the AA/EIS process,"* the following objectives are proposed for the PIP:

- Establish means to reach out to and facilitate information-sharing with the public throughout the Study period.

- Educate the public and elicit public comments and suggestions regarding existing and potential issues within the Hub area, potential alternatives for addressing them, and other Study aspects.

- Employ outreach techniques that will allow for collection and coordination of public communication and comments.

- Reach out to groups that might normally be underrepresented in a study, such as minorities, Spanish-speaking residents, low-income residents, seniors, youth and the disabled.

3. OUTREACH TECHNIQUES FOR DISSEMINATING INFORMATION

The following sections describe the dissemination techniques that will be used by the Study Team to establish and continue a thorough, responsive, open and transparent communication process.

3.1 Committee Meetings

The committees formed during the MIS phase of study will be transitioned into a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and a Stakeholder Committee. The membership of these two committees will be updated and enhanced, as appropriate, during the AA and EIS phases.

For each committee meeting, notifications will be sent and all necessary meeting materials (agendas, sign-in sheets, minutes, comment log, PowerPoint presentations, graphics/boards and handouts) will be prepared. If subcommittees are formed, their meetings will be supported in the same manner.

3.1.1 Technical Advisory Committee Meetings

The MIS Steering Committee will be transitioned into a TAC for the AA/EIS. The purpose of the TAC is to provide regulatory, policy, operating, and design guidance and feedback from implementing or resource agencies to the Study Team. Members of this committee may include representatives from:

- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)
- Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
- Long Island Regional Planning Council (LIRPC)
- Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA)
- MTA Long Island Bus (LI Bus)
- MTA Long Island Rail Road (LIRR)
- Nassau County Comptroller's Office
- Nassau County Department of Assessment
- Nassau County Department of Health
- Nassau County Department of Parks, Recreation and Museums
- Nassau County Department of Public Works
- Nassau County Executive's Office
- Nassau County Industrial Development Agency
- Nassau County Office of Economic Development
- Nassau County Office of Emergency Management
- Nassau County Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee
- Nassau County Police Department
- New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC)

- New York State Energy Research and Development Authority
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
- New York State Department of State
- New York State Department of Transportation (Region 10, MO-Transit Bureau)
- New York State Historic Preservation Office
- Town of Hempstead
- Town of North Hempstead
- Town of Oyster Bay
- United States Army Corps of Engineers
- United States Environmental Protection Agency
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service
- Village of Garden City
- Village of Hempstead
- Village of Mineola
- Village of Westbury

Other agencies may be identified as the study progresses.

Meetings with the TAC will be held every several months throughout the study. The TAC will provide input and guidance on the AA and EIS as they are conducted. It is anticipated that most of these meetings will consist of the entire committee, while some may be with subgroups or individual committee members to address specific issues as they arise during the course of the AA/EIS. Every effort will be made to select meeting locations that are central, accessible by transit and accessible by those with disabilities. The TAC meetings for the AA phase are anticipated at the following milestones, to cover the following topics (Table 1).

Table 1 - Anticipated TAC Meetings During the AA Phase

Meeting Purpose	Topics to be Discussed
TAC Meeting 1) Kickoff	Introductions, Purpose of Committee, Role, Protocols, Study Overview, Tasks, Schedule, PIP, Survey/Ridership Effort
TAC Meeting 2) Purpose and Need/Long List of Alternatives/Screening Criteria	Problem Statement, Project Purpose and Need, Goals and Objectives, MIS Alternatives, New Alternatives, Screening Criteria and Process
TAC Meeting 3) Alternatives Evaluation/Short List of Alternatives	Screening Results, Detailed Review of Alternatives,
TAC Meeting 4) Locally Preferred Alternative	Screening Results of Short List of Alternatives, LPA Selection, Final AA Report

3.1.2   Stakeholder Committee Meetings

The Stakeholder Committee will be used to share information with and receive feedback from the designated representatives about the Study. Meetings will be held at regular intervals throughout the Study and membership will include business organizations, institutions, community and environmental groups, and other civic entities that would serve as representatives on the committee. As appropriate, members of the Stakeholder Committee from the MIS will be contacted and asked to continue as members through the AA/EIS process. Additional members will be added, as needed.

As with the TAC, it is anticipated that most of these meetings will consist of the entire Stakeholder Committee, while some may be held with subgroups to address specific issues as they arise during the course of the AA/EIS. Every effort will be made to select meeting locations that are central, accessible by transit and accessible by those with disabilities. The Stakeholder Committee meetings for the AA phase are anticipated to follow within a few days of the TAC meetings at the same milestones and cover the same topics (Table 2).

Table 2 - Anticipated Stakeholder Committee Meetings During the AA Phase

Meeting Purpose	Topics to be Discussed
Stakeholder Meeting 1) Kickoff	Introductions, Purpose of Committee, Role, Protocols, Study Overview, Tasks, Schedule, PIP, Survey/Ridership Effort
Stakeholder Meeting 2) Purpose and Need/Long List of Alternatives/Screening Criteria	Problem Statement, Project Purpose and Need, Goals and Objectives, MIS Alternatives, New Alternatives, Screening Criteria and Process
Stakeholder Meeting 3) Alternatives Evaluation/Short List of Alternatives	Screening Results, Detailed Review of Alternatives,
Stakeholder Meeting 4) Locally Preferred Alternative	Screening Results of Short List of Alternatives, LPA Selection, Final AA Report

3.2   Public Engagement

While the Stakeholder Committee will represent the interests of many, it is important to provide opportunities for the general public to participate in the study. While the primary vehicle will be public meetings, additional outreach opportunities will be provided at different venues throughout the study area and through a comprehensive website that provides information and collects public comment.

3.2.1   Public Meetings

Public meetings will be scheduled during the AA phase to coincide with major study milestones. A good public involvement process educates, or brings people along, during the evaluation of alternatives, so when it is time to recommend an LPA, the public and stakeholders have had an opportunity to participate in the decision-making process. Members of the public who are informed and engaged in the process are more likely to support a recommended course of action.

It is anticipated that when the format allows, the public meetings may be videotaped to allow the public who cannot attend in person to view the meeting remotely on the study website. This will allow the public to view these meetings over the internet and on their own time schedules. Sign language interpreters will be available at public meetings to accommodate the hearing impaired. Meeting materials will be available in English and Spanish, as appropriate.

The format of the meetings will be based upon the stage of the study and the specific topic. While these meetings will cover similar topics as the TAC and Stakeholder Committee Meetings, it is anticipated that these Public Meetings will occur a few weeks later, to enable the Study Team to incorporate TAC and Stakeholder Committee feedback prior to each Public Meeting. Table 3 lists each anticipated meeting, its topic and format.

Table 3 - Anticipated Public Meetings During the AA Phase

Meeting Purpose	Topics to be Discussed	Format
Public Meeting 1) Kickoff	Introductions, Purpose of Committee, Role, Protocols, Study Overview, Tasks, Schedule, PIP, Survey/Ridership Effort	PowerPoint presentation to entire group followed by breakout stations where Study Team members can record stakeholder comments and respond to questions. A survey may be included for these attendees
Public Meeting 2) Purpose and Need/Long List of Alternatives/Alternatives Evaluation/Short List of Alternatives	Problem Statement, Project Purpose and Need, Goals and Objectives, MIS Alternatives, New Alternatives, Screening Criteria and Process, Screening Results, Detailed Review of Alternatives	
Public Meeting 3) Locally Preferred Alternative	Screening Results of Short List of Alternatives, LPA Selection, Final AA Report	

For each meeting, presentation materials will be developed that will illustrate the key points of the information presented using plain language, graphics, simulations, etc. These will be available at the meetings as handouts and on the Study website for download. All materials will be developed prior to the meetings, will be reviewed by Nassau County and the PMC, and will be approved by the County prior to use and distribution. An annotated summary of the meeting will be prepared and available for public distribution.

3.2.2   Workshops/Open House Meetings

Workshops may be held to exchange information about the Study. Over the course of the AA/EIS, one or more of the public meetings may be held in a workshop format. The purpose of this type of format would be to solicit input from the public related to specific topics. An example could be a workshop focused on identifying potential land use scenarios at candidate station areas or workshops focused on specific geographical portions of the Hub Study Area. These meetings would be highly interactive with a tightly focused agenda. The benefit of this meeting type is that it encourages active participation by the public on a focused set of specific issues.

Open house meetings may also be used for the purpose of displaying project materials and information, answering questions, and holding one-on-one discussions with attendees.

As appropriate, signers will be available at the workshops to accommodate the hearing impaired. Workshop materials will be available in English and Spanish, as appropriate.

3.2.3   Design Charrettes

Some of the Public Meetings may be held in the form of a design charrette. This could be a half-day to full-day event at which the public could more actively participate in the process of shaping the various alternatives. Small groups could be tasked with identifying specific issues, conditions and solutions associated with potential transit improvements in the Hub Study Area. Another example of a design charrette could be a meeting focused on defining the public environment associated with a particular transit improvement. A facilitator would walk the group through a series of tasks focused on identifying design-related goals and objectives, examples of desirable precedents, types of design treatments, etc. Breakout groups could be arranged to examine different aspects related to transit such as stations, street running segments, signage, pedestrian, bicycle accommodations, etc. The final outcome of the charrette could be a list of desirable features to accompany transit improvements.

Signers will be available at the design charrettes to accommodate the hearing impaired. Meeting materials will be available in English and Spanish, as appropriate.

3.2.4   One-on-One Meetings

The Study will also require additional coordination with specific agencies and organizations in the study area beyond the TAC, Stakeholder Committee or public meetings. These one-on-one meetings may be required to explain specific geographic or technical details of the Study to particular audiences, to listen to their concerns and issues, and to receive their input. The need for these meetings will be determined as the Study progresses. It is anticipated that such meetings may be held with local municipalities, institutions, businesses, land owners, homeowner associations or other civic and stakeholder groups.

3.2.5   Web/Ex/iTown Hall Meetings

In order to encourage participation by members of the public who may not be able to attend a public meeting in person, efforts may be employed to reach these people using Web/Ex/iTown Hall type meetings. These techniques could be used during regularly planned public meetings, or special meetings held for the purpose of "electronic outreach" can be held. The need for these meetings and use of this technology will be identified as the Study progresses and will be undertaken at Nassau County direction.

3.3   Printed Materials

Fact sheets will be prepared during the course of the Study. These fact sheets will be developed and used as handouts for meetings, briefings and other forums, as necessary. These sheets will also be web-compatible so that they can be easily distributed via email to a wide audience. This technique affords significant flexibility while allowing for an immediate means of transferring information. An email list will be developed and expanded throughout the process via meetings, events, and the website. Printed materials will be available in English and Spanish, as appropriate.

3.4   Website

The Nassau Hub Study AA/EIS comprehensive website (www.nassauhub.com) will be developed and linked to the Nassau County website. The website will serve as a repository to provide the

public with notification of all meetings and events, downloadable versions of all materials developed for public distribution, and the ability to view taped meetings, animations, etc. Materials for posting may include an overview of the Study, alternatives under consideration, Study reports, maps and documents, summaries of public meetings, notices of public meetings, and contact information. The website will include an area to accept public comment, as well as a section for Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). All materials and information on the website will be kept up to date. A portion of the website will be provided in Spanish, and will provide direction on how to obtain additional information in Spanish.

3.5 Print and Broadcast Media

Study information may be disseminated through local media to educate and reach out to the community and in response to media inquiries. The following media could potentially be used to cover news releases, news items and/or Study-related interviews, as appropriate:

- Newspapers
- Radio Stations
- Television Stations

A particular effort will be made to include publications, radio and TV stations that target minority populations. The details regarding which media may be used will be determined during the course of the public outreach program, and must be directed and approved by the County.

4. OUTREACH TECHNIQUES FOR RECEIVING INPUT

An important component of the outreach program is to understand public sentiment and to be able to answer questions and address public concerns. Several methods are provided in the PIP for the public to make comments and ask questions. The Study Team will use these comments to enhance and improve the AA and EIS. All comments received will be documented in the Study database and will become part of the Study record. The comments will be reviewed by the Study Team in the course of the Study, particularly at key decision points, and how they are addressed (e.g., incorporated into technical studies, considered but dismissed and why, responded to) will also be documented.

4.1 Receiving Input

4.1.1 Surveys (Optional)

A web-based survey tool may be used to gauge public opinion over a range of study issues. The advantage of a survey is its potential reach to individuals that cannot or choose not to attend public meetings. Surveys are restricted to one per email address to limit 'ballot stuffing.' The survey is an opportunity to get feedback on very specific questions and on the respondents themselves (e.g., "how much do you currently use the bus," or "in what zip code do you reside or work?"). Surveys completed by the public that might not come to meetings can help balance the opinions of those that do attend.

4.1.2 Study Team Communication

The Study Team is also available to directly answer specific questions and receive comments. Until otherwise noted, the primary contact for the Study Team is:

> The Nassau Hub Study
> 1305 Franklin Avenue
> Garden City, NY 11530
> nassauhub@jacobs.com
> (516) 307-1321

4.1.3 E-Mail

E-mail correspondence regarding comments and requests for information can be sent to the Study's e-mail address at: nassauhub@jacobs.com. This email address will be prominently displayed on all Study materials and the Study's website so that it is widely disseminated and available for public use. The Study Team will monitor the e-mails and incorporate input and/or respond, as appropriate. The Study Team will post comments or questions (with responses) that appear repeatedly to the FAQ page on the Study's website.

4.1.4   Comment Forms

Comment forms will be available at public meetings/open houses and on the Study's website to provide an opportunity for the public to write down thoughts, which can be given to the Study Team during the meeting or mailed or emailed to the Study's contact person at a later time.

4.2   Documentation & Follow-Up

All events, including general public meetings, public forums, and informational meetings with community groups, elected officials, and agencies will be organized, coordinated, and recorded. All correspondence, meeting minutes and specific action items will be followed-up and kept on file in the Study's outreach database. Coverage of the Study in the news media will be closely monitored and recorded for the Study's record.

4.2.1   Requests for Information

All requests for information will be acknowledged by the Study Team within a week with a letter or email accompanied by the materials requested or by a referral to the Study's website where the material can be downloaded. If it will require more than a week to provide the information, the individual making the request will be contacted indicating when the information will be provided. An offer will always be made to provide further assistance should it be necessary.

4.2.2   Meeting Minutes

Minutes will be prepared for all meetings so that comments made will be noted and included in the alternatives screening process. Copies of the minutes will be distributed to meeting attendees for the TAC. Minutes of the Stakeholder Committee Meetings and Public Meetings will be available on the Study's website.

4.2.3   Outreach Database

A fully customized and flexible database program has been developed for use in managing the public outreach component of this study. The database is a comprehensive "one-stop" destination for logging and reporting on contact information, comments received via mail, email, phone, and public meetings, and press articles about the Study (Figure 1). (Please note that the Nassau Hub Study logo/tag line is a place holder until a final image is selected.)

The database streamlines the public outreach process by providing continuity between Study phases and one-click reporting on public outreach issues. Instant reporting allows quick response to inquiries regarding Study issues of public concern and interest. The use of query functions and time-stamped data entry of public and agency feedback allows for identification of trends in public and agency concern and targeted outreach needs.
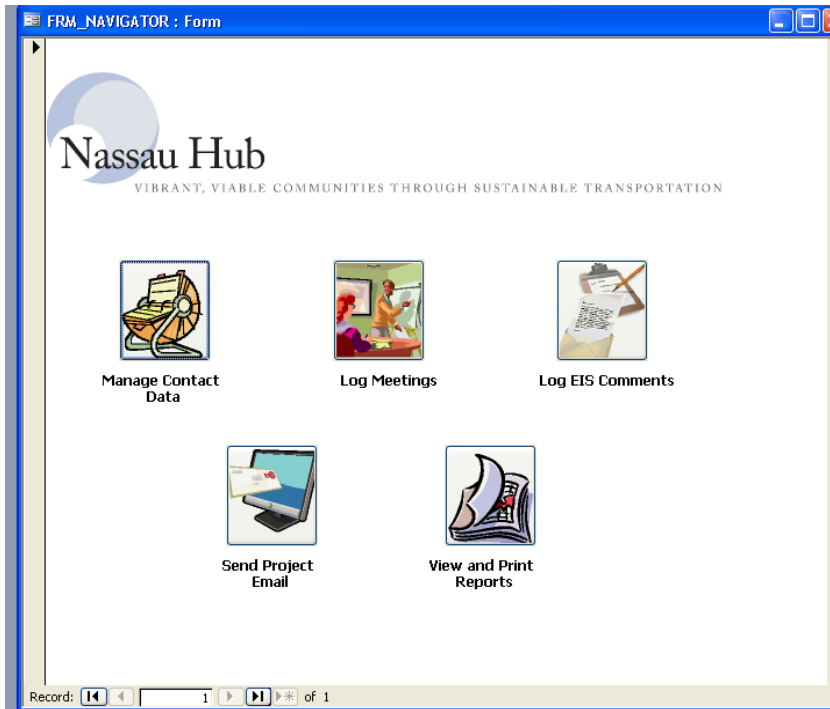
Figure 1 – Outreach Database Main Navigator

<u>Contacts</u>

The database is used to record contact information for all individuals who participate in Study outreach efforts. Qualifiers sort the contact information in terms of the individual's level of participation in the Study (See Figure 2). Contacts can be sorted by name, agency, special interest group, public office, participation level, etc.
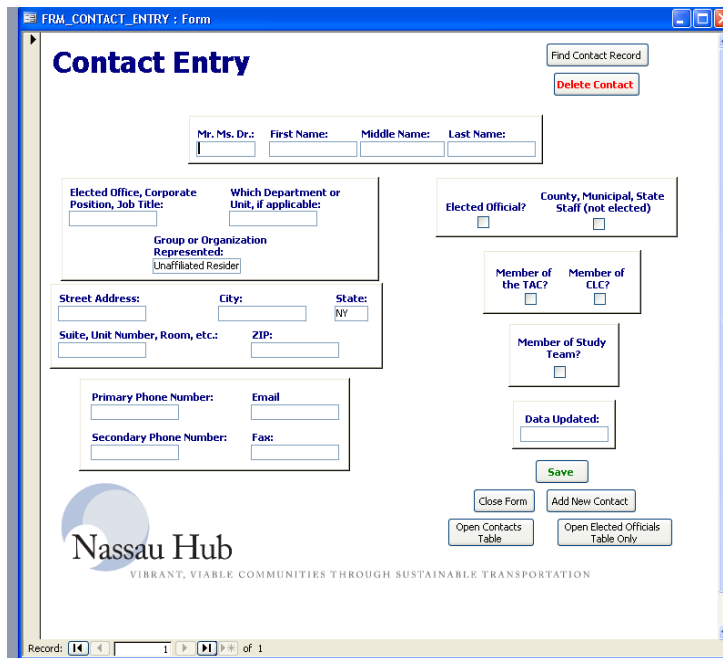

Figure 2 – Database Contact Entry Form

Comments

Comments and remarks are entered in a "many-to-one" format, which means that each remark or comment provided by an individual receives its own unique identifier, but are all linked back to the provider's contact information (see Figure 3). When used from the beginning of a study, this function is particularly useful in identifying trends in the issues of concern raised by public and agency respondents.

Figure 3 – Comment Entry Form

Reporting

Automated reporting allows one-click generation of reports listing data sorted by the topic of interest (Figure 4). For example, a report may list all comments by civic groups, or all comments regarding a particular alternative. Another report may list the remarks of elected officials, for example.

Figure 4 – Reporting

Press Coverage

Coverage of the Study in the media will be recorded in the database. Comments by individuals in the press will be logged and attached to their entry in the contact list. Electronic copies of the press coverage will be attached to the database entry.

Outreach Log

The database also includes an Outreach Log function (Figure 5). Each outreach meeting, regardless of size or scope, is logged, and issues and action items identified at the meeting are recorded. The outreach log data serves as the basis for the final summary of outreach on the Study, and also serves as a useful reference when planning public outreach events.
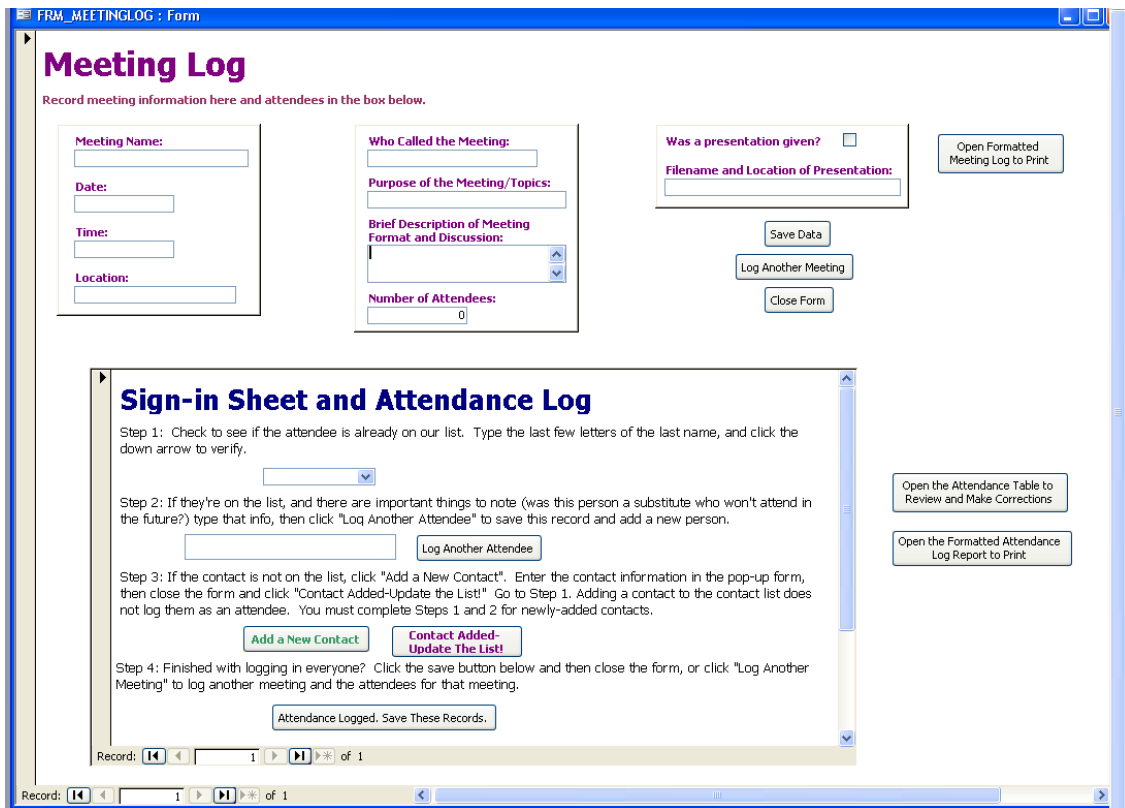

Figure 5 – Database Meeting Tracker