



Red Line Community Engagement Plan

Framework for Meaningful and Equitable Public Involvement During the Alternatives Development Phase

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1 Purpose of the Document

This Outreach and Engagement Plan (the O&E Plan) outlines the timing of and tools for stakeholder and public engagement efforts, the types of information that will be shared, and stakeholder input that the team will gather throughout the alternatives development phase of the Red Line project. The O&E Plan is based on United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) guidance from “Promising Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-Making” (October 2022), and defines specific milestones at which to engage, inform, and/or involve stakeholders and the public. This plan will be a living document as the project team continuously incorporates lessons-learned and adjusts to the needs identified through ongoing involvement activities.

Implementing a Meaningful & Equitable Approach

The core principle for the O&E Plan is to implement meaningful and equitable engagement with the public. Historically, in major infrastructure projects across the country, those whose voices are loudest are not necessarily representative of all those impacted by a project. With thoughtful planning, MTA and its partners will create pathways for more representative and equitable participation in project planning and, ultimately, design. The O&E Plan proactively integrates technical milestones with focused public engagement periods so that the MTA is providing information and gathering input from the public with strategic intention. The intended outcome is to be respectful of stakeholders’ and the public’s time by clearly and continually providing information using the right tools at the correct times.

2 Project Background

The Baltimore Red Line

In 2002, the Baltimore Region Rail System Plan identified the need for better east-west connections across the Baltimore region. This corridor, which was identified as the Red Line, advanced through over a decade of planning, community engagement, and engineering work as it moved through federal funding and environmental analysis processes. The Baltimore Red Line project was originally planned to address several important community needs: to improve transit efficiency and reduce congestion, to increase access to transit near employment and activity centers, to better connect to existing transit service, to provide transportation choices for commuters, and to support economic development and community revitalization. These needs were identified through a community involvement process that included considerable time from community members engaging with project staff from 2002 through 2015.

In 2008, the MDOT Secretary, MTA Administrator, Mayor of Baltimore City, and dozens of community and organization leaders signed the Red Line Community Compact that defined measures of success for the implementation of the project. In 2010, Station Area Advisory Committees were formed to provide local insights for the Red Line station plans and designs along the entire corridor. ***In 2015, the Red Line project was cancelled, but the insights and commitments from the previous community engagement provide a strong foundation upon which the project can build during the relaunch of the project in 2023.***

2020 Central Maryland Regional Transit Plan

Connecting Our Future: A Regional Transit Plan for Central Maryland (RTP), finalized in September 2020, is a plan for improving public transportation in the region over the next 25 years. The Plan approaches regional mobility comprehensively, recognizing that people travel throughout Central Maryland in their daily activities. The Central Maryland region includes Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Harford County, and Howard County. The RTP was developed in collaboration with a regional commission that included representatives from each jurisdiction.

A central focus of the RTP is increasing transit access for the region’s residents, particularly those in historically underserved communities. Providing transit that connects residents to economic opportunities advances the region’s strength and vitality. In 2020, 40 percent of the region’s 2.55 million residents and 50 percent of the region’s 1.21 million jobs were accessible by bus or rail. By 2045, the region is forecast to grow by nearly 300,000 people and 440,000 jobs.

The RTP identifies 30 Regional Transit Corridors to plan and develop over the next 25 years, including an east-west corridor across the Baltimore Region. Areas identified as Regional Transit Corridors demonstrate transit demand that justifies infrastructure, services, and/or technology improvements. All selected corridors are regionally significant, providing crucial connectivity within and between jurisdictions.

2021 East-West Priority Corridor RAISE Project

In 2021, MDOT MTA successfully applied for federal funding under the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) program for the East-West Priority Corridor project. This \$50 million project includes \$22 million in federal funding and includes 10 miles of dedicated bus lanes, transit signal priority at select intersections, bus stop amenities, bioretention facilities, curb bump-outs, signal improvements, real-time signage, ADA improvements, and a bicycle lane along this critical corridor.

The East-West Priority Corridor project will enhance access and mobility to essential services, jobs, health care, and schools along the corridor. These investments are currently in the design phase and planned for completion in 2027. While this project improves mobility in the medium-term, a major corridor-wide investment to create a dedicated transitway is still needed to fully fulfill the long-term needs of this corridor.

2022 East-West Corridor Feasibility Study

The 2022 East-West Corridor Feasibility Study explored a range of alternatives that could serve existing and future east-west transit demand including alternatives that extended to Ellicott City and east to Essex, as well as different modes (BRT, LRT and subway/train). Through extensive community involvement and partnering with local jurisdictions and residents, MTA evaluated alternatives based on goals and objectives established in the previous Red Line EIS Purpose & Need.

East-West Corridor Study findings included:

- **Transit demand warrants investment in a high-quality transit service**, which may best be served by LRT and/or BRT. Both LRT and BRT have been implemented across the country.
- Public engagement during the Study showed **strong support for the previous Red Line Preferred Alternative**, reflecting the highest number of people who expressed support for a specific alternative.
- While support for tunnelling a portion of the Red Line alignment was expressed as a way to fully separate the transit service from private traffic, prior analyses have also raised considerations regarding the potential costs, property takings, and climate change resilience associated with tunnelling. The public and Baltimore City and County expressed an openness to re-evaluate the need for tunnelling and to explore at-grade solutions.
- Other areas in the study area (listed below) also have transit needs and showed public support. Transit improvements in these areas will continue to be studied and advanced through other projects.
 - The east-west corridor north of Patterson Park
 - Connections west into Howard County, including Ellicott City
 - The segment of Eastern Avenue from Bayview to the Essex Park & Ride

Since issuance of the East-West Corridor Feasibility Study, MTA has continued to engage with stakeholders to inform the project's next steps and the early scoping of alternatives.

Where We Are Today

The Red Line is a key element in providing increased equity in mobility and access to residents in the Baltimore region. Over the coming months, MTA will build on existing high-quality technical work from the prior studies and extensive community participation to move this project forward quickly in a way that will update and modernize the previous plan to better meet stakeholders/communities needs throughout the region and aspirations.

This phase in relaunching the Red Line will:

- Help **define the most important needs** that the project should address
- Weigh the **pros and cons** of different options
- Reach a **preferred alternative** that reflects current conditions and priorities
- Engage a **diverse group of stakeholders** in the planning process
- Provide **vehicles for engagement that attract diverse communities** and voices

Working with Jurisdictional Partners

MTA continues to work in close collaboration with statewide, regional, and local partners. Baltimore City and Baltimore County are jurisdictional partners with whom a shared vision of success is foundational to the long-term implementation of this major transit investment. In addition to the Baltimore City Mayor's and Baltimore County Executive's offices, MTA is working with local government departments such as the Baltimore City Departments of Transportation (BCDOT), Planning (BCDOP), Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and Mayor's Office of Employment Development (MOED); the Baltimore County Departments of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) and Planning; and the Baltimore Development Corporation (BDC).

Working with the Public and Stakeholders

The Red Line is a regionally significant project and input from members of the public in communities and neighborhoods across the region is required to make the project a success. Additionally, the benefits and impacts of the project will be experienced more strongly by those who live and work within the project area. Both regionally, and across the project area, the population has strength in its diversity of perspectives. To maintain an equitable process, the O&E plan outlines the tools and methods to inform and gather input from the full diversity of the regional and project-area population in Section 4.

Specific organizations and institutions require targeted communication and coordination to develop and define an implementable project. These include neighborhood/community associations in the immediate project footprint, health care, major employment and educational institutions with which access and coordination concerns are highly impactful to the success of the project, and elected officials representing the project area.

Different types of stakeholders are detailed below to illustrate the various avenues through which the project team will gather input:

- **Community members** – Neighbors who reside within the project area bring experience and insights about how people move in and through the project area, as well as the local transportation priorities and challenges of their communities. Hear voices of transit users and persons that benefit from the services provided
- **Government agencies** – Government agencies include local (Baltimore City and Baltimore County agencies), State (Maryland agencies), and Federal agencies who have funding, review, or regulatory roles in the Red Line project.
- **Elected officials** – Elected officials in the project area comprise those with local, state, or federal positions with a responsibility to represent their constituents' interests in the project area.
- **Organizations and advocacy groups** – Civic, social, and religious/faith-based organizations and advocacy groups may be specific to a local interest/area within the project area geographically or topically.
- **Business and anchor institutions** – Job access and economic growth are central to the project's success and local and regional goals. Businesses and anchor institutions provide key insight to help realize those outcomes.
- **Nonprofit community and social service providers** – These providers offer support to the communities in need.

3 Community Engagement Goals and Objectives

In alignment with its 2021 Strategic Plan, MTA will plan and implement meaningful and robust public involvement throughout the project life cycle for the Red Line project. Drawing upon the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) guidance on features of successful community involvement (Figure 2), MTA has defined six overarching goals for the project, described below:

1. **Develop an understanding of community demographics to allow better targeting of types of engagement and materials** – The Red Line corridor comprises multiple neighborhoods, demographic groups, and community characteristics. Using both quantitative and qualitative sources, MTA will refine its understanding of stakeholder demographics in the corridor.
2. **Build durable community relationships to support and inform the project to full implementation** – Major projects take time and inevitably include challenging decision-points. MTA is building resilient relationships based on trust that will empower stakeholders to collaborate throughout the project's lifetime. Part of this process is honoring the previous collaboration of community members, including the Red Line Community Compact.
3. **Understand community wants and needs along the Red Line corridor** – MTA will continue to engage with a diversity of communities impacted by the project to understand priorities and challenges and inform project decisions.
4. **Involve broad representation of community from throughout the Red Line project area** – MTA will proactively work to involve a diversity of stakeholders with interest in the corridor, including residents, businesses, workers, organizations, and elected officials.
5. **Use community-preferred engagement techniques** – Engagement techniques are not one-size-fits-all. MTA will utilize public involvement tools/options to reach communities with meaningful opportunities to participate, including virtual/digital, in-person, and on-demand resources and information.
6. **Document and share the community's impact on project decisions for the Red Line** – When community members provide input, they have not only shared their insight but also given their time. MTA will respect the time and effort of community members when they provide input and insight by connecting what we heard to decisions and outcomes.

Figure 2. Features of Meaningful Public Engagement (source: Federal Transit Administration)



Based upon the six features detailed above, MTA has identified specific objectives for each goal:

Table 1. Specific objectives for each goal to achieve meaningful public engagement

#	Goal	Objectives
1	Develop an understanding of community demographics to allow better targeting of types of engagement and materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw upon quantitative (e.g., Census, ACS, etc.) and qualitative (e.g., interviews and plan review) data sources to understand current demographics • Identify demographic changes over the past 20 years
2	Build durable and collaborative community relationships to support and inform the project to full implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop partnerships on a one-on-one or small-group basis to build deeper trust and relationships to develop a diverse coalition of stakeholders to advance the project to full implementation
3	Understand community wants and needs along the Red Line corridor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use communication techniques that enable people to interact with other participants as well as the project team • Gain an understanding of the experiences and results of transportation decision-making processes that were not equitable • Bridge racial, cultural, and economic barriers that affect participation • Provide meaningful access for persons with limited English proficiency (LEP)
4	Involve broad representation of community from throughout the Red Line project area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide reasonable modifications and accommodations needed for participation of persons with disabilities • Increase participation by historically disadvantaged groups including those affected by increasing or persistent levels of poverty and underutilized businesses
5	Use evidence based engagement techniques to reach/attract diverse audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convey issues in ways that are meaningful to various stakeholder groups • Provide a diversity of ways to access information and contribute to the project, including digital, in-person, and on-demand resources
6	Document and share the community's impact on project decisions for the Red Line	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide summary results of milestone engagement activities (July-September and October-November) and show connection between public input and decisions or outcomes on the project website

4 Methods, Tools, & Techniques

By defining the purpose of involvement activities, whether it is providing information or gathering input, the project team will use multiple tools and techniques. MTA will proactively assess the right type of engagement at the right time with the right tools to create opportunities for meaningful engagement. We recognize that we can't wait for people to come to us, we have to meet people where they are.

The following table identifies examples of the tools and techniques the team may use to achieve the desired type and purpose of outreach or engagement.

Table 3. Outreach and engagement toolbox

Type	Purpose	Promise	Tools & Techniques		
Outreach	Provide information	We will keep you informed and create connections with civic, social, nonprofit and faith-based organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website Social media Fact sheets Community based newsletters and contact lists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hot line Press release Info kiosk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pop-up Community-hosted meeting Video
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One-on-one briefing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listening sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pop-up
Engagement	Provide and exchange data, opinions, and options	We will listen, acknowledge your concerns and/or aspirations, and provide feedback on how your input influenced our decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public meeting – in person Public meeting – virtual Interactive display 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Games/contest Site visit/field tour Drop-in center Focus group Key person interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community hosted meeting Telephone calls/texts Survey (website, mail, in-person) Visioning/Visual Preference
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshop/charette participation in event held by entrenched organizations 		

Engaging Underserved Communities

MTA will support participation by people who are traditionally underserved so that the project's public engagement incorporates more voices into the project design, minimizes or avoids potential harm from the project, and mitigates risk of future disruption to the project at later stages. MTA will apply a variety of techniques so that there are opportunities for underserved communities to participate in the transportation decision-making process. Several key considerations and responsive tactics are outlined below:

- Economic barriers** – Are factors such as the cost of childcare, work schedules, and access to transportation impacting who is able to participate?
 - » Offer a variety of locations, times, and methods for engagement, including on-demand and web-based materials.
- Digital divide** – Could access to reliable internet/cell phone/computer resources impact who is participating and providing input that influences decision-making?
 - » Provide in-person opportunities that include the same information hosted digitally like on-street pop-ups, attendance at community meetings, and MTA-hosted workshops. Work with community-based organizations to share print information.
- People experiencing disabilities** – Are engagement opportunities truly accessible to all? What alternatives or changes might be needed?
 - » Ensure all materials have accessible options and all engagement activities are both accessible and have appropriate staffing to serve participants' needs.
- Social norms** – Are there cultural or social considerations that may impact members of the public's comfort or ability to engage or participate?
 - » Staff engagement activities with a diversity of team members that understand the local communities.
- Language differences** – Which other languages (spoken, written, and signed) are appropriate when presenting information for non-English proficient populations?
 - » Make engagement materials available in multiple languages and offer translation services upon request.

Leveraging Community Leaders & Focus Groups

The corridor is rich in community leaders and stakeholders who can help advise on the methods for reaching traditionally underserved populations. MTA will leverage these resources throughout the process beyond the focused community workshops and engagement by attending standing community and special interest group meetings and working with focus groups along the corridor.

Measuring & Tracking Engagement

MTA understands that robust, equitable, and meaningful engagement through out the process is an iterative process of continual improvement. To identify and incorporate lessons learned, MTA will measure engagement using different outputs and outcomes.

The **Outputs** of an engagement activity can be assessed as soon as the activity is complete and are easily observable and quantifiable through descriptive statistics or content analysis. **Outcomes** describe the changes in the planning process resulting from the outputs of an engagement activity. Outcome metrics can be evaluated using a combination of opinions and facts.

The project team will measure the following to monitor and report on engagement activities:

Table 4. Measuring engagement: outputs and outcomes

Outputs	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of attendees by zip code Average response time to inquiries from the public Number of participating public officials Website hits & social media engagement Attend hosted by community-based or neighborhood groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback and sentiment Whether participants felt they had adequate notice If participants felt input was valued in the process Tracking how input used If input affected resulting documents/decisions Strength of resulting new relationships and partnership responses

Tracking Equitable Coverage

Key metrics, outlined below, will be collected and analyzed to understand where there are gaps in involvement. Metrics that will be used to monitor the degree to which engagement is meeting the goal of equitable coverage and provide the project team with the ability to adjust course to obtain such coverage are summarized in the table below:

Table 5. Metrics to advance equitable coverage

Coverage Type	Measure
Match corridor demographics	Participation level/percentage by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender Race Primary language Car-ownership Transit Dependence/Transit Use
Even spread along project area	Participation level/percentage by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> census tracts/blocks Neighborhood
Balance within-corridor and in-region population engaged	Participation level/percentage by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within the project area In the region but outside project area

Feedback Incorporation

Following the focused milestone engagement efforts planned for July-September 2023, MTA will summarize and report out on the key themes heard, outputs performance, and outcomes on the project website.

Following the conclusion of the focused milestone engagement effort planned for October-November 2023, MTA will produce a summary of the engagement activities throughout the alternatives development phase, output and outcome metrics, and a summary of how feedback was incorporated into project decisions.

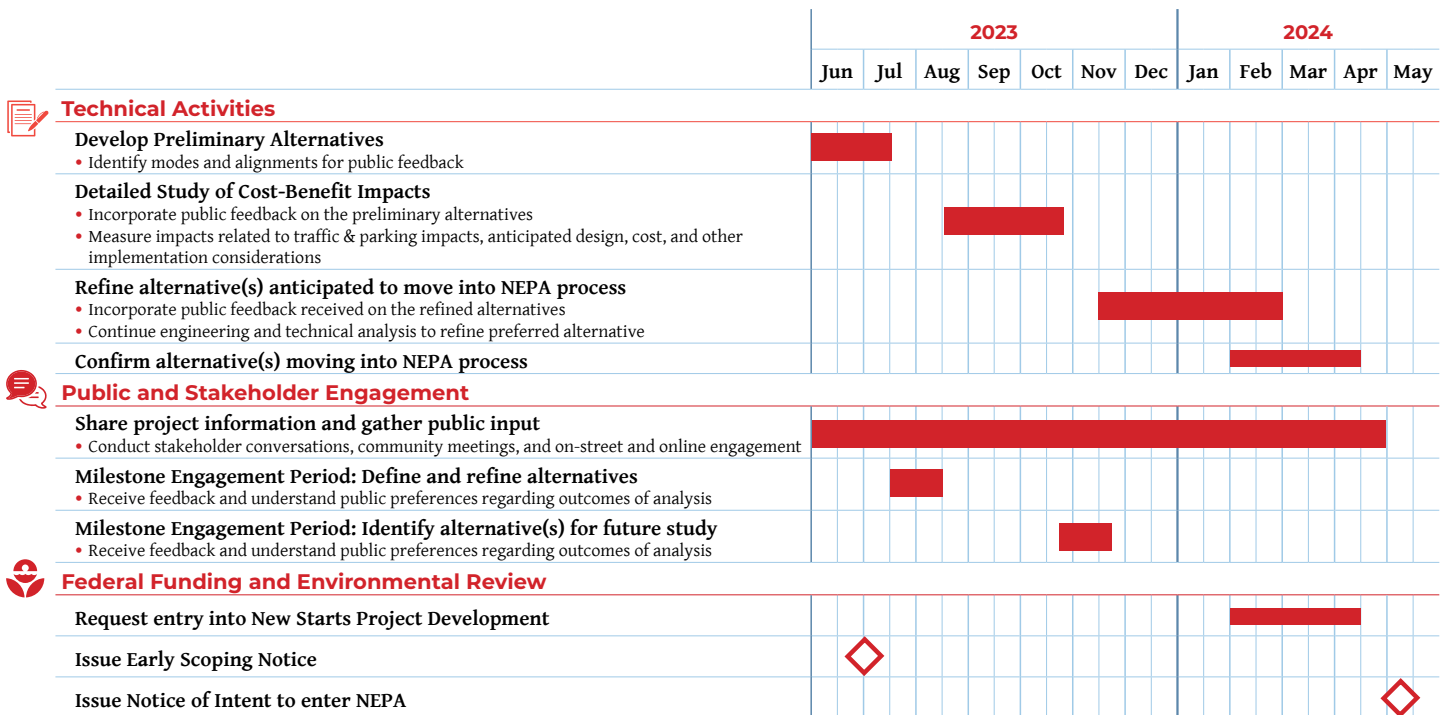
5 Alternatives Development Process

The alternatives development process presents an opportunity for MTA to engage with the public to identify important concerns related to the project. Input received during this phase of the project will help define any potential environmental issues associated with the proposed Red Line and narrow the range of alternatives to be studied during the formal National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) process. During the alternatives development phase, MTA anticipates exploring the following key considerations, with associated public engagement to inform project refinement and decision-making:

- **Transit mode** – Light Rail Transit (LRT) and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) options were both evaluated in the prior Red Line Environmental Impact Study (EIS) and in the East-West Feasibility Study. In the Study, both performed well and will be studied in this phase.
- **Extent of tunneling** – Options to reduce or eliminate tunneling downtown may be consistent with the City’s 2018 Complete Streets Law and will be studied further to assess tunnelling’s costs, benefits, and drawbacks.
- **Highlandtown/Bayview alignment** – Due to recent development in the Highlandtown area, alignment adjustments and design changes in this portion of the corridor will be studied to reflect current conditions and to not preclude potential extension east to Baltimore County as part of a later phase.
- **Environmental changes** – While the affected environment in the Red Line study area has not changed dramatically since 2013, MTA will assess updates to project impacts to reflect current conditions, as well as integrate with other projects, such as the Reconnecting Communities planning study for the West Baltimore United project and the RAISE East-West Priority Corridor project.

Public engagement activities to support the alternatives development process will include ongoing stakeholder and public information-sharing throughout the duration of this phase of the project as well as focused periods of engagement activities that are scheduled to inform decision-making for specific project milestones. Figure 3 shows how the scheduling of the public and stakeholder activities, technical activities, and project milestones interact. The O&E Plan provides guidance on the timing, location, and approach for each of the engagement activities. However, the project team will continue to track the outputs, outcomes, and coverage of the engagement activities as described in Section IV and adjust the approach as needed to provide equitable opportunity to participate.

Figure 3 Timeline of Technical Activities, Public Engagement, and Project Milestones



Ongoing Stakeholder and Public Engagement

Throughout this phase of the project, the MTA will conduct engagement activities to keep the public and stakeholders informed and to exchange information related to the project's key considerations and design decisions. Overall, as part of the ongoing stakeholder and public engagement, the MTA will:

- **Establish and maintain collaborative relationships with stakeholder groups.**
 - The MTA will communicate with communities to respond to questions and provide feedback on new ideas brought by stakeholders and members of the public.
- **Provide online information.**
 - All information provided during in-person engagement will also be available online. Additionally, surveys or comment forms will be available through the project website to collect insights. Social media posts will help drive project awareness and direct people to more information or engagement opportunities.
- **Conduct pop-up events and on-street engagement.**
 - The MTA will conduct small-scale engagement activities that provide opportunities to inform the public and exchange information, including through surveys, while people are out riding transit, shopping, or attending community events. These activities will be conducted across the project area, and additional locations will be guided by the ongoing monitoring of participation rates.
- **Participate in community meetings.**
 - Engagement staff will attend community meetings across the project area to provide updates on the project, share information about upcoming engagement opportunities, and collect input on key considerations and project milestones through surveys and comment forms.
- **Host in person and virtual public workshops.**
 - The MTA will schedule multiple public workshops along the corridor to share findings of technical analysis and receive input to inform decisions at project milestones.
- **Hold stakeholder conversations.**
 - The MTA will participate in stakeholder conversations to accept guidance on the public engagement approach and gather input on specific aspects of the project relevant to each individual stakeholder organization.

For each of the above stakeholder and public engagement activities planned during this phase of the project, communications will focus on the following objectives:

- **Share project information and updates.**
 - During the initial phase of stakeholder and public engagement, the MTA will share information about the Red Line project, the objectives of the current phase of study, and the upcoming federal process. While this information is critical immediately following the relaunch of the Red Line, it will remain a priority to spread awareness about the project and keep the public up to date as the project progresses.
- **Gather feedback on key considerations.**
 - While additional priorities may emerge during this phase of the project, surveys and conversations with both stakeholders and the public will focus on the four key considerations highlighted in Section 5.
- **Promote participation in milestone engagement workshops.**
 - During the periods of engagement that coincide with project milestones, the project team will encourage the public and stakeholders to participate in the MTA-hosted workshops and focus conversations on the input needed to inform each milestone's decision-making.
- **Follow-up on inquiries and new ideas.**
 - The MTA will use follow-up communication within the same communities to respond to questions and provide feedback on new ideas brought by stakeholders and members of the public in a way that continues the conversation.

Coordination with Project Milestones

Integrating periods of focused public engagement with technical decisions is a key characteristic of creating a transparent project shaped by meaningful public input. MTA has identified the technical project milestones around which decisions will be made and targeted input will be needed, empowering the team to plan and provide a diversity of involvement and engagement opportunities. In Figure 3, each of the milestone engagement periods are planned to follow a period of technical analysis. During each milestone engagement period, the public will review the outcomes of the technical analysis and provide feedback to inform the decisions being made at that stage of the study. Following these periods, the technical team will incorporate received feedback into decision-making and continue working to refine the alternatives being studied.

The first focused milestone engagement period is scheduled to occur during July-August of 2023 and is an opportunity to receive public feedback and guidance on the preliminary alternatives proposed for more detailed study. The second milestone engagement period is scheduled to occur during October-November of 2023 and is an opportunity to review the outcomes of the detailed study and receive guidance on the development of the alternative(s) to be moved into the NEPA process. For each of these periods, multiple MTA-hosted workshops will be held at different times of day across the project area. This approach will provide someone living or working in a specific section of the project area both a daytime and evening option to participate in a nearby workshop. Each milestone engagement period will also include at least one virtual workshop for those who are unable to participate in person or for whom virtual engagement fits best in their schedule.

While there are engagement activities, including MTA-hosted workshops, targeted around project milestones, the project team will be available to attend community meetings as requested and will engage continuously throughout the project.

6 Looking Ahead

The MTA will incorporate the public engagement conducted and feedback received during this phase of the project into the NEPA process and the request to enter the federal funding process. Public and stakeholder engagement will continue into this next phase of the project with guidance from an updated O&E Plan that ensures compliance with NEPA and related environmental regulations and integrates lessons learned from the upcoming community and stakeholder activities.



REDLINE