Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Duluth-Superior Safety Action Plan

Introduction

The Metropolitan Interstate Council (MIC), the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Duluth, MN–Superior, WI area, is completing a Safety Action Plan aimed at eliminating traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries. The plan will focus on improving safety for everyone who uses the roads, whether they drive, walk, bike, or take transit. It covers the greater Duluth-Superior region, which spans about 641 square miles across St. Louis County in Minnesota and Douglas County in Wisconsin. (See Figure 1)

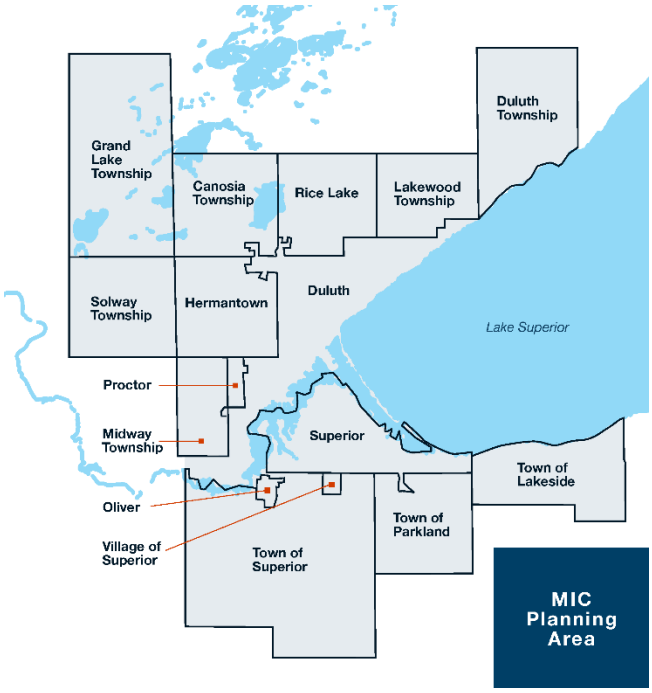

Figure 1.MIC Planning Area

Planning Process

The planning process to complete the MIC's Safety Action Plan will be guided by the U.S. DOT's Safe System Approach, which represents a new way of thinking about traffic safety. This approach emphasizes:

- Creating a strong safety culture,
- Encouraging collaboration among all safety partners, and
- Designing and operating roads in ways that anticipate human mistakes and reduce the severity of crashes.

The Safety Action Plan is being developed in two phases. Phase 1 took place from 2022 to 2024. It focused on technical work, including a detailed safety analysis and identifying potential projects and strategies to improve traffic safety. This work laid the groundwork for Phase 2, which is now underway.

Phase 2 centers on engaging the public and key stakeholders, with the goal of better understanding where people feel unsafe and what their top safety concerns are. This feedback will help shape the final plan, ensuring it reflects both the latest crash data and the real experiences of people across the region. Another important part of Phase 2 is building strong support for the plan. This includes securing commitments from community leaders to the goal of eliminating traffic-related deaths and serious injuries and encouraging the public to support this vision as the plan moves toward completion and adoption.

Project goals

The MIC's ultimate goal is to eliminate traffic-related deaths and serious injuries across the greater Duluth-Superior region by making the transportation system safer for everyone. To achieve this, the final Safety Action Plan will:

- Identify locations with the highest safety risks, and
- Recommend proactive strategies to reduce those risks in the future.

Completing this plan will also make local governments in the MIC area eligible to apply for federal funding—such as the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) program—to carry out safety improvements.

With this project, the MIC will focus on these primary goals:

- Engaging the community and listening to all voices to ensure the plan reflects the real experiences and needs of people throughout the region.
- Recommending projects that can be put into action and policies that will support coordination among jurisdictions in alignment with the U.S. DOT's Safe System Approach.
- Building strong local support by working with leaders to commit to a shared vision of safer streets for everyone who uses them.
- Tracking progress over time by setting clear metrics to measure safety outcomes and move toward the goal of zero traffic-related deaths and serious injuries.

Engagement objectives

This Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan is designed to support open, two-way communication throughout the project in timely and effective ways. The planned engagement activities will accomplish this by:

- Keeping the public informed by sharing clear, timely updates about the project.
- Offering a variety of opportunities for community members and stakeholders to share their vision, experiences, feedback, and concerns using a range of communication and engagement tools.
- Responding to community feedback by acknowledging and addressing questions and concerns in a timely and respectful manner.
- Building shared understanding and support for the plan by keeping the public, community groups, advocacy organizations, elected officials, and government agencies involved throughout.
- Fostering strong, ongoing relationships between the project team and project stakeholders.
- Garnering buy-in and broad adoption of the plan amongst stakeholders.

This Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan is meant to serve as a living document and will be updated as needed to reflect new insights and evolving community needs.

Project schedule

- Project Kick-Off: September 2025
- Safety Analysis: October 2025 – December 2025
- Engagement: November 2025 – September 2026
- Project and Strategy Selection: December 2025 – April 2026
- Draft Plan / Public Comment: June 2026
- Final Plan Adoption: October 2026

Community and stakeholder engagement approach

The communication and engagement strategy is designed to align with the three overlapping project phases. It will also recognize the work completed during Phase 1 of the MIC's Safety Action Plan and show how the current phase builds on that foundation. Below is an overview of each phase and its key outcomes (See Figure 2):

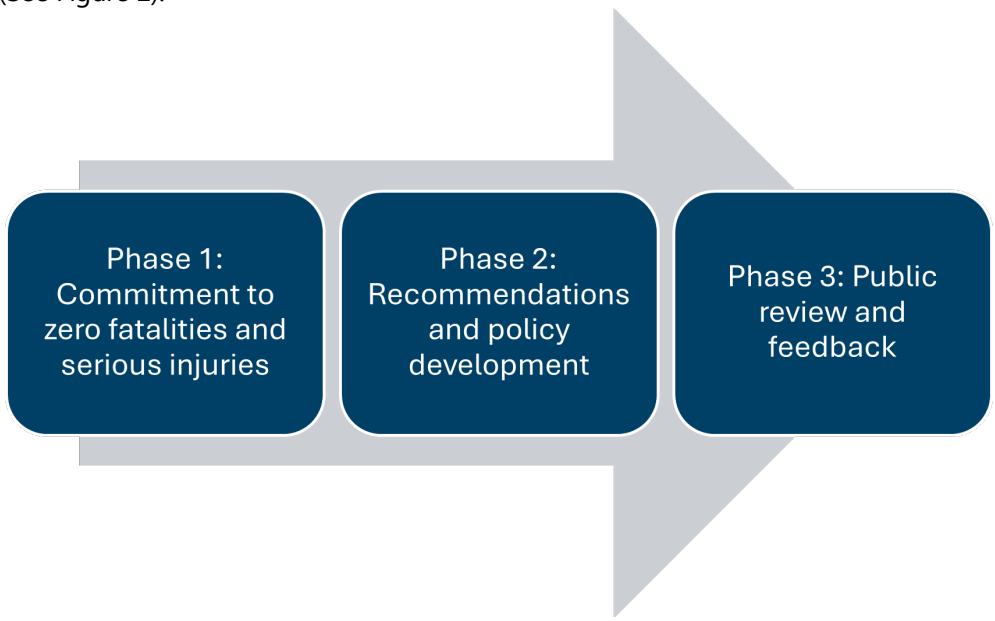

Figure 2.Engagement Phases

Engagement phase 1: Commitment to zero fatalities and serious injuries

The first phase will focus on building awareness of traffic safety issues and support for future improvement projects among the public and key agencies. A key outcome from this phase is for the MIC Policy Board to adopt a resolution committing to the goal of attaining zero traffic-related deaths and serious injuries in the Duluth-Superior region.

Engagement phase 2: Recommendations and policy development

In this phase, collaborative input will inform the development of Safety Action Plan recommendations and policies. Public and agency stakeholder feedback will be used to identify potential safety projects, update policies and/or processes to address safety concerns and confirm the findings from the updated safety analysis.

Engagement phase 3: Public review and feedback

The third and final phase will focus on reviewing the draft Safety Action Plan. The draft will be shared with the public for feedback through a series of pop-up events, culminating in a community meeting. The project team will explain how public and stakeholder input informed the draft plan and gather final comments before the Safety Action Plan is finalized.

Table 1 shows preliminary key messages and engagement questions that will be incorporated into communication and engagement materials throughout the project.

Table 1.Key Messages and Engagement Questions

Phase	Key Messages	Questions
Phase 1: Commitment to zero fatalities and serious injuries *(November 2025-January 2026)*	• The Metropolitan Interstate Council (MIC) is developing a Safety Action Plan aimed at eliminating traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries for all people who drive, walk, bike, roll, or take transit on roadways throughout the Duluth-Superior area. • We can eliminate traffic related fatalities. We can attain Vision Zero throughout the region.	• Do you agree with the project goals? Which resonate most? • What safety issues or problems have you noticed? • What ideas for improvements do you have? • What barriers to achieving Vision Zero do you perceive? • What is your commitment to achieving Vision Zero in this region?
Phase 2: Recommendations and policy development *(January 2026-May 2026)*	• Public input will influence project recommendations. Agency stakeholder input will influence policy development. • We need your help to understand community preferences and priorities for eliminating traffic related fatalities and serious injuries. • The project team has collected input and now we want to illustrate that input. • We want to share with you how public experiences, technical data, and previous plans/studies have informed what we are sharing back with you and hear your thoughts on how the Safety Action Plan is developing thus far.	• Based on these issues/opportunities identified in the first phase of engagement, which recommendations do you feel best address the project goals? • Do the recommendations make sense? Are there others we have not considered? • What is missing? • (For agency stakeholders) What policy additions and/or changes are necessary for successful implementation of the Safety Action Plan?
Phase 3: Public review and feedback *(June 2026-August 2026)*	• We have a draft Safety Action Plan with recommendations and policies that are informed by engagement and advance project goals. • We want to close the loop with you, present feedback to-date, and explain how it was considered.	• Do you feel that the draft Safety Action Plan will address the project goals and problem statement? • What do you like about the draft Safety Action Plan? • What would you change about the draft Safety Action Plan? • Have the project communications and engagement strategies to-date been effective?

Phase	Key Messages	Questions
	• We would like your input on this draft Safety Action Plan and share project next steps. • We hope to gain your support in the implementation of the Safety Action Plan.	

Target audiences

To ensure meaningful engagement, it's important to be intentional about who we're reaching. This includes making a special effort to connect with communities that are often underrepresented in transportation planning—such as people of color, individuals with lower incomes, people with disabilities, older and younger populations, and those who don't own a car.

To better understand the makeup of the MIC planning area, a demographic review was conducted. This involved comparing the population characteristics of the project area with those of St. Louis County, MN, and Douglas County, WI. The goal was to identify key trends and any notable differences. (See Table 2.) The following are key findings from the demographic review

- Younger population: There is a slightly higher portion of people under the age of 25 (32%) living within the project area compared to St. Louis County (30%) and Douglas County (28%). Additionally, there is a larger relative population of community members under the age of 44 within the project area than in either county.
- BIPOC / non-White communities: The project area is somewhat more diverse than the counties in question, with 88% of the population identifying as White, compared to 90% in St. Louis County and 96% in Douglas County. This includes higher proportions of people who identify as two or more races. Further, the MIC and project team recognize that Indigenous people have lived – and continue to live – in the area that is now known as the Duluth-Superior region for nearly 14,000 years; before European colonization, this land was inhabited by the Dakota, Northern Cheyenne, and Anishinaabe people.
- Renters and low-income community members: There is a higher portion of people renting in the project area (33%) compared to St. Louis County (28%) and Douglas County (28%). Income and poverty levels between the project area and St. Louis County are similar, though significantly more people have an income below 200% of the poverty level in the project area (31%) than Douglas County (24%).

Table 2.Demographic Characteristics

	MIC Area		St. Louis County (MN)		Douglas County (WI)	
	No.	*%*	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*
Population	150,966	--	200,231	--	44,197	--
Age						
Under 25 years	49,911	32%	61,930	30%	12,225	28%
25 - 44	38,689	26%	46,603	23%	11,068	25%
45 - 64	35,823	24%	49,849	25%	12,041	27%

	MIC Area		St. Louis County (MN)		Douglas County (WI)	
65 years and older	26,363	18%	41,674	22%	8,863	20%
Race, Ethnicity, Language						
White	133,577	88%	179,881	90%	40,184	96%
Black or African Am.	2,947	2%	3,173	2%	560	1%
Asian or Pacific Islander	2,081	1%	2,103	1%	470	1%
Two or more races	6,950	5%	7,401	4%	2,202	5%
Other race (including Native American)	2682	2%	3,731	2%	781	2%
Hispanic or Latino	3,234	2%	3,767	2%	829	2%
Speaks English less than "very well"	1,405	1%	1,621	1%	422	1%
Disability Status						
Population with a disability	20,936	14%	29,590	15%	6,604	15%
Income						
Income below 200% of the poverty level	46,351	31%	63,871	32%	10,734	24%
Housing						
Occupied housing units	62,985	--	86,264	--	18,947	--
Owner occupied	41,974	67%	62,085	72%	13,661	72%
Renter occupied	21,011	33%	24,179	28%	5,286	28%
Transportation to Work						
Workforce	92,766	--	95,762	--	21,774	--
Car, truck, or van	77,159	83%	79,881	83%	18,943	87%
Public transportation	1,718	2%	1,509	2%	196	1%
Walked, biked, worked at home, or other	13,889	15%	14,372	15%	2,635	12%

Source: American Communities Survey, 5-year dataset. U.S. Census Bureau. Accessed September 2025.

Who We're Engaging: Reaching the Right Audiences

In addition to the demographic data analyzed above, the MIC hosted an equity analysis workshop to ensure local lived experience informed the project Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan. During this workshop, participants identified seniors and older adults as an additional target audience. While census data doesn't show them as a disproportionately large population in the MIC area, local experts emphasized that this group is growing, often harder to reach, and faces unique transportation challenges.

The audiences identified above—including underrepresented populations and older adults, as well as vulnerable users of the transportation system, i.e., bicyclists, pedestrians, and disabled people—will be the target for some of our public engagement efforts. In addition, the project team is committed to actively engaging local elected officials and agency staff in the development and adoption of the final plan. Their buy-in and support are essential to the adoption of this plan and ultimately to its long-term success.

How We're Engaging: Applying Best Practices

Public engagement means more than just sharing information; it's about our commitment to listen first and ultimately inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and/or empower the public in transportation decision making. The "public" can be defined as individual community members, community organizations, businesses, and advocacy groups. Following best practices from the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), this project is committed to:

- Listening to public concerns and ideas,
- Ensuring those voices are reflected in the Safety Action Plan, and
- Reporting back on how public input influenced decisions.

As defined by IAP2, this project will *involve* the public and *collaborate* with agency stakeholders throughout the project to ensure their priorities are consistently understood and considered. Details on how we will engage both the public and agency stakeholders are described in the Engagement Strategies section below.

Key community segments

The following are key community segments that will be targeted during the engagement process (see Table 3).

Table 3.Key Community Segments

Key Community Segment	Corresponding Community Organizations
Vulnerable road users*	• **See Bicycle and Pedestrian advocacy groups and Under-represented groups below*
Bicycle and pedestrian advocacy groups	• Vibrant Streets Duluth • Be Minnesnowta Nice • Driving 4 Safe Communities Coalition
Neighborhood and community organizations	• Zeitgeist / Transportation Academy • Hillside Coalition
Under-represented groups (based on demographic review and input from ZEST workshop) • Young people • BIPOC / non-white communities • Renters and low-income community members • Older adults	• Family Freedom Center • Community Action Duluth • Lighthouse Center for Vital Living • The Arc Northland • American Indian Community Housing Organization (AICHO) • Duluth Aging Support • Arrowhead Area Agency on Aging (ARDC)
Safe Routes to School	• Meyers-Wilkins Community School • Lincoln Park Middle School • Laura MacArthur Elementary School • Denfeld High School
Emergency responders • Law enforcement • Emergency medical services • Hospitals / clinics	• Essentia Health • St. Louis County EMS • Arrowhead EMS

Key stakeholders

The following are stakeholder groups that will be consulted as part of the engagement process (see Table 4).

Table 4.Key Stakeholders

Key Stakeholder	Contact
MIC Policy Board	• All members
MIC Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)	• All members
Other local agency engineers and planners	• TBD
Elected officials	• Roger J. Reinert, Duluth Mayor • Jim Paine, Superior Mayor • Wayne Boucher, Hermantown Mayor • Jayme Heim, Rice Lake Mayor • Chad Ward, Proctor Mayor
Community Leaders (non-elected)	• TBD
Local transit	• Duluth Transit Authority (board, management, and riders)
Freight Industry	• Duluth-Superior Transportation Association (DSTA)
Businesses	• Western District Business Club • Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce • Superior Chamber of Commerce
Colleges and Universities	• University of Minnesota Duluth • The College of St. Scholastica • Lake Superior College • University of Wisconsin-Superior
City of Duluth Transportation Commission (beginning in 2026)	

Engagement strategies

To reach key stakeholders and target audiences, engagement for the Duluth-Superior Area Safety Action Plan project will implement a mix of communication and engagement strategies. This approach recognizes that people receive information and engage in a variety of ways depending on factors such as access to technology, literacy, language, personal interest, capacity, and culture. Anticipated strategies include:

- Advisory committee meetings
- Focus groups
- Elected official and agency stakeholder meetings
- Attendance at community events or high activity locations (pop-up events)
- Online engagement (survey, interactive mapping, email messaging, etc.)
- Community meetings
- Promotions (digital and social media campaigns, flyers, etc.)

The project team has funds available to provide incentives/thank-you's such as food and small giveaways to community organizations or community members for their participation at pop-up events and the

community meeting. Community-based organizations that work with the project team to co-host a community event will be provided with a stipend for their work.

Advisory committee

The MIC will convene an advisory committee representing key community segments, such as residents, businesses, and neighborhood groups, as well as representatives from the Phase 1 advisory committee. We will consult the committee on engagement strategies and plan deliverables. We anticipate 12-15 committee members. We will host up to three facilitated in-person meetings to inform project outcomes. Advisory committee members who are not participating as part of their employment will receive a stipend for their participation.

Focus groups

A key community segment of focus for this project is vulnerable roadway users, including pedestrians, cyclists, and others who "roll" along roadways. We will plan, recruit, and facilitate up to three in-person focus groups with vulnerable road users. Focus group participants who are not participating as part of their employment will receive a stipend for their participation.

Table 5 shows the anticipated engagement activities, by project phase. Appendix 1 includes additional information on each type of engagement activity, including an outline of the event's purpose, schedule, and content.

Table 5.Engagement Activities by Phase

Phase 1: Commitment to zero fatalities and serious injuries	Phase 2: Recommendations and policy development	Phase 3: Public review and feedback
Outcomes • MIC Policy Board and other regional elected officials pass/sign a resolution expressing their commitment to attaining zero fatalities and serious injuries on roadways in the Duluth-Superior region	Outcomes • Development of draft recommendations, initial/updated project list, proposed policy and process changes that are informed by public and agency stakeholder input	Outcomes • Development of a draft Safety Action Plan • Public and stakeholder comment on the draft Safety Action Plan • Finalization and adoption of the Safety Action Plan
Engagement strategies • Initial equity analysis workshop • Online engagement (website update and Social Pinpoint launch) • 1-on-1 stakeholder conversations • Advisory Committee meeting(s) • Focus group(s) • MIC Policy Board update • MIC TAC update	Engagement strategies • Equity analysis review • Online engagement (website and Social Pinpoint update) • Email blasts • Digital and social media campaigns • Advisory Committee meeting(s) • Focus group(s) • Pop-up events • MIC Policy Board update • MIC TAC update	Engagement strategies • Equity analysis review • Online engagement (website and Social Pinpoint update) • Email blast • Digital and social media campaigns • Community meeting • 1-on-1 stakeholder conversations • MIC Policy Board update • MIC TAC update

Engagement roles

In coordination with the MIC and Alliant, Zan Associates will manage all communications and engagement activities including stakeholder meetings, pop-up events, website updates, newsletters, targeted social and digital media campaigns, community meetings, and online engagement activities. Zan Associates will also provide communication materials including project fact sheets, event materials, and coordinate an accessibility review of all public-facing website materials. All project materials will be reviewed and approved by the MIC before distribution to the public.

Zan Associates will document all public contacts and comments received. At the end of each phase, Zan Associates will provide a report summarizing the engagement and communication activities along with the comments received. MIC staff will monitor and respond to questions received through email, phone, and social media. Zan Associates will manage comments received through engagement events and, if needed, will coordinate with MIC staff for any responses. Table 6 shows the project team leads, including name, role, and contact information.

Table 6.Project Team Leads and Contact Information

Name/Organization	Contact	Role
Rondi Watson Metropolitan Interstate Council	RWatson@ardc.org	MIC Project Manager
Dan Edgerton Zan Associates	dedgerton@zanassoc.com	Principal-in-Charge
Latasha Jennings-Dedina Zan Associates	ljennings@zanassoc.com	Engagement Lead/Deputy Project Manager
Shep Rogers Zan Associates	srogers@zanassoc.com	Engagement Support
Tim Burkhardt Alliant	tburkhardt@alliant-inc.com	Alliant Project Manager

Quality assurance and quality control

Zan Associates, in collaboration with Alliant and the MIC, is responsible for drafting and preparing communication and engagement materials for the project using the MIC branding and style guide and plain language. MIC project staff and communications staff will review and provide comments/recommendations within seven days. Zan will coordinate with MIC communications staff to post public materials on the project website and the MIC's social media platforms. Figure 3 includes a flow chart showing the quality control process.

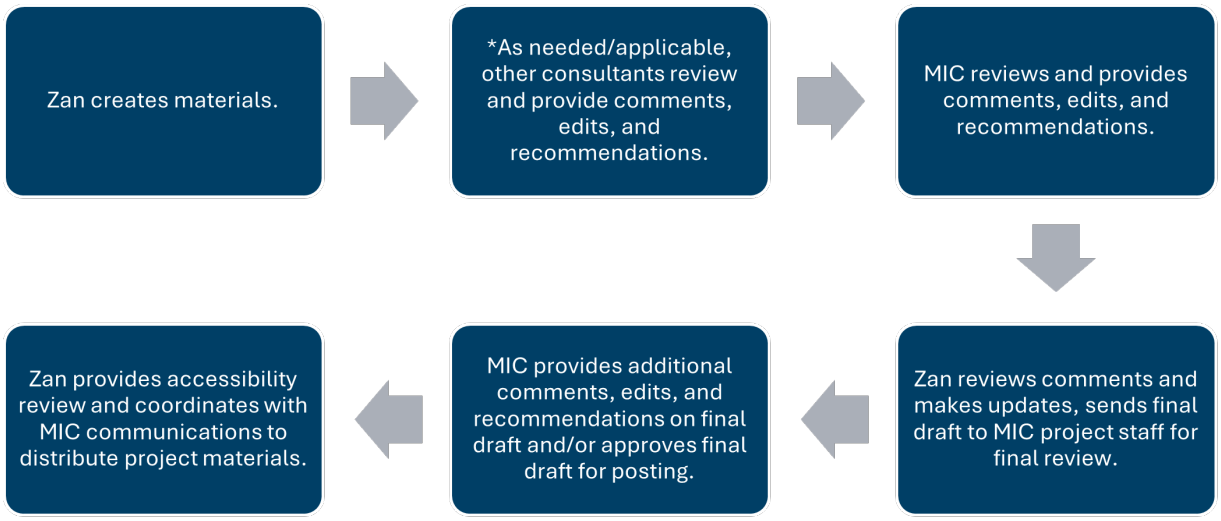

Figure 3.Quality Assurance and Quality Control Process

Accessibility

Zan will work with the MIC to determine which materials to translate and will translate the recommended materials into the appropriate language. Zan will also coordinate with Alliant and the MIC to determine which community activities will require either multi-lingual staff and/or interpreters to support engagement activities in the languages of the participants to reduce barriers to participation. All posted electronic materials and communication materials on the project website and social media will have passed an ADA check and alt text will be provided for screen readers. Zan will work with the MIC to determine and meet any other accessibility needs if they arise, including ASL interpretation.

Appendix 1: Duluth-Superior Area Safety Action Plan Communication and Engagement Activities

	Activity	Purpose	Materials/Tools	Promotions	Schedule	Responsibilities
1.	**MIC Policy Board and Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) Updates**	• Solicit input from MIC and TAC members and keep them apprised of the plan's development at points during the three engagement phases (pp.3-4). • Support understanding of and commitment to Plan goals. • Request adoption of final Plan.	• Presentation • Handouts • Q & A	• Regular meeting notices (distributed by MIC staff)	• Dec 9-10, 2025 and Jan 20-21, 2026 (Phase 1 /Leadership Commitment) • Jun 16-17, 2025 (Phase 2 /Draft Plan review) • Sep 15-16,2026 (Phase 3/Final Plan Report & Adoption)	**Zan Associates:** Create materials, facilitate **Alliant:** Technical content development/review and staffing **MIC:** Approve date, location, materials
2.	**Advisory committee meetings**	• Up to 3. Connect directly with residents, businesses, neighborhood groups, and other key community segments to solicit input on engagement strategies and plan deliverables.	• Presentation • Handouts • Q & A	• Direct invitation by phone and email	December 2025 – April 2026	**Zan Associates:** Create materials, facilitate **Alliant:** Technical content development/review and staffing **MIC:** Approve locations, materials, and activities
3.	**Focus groups**	• Up to 3. Connect directly with vulnerable roadway users to collect feedback and input.	• Varies, depending on audience • Presentation • Handouts	• Direct invitation by phone and email	December 2025 – April 2026	**Zan Associates:** Create materials, facilitate **Alliant:** Technical content development/review and staffing

	Activity	Purpose	Materials/Tools	Promotions	Schedule	Responsibilities
						MIC: Approve locations, materials, and activities
4.	**Pop-up events**	• Three pop-up events will be held at community events or activity centers.	• Engagement activities/tools to capture comments and feedback • Boards • Handouts	• Email blast • Project website • Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)	March 2026 – May 2026	**Zan Associates:** Coordinate logistics, promotions, materials, and staffing **Alliant:** Technical content development/review and staffing **MIC:** Approve locations, materials, and activities
5.	**Community meeting**	• Present draft Safety Action Plan for public review and comment.	• Presentation • Boards • Online engagement activity • Engagement activities/tools to capture comments and feedback	• Email blast • Project website • News release • Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)	June 2026	**Zan Associates:** Coordinate logistics, promotions, materials, and staffing **Alliant:** Technical content development/review and staffing **MIC:** Approve date, location, materials
6.	**Online engagement**	• Up to 3 updates. Connect directly with residents, businesses, neighborhood groups, and other key community segments to solicit input on: o Personal commitments to attain zero fatalities and	• Engagement activities/tools (e.g., comment map, survey) to capture comments and feedback	• Email blast • Project website • Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)	**Launch:** December 2025 / January 2026 **Update:** March 2026	**Zan Associates:** Draft text; provide photos/graphics; format text **Alliant:** Review and comment

	Activity	Purpose	Materials/Tools	Promotions	Schedule	Responsibilities
		serious injuries on MIC roadways ○ Safety project recommendations ○ Draft Safety Action Plan			**Update:** May 2026	**MIC:** Review and approve content
7.	**Email blast / Newsletter**	**Newsletter 1** • Announce project (re)launch. • Recruit focus group participants. • Direct public to online engagement site. **Newsletter 2** • Project status update. • Promote pop-up events. • Direct public to online engagement site. **Newsletter 3** • Announce completion of draft Safety Action Plan. • Promote community meeting. • Direct public to online engagement site.	• Text and photos/ graphics	• Post on project website • Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram): promote newsletter sign-up and/or text of the newsletter	**NL 1:** January 2026 **NL 2:** March 2026 **NL 3:** May 2026	**Zan Associates:** Draft text; provide photos/graphics; format text **Alliant:** Review and comment **MIC:** Review and approve text and send out via GovDelivery
8.	**Social media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram**	• MIC social media platforms will be used to provide updates, promote engagement activities and events. • Social media will also serve as opportunity for public to submit comments/questions.	• Text and graphics		May 2026 In promotion of community meeting and equivalent online engagement opportunity.	**Zan Associates:** Provide graphics and text **Alliant:** Review and comment **MIC:** Post to sites; monitor and respond to comments/questions; forward to Zan
9.	**Handouts/posters**	• Three project handouts and posters with an overview of the project goals and objectives, project schedule will be developed to support	• Text and graphics	• Project website • Community meeting and pop-up events	November 2025 – October 2026	**Zan Associates:** Draft text; provide photos/graphics; develop infographic.

	Activity	Purpose	Materials/Tools	Promotions	Schedule	Responsibilities
		engagement activities during each phase.				**Alliant:** Review and comment **MIC:** Review and approve text/content; shares link on project website
10.	**Engagement summaries**	**Engagement summary 1** • Interim engagement summary. • Include project goals and objectives. • Include project schedule and next steps. • Provide information on how to stay connected and submit comments, questions, and concerns. **Engagement summary 2** • Summary of engagement input. • Describe how public and stakeholder input informed the final Safety Action Plan. • Include project schedule and next steps. • Provide information on how to stay connected and submit comments, questions, and concerns.	• Text and graphics	• Email blast • Project website • Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)	**Interim engagement summary:** Spring / Summer 2026 **Final engagement summary:** Fall 2026	**Zan Associates:** Draft text; provide photos/graphics; develop infographic; shares link in email blast **Alliant:** Review and comment **MIC:** Review and approve text/content; shares link on project website and on all social media sites