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## **Final Report**

Technical Assistance Grant – DTPH56-09-G-PHPT12

Communication strategies to engage local public officials to improve pipeline safety.

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In the late fall of 2009 after receiving the technical assistance grant from PHMSA the [Pipeline Safety Trust](http://www.pipelinesafetytrust.org) (PST) completed a contract with [Applied Research Northwest](http://www.appliedresearchnorthwest.com) (ARN) to provide technical assistance in pilot testing the PIPA Seven Step Communication Model to development of an outreach program to “local public officials.” It was our intent that this testing of an outreach program could then assist in implementation of some recommendations coming forward from the Pipelines and Informed Planning Alliance (PIPA).

We provided the researchers at ARN copies of the draft [PIPA report](#), the PIPA Seven Step Communication Model, the American Petroleum Institutes Recommended Practice 1162, and examples of collected public awareness materials directed at local public officials. Working with ARN we choose members of our Protocol Advisory Group (PAG) who would serve as our review committee as we moved forward. This group was chosen to include representatives of stakeholder groups that would either be likely to help design such a program, or would be on the receiving end of such a program.

The PAG members included:

**Jim Doherty** – who is a legal consultant for Municipal Research & Services Center (MRSC) of Washington, a member of the PIPA Communications Team, and ever since the Bellingham pipeline tragedy has been involved in working with local government throughout Washington State in drafting local ordinances and land use practices related to pipelines.

**Stan Snapp** – who is a two-term elected member of the Bellingham, WA City Council, and before that spent 25 years as a fire fighter, 17 of which were as Division Chief in charge of training and facilities.

**Andrea Grover** – who is the Director of Stakeholder Outreach for Spectra Energy out of Houston, and as such is directly involved with the development of public awareness and outreach programs.

**Matt Aamot** – who has been a senior planner with the Whatcom County Planning and Development Services Department for over 20 years, and focuses mainly on long term planning.

**Carl Weimer** – who is the executive director of the Pipeline Safety Trust, a member of the PIPA Steering Committee and Communications Team, and is a two-term elected member of the Whatcom County Council.

The PAG met for the first time in January of 2010 to review a draft of the social marketing plan (Appendix A) that ARN and PST had prepared, as well as to focus the effort toward a particular PIPA recommendation and discuss initial messages and implementation. At that initial meeting it was decided to focus this research on how best to provide “local public officials” the information and assistance they need that would lead to adoption of the Consultation Zone idea as being brought forward by the PIPA effort (recommended practices BL04 & BL05). During the initial PAG meeting it was decided that there would be three main parts of the research feedback loop that would help verify assumptions built into the social marketing plan. The main assumptions that we wanted to verify were:

- Who the target audience needed to include
- What messages worked best with that audience
- Who was the best messenger to deliver the information
- What barriers there were to adoption of Consultation Zones
- What assistance and incentives might help overcome those barriers.

The three research methods included initial telephone interviews with individuals within the target audience, a survey of city and county planners, and more in depth focus groups made up of individuals from the target audience. After each type of research was completed the social marketing plan was updated to reflect the newly obtained information.

In March of 2010 ARN conducted phone interviews with local planners and elected officials in Ada County, Idaho (Boise), and Benton County, Washington (Kennewick) to check our initial assumptions, get some initial feedback of the idea of Consultation Zones, and prepare for a large-scale survey of similar individuals. The results of those interviews are included in Appendix B. The results of the interviews, along with a draft of the proposed survey, were shared with the PAG and changes to the proposed survey were made based on PAG recommendations.

In April PST worked with the Association of Washington Cities and the Washington State Association of Counties to obtain contact information for planners throughout Washington State. For larger jurisdictions we made contact with planning departments to ensure we had identified the correct planner to receive a survey regarding pipeline safety and planning issues. In May ARN and PST distributed a web-based survey to 183 planners throughout Washington State. Reminder notices were also sent at intervals to remind those planners who had not yet completed the survey that it was available. In the end 49% of the qualified respondents the survey was sent to completed the survey. The survey results are included in Appendix C.

In June of 2010 the PAG came back together for another meeting to review the findings of the survey and decide what additional information was needed through the planned focus groups to allow us to develop a good implementation plan. The Social Marketing Plan was once again updated to include the findings from the interviews and survey.

In July ARN and PST undertook two sets of focus groups in Washington State – one in Benton County and one in Skagit County. The focus groups included planning directors from those areas as well as elected members of the local jurisdictions. Each focus group started with an overview of what a Consultation Zone was and why it was thought to be important. ARN then led the groups through a facilitated discussion of how they thought such an idea might be

implemented within their jurisdictions and what barriers may exist and how those might be overcome. The focus group findings are included in Appendix D.

The focus group findings were shared with the PAG, and comments were incorporated. The results were used by the PST to draft an initial implementation plan that could be used to obtain greater implementation of the Consultation Zone concept in Washington State. That implementation plan was reviewed by ARN for consistency with research findings, and ARN then drafted an evaluation plan that could be used to assess the success of implementation.

The research and implementation plan were shared with the Association of Washington Cities, the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC), and other partners working on land use planning near pipelines in Washington State. Most aspects of the implementation plan from this grant have been adopted by these entities as the path to move forward on Consultation Zones in Washington State in 2011. For example, the WUTC has offered funding to help overcome the major barrier identified in this research – i.e. lack of funding for local planners to work on such code changes. All transmission pipeline operators in the state have designated a contact person for inquiries from local government on planning near pipeline issues, and a meeting of that group of pipeline company representatives has been scheduled for early 2011 to discuss greater implementation.

All of this research information has been uploaded to a webpage on the PST's website (<http://pstrust.org/TagGrant1.htm>), and has been shared with pertinent representatives from the American Petroleum Institute, the Association of Oil Pipelines, Interstate Natural Gas Association of America, American Gas Association, as well as many of those involved with the API RP 1162. It has also been shared with key members of the PIPA Communications Team, and when the implementation group within the PIPA effort is designated we will make sure they are provided this information as well.