



Community Engagement Plan

April 2023



**CONVEYOR UPGRADE & REPLACEMENT PROJECT
FULTON COUNTY
MM922
LOWER MISSISSIPPI RIVER**

Contents

I.	Background	3
II.	Project Overview and Location.....	3
III.	Purpose	4
IV.	HFCRA Community Outreach Goals	4-5
V.	Communities of Interest	5
VI.	Community Outreach Engagement Strategies	5-6
VII.	Community Feedback	6-7

I. BACKGROUND

Since 1978, the Hickman-Fulton County Riverport (HFCRA) has been Kentucky's only public port on the Mississippi River's east bank. It is located in Hickman, Kentucky on the lower Mississippi at mile 922 in Elvis J. Stahr Harbor. This prime geographic location enables the Riverport to offer distinct advantages to shippers for imports along the Mississippi River and exports from one of the Midwest's major grain producing areas. Its primary business includes grain, fertilizer, pet coke, steel wire rod, steel shapes, and general cargo. The vision of the Hickman-Fulton County Riverport Authority is to be a leader in commercial and industrial development focusing on the retention and attraction of businesses and jobs and to be a catalyst for future development and regional growth related to the marine industry.

II. PROJECT OVERVIEW AND LOCATION

The project involves replacing the port owned 30-year-old 36-inch conveyor system with a new 48-inch conveyor to meet increasing demand and improve safety and efficiency at the Riverport and for nearby residents. The Riverport's grain handling conveyor system is used to load grain from the storage and handling facility directly to barge. The current system is operated at maximum capacity 24/7 from August to April to accommodate harvest requirements, with Cargill the current user. The project also includes high-priority repairs to Mooring Cell 6, which have been necessitated by severe corrosion. The HFCRA falls within Census Tract 9602 which meets the definition of an Area of Persistent Poverty and the definition of a Historically Disadvantaged Community. See **Figure 1**. Data shows the 2021 population as 813 families in Census Tract 9602, Fulton County, KY. Of this number, 25.3% fall below the federal poverty line. Identification of these groups will be critical during this process since the HFCRA is seeking to enhance and develop relationships that are mutually informative and beneficial to the local communities.

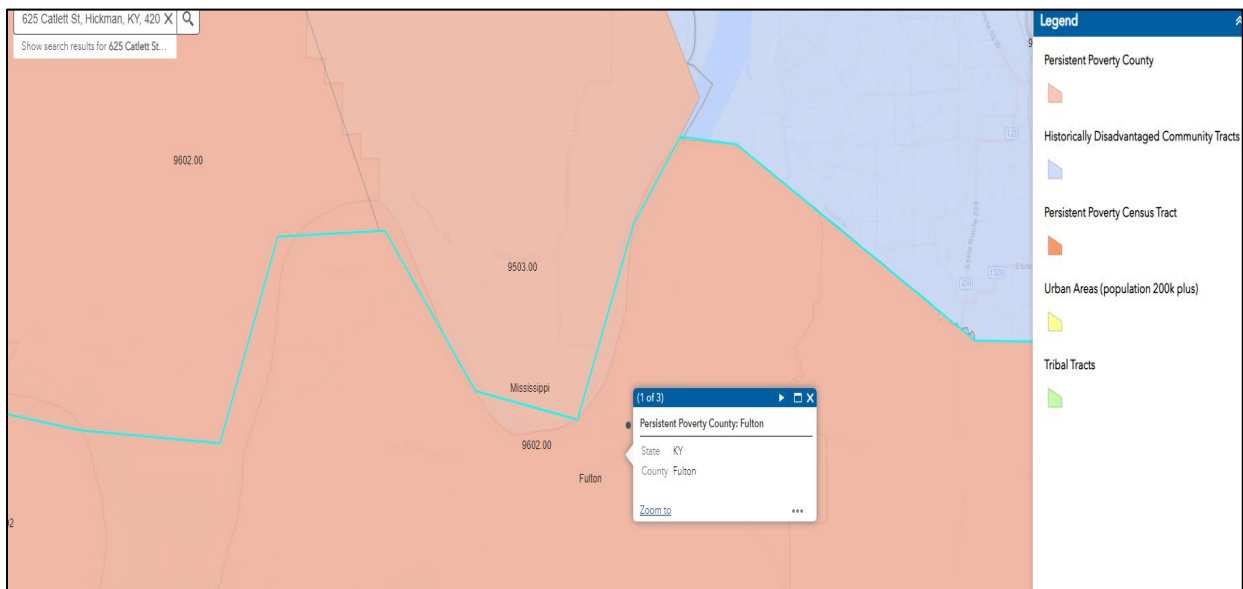


Figure 1- APP Map Census Tract 9602

III. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Community Outreach Plan for the HFCRA Riverport is to provide a detailed, transparent, and cohesive strategy for informing, consulting, and empowering the community members and stakeholders about the Conveyor Upgrade and Replacement Project. In support of *Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government (86 FR 7009)*, the plan is intended to layout engagement strategies to ensure underserved and historically disadvantaged communities, as well as those marginalized by traditional methods of outreach, have ample opportunities to participate and engage.

The Public Engagement will continue to inform the communities about design, implementation, procurement, construction, and on-going life-cycle investment of the project. This will enable the Riverport to address any past inequities identified relating to the Project in relation to equity, job opportunities, and climate change. The Riverport's intent to design their outreach activities to utilize best practices as identified in *USDOT's Promising Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-Making Guide* to ensure that HFCRA adequately informs the public about how the Project will potentially impact affected communities and that diverse views are being heard and considered.

IV. HFCRA COMMUNITY OUTREACH GOALS

1. Implement Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) practices to identify underrepresented individuals and barriers that may deter participation in community outreach activities.
2. Design and deploy a diverse set of communication tools and activities that are accessible, meaningful, and culturally appropriate for diverse groups, comprehensive in reaching the full range of community members.
3. Leveraging the HFCRA community partners' networks and assets to identify a comprehensive list of community members to increase equity and inclusion.
4. Facilitate seamless coordination of the community engagement process with the planning process to ensure community input is reflected in the planning output.
5. Provide comprehensive and transparent communication of community input.
6. Link community members with the project's communication channels to promote ongoing project awareness and communication.

V. COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST

A comprehensive list of stakeholders represented is identified below:

- Government officials at the Federal, State, and Local Levels
- Fulton County Economic Development and other related business groups
- West Kentucky Workforce Board

- Fulton County Schools, Four Rivers Career Academy, West KY Educational Cooperative
- Residents of Fulton, Hickman, and surrounding area
- Non-profit and social service agencies
- Community advocacy groups
 - Environmental Justice
 - Health Equity
 - Housing
 - Watershed, habitat, and river management

VI. COMMUNITY OUTREACH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

The HFCRA recognizes and aspires to the features of meaningful public involvement and community engagement as outlined by the USDOT Guide to Meaningful Public Participation *Promising Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-Making* including:

- Understanding the demographics of affected communities
- Understanding the port-related pollutants and health hazards to near-by communities- (air-pollution, light and noise pollution, water pollution)
- Building durable relationships with diverse community members to understand their needs and challenges. This includes in-person and Virtual Public Involvement (VIP) opportunities.
- Recognizing that it is important to ensure benefits of the Project are shared equally by all members of the community.
- Proactively involve a broad representation of community members to represent all identified stakeholders.
- Document how community input informed decisions made by the HFCRA and communicate results to the communities.
- Use community-preferred engagement strategies to glean input about a specific area or to gather input from different populations in diverse locations. Each tool should be considered carefully and tailored to provide opportunities to engage as many community members as possible.

There are several types of engagement strategies HFCRA will incorporate to gather input for the project development.

Examples are included in below table:

COMMUNITY OUTREACH STRATEGIES		
Technique	Objective	Target Outreach
Local Media	Local media outlets will be contacted with project, meeting, and contact information	General Public
Public Postings	Meeting posters and project information will be posted in public locations	General Public
Open House	To improve project understanding, an Open House will be held at an accessible location. Exhibit boards will be set up in an informal open area with project information. Comment forms will be available to be filled out on site or an electronic version will be available. Public comments will be compiled into a report and considered during the planning stage.	Businesses, Residents and General Public
Social Media	A project website and other Internet tools will be set up to help keep the public connected and up to date on the project. Project Information will be posted on the Port Website and Social media platform	Businesses, Residents and General Public
Public Comment	Comment forms will be available in public locations and at Open House Event	Businesses, Residents and General Public

VII. COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

According to the U.S. Department of *Transportation’s promising Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-making*, “meaningful public involvement is a process that proactively sees full representation from the community, considers public comments and feedback, and incorporates that feedback into a project, program or plan when possible”. Listening to diverse viewpoints and collaborating with neighboring communities enables the HFCRA to make more informed design and implementation decisions.

The USDOT plan indicates: “for engagement to be successful and responsive to the community, the organization should use input gathered from the community to directly influence the decision about a project, program, or plan and demonstrate to the community how specific input was or was not incorporated and why. Meaningful community engagement is not simply public education, it is an opportunity for the community to influence what will happen in their community”.

HFCRA will capture community feedback in both outputs and outcomes and create feedback strategies to keep the public informed of input received and how it may have affected the project.

OUTPUT METRICS	OUTCOME METRICS
Counting the Number of people at events	Whether participants felt they had adequate notice of public engagement activities
Average response time to inquiries from public	Whether participants felt input was valued
Presence of public officials at each event	Tracking how public input was used
Number of project website hits	Whether public input affected the resulting planning documents
Cost of putting together the public engagement plan	

A public survey will be conducted in the final stages of the planning process to measure the effectiveness of the Community Engagement Plan and to guide future engagement related to the project.