

**City of Ramsey
Long-Term Road Maintenance
& Reconstruction Program**

Public Information and Engagement Plan — Revised September 20, 2011

Overview

Roughly half of Ramsey's 178 miles of roads were constructed between 1976 and 1985. With routine maintenance, the average expected life of these roads is 40 years, which means that between now and 2025, the city expects an estimated \$90 million or more in road reconstruction to be necessary to repair or replace its aging streets. While approximately 20 percent of Ramsey's roadways may qualify for state aid, at least 80 percent will be the responsibility of local taxpayers. Currently, the city does not have a street reconstruction policy or a reliable funding source apart from costly individual property assessments.

Recently, the Ramsey City Council agreed to take a more proactive approach to street maintenance and directed staff to develop a policy and funding approach to this long-term issue. Specifically, the city aims to establish a program that:

- **Spreads the cost over time** so individual property owners are not surprised by burdensome multi-year assessments
- **More fairly distributes the cost** to all property owners who benefit from well-maintained roads
- **Removes roadblocks to maintenance** such as insufficient funds or property owner petitions against street repairs, which delay projects and ultimately increase costs
- **Better positions Ramsey for the future** by ensuring high-quality streets that are safe and attract housing, commercial and other economic growth

To measure and better understand public attitudes about these issues, the city conducted a public opinion survey of Ramsey residents in June 2011. The results indicated that street maintenance is one of the most serious issues facing the city, according to respondents. In addition, nearly three-quarters of respondents indicated support for developing a long-term policy for street maintenance and reconstruction.

The survey, however, revealed a lack of majority support for a specific funding source and highlighted general concerns that exist and should be addressed. They include:

- **A challenging economic environment** in which home and business owners will find it difficult to support higher taxes or fees
- **Currently well-maintained roads** that have not shown visible wear
- **Limited public awareness** about the history and anticipated expense of maintaining the city's road system
- **Public sensitivity** to any increase in taxes or fees — as well as increased government spending

Public Information and Engagement Plan

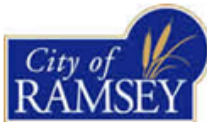
The following public information and engagement plan aims to achieve the city's broad goals, and address the following objectives:

- **Communicate the need for a long-term road maintenance program**, including the consequences of inaction, expected program benefits and the timeline for developing and rolling out a program
- **Engage Ramsey property owners in a public discussion** about potential funding options
- **Build community consensus around a solution**
- **Increase public awareness** about the new policy and funding plan and its early successes (following policy approval)

Public Information and Engagement Strategies

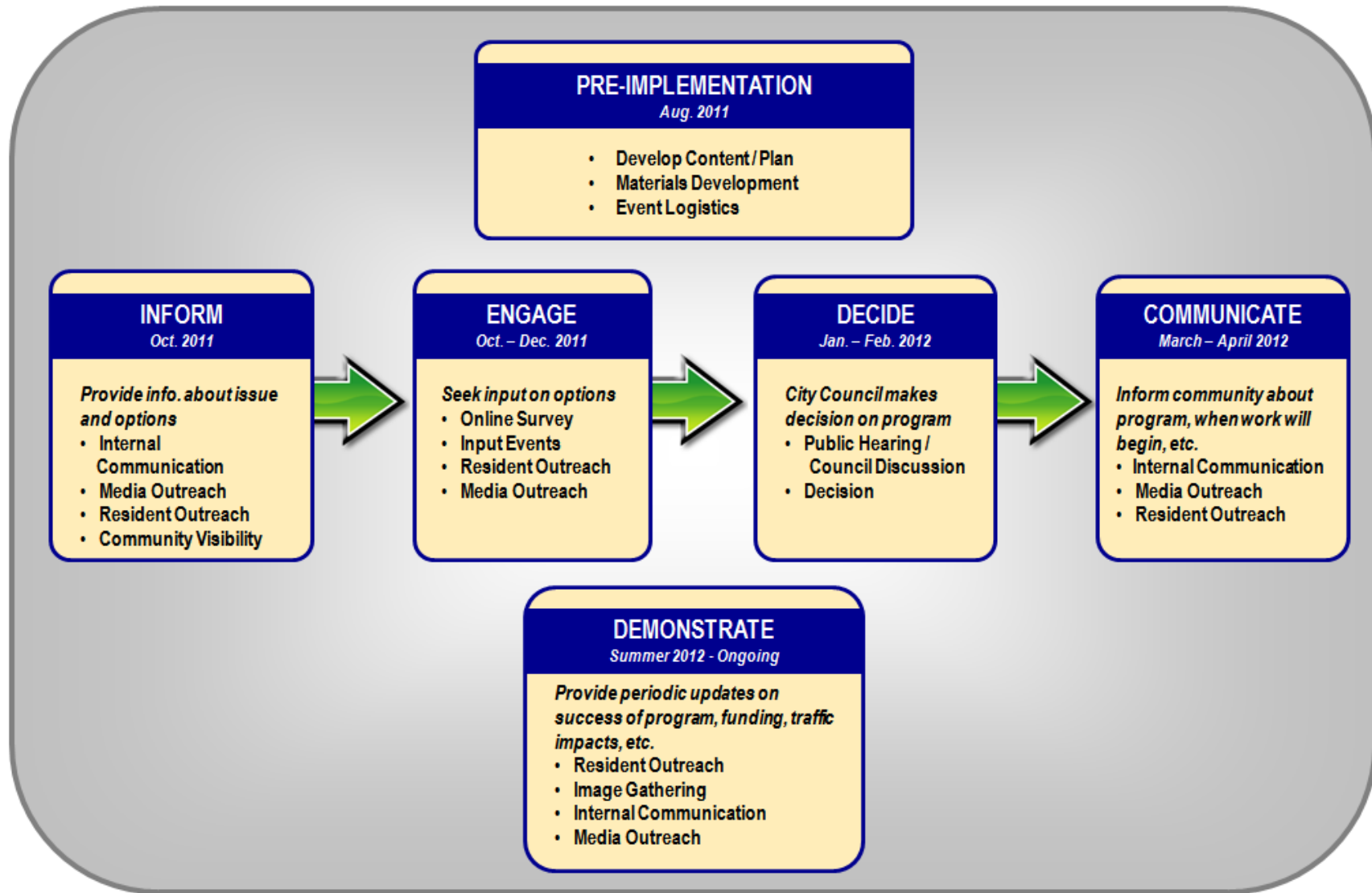
Given the long-term nature of this issue and financial impact to property owners, public information and engagement efforts should focus on the following strategies:

- **Illustrate the extent of the issue**, including photographs of what roads will look like if not repaired, program size in relationship to the city's standard budget, and program and individual project timelines
- **Explain the funding options**, including the basis of each option, how long funds will be collected, anticipated amounts explained in terms residents will understand and how funds will be managed
- **Help residents and business owners connect with the benefits**, including ward-specific priority projects, improvements to safety, spreading the cost across all who will benefit and avoiding expensive assessments
- **Provide two-way communication opportunities** to deliver information about the program and potential funding options, respond promptly to resident questions and concerns, and collect public input that will be useful in making a final policy and funding decision. This includes letting participants know how their input will be used. Methods should be both online/electronic (e.g. website, Facebook, online survey) and traditional (e.g. community meetings, phone, one-on-one discussions) to provide ample opportunity for all constituents to participate.
- **Provide extra context for community leader stakeholders**, such as commercial/business owners in high traffic areas, school bus drivers and city/Public Works employees and other stakeholders, who will have a specific interest in the program and/or will be looked to by others to help explain the need.



Public Information/Engagement Strategy Overview

Aug. 2011 - Ongoing



Tactical Plan and Timeline

Pre-Implementation

Activity	Timeline	Detail
Key Discussion Points and FAQs	Aug. Sept.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Research/finalize Options 1, 2 & 3 for funding ▪ Draft initial content to provide residents/stakeholders with overview of problem, funding options, opportunities to provide input, general timelines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Discussion Points, FAQs ○ Flush out the business messages vs. general messages ○ Develop set of standards for how to move forward (reflect city goals, policies)
Content/Photo Gathering and Project Scheduling	Aug.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gather images for use in communications and to illustrate what will occur if a program is not established <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Before/after photos of road conditions (i.e. the “best” and the “worst”) ○ Project diagrams if available (i.e. plans/graphics that show large-scale projects that may be among the first completed under the new program) ○ Map showing high-priority projects within the city ▪ Develop preliminary schedule of projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ High priority projects from each ward, if possible, to show early and “local” successes ○ Target highly-trafficked/easily-recognizable areas
Materials Development	Completed Aug. – Sept.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Newsletter article for <i>city of Ramsey Resident</i> re: survey results ▪ Develop print materials with project overview, timeline, road images, funding options and resources for more information (e.g. website, Facebook, etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fact sheet for distribution/online download ○ Poster/display boards for key public locations (e.g. graphic showing age of city streets or ratings) ○ Feedback form for use at city events, public meetings ○ Resident postcard (overview of issue, invite to listening session(s)) ○ Utility inserts ▪ Content for city website ▪ Online survey
Event Logistics Planning	Sept.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify/schedule possible events and locations for input gathering, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ EDA event (Dec. 1) ○ Input session(s) (in each council ward, with materials focused on specific projects in ward and hosted by city council member; alternatively, conduct single open house/listening session at Ramsey Municipal Center) ○ Community presentations (Rotary, Lions, etc.) ▪ Develop brief (10-15 slide) PowerPoint presentation, including images, issue and options overview; include customizable slides to highlight high-priority projects in each ward ▪ Develop system for tracking comments, input and feedback (e.g. phone/email address, project email, database)

Inform

Activity	Timeline	Detail
Internal Communication	Early Oct.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Email to city employees with attachments (e.g. fact sheet, FAQs) to inform them about city’s proactive approach, program need, funding options and information about how to respond to resident questions and concerns ▪ Meeting with key Public Works staff to discuss program in greater detail with instructions on handling resident calls ▪ Meeting with Anoka County Commissioner(s) and new council member to outline approach and provide information
Media Outreach	Late Aug. By Early Oct. Oct.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Distribute news release providing overview of public opinion survey results. Follow up with local media as needed. ▪ Draft and distribute news release to outline program need, benefits, funding options and opportunities for providing public input ▪ Additional media outreach to secure interviews and/or story/photo packages; promote input opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ABC Newspapers ○ Star Tribune – North Metro ○ BOB FM, other local radio ○ QCTV ○ Community blogs
Resident Outreach	Early to Mid Oct.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Print/mail postcards ▪ Publish/distribute information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Website – Create separate landing page with images of roads, timeline, overview of funding options, post program news releases, etc. ○ Utility inserts – Provide 3-5 bullet points on need, timelines, process and contacts for more information (e.g. website, hotline, email) ○ Message to city email distribution lists ○ City of Ramsey Facebook postings – Develop information to illustrate issue, raise people’s awareness of the resources, begin a dialogue, etc. Post at least twice per week, preferably late afternoon/evenings. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “Roughly half of Ramsey’s 178 miles of roads were constructed between 1976 and 1985. When will we need to start repairing and reconstructing? Learn more at our website.” – “This is an example of one of the city’s roads that will need to be improved soon.” [Picture of road in disrepair] – “What city roads do you think need to be fixed soon?” – “How long do you think it will take to repair and reconstruct all of the city’s roads? Find out at our website.”

Inform *(continued)*

Activity	Timeline	Detail
Community Visibility	Early to Mid Oct.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Place posters/fact sheet at strategic locations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ramsey Municipal Center (e.g. utility payment office, reception area) ○ Rum River Library ○ Shopping centers/centers of commerce ○ Ramsey Star Express park-and-ride ○ Other potential locations
	Mid Oct.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Letter to key stakeholders, outlining need, approach, benefits, funding options and opportunities for input <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Community influencers (e.g. community/civic organization leaders, city planning/other committees) ○ Major employers/business owners ○ Community nonprofit/tax-exempt organizations
	Nov.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Newsletter article to Ramsey Chamber of Commerce ▪ Presentation to community/civic organizations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ramsey Chamber of Commerce ○ Rotary, Lions, other

Engage

Activity	Timeline	Detail
Online Survey Launch	Mid Oct. -Nov.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement online survey (e.g. Survey Monkey survey)
Input Events	Mid Oct.-Early Dec.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Host events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>EDA event (Dec. 1)</u> — Provide public information table to distribute materials, answer questions, posters/display and collect completed feedback forms ○ <u>Input session(s) in each Ward:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brief PowerPoint presentation - Q&A/public input - Provide fact sheet and FAQ - Collect additional information via feedback forms
Resident Outreach	Mid Oct.-Mid Nov. Dec.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote online survey via city communications (e.g. website, Facebook postings, community TV channel messages, city email distribution lists) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Our online survey goes live in X days” ○ “Have you shared your thoughts about the best funding option for the road maintenance and reconstruction program?” ○ “Just X more days to provide your thoughts via our online survey” ▪ <i>City of Ramsey Resident</i> article providing follow-up to Sept. article, update on decision-making process (e.g. date/time of City Council meeting) and next steps
Media Outreach	Nov.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Draft op-ed and submit op-ed to ABC Newspapers, signed by Mayor or Public Works Director; goal is to report on what the city is hearing from residents during engagement activities/online survey; encourage public input at City Council discussion

Decide

Activity	Timeline	Detail
Report on Public Info.	Jan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tabulate public input/online survey results to help provide context during City Council discussion/public hearing
City Council Discussion / Public Hearing	Jan.–Feb.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ City Council discussion/public hearing ▪ City Council discussion/finalize policy and funding decision
Materials Development	Feb.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Draft news release based on decision of City Council; for distribution immediately following final decision

Communicate

Activity	Timeline	Detail
Internal Communication	Feb.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Email to all city employees/committee members/etc. to provide information about City Council decision, timeline for roll-out and expected 2012 projects
Media Outreach	Feb. March-April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Distribute news release explaining City Council decision, need/benefits of program, how the city conducted a thorough and transparent public process while considering the options ▪ Develop op-ed from Mayor or Public Works Director to explain how program will be rolled out; answer questions including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Timeline for program roll-out ○ The cost to residents, businesses, etc. ○ How will the costs be billed (e.g. in utility bills, property taxes, other) ○ What will it pay for (i.e. the broad benefits and specific priority projects for 2012-2013) ○ How people may pursue answers to their questions/concerns ▪ Conduct media outreach to seek follow-up interviews with local media to explain how program will be rolled out; answer the above questions
Resident Outreach	March-April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Publish update about funding option selected, timeline for program (including any initial projects), etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Website ○ Facebook postings ○ <i>City of Ramsey Resident</i> (city newsletter) ○ Message to city email distribution lists ○ Letter to property owners and/or notice in utility statements ○ Newsletter article for Ramsey Chamber of Commerce

Demonstrate

Activity	Timeline	Detail
Resident Outreach	Early spring (repeat each year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Draft updated content for display/distribution, including update about funding option selected, timelines, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Poster highlighting program and what projects that will be completed in 2012 ○ Update fact sheet with program and projects ▪ Place at strategic locations, including those listed previously (e.g. Municipal Center, spring and summer events, etc.) ▪ Update website, provide Facebook updates, create regular updates for <i>City of Ramsey Resident</i> and utility inserts ▪ Develop and place signage at key project sites (e.g. "This project brought to you by...") ▪ Update website with information about projects paid for by the program; include photos ▪ Facebook postings about project progress; post photos of work ▪ Email to city email distribution lists
Photos	Construction season (2012 and ongoing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gather before/after photo images of completed project(s)
Internal Communication	Beginning of construction season (repeat each year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Email to all city employees/committee members/etc. to highlight season's planned construction that will be paid for by the program (in conjunction with/immediately prior to media outreach)
Media Outreach (<i>construction begins</i>)	Beginning of construction season (repeat each year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ News release highlighting each season's planned construction that will be paid for by the program. Remind residents of the program and its benefits ▪ Conduct follow-up media interviews as needed
Media Outreach (<i>following construction</i>)	Late fall/early winter (repeat each year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ News release and/or media outreach to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Highlight successful projects completed during previous construction season; include before/after photos ○ Provide overview of next season's projects paid for by the program