



I-84 HARTFORD PROJECT

# PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

APRIL 2019 UPDATE

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## Public Involvement Plan

April 2019

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Public Involvement Plan (PIP) describes the intent, methods and expectations for public engagement on the I-84 Hartford Project. It will be a living document, revisited periodically (generally annually) to incorporate changes in approach to be responsive to stakeholders' needs. This will facilitate a flexible public involvement process, allowing the Project Team to respond appropriately and efficiently to evolving project needs and phases.

#### 1.1 Definitions

**The Project Team**- Collective reference for the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) and its consultants on the I-84 Hartford Project.

**Stakeholders**- Collective reference for those individuals and groups likely to be affected by the project or holding a stake in project outcomes.

**The public**- Collective reference for: corridor travelers, residents of affected areas, environmental justice populations resident or employed in affected areas, owners and employees of businesses in affected areas, representatives of non-profit or community-based organizations located in affected areas, representatives of special-interest groups, and other interested parties.

#### 1.2 Project History

Built in the early 1960s, the viaduct structures supporting I-84 through Hartford are nearing the end of their useful life. The need to fully replace or reconstruct the bridges has created an opportunity to explore alternatives that better meet transportation needs while also providing other benefits to the city, region and state.

Following up on an initiative by a local group called the Hub of Hartford, in 2010 the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG), in cooperation with CTDOT, completed an initial planning study that identified several replacement concepts that might also serve to reconnect divided neighborhoods and support economic development. While that study engaged many stakeholders to develop concepts, it did not include detailed analysis of feasibility, constructability, or whether those concepts could adequately serve the transportation demand.

Subsequently, CTDOT decided to move ahead with project planning and carry out a more in-depth analysis of I-84. CTDOT wishes to reach a consensus decision for improvements in the corridor, consistent with the project's Purpose and Need Statement. With significant public and stakeholder input throughout, the project will advance through planning and alternatives analysis, environmental documentation, design and construction. To that end, CTDOT selected various consulting teams to:

- Manage the overall implementation of improvements to I-84,
- Carry out environmental documentation, and
- Investigate the relocation and/or rehabilitation of the rail line that operates in the same corridor.

### **1.3 I-84 Hartford Project Scope**

The I-84 Hartford Project will:

- Identify deficiencies and needs
- Develop and evaluate a range of alternatives
- Carry out National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA) compliance by preparing a federal-level Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and a state-level Environmental Impact Evaluation (EIE) to determine the environmental impacts of identified feasible alternatives
- Select and design the preferred alternative
- Construct the chosen plan

A robust public and stakeholder outreach program, guided by this PIP, will utilize a wide range of strategies to educate the public about the project need, goals, alternatives, impacts and benefits and actively engage all interested and concerned parties in dialogue about the project. The Project Team seeks a project solution that best serves the needs of the State of Connecticut, the Capitol Region, and the City of Hartford, as well as residents, businesses, commuters and travelers through Hartford. Public input will be a crucial element in ensuring that the project addresses and supports these needs while producing a suitable, workable and cost-effective solution.

The Project Team will conduct creative and robust measures to engage the many environmental justice communities in the corridor. Outreach activities will aim to educate the public on the many facets of the project to hear and address their ideas and concerns. There will be numerous opportunities for discussion and comment. Public comments and other feedback will be well-documented and duly considered throughout project planning, design and construction.

The I-84 Hartford Project is a large and complex program. Over the course of the effort, various related planning and engineering studies will be carried out by a variety of different firms under contract to CTDOT. Public involvement will be coordinated as a central function of the overall program to ensure that the message to the public and public input are considered holistically.

### **1.4 Language<sup>1</sup>**

The primary language of communication for the project is English. The Project Team reviewed population data to identify Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations and determined that project communications and information should be offered in Spanish as well as English. The Project Team reviewed local best practices for providing meaningful access to Spanish-speaking LEP populations that do not unduly burden the mission of the project or the Project Team.<sup>2</sup>

Spanish-language translation or interpretation will be available for the following project activities.

- Newsletters
- Factsheets
- E-bulletins
- Brochures
- Audiovisual materials
- Event and meeting notifications
- Comment submission and response
- Public hearings
- Public meetings
- Open Planning Studios

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<sup>1</sup> Added November 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Capitol Region Council of Governments. *Reducing Language Barriers: Guidelines on Making CROG Transportation Programs More Accessible to Those Who Don't Speak English Well*. 25 May 2005.

- Select pop up events
- Social Media

All public notices will advertise the availability of free language assistance, the availability of reasonable accommodations, and the contact information and procedures for requesting language services, including the deadline for requesting the services. All public notices will provide instruction for those who are hearing impaired to call the 711 Telecommunications Relay Service, to contact CTDOT to request accommodations. Public notices will be provided to individuals, organizations, and other stakeholders that represent Title VI and environmental justice populations in the project area.

## 2.0 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

### 2.1 Goal

The CTDOT seeks to carry out a comprehensive and inclusive program of public and stakeholder outreach. The goal of this outreach program is to ensure that all interested parties have the opportunity to participate in the transportation decision-making process, and that public input is duly considered. CTDOT and its consultants understand that successful realization of this goal will assist in identifying the best possible solution for the I-84 corridor—one that meets the project objectives, is embraced by stakeholders, and is implementable.

### 2.2 Objectives

The following four objectives will help CTDOT achieve this goal:

1. **Equity-** The Project Team will provide equitable access to all aspects of the transportation decision-making process. The Project Team will be inclusive in its practices, distributing project information via a variety of channels and venues, and delivered in clear and simple lay language to the extent possible. Public meetings will be held in convenient locations and at convenient times. The Project Team will respond appropriately to the express needs of interested individuals or groups for whom participation is still challenging. The Project Team will identify and partner with select individuals and organizations from diverse communities in order to facilitate greater interaction and engagement with the public.
2. **Information-** The Project Team will inform the public early, clearly, and continuously throughout the project. Information will be communicated in clear and simple lay language via a variety of channels, including: the project website, social media, e-bulletins, quarterly newsletters, presentations, graphic and audiovisual material, and other public project materials. Much information will be available in English and Spanish insofar as without unduly burdening the mission of the project or the Project Team.

The Project Team may at times engage the assistance of community partners who represent different communities and populations, including environmental justice populations, to transmit project information to the public, and to provide the Project Team with public feedback. The Project Team will maintain a transparent relationship with these partners and the general public.

3. **Methods-** The Project Team will employ a variety of creative and robust methods to engage various stakeholders and interested individuals. These methods are delineated in section *3.0 Engaging Stakeholders*.
4. **Responsiveness-** The Project Team will solicit, accept and carefully consider public input throughout all phases of the project. The Project Team will revise outreach methods and information for clarity and accuracy in response to public feedback. Interested members of the public will feel that their input is valued and considered, and will be encouraged to participate in the transportation decision-making process.

The Project Team will respond to most public comments submitted via the project website, social media, or written comment form within 72 hours. Public comments will be recorded and periodically reviewed by the Project Team.

## **2.3 Compliance**

Public projects such as the I-84 Hartford Project are subject to many regulatory requirements. Several federal and state statutes or guidance documents call for certain outreach and coordination measures to be taken to ensure that adequate public and regulatory agency input is incorporated into the project. While CTDOT seeks to exceed these regulatory directives with a comprehensive and inclusive outreach strategy, it is important that the Project Team understand and comply with the regulations that exist. The following federal regulations are perhaps the most relevant:

- The *National Environmental Policy Act of 1969* (NEPA), as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.);
- Statewide and Nonmetropolitan Planning; Metropolitan Transportation Planning; Final Rule 23 *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR) Parts 450 and 771 and 49 CFR Part 613, May 27, 2016;
- Environmental Impact and Related Procedures and Section 4(f). 23 *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR) Parts 771 and 774; October 16, 2001; 40 *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR) 1506.6 and *Freedom of Information Act* (5 U.S.C. 552)
- Protection of Historic Properties. 36 *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR) Part 800.
- Air Quality Conformity. 40 (CFR) Part 51, November 24, 1993
- Management and Monitoring Systems. 23 (CFR) 500, December 1, 1993
- *Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964*, as amended (42 USC Section 2000d)
- *Environmental Justice Executive Order 12898*; and
- *FHWA Work Zone Safety and Mobility Rule 23 Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR) 630 subpart J;
- *Executive Order 13166* – Improving Access for Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency;
- 49 CFR 21, Nondiscrimination in federally assisted programs of the Department of Transportation;
- 23 CFR 200, Title VI Program and Related Statutes – Implementation and Review Procedures

The federal regulations listed above require:

- Early and continuing public involvement opportunities during all stages of the planning and programming process
- Timely information about transportation issues and processes to the community affected by transportation plans, programs and projects
- Reasonable public access to information used in the development of the plans and projects
- Provision of meaningful access to the transportation decision-making process for environmental justice populations
- Adequate public notice of public involvement activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points
- A process for demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input
- A process for seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households
- Periodic review of the effectiveness of the public involvement process

In addition, the I-84 Hartford Project is subject to Sections 22a-1 through 22a-1h of the *Connecticut General Statutes*. Collectively, these sections are known as the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA).

To provide guidance on the department's approach to public outreach, CTDOT published *Connecticut Department of Transportation: Public Involvement Procedures* in 2017 and *Public Involvement Guidance Manual* in 2009.

- <http://www.ct.gov/dot/lib/dot/documents/dplans/PIP.pdf>
- [http://www.ct.gov/dot/lib/dot/documents/dpolicy/pigm final 11 16 09.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/dot/lib/dot/documents/dpolicy/pigm_final_11_16_09.pdf)

### **3.0 ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS**

This PIP proposes the use of many methods to inform and involve the public in a meaningful way. Project information will be accessible to the public, as will Project Team members, who will share information in a thorough and understandable manner and record and respond to comments and concerns. Following is a description of key outreach methods that will be used.

#### **3.1 Stakeholder Database**

The Project Team will maintain a stakeholder contact list throughout the project. This list will be used to convey information to the public through e-bulletins, newsletters and other project updates. Project contacts without email addresses, or who do not wish to provide an email address, will receive USPS communications if a mailing address is provided. Members of the public who wish to be added to the stakeholder database may submit contact information through the project website, or in person at meetings or events held throughout the project. Efforts will be made to add residents, businesses and organizations within the study area to the contact list.

The stakeholder database will record:

- Name
- Postal / email address
- Phone number
- Zip code
- English or Spanish correspondence preference

#### **3.2 Stakeholder Meetings<sup>3</sup>**

The Project Team will meet and partner with key stakeholders as necessary throughout the life of the project. The Project Team may utilize these key stakeholders to engage a wider population through their newsletters, meetings, and contact lists.

#### **3.3 Website**

Project websites are an effective way to support public participation efforts for transportation studies and provide a source for immediate, up-to-date information. The project website, [i84hartford.com](http://i84hartford.com), was created at the beginning of the project and will continue to expand and be refined as the project evolves. The website includes features to increase its accessibility to people with disabilities, per Section 508, an amendment to the United States Workforce Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

This I-84 website:

- Provides overall information and background about the I-84 Hartford Project;
- Provides Spanish-language access to comment mechanisms, the project schedule, meeting information, newsletters, e-bulletins, and summaries of public hearings and other reports of project milestones;
- Provides access to information in other languages through a Google Translate feature;
- Provides regular updates on project progress;
- Advertises meetings and events;

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<sup>3</sup> Added November, 2016.

- Provides access to more detailed or specialized information through a set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) and responses;
- Provides links to other area organizations and related studies;
- Serves as a library for technical documents;
- Provides access to meeting summaries and documents;
- Allows the public to make comments and ask questions; and
- Provides access to mobile internet users.

The website will be evaluated periodically and revised as needed to ensure that it reflects current project information and accurately reflects project progress through the various phases of work.

### **3.4 Newsletters**

Project newsletters will be published quarterly throughout the course of the project. They will report on project progress, provide information on current activities, and solicit input. Each newsletter will be coded for ADA compliance and distributed electronically through an e-bulletin with a link to where it is posted on the project website. All newsletters will be hosted on the project website for the duration of the project. In addition, each newsletter will be posted to social media.

While primarily disseminated electronically, hard copies (generally consisting of a single-fold, four- or six-page layout in color with graphics, photos, and text) of each newsletter will be distributed to public venues, such as local libraries and community centers in Hartford, West Hartford, and East Hartford. Here, members of the public can obtain a copy of the most recent newsletter. Each newsletter will be mailed to those on the contact list for whom addresses exist but no e-mail address is available. In addition, hard copies of newsletters will be available at project meetings and other special events.

### **3.5 E-bulletins**

In addition to regularly issued newsletters, the Project Team will prepare and electronically distribute e-bulletins over the course of the project to the contact email list. The communications may include project updates, notifications of public meetings and events, links to project news articles, notification of project website updates, and announcements about new editions of project newsletters.

### **3.6 Fact Sheets**

Periodically, the Project Team will create and distribute fact sheets to the public that will give a more in-depth description of an aspect or topic of the I-84 Hartford Project. Fact sheets will be reviewed and updated as more current information on that topic becomes available. Each fact sheet will be coded for ADA compliance and distributed electronically through an e-bulletin with a link to it on the project website. All fact sheets will be hosted on the project website for the duration of the project. In addition, each fact sheet will be posted to social media.

While primarily disseminated electronically, hard copies (generally consisting of a one- or two-page layout in color with graphics, photos, and text) of each fact sheet will be distributed to public venues, such as local libraries and community centers in Hartford, West Hartford, and East Hartford. Here, members of the public can obtain the latest fact sheet. Each fact sheet will be mailed to those on the contact list for whom addresses exist but no e-mail address is available. In addition, fact sheets will be available at project meetings and other special events.

### **3.7 Social Media**

The Project Team will disseminate information and encourage public participation across bilingual English and Spanish social media accounts, including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Social media will be updated regularly with project information, meeting and event notices, relevant project photos, and other relevant news or related projects. Links will be provided to the project website for further reference and comment. Comments received through social media will be recorded and reported to the Project Team. Questions posted to social media will be responded to in a timely manner, most within 72 hours.

### **3.8 Audiovisual Material<sup>4</sup>**

The Project Team will produce audiovisual content, including infographics, videos, artistic renderings, and other images that clearly, simply, and accurately explain project design concepts and progress. Where applicable, this material will be available on the project website and social media accounts, as well as at public meetings, stakeholder meetings, and other relevant project-related events. Informational videos created by the Project Team and shown at project events will include closed captioning.

### **3.9 Public Meetings**

Public meetings will be held during the project at various locations throughout the project area and surrounding region. Public hearings will be conducted at key milestones in accordance with federal and state regulations.

Subsequent milestones may include:

- Scoping for the environmental process
- Presentation of a draft set of alternatives
- Completion of the draft environmental documents
- Completion of the final environmental documents
- Selection of a preferred alternative

The Project Team will host additional public meetings and Open Planning Studios during the alternatives development and design phases of the project. These meetings and studios will be held as significant design elements develop and public feedback is requested. Meetings may include or consist entirely of a workshop or charrette format with or without topic-specific small group break-out sessions. Meetings may include public presentations and presentations to the project Public Advisory Committee. An open house format before or after a presentation or workshop will provide opportunities for attendees to speak directly with the Project Team. The Project Team may solicit a third-party videographer to document presentations delivered at public meetings. Video documentation will be made available on the project website.

Meetings will be accessible to people with disabilities and environmental justice populations. Display materials at meetings will be graphically rich, clearly written, and easily understood. "I Speak Cards" and a Title VI Notice to Beneficiaries will be available at the sign-in table. An announcement will be made immediately prior to the start of all public presentations regarding non-discrimination and the services available to assist with preparing written comments and/or for completing forms or surveys. Spanish speaking staff will be available at all public meetings to assist Spanish speaking members of the public. Materials in alternative formats, translated materials, large print and electronic versions of printed materials, foreign language and audible versions of printed materials, and all other reasonable format requests must be requested at least one week prior to the event. Seating for those who use wheelchairs or power assistive devices and for deaf or hearing-impaired people will be reserved at the front of public

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<sup>4</sup> Added November 2016.

meetings so they may see the interpreter, closed captions, or lip read. Space for language interpreters will be clearly visible to the audience.

When possible, meeting notices will be distributed three weeks before the event. The Project Team will accommodate requests for language assistance or accessibility accommodations made at least one week prior to the event.

At and / or immediately following the project public meetings, print and/or digital press packages will be available to news media representatives, PAC members, and other community partners. These packages may contain meeting agendas, presentation materials, and other updated project information. Press package recipients will be encouraged to share project information internally with their representative organizations as well as across their respective media platforms.

### **3.10 Public Advisory Committee**

A group of key stakeholder representatives will be formed to provide guidance throughout the project. The project Public Advisory Committee (PAC) will meet and provide input throughout all phases of the project, including the consideration of the early alternatives and continuing through environmental documentation, design and construction. PAC membership, roles, agendas, reports of meetings, and presentations will be available on the project website. The committee will be a key link between the Project Team and the larger community and will provide input on specific topics, as well as at major study milestones. One of the primary goals of the PAC is to give the Project Team an on-going perspective from informed individuals regarding existing conditions and priorities in the study area.

The PAC will consist of representatives from key stakeholder groups (i.e. transportation agencies, city and regional representatives, major employers in the study area, environmental justice populations, neighborhoods traversed by the project, etc.). The PAC will meet throughout the year to provide input to the Project Team and communicate information about the I-84 Hartford Project to their constituencies. Any additional member of the public may attend a PAC meeting.

An announcement will be made immediately prior to all PAC presentations regarding non-discrimination and the services available to assist with preparing written comments and/or for completing forms or surveys. The Project Team may solicit a third-party videographer to document presentations delivered at PAC meetings. Video documentation will be made available on the project website.

At and/or immediately following PAC meetings, print and/or digital press packages will be available to news media representatives, PAC members, and other community partners. These packages may contain meeting agendas, presentation materials, and other updated project information. Press package recipients will be encouraged to share project information internally with their representative organizations as well as across their respective media platforms.

### **3.11 Working Groups<sup>5</sup>**

From time to time, CTDOT may form small structured working groups composed of interested members of the public and the PAC to closely examine specific elements of the project and concerns. Reports of working group meetings will be available on the project website. Any member of the public may partake in a working group.

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<sup>5</sup> Added November 2016.

Working group meetings will be advertised on the project website, via email invitation, and in digital and social media. Working groups will meet at public meetings at points in the project when the Project Team requires feedback and public input.

### **3.12 Internship Program<sup>6</sup>**

The Project Team will initiate an internship program for Hartford-area youth or involve interns that are employed with other community organizations into the project. Interns may participate in various aspects of the project, including public involvement, engineering, environmental study, or administration with the CTDOT and / or its consultants. The interns will lend the Project Team additional skills and intimate knowledge of the study area, while also building links with local communities and encouraging careers in planning or engineering.

### **3.13 Speakers' Bureau<sup>7</sup>**

The Project Team will establish a Speakers' Bureau that consists of qualified members of the Project Team authorized to speak at meetings of various community or civic groups as requested. The Project Team will consider diversity as well as skills and experience when adding new members to the Speakers' Bureau. Recognizing respective strengths, the Speakers' Bureau will discuss internally the concerns, interests and nature of each stakeholder group before selecting an appropriate speaker.

### **3.14 Pop-Up Events<sup>8</sup>**

The Project Team will identify and attend community events within the project area. Project Team members will distribute project information, answer questions and encourage members of the public to register with the project contact database. Team members will promote upcoming project meetings at pop-up events.

### **3.15 Focus Groups<sup>9</sup>**

From time to time, the Project Team may consider conducting focus groups to gauge public opinion, refine outreach efforts, or collect other relevant data. Focus groups may be conducted in either English or Spanish.

### **3.16 Surveys<sup>10</sup>**

From time to time, the Project Team may conduct surveys of the public, PAC, working groups or other project committees, event attendees or internally to refine outreach efforts or collect other relevant data. Surveys will be conducted in English and / or Spanish as appropriate.

### **3.17 Local Project Office<sup>11</sup>**

The Project Team may open and operate a local project office during the construction phase of the project. Located within the project area in a location convenient for most users, the local project office will serve as a physical resource for the public to gather information about the project, communicate with project staff, and submit questions and comments.

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<sup>6</sup> Added November 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Added November 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Added November 2016.

<sup>9</sup> Added November 2016.

<sup>10</sup> Added November 2016

<sup>11</sup> Added November 2016

### **3.18 Media Outreach**

The Project Team will develop a mutually beneficial relationship with the media to ensure that accurate information about the project and its status are regularly conveyed to the widest possible audience. Project events will be advertised in print, digital and social media, as well as radio and television when deemed appropriate. Certain members of the Project Team will be available for interviews and supply relevant project materials when requested by print, digital, radio or television media. Public meeting information will also be communicated to the CTDOT Office of Communications for inclusion in CTDOT's Calendar of Events and posted on the CTDOT website.

The Project Team will maintain a contact database of local media. Published media content directly relating to the project will be archived on the project website.

Print and/or digital press packages will be made available to local media at and/or immediately following project public meetings and PAC meetings. These packages may contain meeting agendas, presentation materials, and other updated project information. Recipients of these packages will be encouraged to share project information internally with their representative organizations as well as more broadly across media platforms.

## **4.0 RESPONDING TO INPUT**

### **4.1 Comment Database**

All comments and questions submitted via the website and social media pages, as well as via mail and fax, will be reported to the Project Team and most will be responded to appropriately within 72 hours. The Project Team will create a database to collect, manage and report on comments and will regularly review and discuss what the Team is hearing from the public. Comments will be accepted, archived, and responded to under protocol for both English and Spanish-language correspondence.

Oral comments received at public meetings will be captured by project note-takers and included in corresponding reports of meeting.

Written comments submitted at public meetings or other outreach activities will be reported and archived similarly to those received via the website, social media, mail and fax.

### **4.2 Response to Comments**

Every person who sends a comment to the website will receive an automatically generated "thank you for your comment" response indicating that the comment has been received and its content will be reviewed by the Project Team. People who leave comments via the website will automatically be added to the project database and will receive future communications about the project.

All comments that are submitted will also get a longer response, wherein their comment is recognized, gratitude for their involvement is expressed and, to the extent possible, their question or comment is referenced or answered. If appropriate, the topic will be added to the website list of Frequently Asked Questions.

For formal hearings and for the public scoping meeting, transcripts will be used to capture oral comments. These comments will be archived, stored, responded to, and incorporated as appropriate into the project process. Written comments gathered during public meetings or formal public hearings, will be treated similarly to oral comments.

## **5.0 EVALUATION OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT EFFECTIVENESS**

The Project Team will conduct a monitoring and evaluation program to assess and review project activities throughout all phases of the project. The purpose of monitoring and evaluation is to define, measure, and improve upon the success of the public involvement process. The monitoring and evaluation process will involve the participation of the Project Team as well as the public.

The plan will include the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, goals, objectives, and verifiable indicators of achievement. The plan will measure project outputs (i.e. literature distribution, event attendance, etc.) as well as outcomes (public attitudes to the project, degree of understanding, accessibility, etc.). Specific assessment will be given to the effectiveness of outreach to environmental justice and Limited English Proficiency populations.

The Project Team will report regularly on the results of the monitoring and evaluation process. Results will be reviewed by CTDOT and changes to the public involvement plan made accordingly.