

“*Studies show that customers gravitate toward and purchase more from a business with a positive, rather than negative, message.*”

The following tips are designed to assist you in preparing for media opportunities and providing accurate, helpful and enticing information to better serve the public, your business and neighboring businesses during a transportation improvement project. Use this opportunity to emphasize that you are open and accessible during construction and look forward to continue providing excellent customer service.

Prior to the Interview

1. If approached by a reporter, you have the option of being interviewed or not. You can say no. If you agree to an interview, always be polite and respectful.
2. Not sure about the facts? Inform the reporter that you would like to be interviewed at a later time in order to prepare. Remember to keep in mind the reporter's deadlines.
3. Before the interview starts, it is acceptable to inquire about the angle of the story and what information they already have gathered. If appropriate, provide correct or more detailed information.
4. Develop three to five messages that you believe are important to express during your interview. Even if the appropriate question is not asked, you can provide an answer that includes one of your message points.
5. For TV interviews or photographs, suggest an interview location that positively reflects your business in the background.
6. Be meticulous in your grooming and present yourself in a positive manner. Remove sunglasses.

During the Interview

7. When delivering your talking points or any other information, present them in a way that is solution-oriented (proactive) rather than problem-oriented (reactive). If there is an issue, speak to the solution. Remember you are representing your business and want to be seen in a positive light.
8. In order to appear credible to the audience, be calm, professional and show enthusiasm for the subject. Expressing excitement for the project and encouraging people to, despite the activity around you, is free advertising.

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Media Interview Tips

“Your interview is a reflection of you and your business. What you say can directly influence whether people will visit your business and businesses nearby, both during and after a transportation improvement project. The bottom line is... **construct** rather than **deconstruct** your business opportunities.”

9. Avoid any negative comments about a construction project or how project information was conveyed to you. Always maintain a positive approach to the subject, even if it's controversial. Studies show that customers gravitate toward and purchase more from a business with a positive, rather than negative, message.
10. If the reporter asks a question that makes you feel uncomfortable, try to redirect your answer back to one of your message points. Anticipate negative questions and prepare for them beforehand with positive answers. You can always say “*Let me think about that. Can we come back to that question?*”
11. Take your time when answering questions, while keeping in mind that a short answer is less likely to be taken out of context. Stop speaking once you've made your point.
12. Don't interrupt the reporter. Begin your answer when he or she is finished speaking.
13. Assume that you will always be *on the record*, even when a reporter may say that you are *off the record*. Always assume that when there is a camera or recorder in the room that it is on and running.
14. Always presume that a reporter has his or her own angle for the story and may be working from limited information. Be prepared for *shock value* questions and respond with one of your key talking points to reinforce your message. This will help to keep the interview focused on your agenda rather than that of the reporter.
15. For TV interviews, look at the reporter. Avoid looking down or away when speaking.

After the Interview

16. Following an interview, you can ask a reporter to summarize what points they hope to make from the statements you have made. This provides you with at least one opportunity to try to ensure that they do not take your comments out of context.
17. Your interview is a reflection of you and your business. What you say can directly influence whether people will visit you and businesses nearby, both during and after a transportation improvement project. The bottom line is, *construct* rather than *deconstruct* your business opportunities.