



E-PARCC

COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE

Syracuse University

Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs

Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration

Collaborative Solutions to Transportation, Land Use and Community

Design Issues:

The City of Chance and Lucky Highway 13

Background

Chance, population 4,500, is a modest-sized, rural California foothill city in Diceroll County. The local economy depends on tourism, the dwindling logging and mining industry, and people drawn to the area by their second and retirement homes. State Route 13, a two-lane rural highway, runs through the center of Chance's central business district. The highway has a center turn lane. Some sections have curbs and sidewalks, while other sections have no sidewalks. Although it has adequate lighting, SR 13 has no defined bike lanes or paths and only limited parking, except in selected pockets in the five-block area downtown. The road has adequate right-of-way for four lanes, but this would eliminate the center lane, reduce lane widths and parking, and make for narrow shoulders. The city is laid out mostly in a grid pattern and SR 13 has many cross-streets, but only two of these have signals. Pavement and road quality on the side streets are poor. Many businesses front SR 13 and are served with individual or shared driveways. The area does get snowfall, although it generally does not stay for longer than a few days.

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The community derives most of its income through tourists traveling on SR 13, passing through or stopping in Chance. The route dates back to stagecoach days and the local citizenry is justifiably proud of this historical connection, and makes the most of it for tourism. The downtown has made a nice comeback in recent years and is full of shops, restaurants, coffeehouses, offices and businesses. It is difficult to walk downtown because of the lack of side-walks, but people do it anyway.

The highway is heavily used, especially during peak summer months and in the peak of skiing season. People often stay in Chance to ski in the higher areas beyond. The highway also gets a lot of local traffic using the downtown. Because few other communities are in the area, people drive in from some distance to eat at the restaurants, shop, and walk the downtown blocks. The highway is subject to congestion problems, as well as traffic safety hazards. Traffic models suggest volumes are going to increase and levels of service are going to decline if something is not done. Predictably, the models--called "black boxes" by some--are not universally accepted.

The community is discussing two major development projects. One is a major mixed-use project at the entrance to downtown right on SR 13. It includes retail, office and housing and would be a first of its kind in the city and the county. It promises to bring in people to downtown and, thus, revenue, but also an enormous amount of traffic. The mayor and council are in favor of this project, but are listening to the many voices of concern regarding traffic, safety, historic impacts and visual impacts. The second major development project is a 1,000-unit retirement community with a golf course at the edge of town. At one time, a SR 13 bypass was proposed to take traffic pressure off of downtown. This bypass was planned to go right past the retirement community. Developers for the retirement community are pushing for the bypass because it will reduce their road costs and provide a much-improved road connection. It also could open up other lands for development. The environmental community, historic preservation group and downtown advocates are strongly opposed to the bypass idea and the retirement village.

The City Council is fiscally conservative, but has become very progressive on environmental issues and support for pedestrian and bicycle travel. The council has also recently become quite interested in "new urbanist" design principles. Some of the council members and city staff have been pushing for improvements to the highway as part of an upgrade to the downtown area, including such urban design improvements as lighting, sidewalks, planting and bikeways. In the past, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has proposed highway improvements to relieve the safety problems, improve circulation and reduce congestion. Unfortunately, everyone has a very different idea of what changes to make. People have sharp differences of opinion about what to do. Some, who like the historic road as it is, want to do nothing. Others advocate widening SR 13, while others want to build a bypass to funnel traffic away from downtown and increase safety. Some of the alternatives suggested are shown below.

Issues to be Resolved

Your job as a group is to come up with a consensus design plan that satisfies as many interests as you can and leaves no one out. Your job as an individual is to get as close as you can to your interests without blowing up the negotiation *or* accepting a “deal breaker” that drops below your bottom-line solution. You all will have to continue to work together on future projects and plans. Thus, preserving good relationships, particularly among your supporters--i.e., your other coalition members--is also important.

Ultimately, Caltrans will be the lead agency for actual highway improvements with the city as a participating agency and lead on any urban design features. Costs will be shared in some manner, but Chance has little extra funding and is looking to Caltrans and anyone else, such as the county, to help out with improvements. The county and many others will serve as interested agencies. You are at the stage of looking at alternatives and starting to prepare a concept plan for the highway. Several plans have been presented in the past, but none was acceptable and all were shelved. One of the plans called for a full bypass road to alleviate traffic downtown. Another called for widening the road to allow a full center turn lane and wide shoulders. This later option would take considerable private land, as the full right-of-way was not secured. Most people expect that there will be an environmental impact report (EIR). Most people expect that the EIR will be litigated unless this consensus-building process is successful. Easy stuff! Good luck!

Alternatives

Various players have advanced the following alternatives. Some have been taken seriously and studied a bit, while others are untested and have not been looked at by professionals. Typical of options and alternatives, they are not equal in terms of cost, feasibility, comprehensiveness, or timing. Some solve part of the problem; others solve several problems. Some create new concerns.

- **Option A. Widen the road.** This solution would expand the pavement to the right-of-way, allowing for four slightly narrower lanes, additional left turn pockets, shoulders, better sight distances and smoother traffic flow. It would result in a visually wider road with potentially higher speeds. It would also result in a safer road section that could accommodate more traffic and have improved maintenance, especially in winter. However, it will necessitate the removal of trees and reduction of access to some businesses. Driveways, especially near side streets, will have to be consolidated or even removed. Bike lanes or paths would not fit unless major right-of-way is purchased. This solution would require the proposed mixed-use development downtown to be redesigned slightly to allow for such components as adequate setbacks and sidewalks.
- **Option B. Construct the bypass.** This would result in a four-lane highway going around the city on the east. It is an expensive solution, but would certainly improve overall traffic capacity and safety. This solution would benefit the proposed retirement village and the

lands in the surrounding area that might now be more easily developed. It would also, however, direct most traffic away from downtown, seriously hurting local business and affecting the busy street life now emerging in the five-block downtown segment. Several local developers prefer this solution. It is *not* preferred by the developer of the downtown project and is reviled by local environmental and community groups.

- **Option C. Leave the road alone; do nothing.** This solution would not address any of the existing problems, but it would not create new ones nor cost money. It is preferred at this point by several neighborhood and environmental groups that fear any improvements will cause more problems than benefit.
- **Option D. Leave the road alone, but do urban design improvements.** This solution would implement the urban design improvements, including lighting, planting, better parking, sidewalks, bike lanes, and street furniture downtown, but would not fundamentally improve SR 13 for traffic flow and safety. Local community, neighborhood and environmental groups favor this approach, as do some downtown businesses. Other business groups believe this is not an efficient use of funds and believe traffic improvements are imperative.
- **Option E. Narrow the road to two lanes to allow for bike lanes, a median and urban design features.** This solution does little to help traffic flow and safety, but does provide the most substantial opportunities for urban design, bike and pedestrian improvements and a “livable” downtown. City Council members frequently talk about “livable” streets and the importance of downtown. While some community groups support this solution, businesses all over town and developers oppose this as inadequate.
- **Option F. Construct a two-way loop using the adjacent local street.** This creative alternative was suggested at a recent meeting and has not been studied. However, it does show promise. Because of the grid nature of the streets, it would be possible to improve safety and traffic flow without widening SR 13 by creating two one-way roads, each with two lanes. Many people are intrigued by this idea, but more information on feasibility, impacts and costs is needed. Neighborhood residents living on and near the alternate street are, understandably, vehemently opposed to the idea. However, much of the street includes businesses that may support the plan.
- **Option G. Make modest safety improvements at key intersections and entries to the city.** This option could be combined with other options noted earlier. It would concentrate funding for transportation improvements at key intersections by adding signals, crosswalks, left turn lanes, better curb and sidewalk treatments and other features to improve safety, sight distances, and flow. A safety publicity campaign could be part of this option.
- **Option H. Facilitate businesses along the highway to improve their properties from an aesthetic point of view.** This solution can also be combined with many of the other ideas. It involves using city redevelopment funds to improve the facades of local businesses and

encourage combining of driveways, combining and upgrading signage and adding sidewalks where they are lacking.

- **Option I. Improve transit opportunities in the area.** This solution can also be combined with other ones, although funding may be difficult to achieve. A regional bus system currently operates with limited coverage, routes and use. It does serve the ski areas and other tourist attractions. This option would greatly increase the local bus service with low-emission smaller buses, and add many more stops, shelters and amenities to the system, which could be publicized. Some have suggested locals would be able get passes to ride the buses in order to encourage use. Many people support this, but preliminary studies suggest that ridership will be low, and it will not solve all of the traffic problems.

You are encouraged to develop other alternatives or hybrids/combinations as you go and come up with any creative mitigations, assistance programs, or benefits/incentives that might be feasible and might resolve differences.

Players

The following roles will be part of this scenario. You may not use all the roles depending on the number of people in the group. As you will see, so-called coalition members have some common interests, but also differences. In addition, some members have different political constraints or constituency obligations than others.

Coalition: Local Government Interests

- ◆ Mayor of Chance
- ◆ Planning Director/Public Works Director of Chance
- ◆ County Administrator of Diceroll County

Coalition: Highway Design

- ◆ Head of Caltrans Local Projects
- ◆ Consulting Engineer selected for the Project Concept Plan

Coalition: Neutral

- ◆ Facilitator/Mediator
- ◆ Recorder/Co-Facilitator

Coalition: Local Business

- ◆ Downtown business owner on State Route 13
- ◆ Chamber of Commerce representing all local business

- ◆ Developer on the outside of the city, representing real estate interests

Coalition: Community Protection

- ◆ Local environmental group representative
- ◆ A local architect, serving as neighborhood rep from the east side of the highway
- ◆ A local attorney and history buff, serving as neighborhood rep from the west side of the highway
- ◆ Local representative of the Air Quality District

The following are the descriptions of each coalition of interests. All participants, assuming that they have discussed the situation and had interactions in the past, generally know these parties and their viewpoints.

Coalition Description: Local Government

The City Council strongly wants the downtown to succeed, economic development to occur and local parties to be pleased with the result. Council members have recently become enamored with various types of urban design improvements and the whole “new urbanist” movement in planning and design. The city has not taken an official position on any alternative, although during discussions councilors do not seem to want the bypass. Several local developers are heavily lobbying them. They would only support widening SR 13 if the project included lots of urban design features and mitigations. The local downtown mixed-use developer has also lobbied for her project.

Coalition Description: Highway Design

This coalition wants the best engineering solution that resolves the road problems at the lowest cost. Caltrans has hired the private consultant to work on whatever project emerges. Both engineers are concerned about keeping peace with all parties, but also need to make sure that some measures for safety and traffic improvement are built. Both engineers are very sympathetic to the desire for urban design improvements, bike and pedestrian improvements and transit, although SR 13 is their top priority. Caltrans has not taken an official position, but has in the past pursued Option A, that of widening the road to a full four lanes. Caltrans planners have weighed in on the importance of “context sensitive design” and they support linking land use and transportation, as long as the road is upgraded. The engineers do not believe that the bypass makes sense because of costs and environmental impact, but they know that Caltrans management is being lobbied heavily to consider it. The engineers are skeptical about whether the two-way downtown couplet will work, but are willing to study it.

Coalition Description: Neutral

The facilitator and recorder are here to ensure that a fair and objective process occurs and all sides are heard and understood. Their objectives are to get a consensus on some project or set of projects and programs as quickly as possible. These people find it critical that all parties will walk away feeling like their interests were considered and that the solution is reasonable. They hope no one will litigate.

Coalition Description: Local Business

This group is very diverse, but they try their best to be supportive of each other and show a united front. Their official coalition position is that the road must be made safer and carry traffic in a more effective manner. At various times historically, they have supported Option A, that of road widening. They are also interested in exploring Option F, which calls for two, one-way segments, because it will open up new areas that might support business. They favor expansion and business success downtown, as well as in other areas. They support development in general and are supportive of both major development projects. The coalition is mixed on the value of urban design improvements. The downtown advocates believe the improvements will help; others feel they are a waste of funds. The coalition is mixed on bike and pedestrian improvements, but they can never acknowledge that unpopular stance. Some members of the coalition strongly support a bypass road to help development in that area of the community, but they have difficulty acknowledging it since that would run counter to downtown interests. This group is in need of keeping good relationships with City Hall, but not necessarily others.

Coalition Description: Community Protection

This group is very diverse, but they try to be supportive of each other and show a unified front. The members are all quite visible and well known in local politics and are regarded very seriously by local politicians. This group has publicly stated opposition to Options A, B and F. Some individual members have indicated their organizations may litigate over the bypass, Option B, while one neighbor group is threatening suit over the couplet, Option F. This group has expressed strong opposition to the retirement village project. They are mixed on the downtown project. Some believe it represents “smart growth” and is needed as a good example; others believe the traffic and neighborhood impacts are too great. This group has stated it prefers options like C (do nothing), D (minor urban design improvements) or E (narrowing the road for bikes). This group is also supportive of transit improvements even if it costs extra. The neighborhood representatives are supportive of modest urban design improvements, but are very wary of any project that might increase local traffic.

The following are specific roles given to each individual, but not shared among the group:

Confidential Role Description: Mayor of Chance

Recently elected and quite popular, you are determined to make everyone happy, especially people who are local and have influence. Your bottom line is the road must be made safer, traffic must be accommodated, and urban design improvements are needed and will help downtown. You believe the mixed-use development project is just what the community needs. You cannot live with the “do nothing” approach. You are ambivalent about the retirement project. You want to keep a good relationship with the developer and business leaders and you are concerned about opposing a senior project, but you want to be supportive of the environmental community. You have not gone public on any alternative, but have made statements against the bypass and against a “massive freeway” in Chance's historic downtown.

You like Options **F** and **G**. You also like Option **D**, but you are worried that it may not improve traffic sufficiently. You are supportive of **H**, but are concerned about costs. You hope that Caltrans and the developers can fund all the improvements, because you know the city has little to give.

Confidential Role Description: Planning Director/Public Works Director of Chance

Your bottom line is to follow the lead of the council. For the most part, you think that means that the road must be made safer, traffic must be accommodated, urban design improvements are needed and will help downtown, and the mixed-use development project is a positive. You are not sure about the edge-of-town retirement village. The council is divided on the project. You are worried about growth-inducement in an environmentally sensitive area, but you know that Chance needs senior housing facilities. You want to keep a good relationship with all the local interest groups, but elected officials seem to have little concerns for keeping up a good relationship with Caltrans, the engineer or the county. As a solid professional, however, you want to earn the respect of these people.

You generally like Options **D**, **E**, **G** and want to study **F**, but you are worried that they may not improve traffic sufficiently. You are supportive of **H**, but are concerned about costs and feasibility. You hope that Caltrans and the developers can fund all the improvements. You have been the director for some time. You have been through many battles and believe you need a big win to enhance your job. Coming up with the creative idea that saves the day is appealing to you.

Confidential Role Description: Head of Caltrans Local Projects

You have worked on this situation for many years. You know the community and all the players well. You are highly respected by the local professionals and staff members, but you have had your share of tense moments with some of the local business community and activists. You are working hard to meet the new partnership approaches and want to make this a model project for you and your division. Your department has been looking for ways to implement “context sensitive solutions” and you think this may be an opportunity.

Considerable funds have been expended studying Option **A**, and reviewing what urban design improvements can accompany a road widening. You believe Option **A** will solve many of the traffic problems. You also think that some form of Option **D** and **G**, or Option **H** with greatly improved transit, might work for a while, although not in the long-term. Caltrans has not taken a formal position yet. You know that Option **C** will not be acceptable since this region has been promised improvements for many years. You know that Caltrans can proceed without everyone’s concurrence, but it will likely lead to a lawsuit and will be costly. You are willing to maintain an open mind about the bypass Options **B** and **F**, but you do not hold out a lot of hope that they would be feasible.

Confidential Role Description: Consulting Engineer Selected for Project Concept Plan

You are an expert in corridor plans and transportation engineering, but you have not worked in this area before and not familiar with the players, Chance's various development projects, or local history. You know that you can design anything to work, but you are leery about what a diverse group will come up with. The agreed upon solution might be an unworkable “camel” and not an optimal design. However, you know the value of a consensus and are willing to work through the decision-making process until all parties agree.

Considerable funds have been expended studying Option **A**, and reviewing what urban design improvements and parking can accompany a road widening. You believe option **A** will solve many of the traffic problems. You also think that some form of Option **D** and **G**, with greatly improved transit (Option **H**) might work for a while, although you are certain it will not work in the long-term. You feel it is your professional duty to steer your client away from a short-term fix. Your client, Caltrans, has not taken a formal position yet. You know that Option **C** will not be acceptable since this region has been promised improvements for many years. You know that Caltrans can proceed without everyone's concurrence, but it will likely lead to a lawsuit and will be costly. On the other hand, since your firm does environmental work and engineering, the longer the process string out, the more fees you will collect. You are willing to maintain an open mind about the bypass--Option **B** and Option **F**. However, you do not hold out a lot of hope that they would be feasible. Preliminary studies suggest that the bypass is too costly and environmentally damaging and the couplet will require many other changes in established areas of Chance.

Your life is further complicated by the fact that your firm does a lot of work for the developer of the retirement project. It has been determined that there is no actual conflict since the work is all in another county with other branch offices, but there are internal pressures to at least keep the supporters of the bypass happy if you can.

Confidential Role Description: Facilitator/Mediator

Your job is to manage the discussion and reach a conclusion. You need to keep everyone at the table and you would like it if they are pleased with the solution and believe their interests were served. You hope to be rehired by the city and/or Caltrans to do more mediation work in the future. You are neutral and must remain so, but you are very concerned about mixing development decisions with the basic questions of road enhancement. As such, you are quite suspicious of the bypass solution and wish it would go away. You also feel that community interest groups are not quite as represented in this mediation as they should be, given their strong opinions and significant numbers. You can't change the mix, because the city made final decisions on the representatives.

Confidential Role Description: Recorder

Your job is to support the facilitator, act as chief strategist and get the group to a consensus as quickly as possible. You need to keep everyone at the table and you would like it if they are pleased with the solution and believe their interests were served. You hope to be rehired by the city and/or Caltrans to do more mediation work in the future. You are neutral and must remain so, but you are very concerned about mixing development decisions with the basic questions of road enhancement. As such, you are quite suspicious of the bypass solution and wish it would go away. You also feel that community interest groups are not quite as represented in this mediation as they should be, given their strong opinions and significant numbers. You can't change the mix, because the city made final decisions on the representatives. You are hoping to distinguish yourself during this project, so you are looking for opportunities to come up with the winning “compromise” or solution.

Confidential Role Description: Downtown Business Owner

You are a long-time resident and business owner in Chance. You desperately want the downtown to do well and like the progress it has made the last few years. Your bottom line is that the urban design improvements must be made, the mixed-use project must get built and some sort of traffic improvements must be done. You are not so sure about road widening, although you are not vehemently opposed to it. You would rather come up with something better, such as some combination of **D,G** and **H**. You are very concerned privately about the bypass, because you think it will kill business. However, since many of your long-time friends who live outside of downtown support it, you have not said much.

You cannot live with a “do nothing” approach. At the same time, you don't want an approach that widens the road, but fails to give the businesses better design, visibility or access. You are publicly sympathetic to the positions of the environmental and neighborhood communities, because you have dealt with these folks for a long time and need to keep doing so. However, you privately believe them to be extremists who do not take economic reality into account. You believe that local business people continue to sustain the community and need to keep it strong.

Confidential Role Description: Chamber of Commerce Representative

You are a long-time resident and business owner in the county and more recently in the outskirts of Chance. You want to see all business, development and economic activity succeed. Your bottom line is that the traffic improvements must be made and that both development projects have to go through. You are comfortable with the road widening, but would be willing to live with other options if the experts prove to you that traffic safety and flow will get better. You are supportive of urban design improvements, but consider them a bit of extra expense. Privately, you do not believe that bike or pedestrian improvements will really do much for the economic base of the community, but you want to keep peace with certain community groups so you are not vocal about this. You are supportive of the bypass, because many of your members want it, but you are also quiet about this since downtown businesses fear the loss of potential customers.

You cannot live with a “do nothing” approach or an approach that does not correct the long-term traffic problems. You are publicly sympathetic to the positions of the environmental and neighborhood communities because you have dealt with these folks for a long time and need to keep doing so. However, you privately believe them to be extremists who do not take economic reality into account. You believe that local business people continue to sustain the community and need to keep it strong.

Confidential Role Description: Developer/Real Estate Interests

You have long believed that major traffic improvements are needed throughout Chance to accommodate growth and new business. You are strongly in favor of expanding SR 13 to at least four lanes and making appropriate intersection and safety improvements. So, your first position is to support Options **A** and **G**. However, you are also interested in the bypass, Option **B**, partly because you believe it is a good thing and partly because you are, in fact, one of the partners--albeit a silent one--in the development itself. You do not want this to come out in the discussion, however, and so you remain fairly quiet on the bypass subject. You are looking for ways to help facilitate the solution you want. You are in favor of downtown improvements, transit and urban design, such as found in Options **H** and **D**, but these are clearly secondary to you and in no way a substitute for basic traffic improvements.

While you want to continue to do business in this region, you are also interested in using this situation to advance the real estate development interests in the area politically. Therefore, you do want to “teach the naysayers a lesson,” and make sure a major project goes through. You are strongly supportive of both major developments and want the projects to occur.

Confidential Role Description: Local Environmental Group Representative

You are vehemently opposed to the bypass, Option **B**, and the sprawling developments it will bring. You cannot live with that as part of any solution, and in fact would like to put the bypass to rest once and for all. You are also opposed to widening SR 13, Option **A**, because you believe it will simply bring in more traffic and air pollution and will not solve any congestion or economic problems. If there is any widening or traffic improvements at all, you will want to see significant mitigation and some community/environmental trade-offs. You are leaning toward the do nothing solution, Option **C**, but you would like to see the downtown better off and support options such as **D** and **E**. You are privately supportive of the mixed-use downtown project because you believe it is a needed model for the community. At the same time, you are hesitant to be too vocal about this because many in your coalition are concerned that it represents major development. You are intrigued by Option **F**, particularly if it could be combined with the road narrowing of SR 13, Option **E**. However, you cannot voice your interest because the neighborhood members in that area are very concerned about the couplet idea and you need them on “your side.”

You are not too worried about costs, but you would very much like to see Caltrans or a developer pay for most of the improvements. You do not want to take away any potential sources of city funds for other needed projects, such as purchase of open space and river restoration. You are open to creative opportunities to help the local environment, even if the mitigation or trade-off is not directly related to the road or the development projects.

Confidential Role Description: Neighborhood Representative

You have lived at the edge of the downtown area for many years in a restored farmhouse. In fact, you work at home as an architect in an office that's over the restored carriage house. You have very strong historic preservation interests. You do not want to see the road widened, Option **A**, nor do you want to see the couplet, Option **F**. Your neighborhood would not be immediately impacted by the couplet, but you have friends and colleagues who live in the neighborhood that would be affected. You are trying to remain connected with them. You also do not want to see the bypass built, but you are not really adamant about that. Your interests are in keeping a strong, but historic downtown, not really in environmental matters.

You are very interested in seeing urban design improvements, Option **D**, but want to make sure they are historic in character, of high quality and designed by a professional. Transit and bikes are fine, but you do not hold out much realistic hope that they will succeed as transportation modes. For the sake of your other coalition members, you will remain publicly supportive of transit and bike options. You are neutral on the retirement development project and you may even get some of its design work, but are opposed to the mixed-use project downtown. You love the idea of mixed use and the intensity of the project, but believe the design is not adequate and does not take advantage of the historic flavor of downtown. If the project were designed, you would be supportive.

Confidential Role Description: Local Representative from the Air Quality District

You have worked for various environmental agencies in the region over the last decade. You are well known in the area and well respected as a voice of reason and knowledge on environmental issues, particularly air quality. In your current capacity, you are an interested agency that will comment on any environmental documents produced by the projects. Your district's board has not taken an official position on SR 13 or any other component of the debate. On the other hand, you are also a resident of Chance with some strong opinions on how it should be planned. You recognize the need for traffic improvements, but you are not sure a widening of SR 13, Option **A**, is the best solution. You are strongly opposed to Option **B**, the bypass, because you believe it will open up areas for development that should remain undeveloped and will result in increased air pollution. You are pushing hard for better transit throughout the region, as well for such options as bike travel. A combination of Options **E**, **G** and **H** are your top priorities, and you believe your district would support those positions.

You are a good consensus builder and are trying to work between the city, agencies and the environmental coalition. You would like to see some project succeed. You are privately opposed to the retirement village and supportive of the mixed-use downtown project. However, you cannot say much since your district has not taken a stand on either project and probably will not, other than to comment on the air quality and transportation parts of the EIR.