Engaging Communities for Meaningful Public Involvement on Transportation Projects

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Makeover Montgomery 2
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“Attending a public meeting [is] more likely to reduce a person’s sense of efficacy and attachment to the community than to increase it.”

-The Knight Foundation
The Challenge of Effective Public Outreach

How do public agencies effectively reach out to a variety of stakeholders and incorporate their input into the transportation planning process?

Use non-traditional, creative, grassroots approaches
Presentation Outline

1. Overview of five local outreach projects

2. Summary of outreach methods

3. Linking outreach to the planning process

4. Lessons learned
Example 1: Love Your Bus Stop (WMATA)

The “Love Your Bus Stop” program obtained feedback from the public on their preferences for bus stop improvements. Customer feedback is directly impacting how WMATA allocates and spends funds from the $1.9 million federal grant.
Plan to update and improve MTA’s bus service. Outreach has sought public input in restructuring the system to make it more effective and efficient.

**Example 2: Bus Network Improvement Project (MTA)**

**Idea: Combining or Splitting Routes**

**Route Combination**
Combining two routes together based on the best elements of each route can improve productivity and efficiency.

**CONCEPT:**

**Example:**

**Question:** Are there two routes you believe should be combined?

**Route Split**
Splitting a route’s trip distance in half can help improve the route’s performance, especially in areas with major bottlenecks.

**CONCEPT:**

**Example:**

**Question:** Is there a route you believe should be split in half?
Example 3: Arlington Capital Bikeshare (Arlington Co.)

Transit Development Plan for Capital Bikeshare in Arlington:

- Where to expand the system beyond existing corridors?
- How to connect existing corridors with new stations?
- How to fund a growing system?
Example 4: DC Circulator TDP (DDOT)

Transit Development Plan for the DC Circulator will guide system expansion and operational/policy decisions. Plan being guided by a general public survey.
Example 5: Public Participation Plan (WMATA)

Public Participation Plan (PPP) for their Title VI program will serve as a framework and guide for WMATA staff to use as they develop public outreach and engagement plans for their future activities.

Targeted Outreach to Community-Based Organizations

General Public Outreach/Surveys
Sample Outreach Methods

1. Pop-Up Events
2. Festivals / Special Events
3. Partnering with Community-Based Organizations
4. Crowdsourcing
5. Social Media
6. Workshops/Charrettes
OUTREACH METHOD: Pop-Up Events

Staff “pop up” in busy locations to conduct outreach/surveys

- Transit Stations
- Malls / Supermarkets
- Community Centers
- Residential Complexes
OUTREACH METHOD: Festivals / Special Events

Booths set up at special events can be a great way to reach target populations

“Love Your Bus Stop” event at the Southwest Arts Fest, Washington DC

“Speak Up It’s Your Ride” event at DC United Opening Day
OUTREACH METHOD: Partnering with CBOs

Developing relationships with Community Based Organizations to understand client needs
OUTREACH METHOD: Crowdsourcing

Online public engagement platforms function like a “virtual town hall” where constituents can discuss issues and share ideas with each other and decision-makers.
OUTREACH METHOD: Social Media

Engaging the public through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.
OUTREACH METHOD: Workshops / Charrettes

“Traditional” public meetings with an interesting, interactive element
Examples of Linking Outreach to Planning

**BNIP:** Results from trade-off exercise conducted at meetings, pop-ups, and on the crowdsourcing website were used to provide planners with general public preferences.
**Examples of Linking Outreach to Planning**

**Love Your Bus Stop:** Two top-ranked amenities are the ones WMATA is focusing on implementing with grant funds.

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<tr>
<th>Amenity</th>
<th>Average Score</th>
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Examples of Linking Outreach to Planning

**Arlington Capital Bikeshare:** Expansion areas by year of implementation, guided by public comment
Examples of Linking Outreach to Planning

- **WMATA PPP:** Information gathered will inform how future outreach is done – particularly how to most effectively reach Title VI populations

- **DC Circulator TDP:**
  - Feedback from survey will be used to influence location of new routes and/or extension of existing routes, as well as the timing for new routes/extensions
  - Feedback will also influence operations (e.g., adding buses for better headway adherence) and policy (e.g., whether Circulator should have varying service levels across routes)
Lesson 1: “Pop-Up” events capture a different market than online surveys and public meetings.

Demographic Differences of Event vs. Online Survey Respondents (Love Your Bus Stop)

- 25 percent of event respondents and 7 percent of online respondents identified as Hispanic.
- 60 percent of event respondents and 41 percent of online respondents identified as minority.
- 39 percent of event respondents and 18 percent of online respondents identified as low income.
Lessons Learned

Lesson 2: Outreach event content must be appropriate for the venue/audience
Lesson 3: Planner involvement in the outreach process is critical for relevant outcomes

BNIP: Destinations in need of better transit and their origins – result of public engagement
Lesson 4: Leveraging relationships (e.g., community-based organizations) and existing resources is key
Lesson 5: Interactive format at public meetings results in more meaningful engagement.
Thank you!

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