

Chapter III- Public Outreach

Why Public Outreach is Important

Those who work in transportation planning must know the community they serve. Why? Because transportation systems and programs affect people's everyday lives. These transportation systems get people from Point A to Point B, and everywhere else. That is why transportation planning is vital to our infrastructure. Regardless of how many plans and programs are made, without anyone to use them, they are worthless. There's also a legal responsibility for transparency. The roads, trails, and other facilities that eventually come from transportation plans and programs are typically paid for with public funds. As a metropolitan planning organization, this agency is bound by law to have an outlined plan for public involvement, per Title 23 of the Federal U.S. Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration. As the demand for government transparency has grown, so has the importance for planners to know what residents in a community want and need by involving them in the planning process. Those who work in the transportation planning field must take special care to include groups who have been traditionally underserved, including the poor, the disabled, the elderly, and minorities.

Background on the MPO Public Outreach Initiative

A couple of years ago, the D/KC MPO did extensive interviews to find out how many people knew about the MPO. The results were alarming. On average, 90% of people the MPO spoke to had never heard of it. Because of that, the MPO changed the way they approached public outreach. Instead of depending on tabling events and stakeholder committees, it turned toward social media, pop-up outreach events, and giving personalized presentations. Through these efforts, the MPO has slowly but markedly increased the public's awareness.

Using Public Outreach in Development of the Plan

The public outreach initiative was new and unique to the D/KC MPO in many aspects this year. We embraced social media and digital outlets to get more engagement than ever before. We also found a new way to get survey results at our pop-up outreach events by turning it into a game. Finally, we created a new website portal, with its own domain Innovation2045.com to deliver videos and online surveys to our citizens.

Beginning in January 2020 with a launch of Innovation2045.com and continued through April 15, 2020, we began a focused and comprehensive strategy involving:

- Digital Media Advertising
- Email Campaign
- Pop-Up Outreach at locations in Dover, Milford, and Smyrna
- A Major Social Media Campaign
- News Media Coverage
- Three Online Public Workshops
- Surveys and Polls

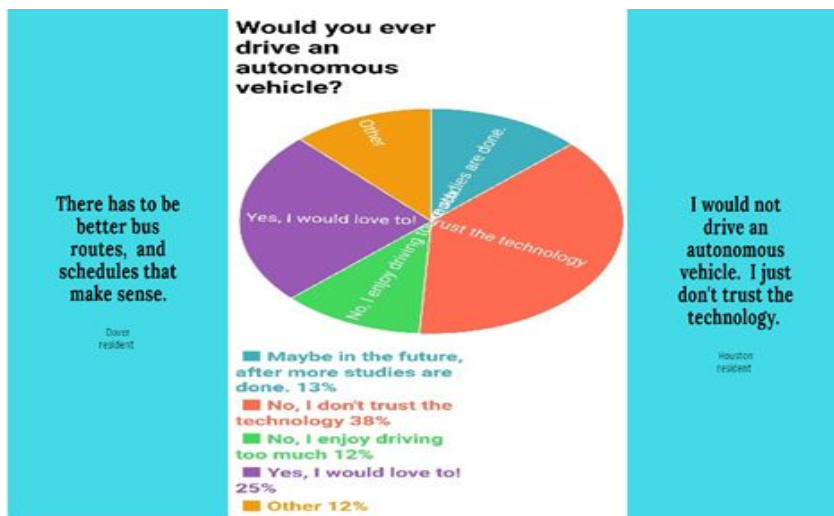
Staff additionally invited comments through business cards designed to drive traffic to Innovation2045.com, at public meetings, and by contacting members of the team directly through email, networking opportunities, phone, or stopping by the office.

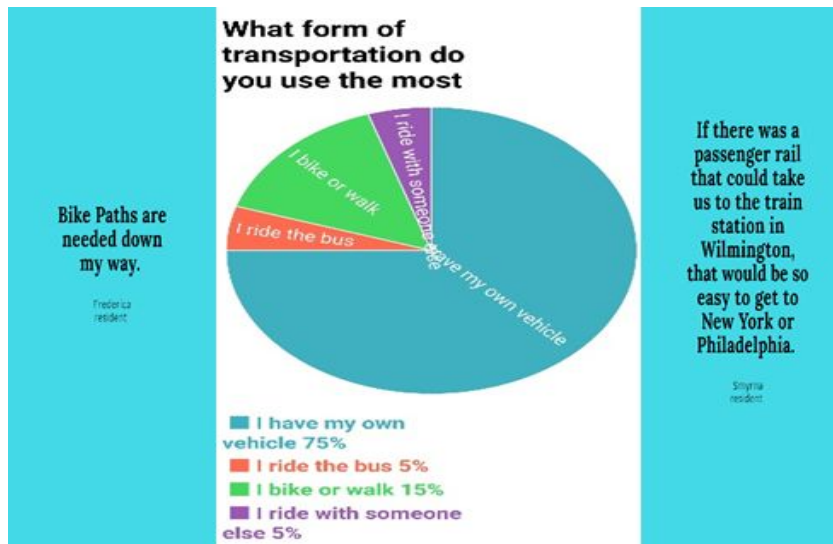
Surveys

Instead of doing one extensive survey, the MPO separated our survey information into six small surveys plus the Money Game. These surveys covered everything from transportation modes that people use, daily commutes, transit, bike paths and sidewalks, new technology, and general questions.

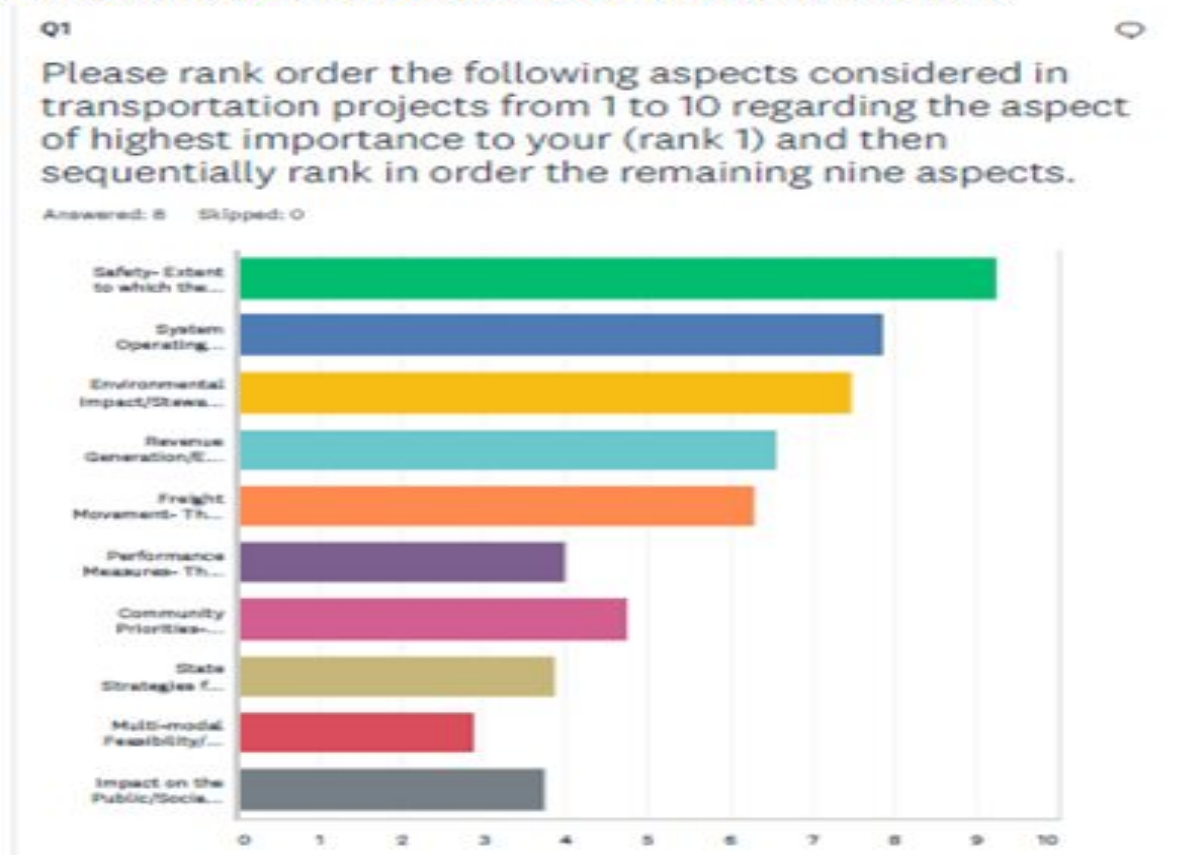
Survey Results

The six general surveys covered the same issues as the money game. The surveys allowed respondents to expand on these concepts. Including the money game, we heard from approximately 300 respondents. A sampling of some of the comments and results from some of the questions appear below:





SURVEY RESULTS FROM PRIORITIZATION SURVEY



You can see all survey results and comments on our website at www.doverkentmpo.org under "Innovation, 2045". NOTE: **The entire survey will be included in this MTP as an appendix when the final draft is completed in August 2020.** However, the public can view the survey in its entirety on our web site: Innovation2045.com.

The Money Game

The money game was a simple but engaging way to receive survey results. We set up ten baskets representing possible future projects. Then we supplied each respondent with 5 million MPO dollars and asked them to spend it as they see fit. The projects were:

- Fix existing roads
- Building new roads
- Bridge repair
- Transit (bus routes and stops)
- Bike Lanes
- Sidewalks
- Passenger Rail
- New Technology
- Crosswalks/Lights
- Air Quality

We had a total of 176 respondents both in person and our online version of the game. Respondents felt that fixing existing roads and providing a more comprehensive transit systems were the most important projects. (see chart below). Please note that due to the Covid-19 crisis we were forced to cancel several of our pop-up outreach events.

Money Game Stats



Public Workshops

We did three virtual public workshops with an average of 20 people who responded to each "online party." These were done on Facebook and lasted several hours. Each party had a combination of poll questions, which were directly from our surveys, and different fun activities. We used Facebook Live during these parties to further, connect and engage our visitors. We

also did several watch parties on Facebook during the events which were instrumental in getting even more engagement during the hours of the workshops.

News Coverage

We interviewed on WMDT news before the launch of public outreach. We have also scheduled an interview with Comcast Newsmakers later in the summer to discuss the draft and to solicit comments.

Advertising

We did digital advertising with the Delaware State News on their webpage, with a pull-down ad that appeared on the top of the DSN website. We also did a paid email that went to 5000 subscribers to the State News. Later, we discovered that we on the ballot for Stars of Delaware, a "Best Of" contest sponsored by the Delaware State News. We used that as a catalyst to do more digital and print ads.

Social Media Campaign

We did a series of social media posts encouraging folks to come to innovation2045.com. A few of these posts are below.



Using Stakeholders in Outreach

Prioritization Working Group

The D/KC MPO Principal Planner organized a working group from the MPO PAC and TAC Committees along with several people from DeIDOT, and the MPO Staff. The working group met several times and decided on the priority criteria for each project would be graded. There is more information on the working group and its priorities in Chapter VI of this plan.

Comments and Prioritization

The Public Outreach office hosted several virtual meetings for the prioritization committee (see chapter VI) as well as doing an additional survey with the project priorities established by the committee. The results of this survey are in Appendix 1 of this chapter. We put each chapter of

the MTP in draft form on the website to get comments and suggestions as the process was in progress.

General Comments at Meetings

All MPO Committee and Council meetings have time set aside for comments. The committee considered all feedback from those meetings. All meetings are also open to the public, so any citizen who attended these meetings also had their comments or concerns taken under advisement.

Comprehensive Plans

The D/KC MPO partners include all towns, cities, and county land area within Kent County, Delaware. Delaware State Code (22 Delaware Code §702) requires municipal governments to develop and regularly update land use plans. Although smaller cities and towns (with populations under 2,000) only have to establish a municipal development strategy, all 20 municipalities in Kent County developed Comprehensive Land Use Plans which are updated every ten years. Each of these plans identifies particular projects crucial to that municipality. The D/KC MPO Executive Director took each of these comprehensive plans and identified the transportation projects within for inclusion in this plan.

Story / Interactive Maps

Sometimes a map can tell a much better story than a narrative. Maps lend a sense of place, illustrate spatial relationships, and have visual appeal. The D/KC MPO GIS Planner took a voluminous amount of information and transformed it into maps that are an excellent tool for public engagement and interest.

Getting At-Risk and Underserved Population Involved

The Dover/Kent County MPO, like all MPOs, have a series of Federal Mandates that fall under "Environmental Justice" describing the charge of considering at-risk and underserved populations. These include people who live under the poverty level, minority populations, the elderly, and people with disabilities. The MPO used several different ways to ensure that these populations were able to get their voice heard. The money game happened at libraries and were scheduled to coincide with other events like tax preparation by the AARP. The Dover Library caters to a significant homeless population, and the MPO was able to talk to several members of that community. We sent an announcement regarding the Innovation 2045 website to churches all over Kent County. The D/KC MPO Public Outreach The manager also presented the site to the Governor's Pedestrian Committee and the University of Delaware Motion in Mobility task force, both of which deal with people with disabilities, people who live in poverty and the elderly.

Final Presentation/Public Workshops

PLACEHOLDER INFORMATION AS THERE WILL BE MORE COPY HERE ON THE FINAL PUBLIC WORKSHOPS IN AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2020

The final draft will post on the MPO website. There will be two presentations, one virtual and one in person (depending on the status of the Covid-19 crisis) to gather the final comments on the draft. The final MTP will then get presented to the PAC and TAC, and they will recommend

to the Council to adopt the plan. The Council will then vote to adopt the MTP, and it will go on record by January 2021.