

ITEM 11 – Information
September 20, 2017

Visualize 2045 Public Outreach: Summary of
Phase 1 Activities

Staff

Recommendation: The board will be briefed on outreach efforts and survey participation as part of the development of Visualize 2045.

Issues: None

Background: Over the summer, staff carried out a public input survey aimed at gathering general attitudes and opinions about transportation in the region. The purpose of the survey was to inform ongoing conversations about regional transportation needs and priorities that will be taking place as part of the development of Visualize 2045. The board will be briefed on the outreach efforts staff undertook to promote the survey and encourage survey participation.



MEMORANDUM

TO: Transportation Planning Board
FROM: Ben Hampton, TPB Transportation Planner
Abigail Zenner, TPB Transportation Planner
SUBJECT: Visualize 2045 Public Outreach: Summary of Phase 1 Activities
DATE: September 14, 2017

Visualize 2045 is the federally required long-range transportation plan for the National Capital Region. It will identify all regionally significant transportation investments planned through 2045 and provide detailed analysis to help decision makers and the public “visualize” the region’s future under current plans.

This memo summarizes the activities conducted as part of the first phase of public outreach for Visualize 2045. This first phase, which took place largely between June and August of this year, centered on a public input survey to gather general attitudes and opinions about transportation in the region. To promote the survey and encourage participation, staff developed and implemented a multifaceted outreach strategy. This memo summarizes the activities that were undertaken and highlights some key outcomes.

BACKGROUND: VISUALIZE 2045 PUBLIC INPUT SURVEY

The Visualize 2045 public input survey was open from June 17 to August 21. It aimed to gather general attitudes and opinions about transportation in the region for the purpose of informing ongoing discussions among decision makers, planners, and stakeholders throughout the development of the Visualize 2045 plan.

The survey used the fun, interactive MetroQuest online survey tool to ask respondents about:

- Daily travel behaviors and patterns
- Key issues related to reliability, affordability, travel time, travel options, and safety
- Suggestions for needed transportation projects or other improvements
- Personal demographic characteristics

Two main approaches were used to gather responses. One was a random sampling to ensure that opinions were gathered from a geographically representative cross-section of the region’s population. Households in this sample received letters asking them to participate, and respondents who completed the survey were provided a monetary reward. The other method was an “open survey” in which any member of the public could participate. People who participated in this survey were entered in a drawing to win one of a set number of rewards.

More than 6,000 people participated in the survey overall. The random sample garnered 755 responses, exceeding staff’s target of 600. More than 5,400 responses were received via the open

survey. The table at the end of this memo provides county-level participation numbers for both the random sample and open survey. These totals provide evidence that the outreach activities to promote the survey and encourage participation successfully engaged residents across the region.

This survey represented a new and expanded effort by the TPB to gather and share public input with regional decision makers and planners as they discussed the development of the region's long-range transportation plan. Federal law has long required the TPB to conduct public involvement activities in its plan development process, however, the TPB has traditionally relied on two 30-day comment periods to solicit input. The timing of the Visualize 2045 public input survey, ahead of the TPB's formal solicitation of project, program, and policy inputs for inclusion in the Constrained Element of the plan, was designed to provide more robust public input earlier in the plan development process.

OUTREACH ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE AND ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION

Staff developed a multifaceted outreach plan to promote the public input survey and encourage participation from a diverse cross-section of the region's population. Outreach activities included both digital and in-the-field elements:

- "Live-surveying" events
- Digital outreach and promotion
- Visualize 2045 "Ambassadors"
- Additional targeted outreach

These activities took place between mid-June and mid-August. To assist in executing these efforts, TPB staff contracted the services of WBA Research and Remline Marketing Services.

"Live-Surveying" Events

Fifteen "live-surveying" events provided an opportunity to gather input from individuals beyond the normal reach of the TPB's outreach and communications activities. For these events, survey teams were equipped with tablet computers and deployed to community events where they would engage with event attendees and administer the survey in real time.

Event locations were chosen to ensure that at least one live-surveying event was held in each of the county-level jurisdictions in the TPB Planning Area. To identify events, staff drew on suggestions from the TPB, TPB Technical Committee, and Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC).

Special efforts were made to ensure that the 15 event sites helped achieve a geographic and demographic balance that would be reflective of the region's diversity. Special attention was also paid to the kinds of events where live-surveying would be appropriate and productive, focusing on farmers markets and street festivals, where potential respondents had time to take the survey, rather than transit stations or outdoor performances, where potential respondents might be rushed or not able to focus on the survey.

The table on the following page outlines the events, locations, and dates of the 15 "live-surveying" events.

“Live-Surveying” Events for the Visualize 2045 Public Input Survey

LOCATION	EVENT	DATE
District of Columbia	Columbia Heights Day	Sat 6/17
Prince George’s County (MD)	Greenbelt Farmers Market	Sun 6/25
District of Columbia	Farragut Friday	Fri 6/30
Frederick County (MD)	Frederick First Saturday	Sat 7/1
Fairfax County (VA)	Mosaic District Farmers Market	Sun 7/2
Prince William County (VA)	Manassas Fourth of July	Tue 7/4
Prince George’s County (MD)	College Park Fourth of July	Tue 7/4
Montgomery County (MD)	Silver Spring Farmers Market	Sat 7/8
Prince William County (VA)	Dale City Farmers Market	Sun 7/9
Prince George’s County (MD)	Crossroads Farmers Market	Wed 7/12
Montgomery County (MD)	Peace Day Party	Sun 7/16
Arlington County (VA)	Ballston Farmers Market	Thu 7/20
Loudoun County (VA)	Leesburg Farmers Market	Sat 8/5
District of Columbia	Soular Sunday (Marvin Gaye Park)	Sun 8/20

Digital Outreach and Promotion

Staff also used a number of digital tools and methods to promote the survey and encourage participation.

- **TPB and COG newsletters.** Staff created a dedicated Visualize 2045 email newsletter to promote the survey, report on outreach activities, and reinforce key messages about the Visualize 2045 plan and planning process. The email was distributed to the TPB’s normal distribution list (approximately 1,200 subscribers) plus anyone who signed up for updates through the Visualize 2045 website. In addition to the dedicated Visualize 2045 email newsletter, staff also promoted the survey in the main TPB and COG e-newsletters—TPB News and COG Connections.
- **Social media.** Using the TPB Twitter account, staff sent out 351 messages, which together gained 64,438 “impressions”—a measure of how many users saw or interacted with a post. Social media provided an effective way to create buzz, keep putting messages in front of people, and encourage conversation. These messages were also re-tweeted by a number of existing TPB followers, including partner agencies and individuals. These re-tweets amplified the TPB’s message, reaching audiences beyond the TPB’s normal group of followers.

Best-Performing #VIZ2045 Tweets

TWEET	DATE	IMPRESSIONS
There's still time to share your opinions on transportation for the #VIZ2045 long-range plan! Go to http://visualize2045.org by Aug 21!	8/15/2017	13,342*

Best-Performing #VIZ2045 Tweets (continued)

TWEET	DATE	IMPRESSIONS
We'll be at @Rockville411's #PeaceDay Party this Sunday to gather community input for #VIZ2045. #MakePeacetheNews	7/14/2017	2,853
One week left to tell us about your daily travel experience for #VIZ2045! Take the survey now at: http://visualize2045.org	7/24/2017	1,679
DEADLINE EXTENDED! You now have until August 21 to take the Visualize 2045 survey! #VIZ2045	7/31/2017	1,599
Got lunch plans? We will be out at Farragut Friday with the @GoldenTriDC spreading the word about #VIZ2045!	7/7/2017	1,314
We're giving you more time to share your thoughts for our #VIZ2045 long-range plan! Take the survey by August 21: http://visualize2045.org	7/31/2017	1,310
We just extended the deadline a few more weeks to August 21, so there's even more time to provide input! #VIZ2045 https://twitter.com/johnfoustva/status/892034267152306178 ...	7/31/2017	1,210
We're giving you a couple more weeks to weigh in for #VIZ2045! Learn more and take the survey by August 21: http://visualize2045.org	8/03/2017	871
One week left to share your thoughts on transportation for our new #VIZ2045 long-range plan! Go to http://visualize2045.org by Aug 21!	8/15/2017	849
We'll be at @GoldenTriDC's Farragut Fridays today from 11 to 3. Come out and share your thoughts on #regional #transportation! #VIZ2045	6/30/2017	802

**The post on 8/15/2017 was a paid "boosted post" expanding the reach past regular followers.*

- **Targeted advertising on Twitter and Facebook.** In the final week of the survey, staff paid to “boost” and “promote” messages on Twitter and Facebook to reach further beyond the TPB’s normal social media audience. The paid Twitter post earned 67,800 impressions while the boosted Facebook post reached 1,770 people. A total of 166 people liked, shared, or clicked on the Facebook post, far surpassing interaction with any previous Facebook posts.
- **Media outreach and ad buys.** To reach traditionally hard-to-reach population groups, especially non-English speakers and African-American audiences, staff purchased digital ads in El Pregonero, El Tiempo, The Washington Informer, and The AFRO. The COG Office of Communications also issued a press release that helped generate coverage by local media outlets, including The Frederick News Post, WHAG-TV (Hagerstown), Greenbelt News Review, and Greater Greater Washington.

- **Visualize 2045 website.** Staff set up a dedicated landing page and website for the Visualize 2045 survey. Site users could easily access the online MetroQuest survey, as well as learn more about the plan, sign up for email updates, submit comments, and get social media and news highlights.

Visualize 2045 “Ambassadors”

One of the other ways staff aimed to expand the reach of the Visualize 2045 survey was by leveraging existing TPB networks and stakeholder groups to help spread the word. Members of the following groups became Visualize 2045 “Ambassadors.” They were encouraged to share the survey information with their constituents, colleagues, and other professional and personal networks.

- Transportation Planning Board
- TPB Technical Committee
- TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)
- TPB Access for All Advisory Committee (AFA)
- COG Public Information Officers Committee (PIOs)

To make it easy for ambassadors to help spread the word about the survey, staff provided “Ambassador Kits” which included text for e-blasts, newsletters, and web pages; pre-packaged social media messages and graphics; information cards; and FAQs and talking points about the plan.

The ambassadors proved to be a great way to increase public awareness about the survey. The following member jurisdictions and agencies Tweeted about the survey from their official Twitter accounts. Collectively, these accounts reach a total of 24,559 followers.

City of Gaithersburg
 Charles County Department of Health
 Fairfax City Planning
 City of Rockville
 District of Columbia Office of Planning
 Alexandria Transportation and Environmental Services
 Montgomery County Stats
 City of Frederick
 Frederick Transit
 Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation
 National Capital Planning Commission

Advocacy and other stakeholder groups also tweeted using the #VIZ2045 hashtag. These included, but were not necessarily limited to:

Coalition for Smarter Growth
 Sierra Club
 Safe Routes to Schools
 Action Committee for Transit
 Cross the Potomac

Additional Targeted Outreach

Additional targeted outreach activities sought to reach other important audiences, including hard-to-reach populations:

- **Metro station “postcarding”**
Staff volunteers handed out postcards to people entering or existing busy Metrorail stations during morning and afternoon peak periods. The postcards invited recipients to complete the Visualize 2045 survey online. Nine stations were strategically chosen for their high ridership numbers as well as for their geographic distribution in the region or the overall demographic make-up of their normal users.

Metro Stations for Postcarding

METRO STATION	TIME
Shady Grove	AM Peak
Dupont Circle	AM Peak
Vienna	PM Peak
Prince George’s Plaza	AM Peak
Union Station	PM Peak
Silver Spring	AM Peak
Anacostia	AM Peak
King Street	AM Peak
L’Enfant Plaza	AM Peak

- **Lunchtime “postcarding”**
Staff volunteers also handed out postcards at two busy lunchtime events: Farragut Friday in DC’s Farragut Square and Food Truck Thursday in Crystal City. These events, hosted by the respective local Business Improvement Districts, attract nearby office workers who commute in from a broad range of locations throughout the region.
- **Other meetings and events**
To reach other under-represented groups, staff attended National Night Out events at King Greenleaf Recreation Center in Southwest DC and Kenilworth Park in Northeast DC. Staff also administered the survey to numerous students at the Washington English Center, a language school for immigrants. And staff reached out to and promoted the survey among additional groups who provide services for hard-to-reach populations.

NEXT STEPS AND FUTURE OUTREACH EFFORTS

Since the survey was only recently concluded, results are not yet available. Staff have begun analyzing the survey responses and plan to begin sharing results in the near future. Further in-depth analyzes will be ongoing and shared with the TPB and its stakeholder groups at a future date.

Additional outreach, in the form of more in-depth workshops and/or focus groups, is expected to take place later this year or in early 2018. The results of all outreach will be shared with board members at various points in the development of Visualize 2045 and included in the final plan to be approved by the board in October 2018.

Geographic Data for Respondents to Visualize 2045 Survey

Random Sample Respondents

Regional Sub-area and Jurisdiction	Respondents
Urban Core	213
Alexandria	29
Arlington	49
District of Columbia	135
Inner Suburb	395
Fairfax	167
Montgomery	134
Prince George's	94
Outer Suburb	147
Charles	16
Fauquier Urbanized Area	3
Frederick	35
Loudoun	41
Prince William	52
TOTAL	755

Respondents to Open Survey Who Reported A Home Zip Code

Regional Sub-area and Jurisdiction	Respondents
Urban Core	1,657
Alexandria	152
Arlington	351
District of Columbia	1,154
Inner Suburb	1,969
Fairfax	723
Montgomery	993
Prince George's	253
Outer Suburb	897
Charles	87
Fauquier Urbanized Area	14
Frederick	250
Loudoun	134
Prince William	412
Outside of TPB Boundary	386
TOTAL (respondents who reported a zip code)	4,909
TOTAL RESPONDENTS	5,460