



MEMORANDUM

TO: TPB Technical Committee
FROM: Ben Hampton, TPB Transportation Planner
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SUBJECT: Visualize 2045 Public Outreach: Summary of Phase 1 Activities
DATE: September 8, 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 Visualize 2045 public outreach. The first phase centered on a public input survey designed to gather general attitudes and opinions about transportation in the region. To promote the survey and encourage participation, staff developed and implemented a robust outreach strategy. This report documents the activities that were undertaken and highlights the outcomes of those activities.

BACKGROUND: VISUALIZE 2045 PUBLIC INPUT SURVEY

While there are federal requirements for public involvement in the development of the long-range plan, the TPB had not conducted public outreach in the early development of the plan for quite some time. The purpose was to begin a conversation about the region’s transportation system among decisionmakers, planners, and other stakeholders. Aside from the two public comment periods for air quality conformity and the final plan, there will be additional public outreach activities as we continue to develop the plan.

In the first phase of Visualize 2045 public outreach, the TPB conducted an online public input survey from June 17 to August 21. The survey aimed to gather general attitudes and opinions about transportation in the region.

To increase engagement, the survey used the MetroQuest online survey tool to make it fun and interactive. The survey asks 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 (to ensure a representative sample)

There were two methods for gathering responses. One was a random sampling to ensure that opinions were gathered from a scientifically representative cross-section of the region’s population. Households in this sample received letters asking them to participate. For letter recipients who could

not access the online survey, a phone number was provided and staff administered the survey over the phone. The second method was an open call for anyone in the region to complete the survey. The open survey provided a vehicle for conversation in the region about our transportation challenges and a way for the TPB to connect with the public—both members of the public already engaged in the TPB’s process and those who may be new to regional transportation planning.

More than 6,000 people participated. About 755 of those were from the random sample, which exceeded the participation target of 600. The remaining 5,460 were from the open survey. The table at the back of this memo provides totals, by county-level jurisdiction, including both the random sample and the open survey.

These totals provide evidence that staff successfully used a variety of outreach methods to engage residents in various corners of the region. Overall, the level of participation was much higher than anticipated, particularly given the fact that time constraints forced staff to conduct the survey during the summer.

The remainder of this memo focuses on the outreach activities undertaken to promote and encourage participation in the open survey sample.

ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE AND ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION

Staff developed a comprehensive outreach plan to encourage widespread participation. The plan included both digital and in-the-field elements falling into the four main categories that follow:

- “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 Strategic Communications. Below is more information about each of these activities.

“Live-Surveying” Events

To ensure that anyone could participate in the open survey, whether or not they had online access, staff planned in-person, “live-surveying” events. Survey interviewers with tablet computers were available at events so people could take the survey in-person.

To identify events, staff drew on suggestions from TPB, Technical Committee, and Citizens Advisory Committee members. In choosing the locations for 15 events, staff focused on achieving a geographic and demographic balance that would be reflective of the region’s diversity.

There were some important considerations for choosing events. Event organizers were required to give permission to allow survey interviewers to be on site. The events also had to attract large numbers of people. People attending the events had to be able to take time to complete a survey and give it their attention. These criteria ruled out busy places like transit stations, or times when

people were rushed. They also ruled out outdoor movies or concerts when attendees would need to focus on the performances.

“Live-Surveying” Events Held Throughout the Region

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

Digital Outreach and Promotion

Staff determined that outreach for a web-based survey required an online strategy to reach people already engaged with the TPB and those not already involved.

- **TPB and COG newsletters** broadcasted information about the survey. Staff created a dedicated Visualize 2045 email to provide updates to existing TPB distribution lists (approx. 1200 subscribers). The newsletter was sent out roughly every 1-2 weeks to promote the survey, report on outreach, and reinforce key messages. Links and information about the survey were also included in TPB News and COG Connections.
- **Social media was another big thrust.** Using the TPB Twitter account, staff sent out 351 messages, which together had 64,438 impressions. “Impressions” are 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, further amplifying the message and sharing it with others.

Best-Performing Tweets

TWEET	DATE	TOTAL 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	13342*
We'll be at @Rockville411's #PeaceDay Party this Sunday to gather community input for #VIZ2045. #MakePeacetheNews	7/14/2017	2853

One week left to tell us about your daily travel experience for #VIZ2045! Take the survey now at: http://visualize2045.org	7/24/2017	1679
DEADLINE EXTENDED! You now have until August 21 to take the Visualize 2045 survey! #VIZ2045	7/31/2017	1599
Got lunch plans? We will be out at Farragut Friday with the @GoldenTriDC spreading the word about #VIZ2045!	7/7/2017	1314
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	1310
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	1210
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** reached non-TPB audiences. For the final week of the survey we purchased boosted or promoted messages for the whole metropolitan area. These posts were shared beyond our regular followers. Twitter yielded 67,800 impressions while the boosted Facebook post reached 1,770 people and 166 people liked, shared, or clicked on the post.
- **Media outreach and ad buys** reached non-TPB audiences with a focus on hard to reach groups. These included buys in El Pregonero, El Tiempo, Washington Informer, and The AFRO. COG press releases helped generate coverage by local media outlets including, Frederick News Post, WHAG, Greenbelt News Review, and Greater Greater Washington.
- **The public portal website** was the main conduit to the survey. In addition to taking the survey, people who visited visualize2045.org could learn more about the plan, sign up for email updates, leave comments, and get social media and news highlights.

Visualize 2045 “Ambassadors”

We also leveraged existing TPB networks and stakeholder groups to help spread the word about the survey. This included the TPB itself as well as the TPB Technical Committee, Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), Access for All Advisory Committee (AFA), and the COG Public Information Officers (PIOs) Committee. Members of these “ambassador” groups were encouraged to share the survey information with constituents, colleagues, friends, family, and networks.

Ambassadors also received kits which included:

- Text for e-blasts, newsletters, and web pages
- Pre-packaged social media messages and graphics
- Information cards to distribute
- FAQs and talking points

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 they reach 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 #VIZ2045 these included:

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

These lists only capture those accounts using the official hashtag, #VIZ2045. Others may have also shared the link to the survey without using the tag.

Additional Targeted Outreach

One of the goals of this outreach was to reach people from all walks of life and those who may not be presently engaged in TPB activities, including hard to reach populations. Staff developed postcards that encouraged residents to take the survey at home. Handing out postcards at Metro stations and specific events helped spread the survey's reach.

- **Metro station "postcarding"**

In addition to the live-survey events, staff volunteers fanned out to Metrorail stations with information cards to hand out to passengers entering and exiting the stations. The postcarding was a way to reach commuters at stations across the region and provide them with information about the survey.

Staff identified a list of stations with high ridership numbers and handed out hundreds of postcards during rush times. Staff also identified stations to reach more diverse populations.

After receiving permission from WMATA, volunteers would hand out postcards to people on their way in and out of the stations. This was primarily a marketing exercise and a way to spread the word about the survey since commuters have little time to talk.

Metro Stations for Postcarding

METRO STATION	DATE
Shady Grove	7/19
Dupont Circle	7/19
Vienna	7/25
Prince George's Plaza	7/20
Union Station	7/20
Silver Spring	7/26
Anacostia	7/26
King Street	7/27
L'Enfant Plaza	7/27

- **Lunchtime “postcarding”**

Staff volunteers also handed out postcards at other events including Farragut Friday, Crystal City’s Food Truck Thursday. These events, organized by the Business Improvement Districts attract office workers from across the region. This was a way to reach commuters from a wide range of locations during their lunch-breaks. Anecdotally, people seemed to visit the website and take the survey or subscribe when they returned to their offices after receiving the cards.

- **Other meetings and events**

To reach other under-represented groups, staff volunteered at National Night Out events at King Greenleaf Recreation Center in Southwest DC and Kenilworth Park in Northeast DC to hand out postcards. Staff also conducted the survey with students at the Washington English Center, a language school for immigrants, and reached out to other groups who provide services for hard to reach populations.

NEXT STEPS AND FUTURE OUTREACH EFFORTS

The attached table shows the number of respondents for each county-level TPB jurisdiction. The table includes totals for both the random sample and the open survey. The levels of participation conveyed in the table are evidence that the region’s geographic diversity is well-represented in the survey results.

Since the survey was only recently concluded, staff will be analyzing the results during the next month and plan to share high-level results in the near future. Further in-depth analysis will be on-going. These results are intended to inform the conversation among decisionmakers, staff, and the public.

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