

visualize
2045 A long-range
transportation plan
for the National
Capital Region

VOICES OF THE REGION

Summary of the *Aspiration to Implementation*
Public Engagement Activity

February 2022



National Capital Region
Transportation Planning Board

VOICES OF THE REGION: SUMMARY OF THE ASPIRATION TO IMPLEMENTATION PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY

ABOUT VISUALIZE 2045 & THE TPB

Visualize 2045 is the federally required long-range transportation plan for the National Capital Region. It identifies and analyzes all regionally significant transportation investments planned through 2045 to help decision makers and the public “visualize” the region’s future.

Visualize 2045 is developed by the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB), the federally designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for metropolitan Washington. It is responsible for developing and carrying out a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process in the metropolitan area. Members of the TPB include representatives of the transportation agencies of the states of Maryland and Virginia and the District of Columbia, 24 local governments, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, the Maryland and Virginia General Assemblies, and nonvoting members from the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority and federal agencies. The TPB is staffed by the Department of Transportation Planning at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG).

CREDITS

Report contributors: Sarah Bond, Stacy Cook, John Swanson

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to past TPB staff member Karen Armendariz for conceptualizing and launching this activity. Thank you to ICF and PRR who supported this activity.

ACCOMMODATIONS POLICY

Alternative formats of this document are available upon request. Visit www.mwcog.org/accommodations or call (202) 962-3300 or (202) 962-3213 (TDD).

TITLE VI NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) operates its programs without regard to race, color, and national origin and fully complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes and regulations prohibiting discrimination in all programs and activities. For more information, to file a Title VI related complaint, or to obtain information in another language, visit www.mwcog.org/nondiscrimination or call (202) 962-3300.

El Consejo de Gobiernos del Área Metropolitana de Washington (COG) opera sus programas sin tener en cuenta la raza, el color, y el origen nacional y cumple con el Título VI de la Ley de Derechos Civiles de 1964 y los estatutos y reglamentos relacionados que prohíben la discriminación en todos los programas y actividades. Para más información, presentar una queja relacionada con el Título VI, u obtener información en otro idioma, visite www.mwcog.org/nondiscrimination o llame al (202) 962-3300.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROJECT OVERVIEW	1
Implementing the Activity	2
Outreach Approach: Open and Virtual	3
Response Rate	3
Analysis	4
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	5
Overall Themes	5
Findings Related to the Seven Aspirational Initiatives	5
NEXT STEPS	16
APPENDIX A	17

FIGURES AND TABLES

FIGURE 1 THE TPB'S ASPIRATIONAL INITIATIVES	1
FIGURE 2 SIGN AT LARGO TOWN CENTER METRO	2
FIGURE 3 SIGN AT PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY PARK AND RIDE	3

PROJECT OVERVIEW

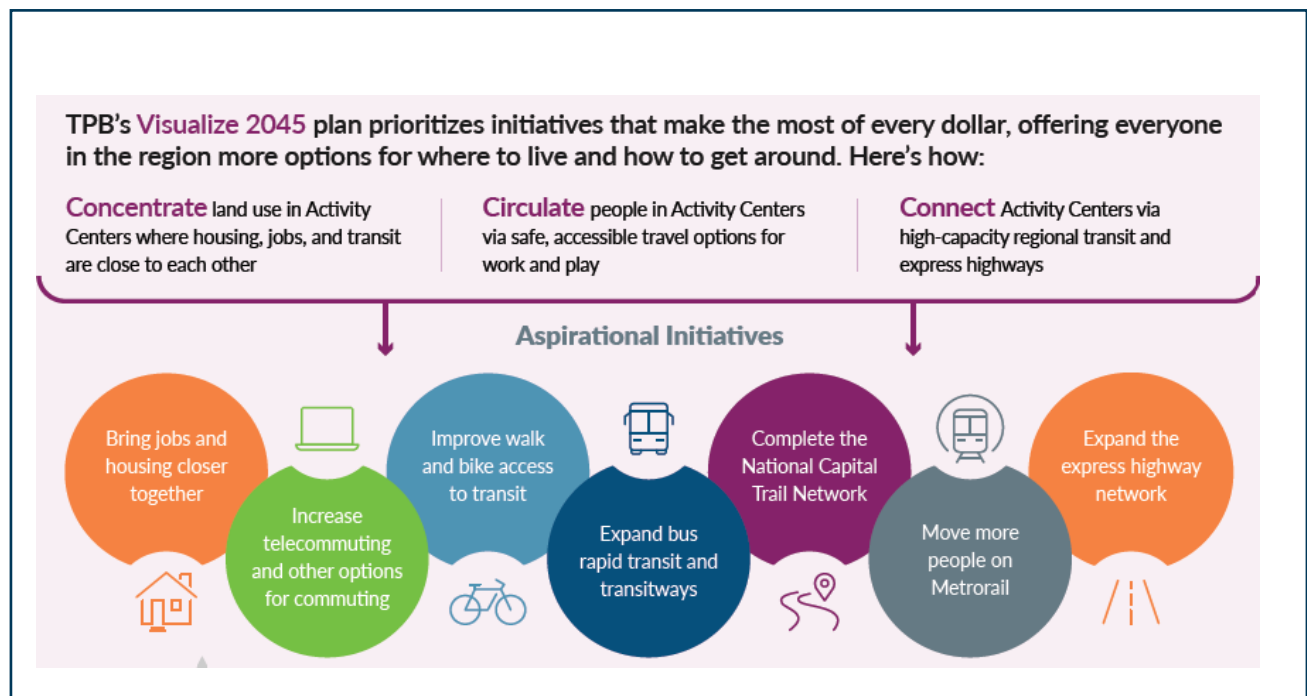
In the summer of 2021, the TPB conducted a virtual public engagement campaign, called Aspiration to Implementation, to solicit input for the update of Visualize 2045, the region’s long-range transportation plan. The campaign used posters and signs with QR codes to obtain comments from the general public about ways in which regional transportation projects, programs, and policies have affected their daily lives.

The campaign’s QR code posters asked people for their personal reflections on projects or policies that are linked to the TPB’s seven Aspirational Initiatives, which are policy-level strategies approved by the TPB in 2018.

The Aspirational Initiatives are:

- Bring Jobs and Housing Closer Together
- Expand Bus Rapid Transit and Transitways Regionwide
- Move More People on Metrorail
- Provide More Telecommuting and Other Options for Commuting
- Expand Express Highway Network
- Improve Walk and Bike Access to Transit
- Complete the National Capital Trail Network

Figure 1 The TPB’s Aspirational Initiatives



The Aspiration to Implementation QR campaign was designed to “meet people where they are” and ask for feedback as they interact with projects that align with TPB policies. The respondents provided feedback on how the initiatives have been useful and what might be improved or expanded to ensure future success.

The personal experiences documented through the QR comments in this report help to make the case that the regional policies embodied in the TPB’s Aspirational Initiatives are already making a difference in people’s lives – and could potentially be even more impactful if implementation were accelerated. This input, along with the other outreach conducted for the plan, will help to establish a starting point for future long-range transportation planning activities of the TPB.

Implementing the Activity

Working with the consultant firms of ICF and PRR, the project team installed posters and signs in more than 40 locations throughout the region. The locations were strategically chosen to highlight projects or policies— such as a new BRT line or a trail— that illustrated one of the Aspirational Initiatives. The project team conducted extensive research to identify potential locations and secure permission for the sign installation.

The posters, which were tailored for each Aspirational Initiative, featured provocative questions to get respondents to share their comments. In regional Activity Centers, for example, the QR code posters asked: “How does having options to live near your job, school and shops affect your life?” As an incentive, people who participated by providing comments were given the chance to win a gift card of \$100.

The posters asked participants to scan the QR code, which led to a website with a survey where they could provide their thoughts about the Aspirational Initiative in question. The website also included an informational [video](#) about the initiatives.

Two of the questions on the online survey used a closed-answer (check-box) format. These questions asked 1) how satisfied the respondent was with the implementation of the initiative and 2) how important the initiative was to them. For example, the Aspirational Initiative calling for the region to move more people on Metrorail asked: “How satisfied are you with the frequency of 8-car trains?” and “How important is having frequent Metrorail and 8-car trains to you?”

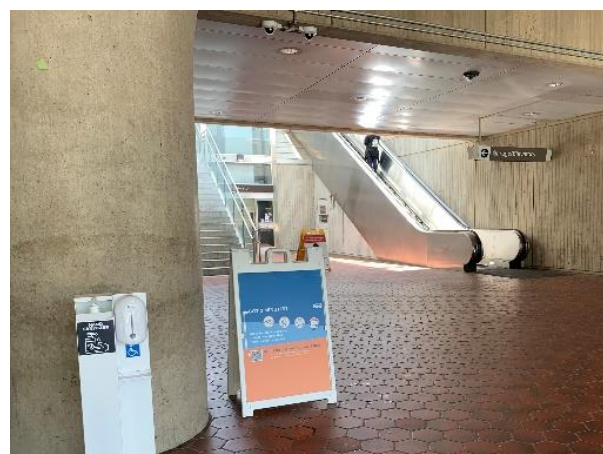


Figure 2: Aspiration to Implementation sign at Largo Town Center Metrorail Station (PRR)

A final question on the online form, which was open-ended, repeated the question on the poster that caught the participant’s attention in the first place. Again, these questions asked participants to share information about how the Aspirational Initiative concepts affect their daily lives. It is worth noting that the general line of inquiry did not talk about Aspirational Initiatives per se and generally avoided jargon. Rather, the activity used the language of projects and options – such as trails, express buses, or increased telework – that represented improvements that people can relate to as individuals.

Residents who did not encounter the QR code signs also had the opportunity to go directly to the website to respond to the form online. This direct opportunity input was advertised through email notices and social media.

Outreach Approach: Open and Virtual

The Aspiration to Implementation QR posters sought input from anyone who cared to contribute. Earlier phases of outreach for Visualize 2045, which were invitation-only activities, included a representative survey and a series of focus groups. Those earlier efforts were designed as rigorous public opinion research activities. In contrast, the QR campaign was intended to be an open opportunity for the public to share – and for decision-makers to learn about – whether and how regional policies are making a difference in people’s lives.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, staff anticipated that this phase of open outreach for the long-range transportation plan update would feature public forums or workshops. Unfortunately, such efforts were not possible. Although the country was gradually reopening in the summer of 2021, the pandemic was not over, and face-to-face engagement techniques were not yet appropriate for public engagement. Therefore, the TPB staff decided to conduct outreach that was completely virtual, which included an online meeting and use of social media to highlight and advertise the activity.



Figure 3 Aspiration to Implementation Sign at Prince William County Park and Ride

Happily, there were clear benefits from the virtual approach. Although there is no substitute for in-person events, virtual engagement provided the opportunity to hear from people who might not normally have participated in the regional planning process. As the world returns to a post-pandemic new normal, it is likely that the TPB will continue to employ virtual engagement tools.

Response Rate

The total number of responses to the survey was 428. These included respondents from all of the TPB’s member jurisdictions. The respondents reported themselves as belonging to the following age and racial categories:

- 1.4% Less than 18 years old
- 17.3% 18-24 years old
- 32.5% 25-34 years old
- 19.2% 35-44 years old
- 14.5% 45-54 years old
- 9.1% 55-64 years old
- 4% More than 64 years old
- 2% Other/Non-responsive
- 61% White
- 17.5% Black/African American
- 9.6% Hispanic/Latino
- 7.9% Asian
- 4% Other/Non-responsive

While the overall number of substantive comments was high for this type of outreach, the responses were not evenly distributed among the seven Aspirational Initiatives. The largest number of responses was 132 for the initiative “Improve Walk and Bike Access to Transit.” In contrast, the initiative “Provide More Telecommuting and Other Options for Commuting” only solicited 10 responses.

This inconsistency among the responses was likely related to the way the activity itself – asking people to respond to posters placed in physical locations – could be easily applied to some Aspirational Initiatives, but not to others. For the initiative about telework, for example, it was difficult to identify poster locations where potential respondents (i.e., people who are currently teleworking) might take a few minutes to answer some questions about the benefits of working from home at a moment when they were actually away from home. The team working on this activity did set up the signs in coffee shops and libraries, but those locations elicited few responses.

In contrast, some Aspirational Initiatives were better suited to the activity. People entering a Metro station or riding a bike on a trail encountered the signs in passing but were easily able to stop and share their input.

Analysis

TPB staff used qualitative data analysis software called MAXQDA to detect primary themes in the input received. Using an initial list of themes and subthemes, staff flagged and categorized comments and then reviewed them to comprehensively understand the feedback on the initiatives and how the information could be used to further promote implementation of and communicate about the Aspirational Initiatives.

The themes are identified in the Summary of Findings below. This section also provides a more detailed breakdown of thematic findings for each of the Aspirational Initiatives, along with selected quotes from comments received,

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Overall Themes

Out of 428 total written comments, the following themes were the most frequently mentioned. As shown below, nearly a quarter of respondents mentioned “time management/efficiency” in their written comments. One in five spoke about convenience and the value of having transportation options.

- **Time management/efficiency** (98 comments) – Respondents expressed a desire to save time, spend time wisely, and arrive to destinations quickly.
- **Convenience/options** (85 comments) – Respondents described the appeal of having reliable options close and accessible to where they live and work.
- **Access to Jobs/ School** (67 comments) – Respondents highlighted the importance of good access to work or school.
- **Family and Quality of Life** (65 comments) – Respondents emphasized how transportation can impact the quality of people’s personal lives, and/or the quality of the lives of their family or friends.
- **Health and Personal Well-being** (59 comments) – Respondents described how transportation can improve their physical health or mental health.
- **Safety** (44 comments) – Respondents expressed feeling personally safe or unsafe when using the transportation system and described how safety plays a role in their travel choices.
- **Connectivity** (37 comments) – Respondents commented on the importance of transportation’s connections to their destination or to other modes of transportation.
- **Environment** (37 comments) – Respondents made comments about the environment or climate change.

Findings Related to the Seven Aspirational Initiatives

For each of the seven Aspirational Initiatives, the text below provides a description of the questions that were asked on the QR signs, along with a summary of the comments received. Each initiative also includes a section called “In their own words,” which provides quotes that are thematically grouped.

BRING JOBS AND HOUSING TOGETHER

What we asked:

This Aspirational Initiative, the only one focused primarily on land use, calls for policies to increase the opportunities for people to live and work in Activity Centers — places where jobs and housing are concentrated and it is easy to walk, bike, or take transit.

The QR signs asked the question: “How does having options to live near your job, school and shops affect your life?” The signs were placed in established mixed-use developments throughout the

region that typically have a lot of pedestrian and bicycle activity. A total of 95 residents sent in their responses.

What we heard:

Overall, respondents to this QR code expressed support for the initiative and shared how these improvements have affected their daily lives – or could impact their lives in the future. The respondents included people who already live close to their jobs, those who *wish* to live closer to their jobs, and some who are content not living close to work.



To a large extent, respondents indicated they are already enjoying the benefits of the initiative. When asked how satisfied they are with how near they are to their workplaces, about two-thirds said they were very or somewhat satisfied. Similarly, nine out of ten respondents said it is extremely or very important for them to have options to live near their jobs, schools, and shops.

A major theme found in the responses was “family and quality of life.” Respondents chose to not only talk about how this initiative would improve their lives, but also the lives of those closest to them. This was a recurring theme, as many respondents also talk about described how time spent in traffic takes away from time spent with their families and affects the lives of their children.

Another common theme used was “health and personal well-being.” Respondents frequently said that a closer distance to work makes it easier to achieve a “work-life balance.” But others said that remote work no longer makes living close to work as a necessity.

A few respondents noted the equity implications of this initiative and specifically mentioned housing affordability concerns which complicate the ability of many people to aspire to this initiative.

In their own words:

- Time savings to do other things
 - *“It makes the work life balance better. Instead of a long commute you are able to get back to your family.”*
 - *“Having a job close to where I live will make me save so much time and do other things such as working out or volunteering.”*
 - *“Living near my job will give me more time for me and my family. I will not be so tired at the end of the day and I will enjoy life. Long commutes are taking much hours off my life.”*
 - *“I pay a lot for child care... the longer I sit in traffic, it’s like I am paying double: once for gas and once for the babysitters and pay more in loss of time with my family (my 4 year old son).”*
 - *“This has a massive impact on my life! The amount of things I can do in a day, the jobs available to me, and the ability to see family and friends rely on having options to live close to jobs, shopping, and school.”*

- Expanded access to non-work opportunities
 - *“It makes all the difference in the world. I’m lucky enough to live within walking distance of a metro station and it opens up a whole new world for me.”*
 - *“Being able to walk or take transport to work, shops etc. helps me be immensely more active, involved in the community, and social. Having to drive everywhere reduces my desire to leave the house.”*
 - *“I can go straight from Reston to pretty much anywhere in the Washington Metropolitan area.”*
 - *“It allows me to sleep in later and get home earlier as well as be more connected to my community.”*

- Increased access to jobs
 - *“For jobs, we have more opportunities, and we are not limited to only jobs around certain areas.”*
 - *“I walk to work and love it!”*
 - *“We know that so many of the people who work in Alexandria can’t afford to live in Alexandria, so they either have to drive into work or take transit... Making more affordable housing in Alexandria would help make people’s lives better and would combat climate change.”*

- Saving money
 - *“It allows our family to go down to only one car, subsequently allowing us to pay off debt and be more financially secure.”*
 - *“It’s cheaper because you spend less money on gas public transportation. Being able to walk to local shops is also really nice.”*
 - *“I pay a lot for childcare... The longer I sit in traffic, it’s like I’m paying double: once for gas and once for the babysitters.”*

- Helping the environment
 - *“Helping reduce individuals carbon footprint by reducing the commute.”*
 - *“Who won’t love reducing carbon footprint if metro got good frequency and had no delay operations.”*
 - *“For me being green in my daily activities is my highest priority. Ideally, I’d like a situation that also allows me to bike to work so I can spend less time at the gym, killing two birds with one stone.”*

- Enjoying convenience
 - *“If I lived closer to shops it would be easier in the event that I forgot ingredients to a recipe I forgot make up or eyeliner for a night out. Being closer to shop so I can simply run downstairs or run across the street to purchase whatever I need.”*

- General happiness
 - *“It’s a game changer. The less time I have to spend in my car, the better off I am in terms of health and well-being.”*
 - *“I am healthier and happier – and the air quality is better!”*
 - *“Being able to work in the same town/county that I live in for the past few years has been a massive improvement to my work life balance for both my wife and myself.”*

- Health benefits
 - *“When I live close to work it means I have a shorter commute and can make time to exercise or actually make a healthy dinner.”*

- “The last time people sit in traffic, the less destructive impact we have on our waistlines and on the environment.”
- Criticisms & suggestions
 - “I sincerely hope these plans are made with equity in mind, allowing people of all income levels and races to have the opportunity to live closer to jobs, schools and shops (as opposed to simply well-off white people).”

EXPAND BUS RAPID TRANSIT AND TRANSITWAYS REGIONWIDE

What we asked:

This Aspirational Initiative calls for the expansion of bus rapid transit (BRT) services throughout the region, as well as other transit options.

The QR signs about this initiative asked: “How does having faster and more frequent bus service affect your life?” The signs were placed at locations around the region where BRT and express bus services are currently in operation – particularly in Alexandria, Arlington, and Montgomery County. A total of 29 responses were received.



What people told us:

While some respondents described positive current experiences with express buses, others expressed a desire for more frequent and faster services. A common theme for this initiative was time management and efficiency. Respondents described the desire to save time, spend time wisely, and arrive at destinations quickly.

Another common theme with this initiative was access to jobs and schools. Respondents described how they currently use buses to get to work or school. They said that having more BRT options would improve their commutes.

In their own words:

- Reducing the need to drive
 - “Will be very good when 66 HOT lanes are done, so commute times can be reduced (hopefully significantly). Faster and more frequent bus service should then be used to encourage the public to choose bus over driving their own car. This has multiple benefits: saves time and money. And on top of that, better for environment.”
 - “Having bus service from Gainesville VA to the Pentagon is fantastic! The only improvement you could possibly make is allow for the connecting bus service to run throughout the whole day.”
- Increased access to non-work opportunities
 - “It makes my commute to work, the grocery store, nightlife, and metro faster, more feasible and convenient.”

- *“Not everyone wants, needs, or can afford to take metro rail so we need to get our buses to important destinations for the riding public quickly. BRT is the answer.”*
- Improving quality of life
 - *“Getting to work on time, escaping bad weather, getting home on time.”*
 - *“Improves my work life balance.”*
- Criticisms & suggestions
 - *“Bus stop coverage has been very good, but trip times have been similar to cycling or even walking ... to improve trip times, I typically mix cycling to avoid transfers and stick to more direct bus routes.”*
 - *“When something happens – when the express buses don't show or are cancelled– I have no way to get home after 6-7pm in the evenings.”*
 - *“The infrequency and limited hours of rapid bus services (and of bus transit in general) requires me to drive for nearly all trips into the regional core.”*

MOVE MORE PEOPLE ON METRORAIL

What we asked:

This Aspirational Initiative calls for Metrorail improvements to move more people through the center of the region by (among other things) increasing train lengths (from six-car trains to eight-cars) and increasing the frequency of service.

The QR signs about this initiative asked: “How does having frequent Metrorail and 8-car trains affect your life?” The signs were hung on A-frame boards that stood near Metro station entrances. A total of 87 responses were submitted in response to this question.



What people told us:

Respondents generally expressed satisfaction with their use of Metro and said that more cars and more frequency would improve their riding experience. Many spoke openly about how their commutes impact their day-to-day life. About half of the responses mentioned the importance of time management and efficiency, specifically referring to a desire to save time, spend time wisely, and arrive at destinations quickly and efficiently.

In their comments, participants described taking Metro to get to and from work, attend doctor’s appointments, go shopping, explore attractions, and visit friends and family. They said they would support improvements to make these trips quicker and more efficient.

Some respondents praised Metro as a convenient option for exploring the region without having to use a car. However, others noted that the quality of their trips is adversely impacted by the level of crowding on trains, and they noted that these concerns have been heightened by the COVID pandemic.

In their own words:

- Service has become more reliable
 - *“More frequent service and 8-car trains help reduce crowding on subway cars and decrease chances of being late.”*
 - *“Having consistent trains of the same lengths means you can better plan your transit experience.”*
 - *“My commute is long, so more frequent trains are important to make sure I’m on time without having to leave home hours before my shift”*
- Trips are faster
 - *“My commute is always short because of frequent trains.”*
 - *“it actually made my life easier because I get everywhere faster.”*
 - *“Cuts down my commute and increases time home with family!”*
- Using Metro is good for the environment
 - *“It not only saves me from headaches from having to figure out how to get places when it’s not peak hours, it also makes it easier for me and my friends to commit to more environmentally sustainable choices and lifestyles.”*
 - *“A greener option: more people will want to metro vs driving. Less cars on the road.”*
 - *“I don’t have to drive, I get to cut my carbon footprint and parking/roads should be turned into green spaces.”*
- These improvements make a car-free lifestyle more possible
 - *“Makes it easier for me to get to work and see friends, especially since I am car free.”*
 - *“It makes it easier for me to move about the city for my work since I don’t have a car.”*
 - *“Makes it so much easier to get around town! I sold my car when I moved from NoVA to DC partially because the Metro’s so good here.”*
 - *“I can live happily without a car”*
- More space on trains helps with social distancing
 - *“Having 8-car trains makes it possible for more people to get to work without having to be packed in like sardines, especially considering the current pandemic.”*
 - *“It means there is less crowding, which during COVID is less chances of exposure and germ spread.”*
- Criticisms & suggestions
 - *“If the Metro ran more often (like every 5 minutes or less), I would be able to take that, because the commute time would be about the same or less. But as it is, that’s not an option.”*
 - *“Not enough trains. Would rather have very frequent 6 car trains than infrequent 8 car trains.”*

PROVIDE MORE TELECOMMUTING OPTIONS & OTHER COMMUTING OPTIONS

What we asked:

This Aspirational Initiative calls for programs to double the number of people who telework, along with other demand management measures to reduce driving.

The QR signs about this initiative asked: “How important is having options to work from home to you?”

Only 10 responses were submitted in response to this question. This low response rate was probably due to the nature of the Aspirational Initiative itself.

Overall, this QR code outreach activity was designed to catch people in the moments when they are actively engaging in one of the Aspirational Initiatives. But for the teleworking initiative this approach was less appropriate; people who are teleworking are at home and not in a place where a QR sign is going to grab their attention. The public engagement team hoped that putting the signs in libraries, coffee shops, and food courts in malls would attract attention, but this approach had limited success.



What people told us:

All respondents said that this initiative was either moderately, very, or extremely important and they described the positive impacts this initiative could have or does have in their personal lives. Respondents spoke of the ‘flexibility’ or ‘freedom’ provided by teleworking, and particularly noted the time they saved by not having to commute. The most common code or theme used in analyzing this initiative was “family and quality of life.” In illustrating the personal value of teleworking, participants described the additional time they have to spend with family and friends, as well as the money they are saving on childcare costs. Respondents said they would like to continue teleworking after the pandemic, if possible.

In their own words:

- Teleworking saves valuable time
 - *“I will save 4 hours of daily commute and no more before and aftercare payment.”*
 - *“Pretty positively! More time for me, more time for my family.”*
- Quality of life has improved
 - *“It has greatly benefited my life. I am more patient because I am spending less time in traffic, more efficient because I’m not rushing to finish to beat traffic to get home. And, I’m saving money by not purchasing as much gas for my car.”*
 - *“It cuts down on commute time and lets me visit my garden on breaks.”*

EXPAND EXPRESS HIGHWAY NETWORK

What we asked:

This Aspirational Initiative calls for the addition of toll lanes to existing highways throughout the region.

The QR sign asked: “Express toll lanes as an option: how does this affect your life?” The signs were placed in park and ride lots around the region.

Only 18 people sent responses to these signs. Similar to the response rate for the telework initiative, the small number of responses was likely due to the nature of the Aspirational Initiative itself.

People who use express lanes were probably less likely to see and respond to the QR posters as they moved quickly through park and ride lots. Perhaps most important, these lots were extremely underused because of the pandemic. In contrast, people engaging in the other Aspirational Initiatives, such as those that relate to trails or transit, probably had more time and opportunity to respond to the outreach.



What we heard:

The relatively small number of people who shared their thoughts about toll roads had very mixed feelings. A sizable number had very negative opinions about the initiative.

Generally, respondents that spoke positively about expanding express toll lanes noted the importance of time management. They said toll roads help them save time and spend less time in traffic. Traffic congestion was mentioned frequently within the responses for this initiative as a concern, and some respondents think express toll lanes will provide a solution for congestion across the region. Others, who indicated dissatisfaction with this initiative, shared concerns about the affordability of toll lanes and environmental impacts.

In their own words:

- Good to have the option if needed
 - *“Having options to use express lanes is certainly a positive effect on the undeniable traffic congestion of the DC Metro and surrounding area.”*
- Saving time to do other things
 - *“Allows me to decide how important it is to save time when traveling.”*
 - *“Less time commuting”*
- Criticisms & suggestions
 - *“Costs too much”*
 - *“It increases human suffering because the average citizen cannot afford \$10-\$20 tolls increase yet another short cuts for the rich.”*

IMPROVE WALK AND BIKE ACCESS TO TRANSIT

What we asked:

This initiative calls for more sidewalks, crosswalks, trails, and other improvements to make it easier to get to a train or bus on foot or by bike.

The QR sign asked: “How does having an easy walk or bike ride to your bus or train affect your life?” The signs were placed in the areas around Metrorail and commuter rail stations that have a lot of foot traffic. A total of 134 people responded to this sign – the most feedback for any of the seven Aspirational Initiatives.



What we heard:

Responses were largely enthusiastic and positive. When asked how satisfied they were with the current number of paths to transit, three out of four said they were satisfied. Nearly all respondents said an easy walk or bike ride to transit was important to them.

In their written comments, respondents spoke about the importance of connectivity to the transportation system. These comments conveyed a general understanding that first- and last-mile connections to transit are integral components of the region’s transit system. Another common theme was a desire for convenience when walking or biking to transit. Respondents indicated that they want their connection to transit to be “easy,” “safe,” or “comfortable.”

Some respondents said that they enjoy the lifestyle of not owning a car or the option to use their car less. In addition to saving money and getting exercise, they appreciated the environmental impacts of walking and biking to transit. A number of respondents said they made their housing decisions based on how well they will be able to walk or bike to transit, which they said improved their quality of life.

In their own words:

- Walking and biking options increase the likelihood of using transit
 - *“Being able to access transit easily makes me more likely to take it.”*
 - *“Makes it more likely for me to take mass transit, which I feel good about.”*
 - *“If the walk to the metro was more difficult... I’d be less inclined to take metro and just drive. Because it’s an easy walk, I take the metro.”*
 - *“Having an easy walk to my train significantly improves my satisfaction with public transportation.”*
- It’s a key factor in choosing where to live
 - *“The easy walk to the metro was made and what made my partner and I choose to live here. We can easily get to work, entertainment, shopping, and visit friends and family via the numerous transit pads, which makes our quality of life very high. Can’t imagine living in any place with fewer transit options!”*
 - *“I use the metro every day to get to work. It allows me to live outside of downtown DC which ultimately saves me money.”*

- *“Having a sidewalk with a crosswalk was very important to me when I was deciding where to move in the DMV.”*
- *Very much affects my life, picked housing based on that factor.”*
- Reducing car dependency
 - *“It allows for not needing to use a car which reduces traffic and helps the environment.”*
- Saving money
 - *“The ease of transport was why I moved into Crystal City. I wanted to save money and not need a car, so the easier the access the better.”*
 - *“A car free lifestyle has save me hundreds of dollars and gets me in better shape by walking more.”*
- Health benefits of walking and biking
 - *“Getting exercise. Improves mood relieves stress.”*
 - *“Same amount of time to get to work. Do not need as much time in the gym.”*
 - *“Besides providing the only type of routine exercise I can fit into my work schedule, it allows me to clear my mind and prepare for the day.”*
 - *“... Walking keeps me active and healthy, plus then I’m more likely to support a local business and meet a new cool person on my way to the metro (my favorite part of living in DC!)”*
- Feeling safer
 - *“Definitely adds convenience and a feeling of safety to my day.”*
 - *“Ease of access, visibility, and lighting feel safer than a mud-ridden path without any sort of visibility.”*
 - *“It makes it so I don’t have to worry about drinking and driving because I can take the metro. It keeps us all safer!”*
 - *“Having an easy walk to the train makes me feel much safer using the metro at night. In areas where I cannot do this, I have to use Ubers instead of the metro.”*
- Expanded access to non-work opportunities
 - *“It greatly facilitates my meeting up with friends who live in different parts of the area, both the District and NoVa.”*
 - *“Very easy to get up and go places in the city!”*
- Environmental benefits
 - *“Having an easy walk to the metro and bus is a huge reason for why I do not own a car that contributes to global warming.”*
- Criticisms & suggestions
 - *“Currently it’s about a 20-minute walk at a narrow sidewalk to my nearest metro station, easier access to mass transit would be a huge benefit.”*
 - *“Many areas in Vienna lack sidewalks where you can safely walk in... I could definitely enjoy my walks better if they were more sidewalks on both sides of the roads.”*
 - *“There are good sidewalks, but no protected bike lanes without protected bike lanes, I won’t travel on main roads to transit.”*
 - *“... Traveling sometimes involves walking on the side of highways that don’t have any or adequate sidewalks, which feels very unsafe.”*

- *“One of the things that is annoying to me is how the signals on my walk to the metro are timed for drivers and not pedestrians ... It is yet another reminder that I am not the priority of transportation planners, the roads are designed for the interests of car drivers and not for people like me.”*

COMPLETE THE NATIONAL CAPITAL TRAIL NETWORK

What we asked:

Through this Aspirational Initiative, the TPB has called upon the region to complete the National Capital Trail Network, a long-distance, continuous network of low-stress, mostly off-road bicycle and pedestrian trails that will serve the entire metropolitan Washington Region.

The QR sign for this initiative asked: “How does having a connected network of regional trail affect your life?” The signs were placed along major regional trails throughout the region. A total of 55 people responded to this sign.



What we heard:

Respondents expressed positive feelings about their current trail experience and a desire to have more connectivity. Roughly half of respondents said they are very satisfied with current trails, while approximately one-third said they are somewhat satisfied – which seems to suggest a desire for continued improvement.

In their written comments, respondents shared how the varied uses for trails allow for recreation, fitness, and time in nature, as well as serving a transportation purpose. An overwhelming theme found in the analysis identified health and personal well-being as an important benefit of trails. Respondents view access to trails as a connection to a healthy lifestyle and ‘improved morale.’

Those respondents who use trails for cycling spoke about trails as a safer alternative than being on the road, and they specifically noted that trails are safer options for families and younger children when they use their bikes. There were some respondents that use trails to get to work as an alternative to using their vehicle on congested roadways.

In their own words:

- Useful for transportation (not just recreation)
 - *“It allows me not to have a car, and to get most everything I need on a bike.”*
 - *“It’s vital to connect neighborhoods with business districts and public transportation.”*
 - *“More trails, especially trails that lead to centers of business, shopping, and dining, means I am spending less time on the beltway, reducing emissions, and improving my health.”*

- *“Bicycle trails that go anywhere where anyone needs or wants to go is essential. They must be more than for out and back leisurely rides.”*
- Health benefits of walking and biking
 - *“I am so thankful in a time of shut-downs that I have the space to listen to my music and nature, and to walk.”*
- Good for the environment
 - *“It enables me to stay active and it is good for the environment”*
- Connecting communities
 - *“The trail is nice because it connects Maryland with old town and DC.”*
 - *“I like having the ability to go to Alexandria from National Harbor without using the bus or driving.”*
- Recreational value, appreciating nature
 - *“I now have 7 miles of nature trails to enjoy my morning exercise instead of riding on congested roadways.”*
 - *“It helps me get outside more often and keeps me healthier, knowing I have high-quality, well-maintained trails close to where I live and work :-)”*
- Criticisms & suggestions
 - *“I would like to see more routes designed for efficient commuting in my area, not just recreation.”*
 - *“I have safety concerns about cycling in places where I share roads that aren’t designed for me and my bike with drivers who are unaccommodating.”*
 - *“Please make trails more accessible for a lower-income people by putting them more in low-income areas.”*

NEXT STEPS

The findings from this report will be integrated into the Visualize 2045 plan update, which is scheduled for TPB approval in June 2022. A variety of quotes from the Voices of the Region outreach conducted for the plan update will be woven into the plan document. This inclusion of authentic human voices in the plan document will help to make the case that the plan’s objectives are vital for the region’s future.

The personal experiences documented in this report help to make the case that the regional policies embodied in the TPB’s Aspirational Initiatives are already making a difference in people’s lives – and could potentially be even more impactful if implementation were accelerated. This input, along with the other outreach conducted for the plan, will help to establish a starting point for future long-range transportation planning activities of the TPB.

APPENDIX A

Memorable Narratives from the Aspiration to Implementation Outreach

BRING JOBS & HOUSING CLOSER TOGETHER

Quote	Age	Race	Location
My quality of life is greatly improved when I have multiple affordable public transportation options available to me, and furthermore I love the environmental implications of public transit. I'd consider living/working in a much greater set of areas if there were more transportation and other sorts of things (shops, restaurants, concert venues, etc) available to me! I also love the addition of bike lanes every time they spring up. I sincerely hope these plans are made with equity in mind, allowing people of all income levels and races to have the opportunity to live closer to jobs schools and shops.	18-24 years old	White	Wiehle Reston Metro Station
I pay a lot for child care... the longer I sit in traffic, it's like I am paying double: once for gas and once for the babysitters and pay more in loss of time with my family (my 4 year old son).	45-54 years old	White, Black or African American	Reston
Having options to live near my job and school is very impactful on my life. It means that I not only have multiple options on where I can potentially work, but the initiative ensures I can make it to school on time and safely. I go to school at George Mason University, and since there is so much reliable transportation namely the metro and cue buses in the area, it makes it easy for me to make it to class and when I study with friends or need to meet a professor.	18-24 years old	White	Wiehle Reston Metro Stration

EXPAND BUS RAPID TRANSIT AND TRANSITWAYS REGIONWIDE

Quote	Age	Race	Location
Not everyone wants, needs, or can afford to take Metrorail so we need to get our buses to important destinations for the riding public quickly. BRT is the answer.	45-54 years old	White	Sterling
BRT would provide a viable alternative to driving a car. It would decrease air pollution and address climate change. It would reduce car accidents, injuries, and death. It would reduce the space needed for parking cars. It would reduce wear and tear on the roads and the subsequent tax burden.	65 years or older	White	Bethesda

MOVE MORE PEOPLE ON METRORAIL

Quote	Age	Race	Location
Many people use Metrorail. Having frequent Metrorail especially during rush hour lessens the amount of time people spend commuting to and from work because they aren't waiting as much. Additionally having 8-car trains makes it possible for more people to get to work without having to be packed in like sardines, especially considering the current pandemic.	25-34 years old	Black or African American	Largo
Having more frequent 8-car trains not only makes it more convenient to travel, but it makes me feel safer. I can more easily keep my distance from people when there's more space to spread out.	25-34 years old	White	Rosslyn
I've found that 8 car trains help a lot with the quality of the commute. Previously cars were more often than not stuffed with people, but now on most occasions there is plenty of seating and this makes for a more relaxed ride.	Less than 18 years old	White	Arlington

PROVIDE MORE TELECOMMUTING OPTIONS & OTHER COMMUTING OPTIONS

Quote	Age	Race	Location
I will save 4 hours of daily commute and no more before and aftercare payment. Better life for my children who no longer need to be up early to be dropped off.	55-64 years old	Black or African American	Waldorf
I have a 30 Min commute to work. With little kids, pandemic, I was on a tight schedule. No daycare or trying to save allowed me to hybrid work.	25-34 years old	Asian	Waldorf
The pandemic has forced a good deal of work to be done by telework. While not everyone can benefit from it, many white-collar workers can. Flexible telework allows me to structure my days more creatively to get both work and personal affairs done more efficiently.	55-64 years old	Black or African American	Montclair

EXPAND EXPRESS HIGHWAY NETWORK

Quote	Age	Race	Location
Toll lanes will provide opportunity for expanded commuter bus service between Frederick and the region!	55-64 years old	White	Frederick
Do not add toll lanes. This makes the expense of driving to work even higher – cutting back on how much I make per day. This especially effects people with hourly positions who aren't making that much per hour. I am afraid that soon all the roads will be toll roads which is ridiculous because we already pay for road maintenance- now we have to pay to get places faster? Only a luxury for those with enough money	25-34 years old	White	Manassas

IMPROVE WALK AND BIKE ACCESS TO TRANSIT

Quote	Age	Race	Location
Knowing that my walk to my transit stops reliable lets me plan my commute with confidence. The fact that my house is near a station or stop also makes it easier to use public transportation when the weather is bad. That consistency lets me keep transit and climate change in my mind.	25-34 years old	Hispanic, Latino/a/x, Spanish origin	District of Columbia
It has greatly benefited my life. I am more patient because I am spending less time in traffic, more efficient because I'm not rushing to finish to beat traffic to get home. And, I'm saving money by not purchasing as much gas for my car.	35-44 years old	White	Wood-bridge
Having an easy walk or bike ride means that I'm more likely to go out to the movies, eat out, sit in the parks, and meet my neighbors. It means fewer trips done by car to see friends and get to work and less pollution in my neighborhood and in the region overall. It helps me stay fit and mobile even with post-COVID health issues. It helps me improve my mood being able to move my body as part of my travel or commute.	25-34 years old	White, Black or African American	Silver Spring
Having a clear cut path/route to a bus stop and metro station is essential. In inclement weather walking through mud/dirt/grass/etc to get to a bus stop I shouldn't be necessary. Ease of access, visibility, and lighting feels safer than a mud ridden path without any sort of visibility.	18-24 years old	Hispanic, Latino/a/x, Spanish origin	Merrifield, Dunn Loring

COMPLETE THE NATIONAL CAPITAL TRAIL NETWORK

Quote	Age	Race	Location
It is a great initiative which will definitely help to develop the area more functionally and enhance the living resources in the neighborhood, as particularly we like to have a walks with my 4 year old son with development delay and explore the new unknown destinations and be closer to the nature.	35-44 years old	White	Vienna, Dunn Loring
Safe, well-maintained regional trails impact me massively. Cycling is my preferred mode of transportation, so more trails-especially trails that lead to centers of business, shopping, and dining-means I'm spending less time on the beltway, reducing emissions, and improving my health. As an overweight guy, I cherish any opportunity to fit some exercise into a busy schedule.	35-44 years old	White, Hispanic, Latino/a/x, Spanish origin	Woodrow Wilson Bridge
I just moved here from an abusive relationship and have been able to peacefully go for a morning and evening walk every day for a week. I am so thankful in a time of shutdowns that I have this space to listen to my music and nature and walk. I've seen ground hogs and baby bunnies everyday. It is helping me heal so much. Thank you for having this space and maintaining it.	25-34 years old	White	Frederick
Currently I use the trails mainly for fitness and recreation. I would prefer to use my bicycle for transportation whenever possible, and I use the trails when available. Some of the trails connect areas in better, safer ways to where I'd like to go, but there are some routes they do not cover that are dangerous to ride by bike. I would like to see more routes designed for efficient commuting in my area, not just recreation.	25-34 years old	White	Frederick