



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN ANNUAL EVALUATION 2013



OZARKS TRANSPORTATION ORGANIZATION
A METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AUGUST 2013

This report was prepared in cooperation with the USDOT, including FHWA and FTA, as well as the Missouri Department of Transportation.

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INTRODUCTION

An annual evaluation is conducted in order to examine outreach efforts by Ozarks Transportation Organization (OTO) to foster meaningful, public input.

OTO ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE OUTREACH AND INCREASE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Website re-design

New OTO logo

New Public Comment email address: comment@ozarkstransportation.org

Facebook campaign

Posters in City Utilities buses and downtown bus terminal

RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

In order to evaluate the current OTO public participation strategies and Public Participation Plan (PPP), OTO used an Interested Parties database to invite about 125 stakeholders, including members of the public/private sector and current/former OTO advisory boards to complete a survey. Members of the general public were also invited to participate in the survey.



PHASE 1 - SURVEY

The Initial Public Survey was conducted from April 22 to May 2, 2013, giving prospective participants two weeks to respond. The survey invitation was emailed to approximately 125 stakeholders who signed up for OTO's contact list.

In order to include other types of participants and increase outreach, a full-color display ad was placed in the Springfield News-Leader. Posters were distributed and hung in the campus student centers of Missouri State University, Drury University, Evangel University, and Ozarks Technical College. Posters were also hung by City Utilities Transit staff in the downtown bus transfer facility and laminated posters were installed 25 City Utilities fixed-

route buses. All posters included a QR (Quick Response) code which directed a mobile device to the online survey, and which could be tracked online through Google.

A full-color ad with a featured link to the survey was placed at the top of OTO's website. OTO's Facebook had custom header art advertising, along with a link directed to the online survey. Hard copies of the surveys were made available for pickup at OTO's office. See promotional samples below.

PROMOTIONAL SAMPLES:



17"x11" POSTER, SPRINGFIELD NEWS-LEADER DISPLAY AD, PHOTOS OF DOWNTOWN SPRINGFIELD CITY BUS TERMINAL



OTO WEBSITE (L), OTO FACEBOOK (R)

Online surveys were created, collected and analyzed with Survey Monkey (surveymonkey.com). Feedback questions were asked inquiring how OTO could better communicate with the public on future transportation priorities, and how the public could better communicate with OTO as well.

A total of 39 people responded to the survey. There were nine responses via QR code-directing. QR codes were included in the promotional posters placed at the City’s downtown bus terminal, and the four college student centers. The response rate of those utilizing the QR code was 23 % (number of clicks vs. total number who completed the survey, n=9/39).

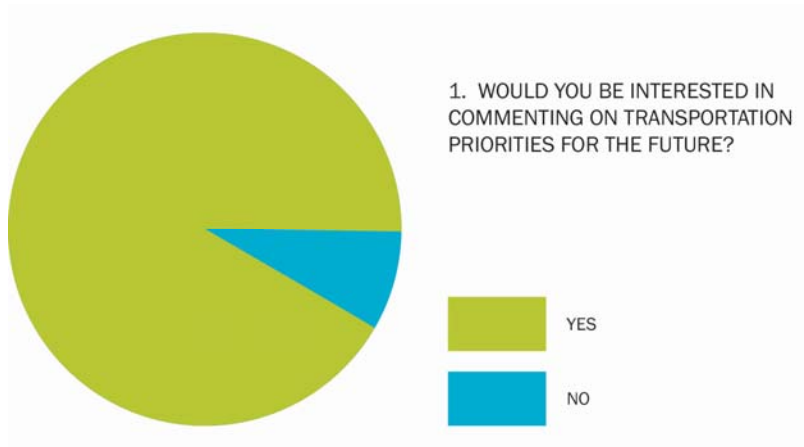
The remaining 77% of the responses were the result of OTO’s email invitation of approximately 125 addresses and/or the survey advertisements placed on OTO’s website, the News-Leader color display ad, OTO’s Facebook, and the downtown bus terminal.

This was a general increase over the previous PPP in 2009, where 23 people replied with a response rate of 15.3%, based upon responses vs. 150 email invitations. An analysis of the 2013 survey can be found in the next section, “Phase 2 – Survey Results.”

PHASE 2 – SURVEY RESULTS

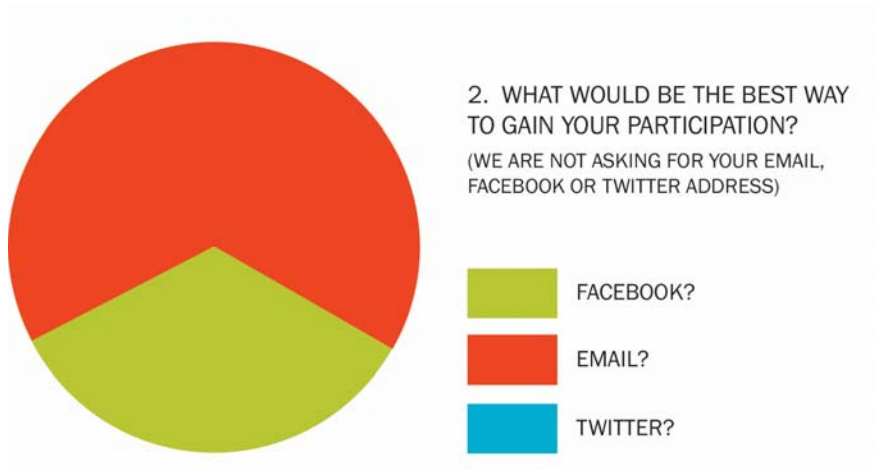
The following results are based on the Initial Public Survey conducted from April 22 to May 2, 2013. Responses are shown in the three graphs below.

1. THE PUBLIC’S INTEREST IN COMMENTING ON TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE



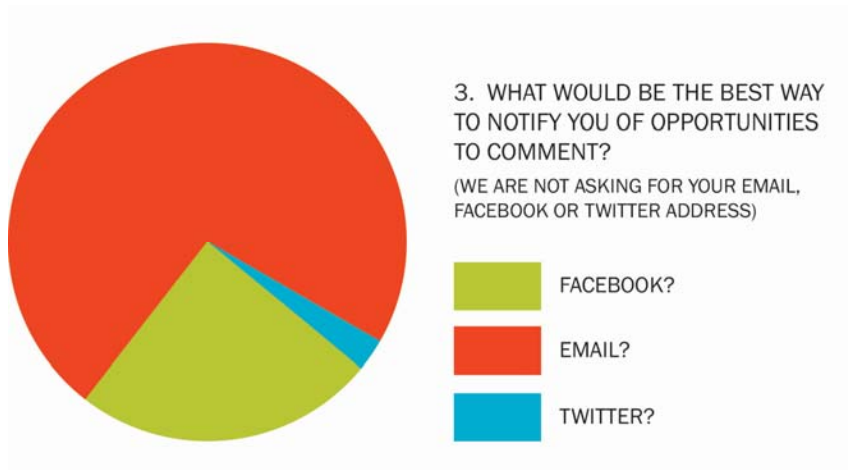
Survey results: A total of 37 answered this first survey question. 91.9% answered “yes,” indicating they were interested in commenting on future transportation priorities, while only 8.1% - or two responses - said they would decline commenting in the future.

2. THE BEST WAY FOR OTO TO GAIN THE PUBLIC'S PARTICIPATION



Survey results: 65.8%, or 25 persons, indicated email as their preferred method of participating and commenting on future transportation priorities. 34.2%, or 13 persons, preferred Facebook as their communication vehicle. These were the only two options responders opted for; Twitter had no indications, nor did an open, fill-in-the-blank option.

3. THE BEST WAY FOR OTO TO NOTIFY THE PUBLIC OF OPPORTUNITIES TO COMMENT AND PARTICIPATE?



Survey results: 70.3%, or 26 persons, indicated email as their preferred method of OTO notifying them of opportunities to participate and comment on future transportation priorities. 27%, or 10 persons, preferred Facebook as their communication vehicle. 2.7%, or 1 person, indicated Twitter was their preferred method. No one filled in an alternate method via the open, fill-in-the-blank option.

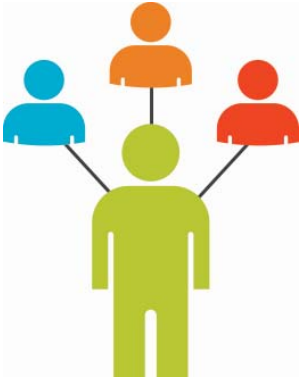
PERFORMANCE MEASURES

To establish a simple but manageable way to evaluate the alternatives, staff worked to define six performance measures against which to evaluate the PPP objectives: Reach, Access, Effective Communication, Input, Impact and Diversity and Equity. The performance measures were broken down into a more defined set of fifteen considerations.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

CONSIDERATIONS

REACH



1. Public's awareness of OTO (logo, office location, media, radio, etc.)
2. The public's familiarity with OTO's role and publications
3. Effectiveness of methods to get informed (mail, email, website, etc.)
4. Effectiveness of methods to get involved (meetings, focus groups, surveys, website, boards, commissions, etc.)

Goal: Continual outreach growth

Outcome: Public knowledge of OTO increased OTO's email database growth

Next Steps: Monitor the number of participants in total and per plan or products. OTO will increase the Interested Parties email database. A link will be added to OTO's website for persons to sign up to receive notices. This link can also be advertised on OTO's Facebook, website homepage, Twitter and Craigslist.

Although Twitter was not a strong preference from the survey results, Twitter has also never been associated before with Ozarks Transportation Organization. Twitter will be included as a future Reach method, for its own unique community of users and ease of use on a mobile device. Its growth and usage will be monitored.

OTO began regular postings of industry-related news articles on their Facebook page only a few months ago. Participation is good and Facebook "likes" have increased from 20 to 51. OTO will continue to increase readership of their Facebook, and expand usage to include more OTO, MPO-related pieces of information, such as agendas, press releases and all reports, which are currently primarily posted on ozarkstransportation.org, along with an email press release.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

ACCESS



CONSIDERATIONS

5. Provide timely information to allow the public to review plans, give comments and attend meetings
6. Convenience of meetings at a given time and location (e.g. meetings held at a central location and in neighborhoods where affected people live)
7. Ability to access OTO's publications (internet, library, OTO's office, etc.)

Goal: Improved public access

Outcome: Continued advance notice of meetings, convenient meetings and accessible publications

Next Steps: Six Board meetings with the public's opportunity to comment. Website is improved with easier-to-find plans and publications. Continually explore project specific ways to hold timely and convenient meetings

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION



CONSIDERATIONS

8. OTO products and presentations use effective visualization techniques to help the public conceptualize the material presented
9. Material presented at meetings is relevant
10. A quality discussion takes place at meetings

Goal: Increased participation at public meetings

Outcome: Improved planning product

Next Steps: Increased advertising, using high-visibility methods while being cost-effective.

Options could include:

- Long-term advertisements placed in City Utilities' fixed-route buses
- Ongoing Craigslist advertising
- Utilizing OTO's Facebook, and OTO's new, upcoming Twitter and LinkedIn pages
- OTO's newly re-designed web site
- Collaborations with regional universities and technical schools

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

INPUT



Goal: Increased public input

Outcome: Increased public input and understanding of OTO’s purpose and product

Next Steps: Use input opportunities to increase OTO’s email database, and utilized participants interest as a referral to boost OTO’s profile. When people are included, it increases their interest. When their interest is increased, they may be more inclined to share with others about their OTO experiences.

CONSIDERATIONS

11. Create a number of opportunities for participants to give their input during comment periods, meetings and other activities (public speaking, surveys, comments cards, etc.)

12. The public understands why, how and when to participate

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

IMPACT



Goal: Respond to public concerns and comments

Outcome: Efficient handling and usage of public feedback

Next Steps: Develop effective public comment response summary process for all plans and policies. OTO’s new Public Comment website page will offer enhanced responses to comments and questions, increasing the public’s understanding.

CONSIDERATIONS

13. Public concerns are addressed, questions are answered and comments are taken into consideration

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

DIVERSITY AND EQUITY



CONSIDERATIONSS

14. Outreach to diverse populations (citizens, interest groups, governmental organizations/stakeholders from a wide geographical area/demographic diversity by age, race, income and gender)
15. Inclusion of traditionally underrepresented groups (racial/ethnic minorities, the elderly, low-income households, persons with Limited English Proficiency, and persons with disabilities)

Goal: Continual outreach growth to diverse groups

Outcome: Increased participation from these groups, and improved communication

Next Steps: Work closely with OTO's Title VI, Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and Disadvantage Business Enterprise (DBE) coordinator. Develop professional relationships with area organizations for greater open dialog, and encouraging participation. Continue to identify diverse populations and use special outreach methods for contact.

CONCLUSION

This evaluation has identified the "Next Steps" in improving the OTO public participation process. Over the next year, these recommendations will be implemented and a new evaluation will be conducted to assess the effectiveness of the recommendation.