

Virtual Public Involvement Initiative

Learn About

Mobile Applications



What are Mobile Applications?

Smartphones are more common than ever before, with some stakeholders relying exclusively on smartphones for internet access rather than tablets, laptops, or desktop computers. A 2017 study found that more than three-quarters of Americans reported owning and using a smartphone.*

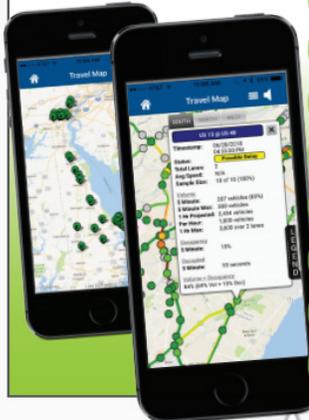
Mobile applications are closely related to – but very different from – their mobile-responsive website counterparts. With an app, users download and install the program directly on their smartphones. Apps allow users to obtain or review information, or submit their own text, images, or other multi-media messages.

Apps also usually feature on-screen notification options that serve to keep people engaged with, and aware of, updates from other users or from the app provider. In a transportation planning context, mobile apps can be developed as a single digital clearinghouse of information about project planning, development, public involvement opportunities, and contact information.

Mobile apps, by design, leverage geolocation services, which allows users to associate their comments with specific project locations, submit geotagged photos, or share location-based input.

DeIDOT App

The DeIDOT App provides up-to-the-minute, reliable traffic data that comes directly from DeIDOT's 24/7 Transportation Management Center (TMC).
Use the interactive travel map to view:



-  Real-time DART bus information
-  Live video from over 150 traffic cameras
-  Travel times for the heaviest-traveled roadways
-  24-hour real-time travel advisories (incidents)
-  Traffic flow
-  Roadway weather
-  Travel restrictions and closures
-  Snow plow movement during snow events
-  EV charging stations
-  Water levels on roadways

VPI in Practice

The Delaware Department of Transportation (DeIDOT) developed a mobile app for a range of activities, from sharing information about project planning and alerting stakeholders to upcoming public meetings to giving the public a way to report maintenance issues.

Image courtesy of Delaware Department of Transportation (DeIDOT)



Virtual Public Involvement Initiative Mobile Applications



Can Mobile Apps Help My Agency?

Mobile apps can reach more people than traditional media, especially in communities with high rates of smartphone use. Mobile apps can expand engagement by allowing users to submit or share geotagged photos, videos, and comments. Bolstering participation can make projects better, and make for a

smoother project delivery process.

Costs to develop mobile apps are typically invested up front, so longer term outreach costs can be reduced once stakeholders have downloaded and installed the app. Users can later be encouraged to take part in a range of public involvement activities outside of the mobile app setting, potentially growing the universe of stakeholders.



How Can My Agency Start Using Apps?

Agencies have a range of options when considering mobile apps. Some "all-in-one" community engagement software packages include customizable mobile apps in the suite of services. In other cases, like DelDOT's app, an agency will develop a custom app.

DelDOT created both iOS and Android versions of an app that assembles project information, event information, real-time traffic and weather alerts, and provides a way for drivers and system users to contact DelDOT when issues arise. The app interfaces with other popular traffic reporting apps as a way of keeping users engaged.

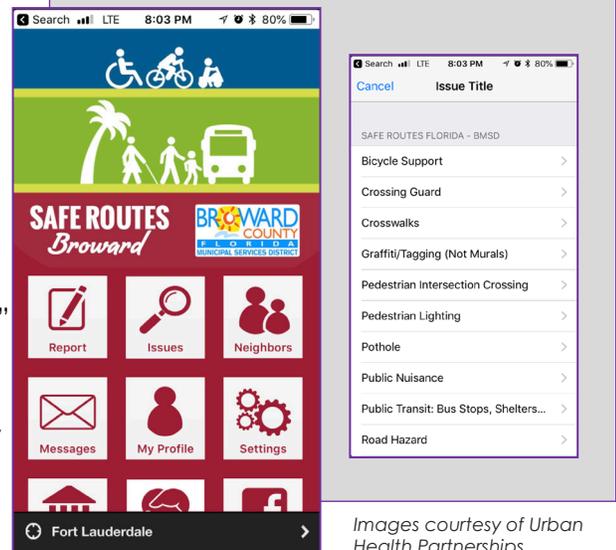
CONTACT A COLLEAGUE

Todd Reavis
Director of Technology
and Innovation
Delaware DOT
(302) 760-2606
Todd.Reavis@
state.de.us

Center for Accelerating Innovation

VPI in Practice

Broward County Florida works with a non-profit - Urban Health Partnerships - to provide a mobile app that lets residents report issues they experience during walking, biking, and transit trips to and from school. The app uses GPS to tie comments and pictures to specific locations. Reports are routed to the appropriate department to be assessed and addressed. Users can track the status of their reports in the app and see what other users have identified as issues.



Images courtesy of Urban Health Partnerships

TAKE NOTE...

- **Smartphones are common among some stakeholder groups but not all**
- **A 2017 study* found 77% of U.S. adults say they own a smartphone**
- **Mobile apps put your information in stakeholders' pockets**
- **Mobile apps can leverage GPS-based location services to connect input with on-the-ground projects in real time**
- **Mobile apps may prime stakeholders for other kinds of engagement**

* Pew Research Center, "10 Facts About Smartphones as the iPhone Turns 10." June 28, 2107.



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**