



Interactive Maps

 online

OVERVIEW:

Transportation agencies are using interactive maps to gather ideas for plans and projects from the public and display them online. Also called “crowdsourcing,” this popular method gives participants a direct voice in plan development. Users click on a map to point out the locations of transportation problems, unmet needs, or potential improvements, as appropriate. Agencies can choose from a variety of ready-to-use mapping platforms at different price points, or create a custom tool to meet specific needs. These platforms typically allow users to add symbols and a descriptive comment; some also allow them to upload photos and respond to other people’s comments, enabling dialogue among participants.

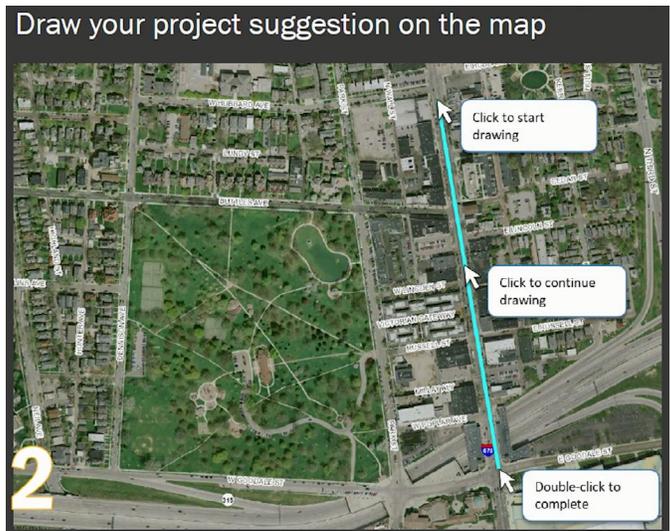
BEST SUITED FOR:

Plans; Projects in a visioning or scoping phase

CASE STUDIES:

Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, Metropolitan Transportation Plan

The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) developed a custom interactive mapping tool for their metropolitan transportation plan. In a phased process, they first asked participants to draw project suggestions on the map, and received over 300 project suggestions. After a preliminary screening to ensure each was a suitable project type for consideration in the metropolitan planning process, MORPC displayed the suggested projects for comment, along with other candidate projects identified through state and local planning processes, and included them in the project evaluation process. Over 700 people added comments, which were visible to everyone who viewed the map. MORPC publicized the map on social media, e-mail, and at meetings, and people shared the link with others. All told, the map generated over 10 times the number of interactions MORPC had using traditional outreach methods. This input informed the development of the financially constrained plan. MORPC has continued to use the map to provide information on the adopted plan, and it will provide a platform as they begin the next plan update.



MORPC encouraged the public to suggest projects by drawing on their interactive map.

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San Francisco Municipal Transportation Authority, Subway Master Plan

The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Authority (Muni) used a low-cost mapping tool as a forum to engage residents in the development of their Subway Master Plan, a vision for the subway’s future. A simple interface allowed



CASE STUDIES cont...

users to draw lines and points on a map of the city for potential service additions and stations. Muni obtained over 2,600 online map submissions in under three weeks by enlisting local reporters and bloggers to publicize the effort. Muni also offered a paper version of the map at four pop-up outreach locations geared to lower income and limited English proficiency communities which may have less access to the internet and the online tool. The hand-drawn visions were similar to those submitted online. The input received was combined in a “heat map” that became a central piece of the subway vision plan.



The heat map of your online responses.

The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Authority developed a “heat map” showing the most popular locations for subway expansion.

Snapshot



Advantages

- Economical, off-the-shelf tools available
- Can engage thousands of participants at a relatively low cost
- Quick and convenient for users
- Display input in real time, providing transparency



Disadvantages

- Requires internet access and comfort with maps and computer-based tools; as a result, participants may not be representative of the overall population
- Less useful for gathering non-spatially oriented comments (for example, comments about policy issues or funding)



Resources Required

- Cost varies from several hundred dollars for a simple, off-the-shelf tool to \$30,000 or more for a high-end custom tool

- Start-up time varies: an off-the-shelf application may take a few hours of staff time to set up, while a custom tool may require several months of development
- Staff time to plan and execute publicity campaign and cost of any advertising/publicity
- Staff time to analyze comments placed on the map



Outcomes

- Detailed, location-specific insights about transportation issues and needs
- Organized display of public input



Tips for Success

- Publicity is essential. Consider enlisting local media to share the map link
- Encourage people to use the map during public or stakeholder meetings; designate a mapping station at an open house meeting
- Create a paper version of the map for use at pop-up events