



Pop-Up Outreach



in-person



low-cost

OVERVIEW:

Pop-up outreach is used as a direct way to engage people where they already are, using a table or booth at a high density location to provide information and get quick feedback for a plan or project. Also known as intercept outreach or “event tabling,” pop-up outreach can take place wherever people congregate—from a library or sporting event to a shopping mall or county fair. This method is often combined with a short survey, conducted verbally, or on a tablet or survey card.

BEST SUITED FOR:

Plans and Projects, All Phases

CASE STUDIES:

Minnesota Department of Transportation, Statewide Long-Range Plan

The Minnesota DOT used pop-up outreach to solicit feedback for their multi-modal transportation plan. Using the state tourism website, MnDOT staff identified upcoming events in different areas of the state, and arranged to conduct pop-ups at 28 community events. These included markets, marathons, craft fairs, parades, and the Minnesota State Fair. Staff used a tablet-based survey to gather input on transportation investment priorities. At the State Fair, they also used a “dot exercise” to gather feedback on the most important trends to plan for, such as changes in technology, the environment, or transportation behavior. The State Fair outreach generated 5,500 responses at a cost of \$1.50 per response, a fraction of the cost of \$100 or more per response at traditional public meetings.



Children color on a van decorated with plan themes at a Minnesota DOT pop-up event

New Jersey Department of Transportation, Pulaski Skyway Rehabilitation

The New Jersey DOT used pop-up events as part of its comprehensive outreach program for the rehabilitation of the Pulaski Skyway, where a one-directional closure would affect both local and regional travelers. NJDOT partnered with the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) and the Liberty Science Center in Jersey City, NJ to hold an educational event for families visiting the museum. The Pulaski Skyway booth included information on the structure’s history, its condition, and the reconstruction process, as well as a bridge-building activity for children. Hands-on exhibits included a large piece of decayed steel that had been removed from the structure, prompting interest and helping to increase understanding of the project’s importance.



Snapshot



Advantages

- Reaches people who do not attend public meetings, yielding new perspectives
- Quick and convenient for participants
- Scalable, from a single event to many; new locations are easily added with existing materials
- Suitable for agencies of any size, including rural agencies
- Requires little lead time and no publicity
- Allows direct targeting of transportation facility users, such as transit passengers at a bus stop or rail station, cyclists at a bike shop, or truck drivers at a truck stop



Disadvantages

- Interactions are typically brief, limiting the depth of the exchange
- Outdoor events are subject to wind and weather conditions
- Predetermined questions may skew or limit feedback



Resources Required

- Staff time to arrange locations, produce table displays or other materials, set up and cover events
- Cost of printing materials and table and/or tent rental, if applicable
- Event table fees, if applicable



Outcomes

- Reaches hundreds of participants or more (typically 30-200 per location), generating awareness and feedback from new participants
- Builds goodwill and familiarity through direct one-on-one interaction with agency staff



Tips for Success

- Partner with organizations that are already holding scheduled events to leverage shared resources
- Choose high-volume locations where people are not in a hurry; consider captive audiences, such as people standing in line or waiting at a bus stop
- Keep lead questions or surveys short and simple—one or two questions that can be answered in under two minutes
- Pre-test all materials
- Use a sign-up sheet to gather names and contact information of people interested in further involvement
- Share event information live on social media to enhance awareness

