



Creative Use of Short Videos

 online

OVERVIEW:

Transportation agencies are discovering new ways to use short videos in public engagement. The 21st century audience is more distracted than ever, so conveying complex information quickly has never been more important. Often no more than a minute in length, short videos on a website or social media platform help to introduce a project or planning products and encourage viewers to participate. Videos can be used to provide updates as a project progresses, or to illustrate the viewpoints that have been expressed by community members. Options range from professionally produced videos to low-cost, “do-it-yourself” videos that staff members can create without specialized training.

BEST SUITED FOR:

Planning Products and Projects, All Phases

EXAMPLES:

Capturing Feedback with “Man on the Street” Videos

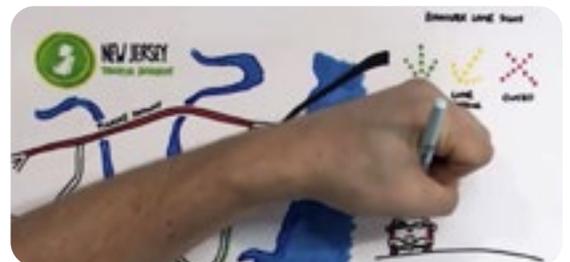
For their NextGen Bus Study, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA Metro) brought a diverse group of residents into a studio, and also traveled with them around the region, asking for feedback on the state of the county’s bus system. These video interviews covered critical tradeoffs such as bus speed versus the number of stops served. Using this direct style of video enabled LA Metro to communicate with a wider audience than would typically be reached through traditional means. Keeping the video short allowed viewers to consume information quickly.



LA Metro recorded residents’ feedback on the bus system for a short video used during the NextGen Bus Study. Image courtesy of Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

Using Animation to Convey Complex Information

Animation can be especially effective in short videos designed to educate or engage the public in complex transportation issues. Examples range from traditional cartoon animation to animated maps and diagrams. The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission used animated mapping to portray predicted population change in Greater Philadelphia as part of their long-range plan, while the Utah Department of Transportation used animated diagrams to explain the DOT’s policy on noise walls. Another special technique is “speed drawing,” which creates interest as viewers watch a drawing emerge from the artist’s pen. The New Jersey Department of Transportation used a speed drawing video to educate the public about what to expect during the Pulaski Skyway Rehabilitation Project.



The New Jersey Department of Transportation used a speed drawing video to alert the public during the Pulaski Skyway Rehabilitation Project. Image courtesy of New Jersey Department of Transportation.



EXAMPLES cont...

Creating “Do-it-Yourself” (DIY) Videos

As a low-cost alternative to professionally produced videos, many agencies are experimenting with DIY videos recorded on smart phones, tablets, or consumer grade video cameras. In addition to cost savings, this provides the flexibility to create a video on the spot as the need or opportunity arises. The Utah Department of Transportation uses DIY videos to report on construction progress from the field. The Alamo Area Metropolitan Planning Organization creates short videos on current, regional topics for use in social media posts. Examples include videos on ridesharing, bicycle and pedestrian travel, and safety.



The Utah Department of Transportation provides a construction update with a cell phone video. Image courtesy of Utah Department of Transportation.

Snapshot

Advantages

- Helps convey complex information in an engaging and readily digestible form
- Attracts attention and provides the visual interest today’s public expects from information sources
- Allows an agency to serve as its own “newsroom,” producing footage for wider circulation by the news media
- Can be shared through multiple media sources such as websites, social media, local television

Disadvantages

- Lead time for professionally produced videos
- Competition for attention, as videos proliferate online and on social media

Resources Required

- Professional videographer (for professionally produced videos); simple equipment and standard editing software for a do-it-yourself video

Outcomes

- Increase in the number of residents who are informed about a project and the opportunity to participate
- More informed comments and feedback from the public

Tips for Success

- Keep videos short, generally 60 seconds or less
- Use the first few seconds wisely to attract attention; try to incorporate movement and bright, visual openers
- Develop a script or “story board” prior to filming
- Have one main idea throughout the video
- Have the subjects or animation convey emotion
- Include captioning, both for Section 508 compliance and viewer convenience

A Note on Video Captioning:

Videos produced for the public should include closed captioning, both to comply with state and federal requirements and to allow people to watch without sound (for example, when in a public place or shared workspace). An example of such requirements is Section 508 of the Workforce Rehabilitation Act of 1973 which requires that captioning be provided on videos whenever speaking or narration is present. Audio descriptions should also be provided for music and other sounds. Captioning capability is available in most professional and consumer grade editing systems.