



# Building an Engaged Social Media Following



online



low-cost

## OVERVIEW:

Many transportation agencies use social media to inform the public about plans and projects. However, fewer agencies take steps to engage with users and develop a robust social media following as part of a public relations approach. Maintaining a community of engaged followers can improve public outreach effectiveness when an agency seeks feedback. Establishing that community requires building relationships through responsive, two-way communication and with routine updates of fresh material. The most effective efforts often begin before there is a need for specific feedback.

## BEST SUITED FOR:

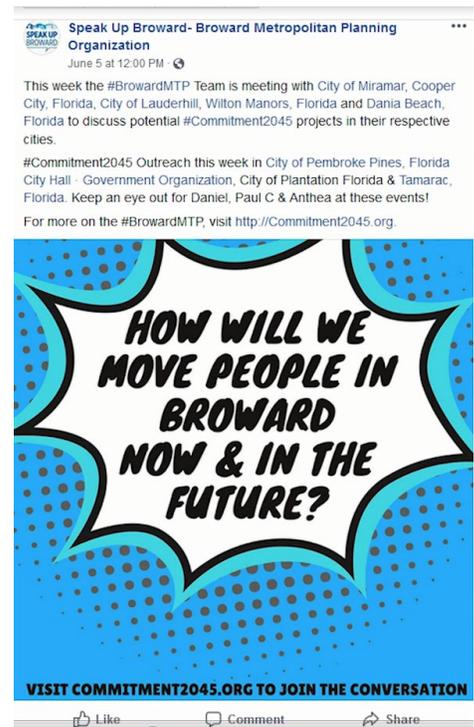
**Planning Products and Projects, All Phases**

## CASE STUDIES:

### Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization

The Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization (Broward MPO) used a strategic approach to create a social media following that could help inform projects and plans on an ongoing basis. In 2014, they set a goal of obtaining 5,000 followers on social media. That goal was reached in 2016, and by 2018 the MPO had over 10,000 followers across several platforms. The MPO fosters ongoing conversation through frequent posts and quick responses to questions and comments. They use a monthly content calendar to plan each day's posts by topic and platform. Regular posts include "Talk Back Tuesday," a one-question poll related to a current topic. Broward MPO's strategic use of social media, along with other types of public involvement, helped generate over 3,000 visits to their metropolitan transportation plan website and over 2,000 responses to the plan survey.

*Broward MPO uses social media and email blasts to generate interest in planning topics.*



### Michigan Department of Transportation, I-96 Reconstruction Project

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) built an engaged community of followers on social media during the reconstruction of Interstate 96. MDOT used social media to build relationships in the community in advance of in-person meetings. MDOT posted daily, sharing local news and events along with project information, and responded to comments and questions promptly. MDOT turned to its social media followers to gather input



CASE STUDIES *cont...*

at key points in the design process. A survey asked the public to choose between closing the freeway completely or a partial closure that would extend construction by up to two years at a higher cost. The survey was widely promoted on Twitter and Facebook, and MDOT received 1,700 responses. A majority chose the full-closure option, which MDOT adopted. This continuous engagement with stakeholders resulted in an enthusiastic response to the project, culminating in an opening day celebration that attracted 10,000 people.

# Snapshot



## Advantages

- Potential to reach large numbers of stakeholders
- Low cost
- Easy to promote and link on existing website



## Disadvantages

- Requires advance work to build relationships through social media
- Requires continuous updates to remain effective
- Only reaches those who use the particular social media platform(s) employed



## Resources Required

- Understanding and expertise in use of current social media platforms
- Staff time to plan and prepare regular posts
- Staff time to monitor and respond to individual questions and comments



## Outcomes

- Network of social media followers that can be tapped for feedback as needed



## Tips for Success

- Plan for regular posts across multiple social media platforms
- Aim for a conversational tone
- Use attention-catching media such as videos and animated images (GIFs)
- Ask followers for feedback on a regular basis, not only when a plan or project is underway
- Share content of interest to your followers, including topics of general interest and articles on transportation or planning trends
- Share information from partner organizations, and ask partners to share your news
- Use the analytics available from each social media platform to monitor user responses; make adjustments as needed to maintain interest

