

Transportation Public Involvement Annual Performance Report: FY2019

This report was written in accordance with the North Central Texas Council of Governments' Transportation Department Public Participation Plan, which was most recently updated in November 2018, as approved by the Regional Transportation Council (RTC), the transportation policy board for the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The reporting period for the performance metrics included in this report is Oct. 1, 2018 through Sept. 30, 2019, which corresponds to the fiscal year.

The Transportation Department seeks to engage the public through a variety of means, both mandated and voluntary: public meetings, community events, online public input opportunities, media outreach, social media, email, website, publications, speaking opportunities, and community partnerships. In addition to a presentation of quantitative metrics, this report provides a summary and qualitative analysis of the Department's public involvement efforts over the past year.

Traditional Outreach

The Department had a robust media presence over the year, sending out 25 press releases to 193 reporters at 177 news outlets through print, online, radio, television and podcast. Most reporters were based in the region and represented all 12 counties comprising the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA). These efforts resulted in 100 media requests for information or staff interviews and 207 mentions in the media. Topics of special interest to the media were bicycle/pedestrian projects, highway projects, high-speed transportation (high-speed rail and hyperloop), and automated vehicles.

Media outreach was an important component of notifying the public of input opportunities related to the Department's plans and programs. In total, nine public meetings were held, and four online opportunities were used to provide formal comment periods for amendments and updates to routine plans and documents. Meeting attendance was generally low, in keeping with the past decade's overall trend, but more people chose to participate through a livestream of these meetings—nearly three times as many, on average. Meetings were, of course, accessible to all people with internet access, but in addition, all meeting locations were accessible to people with disabilities. Further accessibility measures included posting all meeting information online and providing it in print upon request; meeting notices were posted online, mailed and emailed to an opt-in database of 14,937 public involvement contacts as well as mailed to city halls and public libraries around the region. Notices were also placed in seven regional newspapers published in English, Spanish and Vietnamese. In addition, the notices were advertised on Facebook, with a median reach of 21,180 people per ad. Information about how to request a translator or special accommodations was included in each ad. Public meetings were also shared on the Meetup app, of which there were 24 members.

Besides public meetings, staff provided in-person opportunities for the public to learn about transportation and provide feedback through 14 community events and 25 speaking opportunities. The community events were located in the MPA's four core counties and had an estimated total attendance of 195,000 people. (Note that the three-day Earth X event, a statewide environmental fair held annually in Dallas, accounts for 177,000 of this figure.) At least 2,400 people were reached by Department staff through speaking engagements, primarily hosted by business, government and transportation industry groups in Dallas and Tarrant counties. The purpose of most of these engagements was to provide an update on regional transportation planning and demographics, but many groups were especially interested in hearing about plans for high-speed transportation in North Texas.

To provide information at events and by email, the Department publishes several newsletters and reader-friendly reports over the course of the year, both online and in print. More than 12,000 copies of the Department's annual performance report were distributed to partners, elected officials and the public this year, and a semi-annual newsletter highlighting current plans, programs and RTC members and initiatives was distributed to nearly 10,000 people. In addition, 12 partners chose to share Transportation Department articles or other content with their online followers or in their own print publications.

Digital Outreach

Digital outreach is an essential and growing part of the Department's outreach strategy, comprised of two elements: web and accounts on three social media platforms. Website visitors and social media followers often set out to accomplish different tasks, which are reflected in the metrics below. FY 2019 metrics show the Department's website functions primarily as a repository of information for the public, especially about plans and projects, whereas social media is the main interface the public uses to provide comments directly to the Department.

The public's preference for providing comments through social media is reflected in the nature of the comments submitted. For example, out of 326,222 visits¹ to the Department website last year, 16,041 of those visits were to main public involvement webpages. Apart from the Department homepage, the most-visited webpages were for air quality, accounting for 15 percent of visits and reflecting outreach initiatives undertaken by this program area in concert with public involvement efforts. On average, website visitors spent 1:44 on each webpage. On social media, followers seem to be highly engaged across a number of topics. The Department ended the year with 2,569 Facebook followers and 2,101 Twitter followers. However, the reach for each medium was significantly greater, resulting in engagement with the public several magnitudes greater.

Public Comments

This year the public submitted 973 comments, all of which were shared with the Regional Transportation Council. Of those comments, 84 percent were submitted through either Facebook or Twitter, and only one was submitted directly through the website. The other 150 comments were mainly received through the Public Involvement Team's transinfo@nctcog.org email account, which is posted to the website and shared widely through the Department's emails, print material and presentations. The remaining comments were either oral or written comments submitted at public meetings. In general, comments received through social media were shorter and less detailed than comments received by email or at public meetings.

Over two-thirds of the comments the Department received were on a single Facebook post related to Drive Electric Week, an initiative to promote greater adoption of electric vehicles. Besides this post, there were 31 additional comments related to alternative fuel vehicles (AFVs), several of which were sent by partners hoping to increase visibility for AFV events and programs. Other instances of a single

¹For purposes of this report, visits are "user sessions" recorded in Google Analytics.

event, plan or project receiving several comments were the US 380 project in northern Collin County and the TEXRail opening in Tarrant County. (The public's interest in US 380 was also reflected in several news articles mentioning NCTCOG and written around the time of TxDOT's public meetings.) Otherwise, the two topics receiving the greatest number of public comments were transit and bicycle/pedestrian and sustainable development initiatives, with about 10 percent each. It should be noted that many of the transit comments were submitted by one Twitter user. Other areas of significant public interest, as reflected in the comments, were air quality, safety, and high-speed transportation (high-speed rail, hyperloop or both).

Overall, the comments seemed to be shaped by three different forces: 1) media interest in specific topics or projects, 2) partner promotional efforts, and 3) activist or group causes, for example, US 380, transit and bicycle/pedestrian initiatives.

Transportation Public Involvement Annual Performance Report: FY2019 Outreach Strategy Performance Metrics

NCTCOG Transportation Department Website				
Total number of visits ¹	/trans		326,222	
	/trans/involve		16,041	4.91% ²
Number of unique visitors ³	/trans		244,274	
	/trans/involve		12,725	5.20%
Webpages with most visits	/trans/quality/air/for-everyone		30,995	9.50% ⁴
	/trans		19,552	6.00% ⁴
	/trans/quality/air/ozone		17,751	5.40% ⁴
	/trans/plan/mtp/2045		12,118	3.70% ⁴
	/trans/about/committees/regional-transportation-council		11,117	3.40% ⁴
Average time spent on significant webpages	/trans		1:44 (minutes)	
	/trans/involve		2:00 (minutes)	
Top referring websites/sources of web traffic ⁵	Facebook			
	fortworthtexas.gov			
Most common search terms	N/A—Data no longer available through Google Analytics subscription.			
Social Media and Video				
Facebook	Number of total page likes		2,569	
	Total reach		243,813	
	Average engagement rate per post		4.40%	
Twitter	Number of followers		2,101	
	Total number of impressions		467,352	
	Total number of engagements		5,358	
	Average engagement rate per post		1.20%	
YouTube	Number of subscribers		161	
	Number of views		64,468	
	Estimated minutes watched		19,738	
Print and Digital Publications				
Publication Name	Citizen's Guide	Progress North Texas	Mobility Matters	Local Motion
Available publication formats	Print, PDF, HTML	Print, PDF, HTML	Print, PDF, HTML	Print, PDF, HTML
Number of print copies of each publication distributed	216	12,807	9,641	1,875
Number of online unique views for each publication	71	367	203	140

¹ Website visits are “user sessions” recorded in Google Analytics..

² Percentage represents the Public Involvement webpages' share of the Department's total visits.

³ Unique visitors are “users” recorded in Google Analytics.

⁴ Percentages represent the specific webpage's share of the Department's total visits.

⁵ This is determined by the number of “users” as reported in Google Analytics.

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Outreach Strategy Performance Metrics

Public Meetings and Community Events		
Public Meetings	Number of public meetings	9
	Number of online public input opportunities	4
	Median attendance per meeting	8 people
	Median online viewers per meeting and online public input opportunity	26 views
	Accessible locations for individuals with disabilities	Yes
	Regional accessibility of information	Yes (online posting, email, notices to libraries and city halls, newspaper ads, mailed postcards)
	Notification of how to request language translation or special accommodations	Yes (online posting, email, notices to libraries and city halls, newspaper ads, mailed postcards)
Public Contacts	Number of contacts receiving public meeting notifications	14,937
	Net change in number of contacts for the year	Not available
Public Meeting Advertising	Ad placements	Dallas Morning News, Al Dia, Fort Worth Star-Telegram, La Vida the Black Voice, La Estrella, Star Local, Tre
	Median reach for each Facebook ad	21,180
	Median engagement for each Facebook ad	185
Community Events	Number of events attended by staff	14
	Number of events distributing NCTCOG Transportation Department information	14
	Total estimated attendance for all events	195,253 (177,000 Earth X)
	Geographic representation in event locations	Collin, Dallas, Denton, Tarrant
Public Comments		
Total number of comments received	973	
Number of comments from email	116	
Number of comments from social media	822	
Number of comments from meetings and events	34	
Number of comments received via other modes	1 website comment	
Most common comment topics	Alternative Fuel Vehicles, Bicycle/Pedestrian, Sustainable Development, Transit, US 380, Air Quality, TEXRail, Safety	

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Outreach Strategy Performance Metrics

Speaking Opportunities			
Number of presentation requests	28		
Number of presentations	25		
Number of people reached	At least 2,400		
Types of audiences/ groups reached	Business and government officials primarily		
Types of presentation topics	Regional transportation, high-speed rail and hyperloop, Tarrant County transportation		
Shareable Content			
Number of partners that shared content	12		
Type of partners that shared content	Municipalities, local newspapers, chambers, radio station, trade journals		
Type of content shared by partners	Op-eds, MPO articles and press releases, photos, maps, social media posts		
New audiences reached through partners	Residents of Fort Worth, Grand Prairie, Cedar Hill, Richardson, Hood County; Waco residents		
Media Relations			
Number of news releases	25		
Number of media requests	100 print		
	11 TV		
	1 Podcast		
Number of media mentions	207		
Media Contacts List	Types of news sources	Newspapers (print, online, local, state, national, daily, weekly, monthly), magazines, TV, radio, podcasts	
	Number of reporters	193	
	Number of news outlets	153 newspaper 12 Radio	
	Number of minority news outlets	24 newspapers	
	Number of news outlets in each county	Collin	15
		Dallas	52
		Denton	10
		Ellis	5
		Hood	2
		Hunt	3
		Johnson	5
		Kaufman	5
		Parker	4
		Rockwall	2
Tarrant	21		
Wise	3		
No County	12		