Evaluating Complete Streets Public Engagement Practices
Results of a National Survey
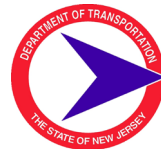
2020

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About the Report

This report was developed by Aashna Jain, Lisa Cintron, Charles T. Brown, and James Sinclair at the New Jersey Bicycle and Pedestrian Resource Center (BPRC) within the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center (VTC) at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.

The Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center (VTC) is a national leader in the research and development of innovative transportation policy. Located within the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University, VTC has the full array of resources from a major research university on transportation issues of regional and national significance.

The New Jersey Bicycle and Pedestrian Resource Center (BPRC) assists public officials, transportation and health professionals, and the public in creating a safer and more accessible walking and bicycling environment through primary research, education and dissemination of information about best practices in policy and design. The Center is supported by the New Jersey Department of Transportation through funds provided by the Federal Highway Administration.

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I. Introduction

Public outreach and engagement is the process of incorporating stakeholder/community feedback and participation in planning, program and policy efforts. There can be multiple levels of public outreach and engagement, comprised of "informing" or "educating" citizens and "support building" to "empowering" citizens to voice their concerns and feedback. As such, public engagement can constitute a collaborative effort to decision-making and implementation, as well as a one-way flow of information depending on the end goal. It can take on a variety of forms ranging from in-person workshops to virtual meetings and design charrettes to temporary demonstration projects.

Complete Streets are streets designed for all users, all modes of transportation, and all ability levels. They balance the needs of drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, emergency responders, and carriers of goods based on local context (Figure 1). Public outreach and engagement in Complete Streets implementation can mean anything from collecting input during the planning process to educating users on how to safely share the roadway. It is an essential part of Complete Streets policymaking and implementation because changes in road design can improve the safety for different users and travel modes, though it is often not enough to eliminate crashes. Public engagement also helps ensure that all voices are heard in the design, planning, operation, and maintenance of Complete Streets.

In 2020, the New Jersey Bicycle and Pedestrian Resource Center (NJ BPRC) partnered with Smart Growth America (SGA) as part of a national survey of planning professionals, policymakers, Complete Streets advocates, and concerned community members, in both the public and private sectors, to reflect on the level of outreach and engagement that is pursued in accomplishing Complete Streets outcomes, as well as initiatives that have been implemented by these professionals in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of this research is to collect information about effective and notable Complete Streets outreach, educational, and engagement activities as conducted by professionals across the country.

Findings demonstrated a wide range of approaches to engagement with different goals, methods, target audiences, partner organizations, and scopes, in addition to the limitations and challenges faced by various organizations. A potential next step in this research is to conduct an in-depth study of the best practices and case study examples discussed in this report.

a. Report Overview

In addition to this section, the Introduction (I), this report is divided into four main sections – Literature Review (II), Survey Results (III), Key Findings (IV), and Next Steps (V). Section II, Literature Review, includes an overview of literature on how public engagement is defined, measured, and implemented along with an analysis of diverse engagement methods. Section III, Survey Results, includes a description of the survey followed by a detailed summary of the survey findings. Sections IV and V, Key Findings and Next Steps, discuss the key findings from the survey and the next steps for analyzing Complete Streets outreach and engagement strategies and best practices in more detail.

Figure 1. A Complete Street as seen in Hoboken, New Jersey (Source: The City of Hoboken)

II. Literature Review

Public engagement is a broad term that encompasses diverse activities with different goals depending on the circumstances. One common conclusion in the literature is that public engagement is not clearly defined nor is it easily evaluated, but it is generally agreed upon that no single public engagement technique outranks the others. Instead, certain techniques are more useful in a given situation. Public engagement can generally be defined as a process of involving and empowering community stakeholders in the identification, development, and assessment of solutions (Arnstein, 1969; Rowe and Frewer, 2005; Glass, 1979).

Rowe and Frewer define public engagement broadly as "the *flow of information* between [public] participants and [policy-setting] sponsors. These activities include "*public communication, public consultation,* and *public participation*" (Rowe and Frewer, 2005). Simply providing information, however, is not considered as public engagement but rather public relations (Wadsworth, 1997). Wadsworth notes that "public engagement presupposes a much more collaborative process in which individuals and groups think through issues together in a struggle to arrive at solutions they all can live with."

Additionally, public engagement does not need to occur only during policy development as defined by Rowe and Frewer. It can also be used to collect input in the implementation process and garner support for Complete Streets initiatives and goals. In building support, practitioners often walk a thin line between public engagement and sales. Public engagement is not "a sales effort designed to convince others to believe as the experts do," instead, public engagement should lead participants through a series of steps from becoming aware of a problem to developing an opinion and "working through the problem to agreeing on solutions" (Wadsworth, 1997).

The literature identifies numerous goals for public engagement, from education and support building (Glass, 1979) to empowering marginalized groups (Arnstein, 1969) and collaborating with stakeholders (Nabatchi, 2012). In both Arnstein's ladder of participation and the International Association for Public Participation's Spectrum of Public Participation (IAP2, 2007), informing or educating the public are among the lowest, simplest steps in the engagement process that can serve as first steps but should not be the ultimate goal (see Figure 2 and 3). In terms of Complete Streets engagement, the most basic goals are education and support building. However, if practitioners do not also consider collecting feedback during implementation, then they are simply providing a service of one-directional information sharing that cannot be considered as public engagement according to Wadsworth's definition.

Figure 2. Ladder of Citizen Participation (Arnstein, 1969)

It is clear from this research that there is no single toolbox of proven, creative and diverse outreach and engagement activities related to Complete Streets. The FHWA Transportation Planning Capacity Building provides links to a variety of case studies on public engagement in varying degrees of detail. Additionally, America Walks, a national non-profit that advances safe and equitable walking environments, created four relevant case studies that confirm that Complete Streets engagement is happening across the country.
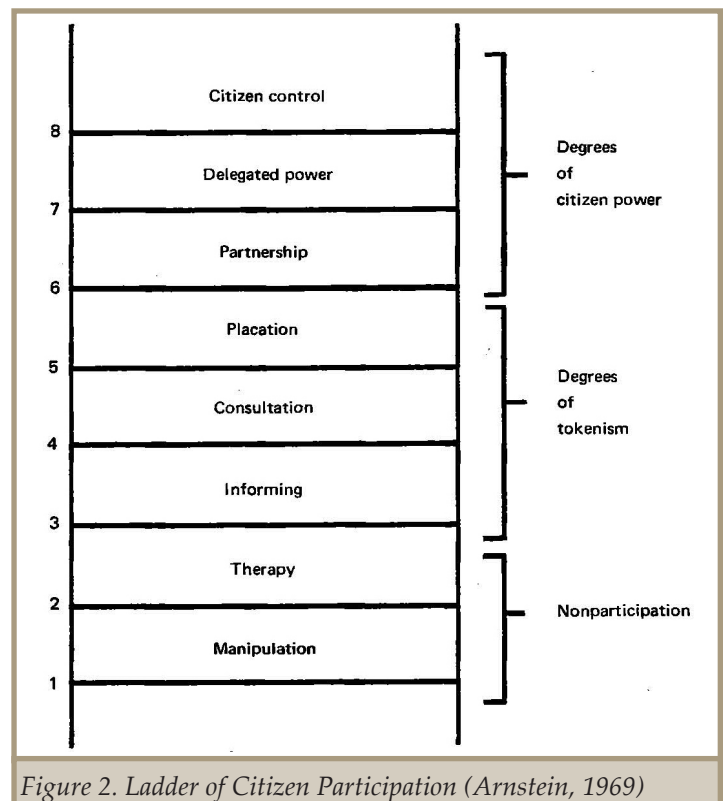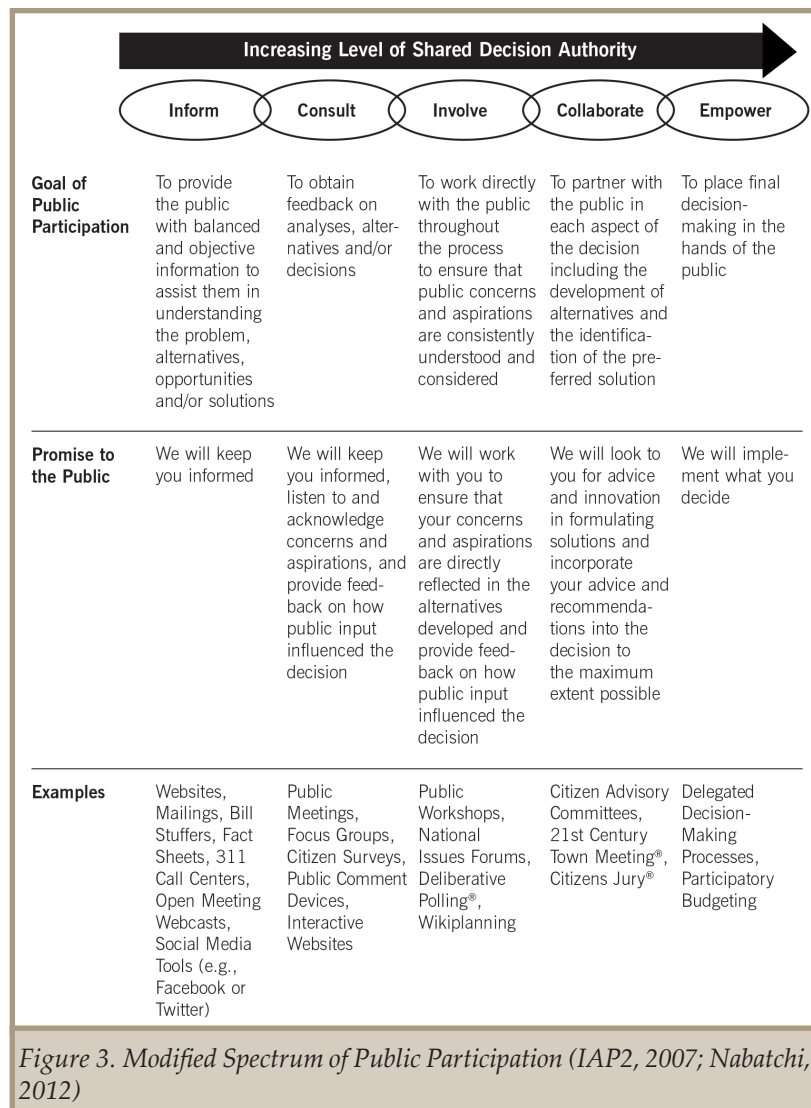
	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Increasing Level of Shared Decision Authority →					
Goal of Public Participation	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions	To obtain feedback on analyses, alternatives and/or decisions	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public
Promise to the Public	We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decision to the maximum extent possible	We will implement what you decide
Examples	Websites, Mailings, Bill Stuffers, Fact Sheets, 311 Call Centers, Open Meeting Webcasts, Social Media Tools (e.g., Facebook or Twitter)	Public Meetings, Focus Groups, Citizen Surveys, Public Comment Devices, Interactive Websites	Public Workshops, National Issues Forums, Deliberative Polling®, Wikiplanning	Citizen Advisory Committees, 21st Century Town Meeting®, Citizens Jury®	Delegated Decision-Making Processes, Participatory Budgeting

Figure 3. Modified Spectrum of Public Participation (IAP2, 2007; Nabatchi, 2012)

Partnerships are undeniably an essential element of Complete Streets related public engagement. In San Bernardino, California, a local Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) developed the Active Transportation Network in collaboration with the California Safe Routes Partnership. The network has not only successfully secured funding for projects and developed county-wide plans, but also conducted a variety of engagement efforts from bike and walk audits to public outreach events. A Complete Streets Task Force in Hartford, Connecticut created an annual festival called Envisionfest Hartford. A transit bus was parked at the center of the event where a local improvisational theater group performed shows throughout the day. A non-profit bike shop also partnered with the Task Force to promote bicycling in the community. In Nashville, Walk Bike Nashville created a partnership to promote a ballot initiative to approve a $5 billion expansion of the transit network.

Some communities have developed less conventional outreach methods, using interactive maps and games to engage with the public. In Fairbanks, Alaska, Complete Streets representatives have taken to social media to engage the community. The Atlanta Regional Commission worked with Georgia Tech graduate students to develop a video game that would encourage youth to engage in the transportation planning process. Mobile outreach in a 1970's Airstream camper helped engage the community in Lawrence Douglas County, KS and an interactive map with infographics helped the Polk Transportation Planning Organization (TPO), FL engage their constituents in transportation planning efforts. Open Streets events and Ciclovias, like the one held in New Brunswick, New Jersey, have provided another opportunity for engagement.

III. Survey Results

a. Survey Description

The online Complete Streets public engagement survey was a partnership between the NJ BPRC at the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center, Rutgers University and Smart Growth America (SGA), the survey lead, who is a national non-profit that helps communities in developing safe, healthy, and livable environments. The purpose of the survey was to collect information and identify best practices in Complete Streets outreach and engagement activities. SGA promoted the survey questionnaire, which consisted of eight multiple choice and six open-ended questions through their Complete Streets newsletter (see Appendix A). The survey included questions such as how often organizations target vulnerable communities in Complete Streets engagement, what are their methods of engagement, how do organizations develop their outreach plans, and whether they pursued social-distancing related efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey was distributed on November 17, 2020 and collected data from 521 planning and policy professionals and complete streets advocates from non-profits, government planning and health departments, private consultants, and a few concerned citizens.

It is also important to note that the number of responses received per question in the survey varied substantially from 43 responses to 515 responses (see Appendix B). In particular, the open-ended questions received few responses; however, the analysis shows that they still covered a wide range of answers that are consistent with the background context provided by other questions.

b. Survey Respondent Characteristics

Figure 4 shows that the survey responses came from nearly every state in the country (geographic information was available for 270 or 52% of the 521 survey responses). Respondents from three states – California (8.9%), Florida (6.7%), and New York (5.9%) – accounted for more than one-fifth of all respondents and the 15 states mentioned in Table 1 accounted for more than half of the total responses. Eight of the respondents were located outside the United States in Canada (4), Colombia (1), Israel (1), Lithuania (1), and Mexico (1).
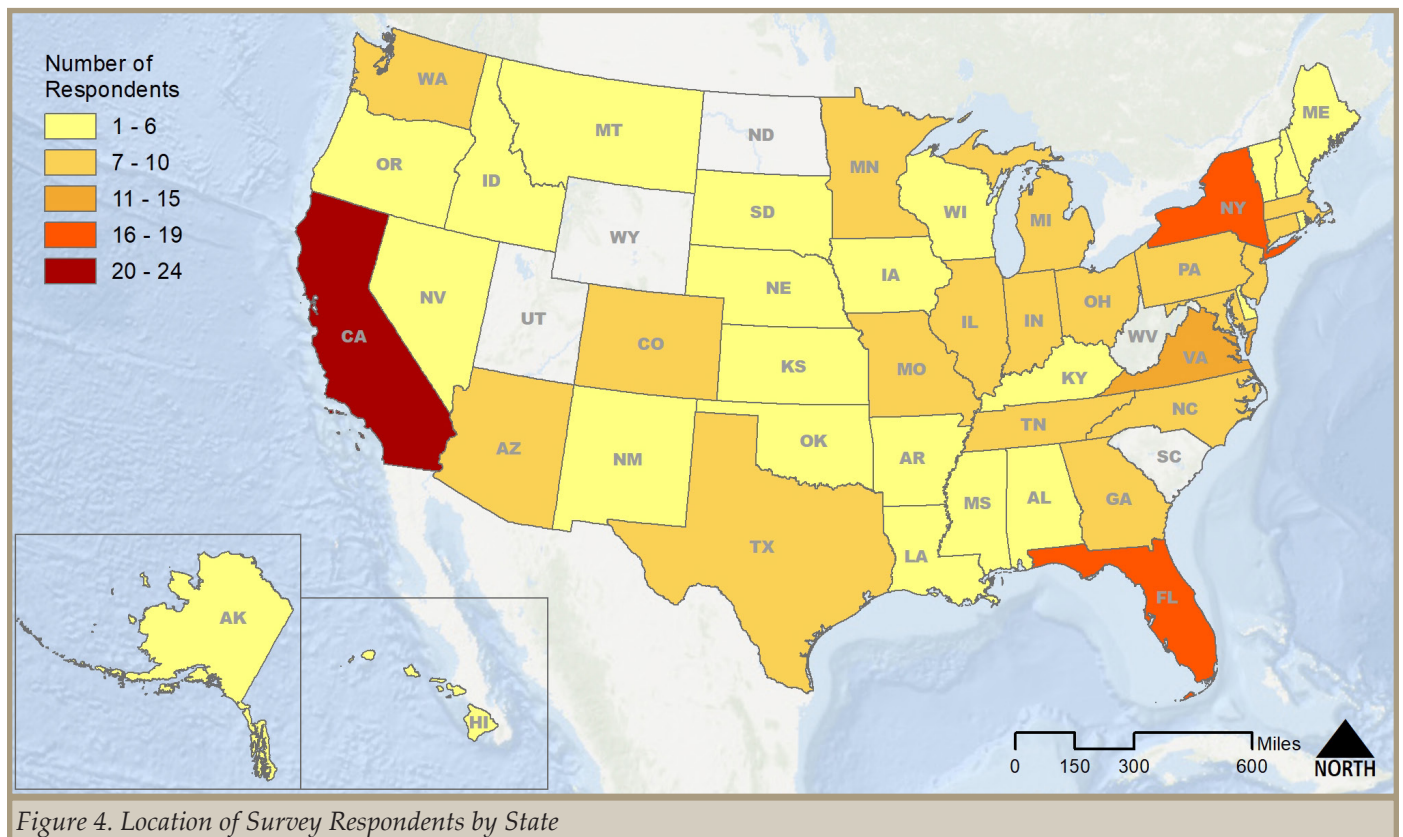

Figure 4. Location of Survey Respondents by State

Approximately 60.6% of the survey respondents worked at advocacy groups or community organizations and local governments, whereas only 3.7% and 7.8% were from state departments of transportation (DOTs) and regional governments or planning authorities, respectively (Figure 5). Hence, many of the responses and examples discussed in this report come from local agencies. Of the respondents who selected "other" (28%), most were employed at consulting firms, followed by educational institutions, individual community members, local/state health organizations and medical centers, and transit agencies.

State	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents	Cumulative Frequency
California (CA)	24	9.2%	9.2%
Florida (FL)	18	6.9%	16.0%
New York (NY)	16	6.1%	22.1%
Virginia (VA)	11	4.2%	26.3%
North Carolina (NC)	10	3.8%	30.2%
New Jersey (NJ)	10	3.8%	34.0%
Maryland (MD)	10	3.8%	37.8%
Texas (TX)	9	3.4%	41.2%
Michigan (MI)	8	3.1%	44.3%
Massachusetts (MA)	8	3.1%	47.3%
Georgia (GA)	8	3.1%	50.4%
Colorado (CO)	8	3.1%	53.4%
Tennessee (TN)	8	3.1%	56.5%
Illinois (IL)	8	3.1%	59.5%
Connecticut (CT)	8	3.1%	62.6%

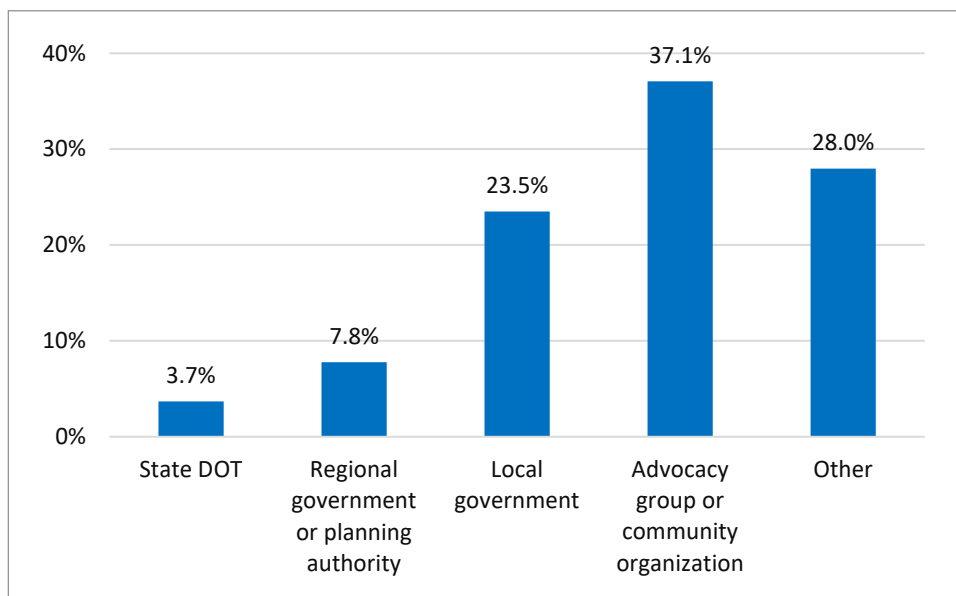*Table 1. Top 15 States with the Most Respondents*

Figure 5. Respondents by their Organization Type

c.   Complete Streets Policy Adoption

When asked about the Complete Streets policy in their region, more than 80% of the respondents indicated having a Complete Streets policy. The policies were passed by municipal or local governments (57.1%), state DOTs (10.3%), regional governments (8.9%), grassroots organizations (4.7%), and other sources (18.9%), which included policies passed through governor initiatives, state legislation, enactments, executive orders, or a state-level board (Figure 7). It is worth noting that some regions have Complete Streets policies enacted at both state and local/regional levels. Approximately half of the respondents who selected other sources (9.7%) indicated that they did not currently have a Complete Streets policy and several were not aware if a policy exists in their area.

Figure 6. The New Jersey Complete & Green Streets For All Model Policy & Guide, Released by NJDOT in 2019
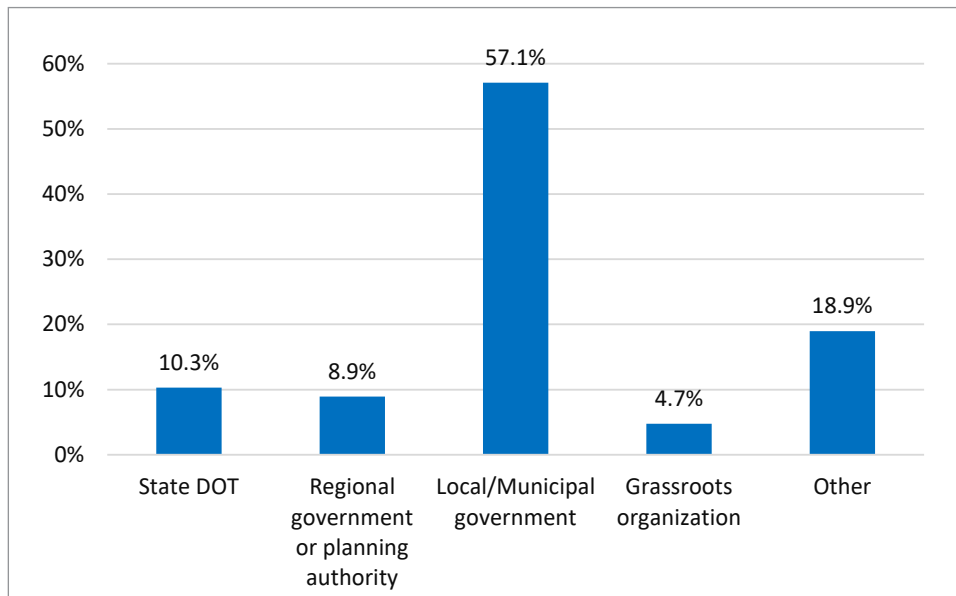

Figure 7. How was your Complete Streets Policy Passed?

d.   Goals of Complete Streets Engagement

In response to the question on goals that respondents hoped to achieve in conducting Complete Streets engagement, an overwhelming share of participants selected building support for a project/program (69.3%) instead of education (23.2%) and gathering feedback (7.5%) (Figure 8). This indicates that engagement is widely viewed as a one-way channel of communication with rudimentary goals, rather than a methodical approach to understanding/incorporating residents' concerns and ideas for their community. It is also important to note that both "building support" and "education" are at the lower rungs of Arnstein's Ladder of Participation (Figure 2) and do not help as a strategy for empowering the underrepresented populations in the engagement process.
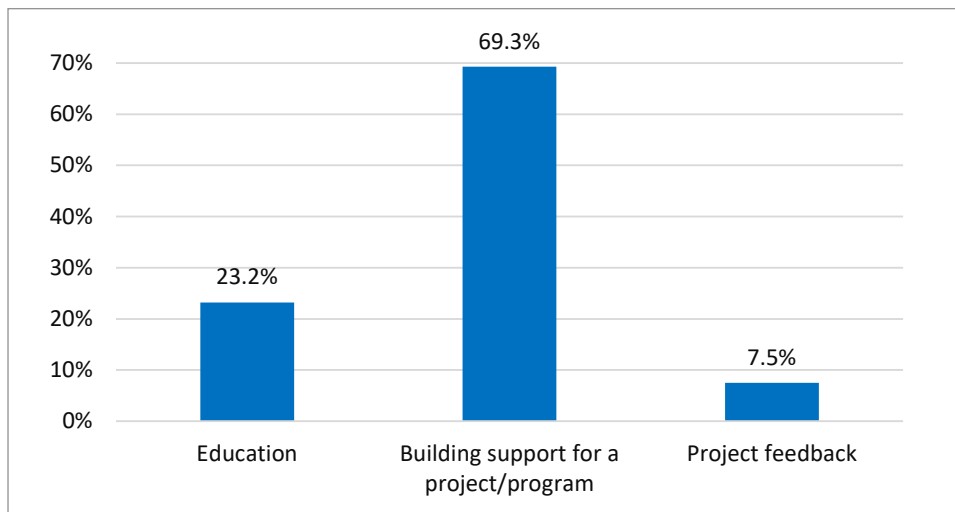
Figure 8. Goals of Complete Streets Engagement

e.   Targeting Vulnerable Populations

Figure 9 depicts the responses to the question "How often do you specifically target the following stakeholder groups for Complete Streets engagement in your community." It shows that approximately 14% to 20% of the respondents never engage or conduct Complete Streets outreach to youth, differently abled, older adults, minority, and low-income populations. At the other end of the spectrum, more than 40% of the respondents always engage with older adults, minority, and low-income populations, while 25% to 30% always engage with youth and differently abled community members. These figures indicate that young adults and differently abled populations are targeted less often for Complete Streets engagement, compared to older adults, minority, and low-income populations who are more frequently included.
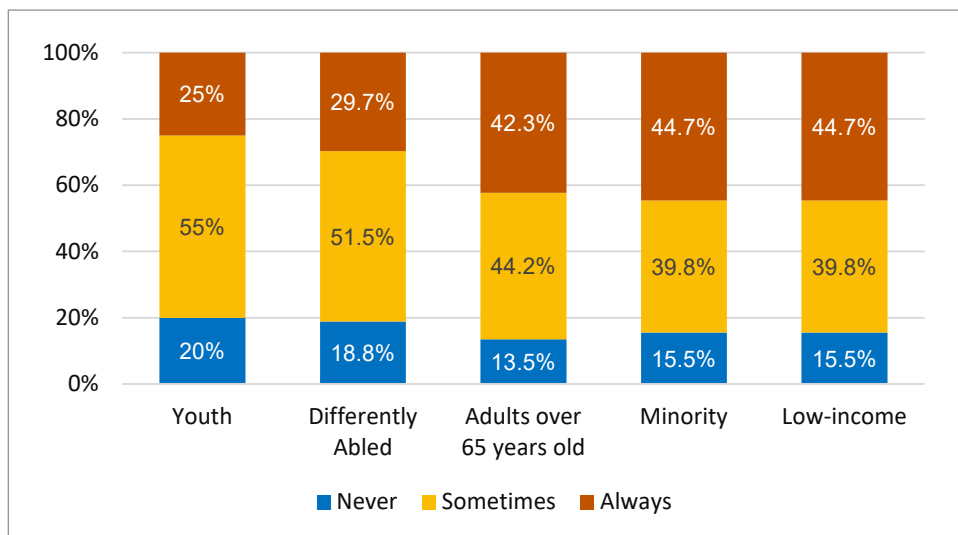

Figure 9. Frequency of Engaging with Specific Stakeholder Groups

f.   Participating in Cross-Jurisdictional Active Transportation Links

Nearly two-thirds of respondents (65.7%) answered "Yes" when asked whether their municipality/state/region participates in the planning or development of any cross-jurisdictional active transportation network link, such as multiuse trail networks and bicycle routes. Many respondents also reported joining in regional alliances for sustainable transportation, multimodal advisory committees through MPOs, regional bicycle and pedestrian

committees, access and mobility councils, and Transportation Management Association (TMA) committees to develop regional trail, bicycle, and pedestrian studies and master plans. For instance, the Richmond City Health Department in Virginia collaborated with nine of the localities in the region to prepare a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian master plan.

g. Complete Streets Task Force or Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Groups

More than four-fifths (80.3%) of the respondents selected "Yes" when asked about having a Complete Streets Task Force or Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Group in their region. Many of these groups comprised of active transportation committees, Complete Streets advisory committees and councils, or walkability action teams hosted by state or regional planning authorities (such as MPOs or TPOs). Additionally, some municipalities/state/ regions have Complete Streets groups at the municipal or county level, while other locations have several groups. For example, the City of Newport in Rhode Island has three bicycle and pedestrian groups – the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission to the City of Newport, the Newport Health Equity Zone Transportation Working Group, and the Newport Transportation Planning Committee.

Figure 10. New Jersey Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Council meeting in 2019

h. Methods of Complete Streets Engagement

In terms of methods of engagement, organizing public meetings tied with "other" as the most common method used by respondents (35.3% respectively), followed by social media (18.6%), and surveys (10.8%) (Figure 11). Of the respondents who selected "other," many reported using more than one method, including charrettes, phone trees, virtual walk audits, tabling polls, in-person pop-up engagement events, workshops, and interactive maps. These responses hint at the flexible methodologies adopted by organizations to engage with community members and stakeholders. The following subsections highlight how some of these methods of engagement are utilized by respondent organizations.
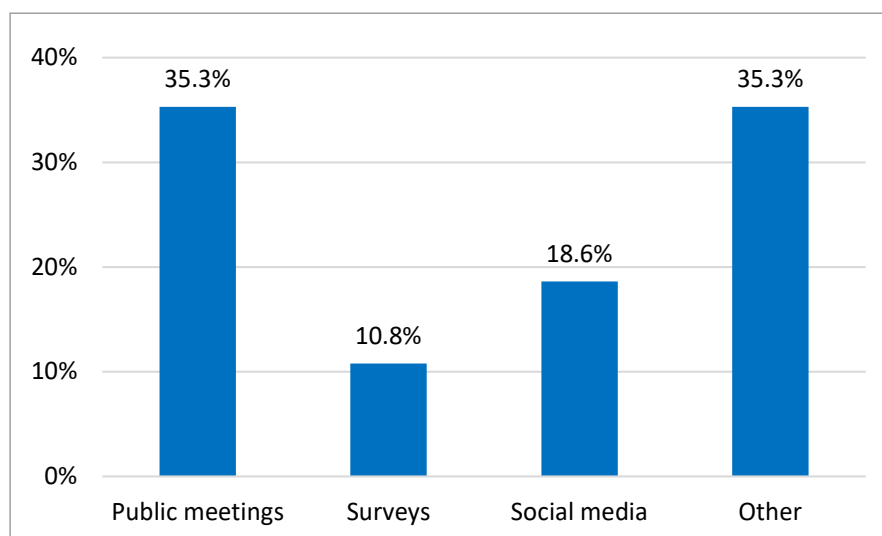

Figure 11. Frequency of Methods of Complete Streets Engagement

Social Media

When asked about how organizations use social media for Complete Streets engagement, respondents reported commonly using social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to educate, promote, discuss, and encourage Complete Streets outcomes. They utilize social media to post notifications and information about upcoming events such as public meetings and webinars. Respondents also reported sharing articles, blog posts, and newsletters, along with project updates and information to educate and discuss, gather input, review comments, and encourage resident participation. The Broward MPO in Florida uses social media to talk about the benefits of Complete Streets, give project implementation updates, and conduct virtual contests (Figure 12). The New York Coalition for Transportation Safety (NYCTS) posts educational videos for promoting and sharing information on Complete Streets. Some local/regional governments and community organizations (such as the City of Keene Community Development Department, NH; Palm Beach Transportation Planning Agency (TPA), FL; and Sacramento Area Bicycle Advocates, CA) utilize social media to promote surveys for gauging public interest and gathering feedback. The Sacramento Area Bicycle Advocates in California also launched an Instagram campaign to educate people on Slow Streets.

The respondents considered social media as an effective tool for disseminating information particularly during COVID-19. It can be highly cost-effective and help reach large audiences; however, some respondents also noted that its "reach could be limited to like-minded parties" and highlighted the need for additional funding to expand their outreach and communication methods.
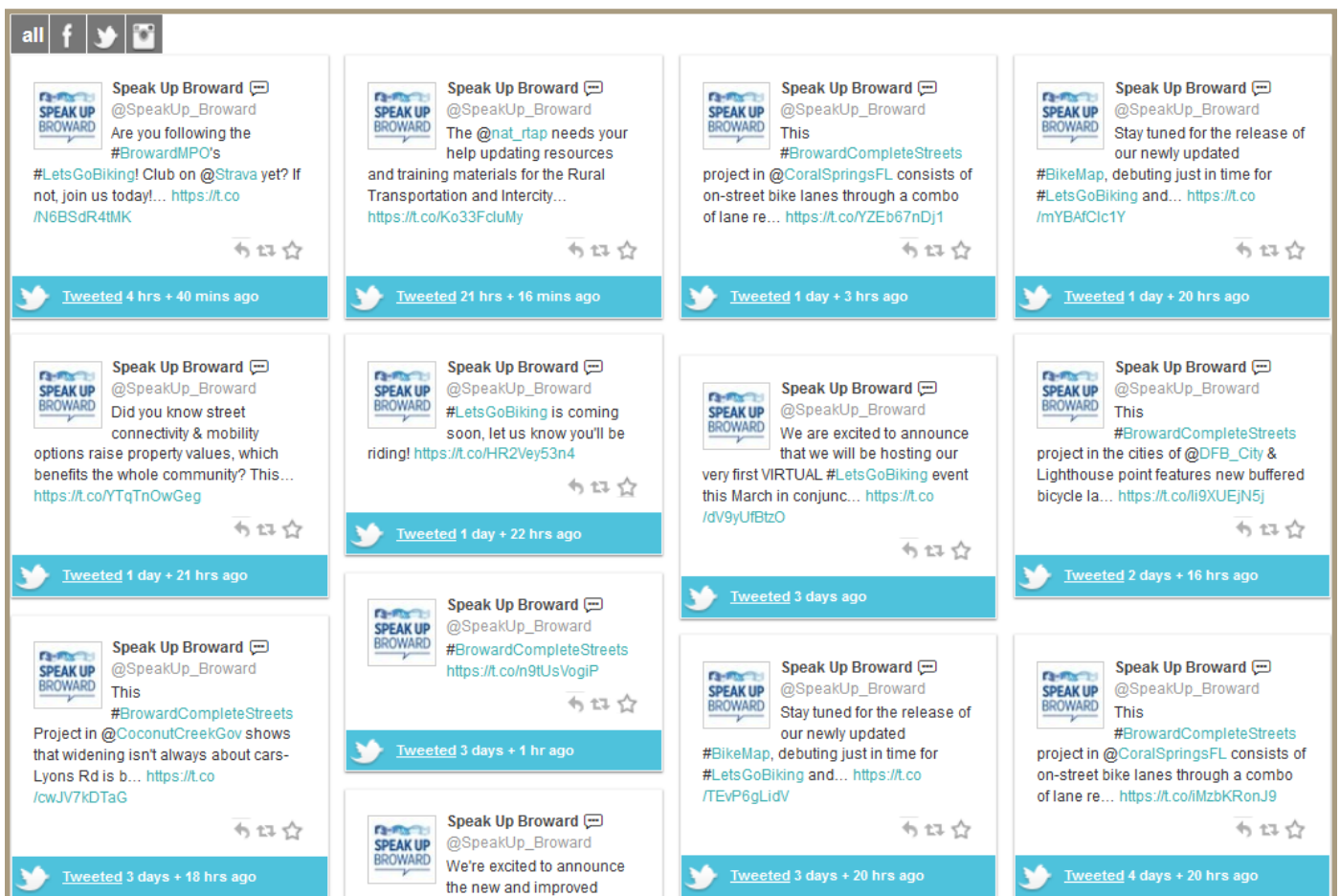

Figure 12. A Screenshot of Broward MPO Social Media Posts (Source: Broward MPO)

Technology

When asked about how organizations use technology, most respondents reported using simple internet applications, including websites and emails, virtual meeting platforms (such as Zoom and Teams), and online surveys (such as ESRI Survey, Google Forms, and Survey Monkey) to share information and collect input. They noted that technological alternatives have played a vital role in community outreach and engagement during COVID-19. A respondent shared that virtual meetings were probably the most helpful for their advocacy group in terms of getting feedback as they encouraged "responses from a good cross-section of the community in a single setting," while also recognizing their limitations due to unreliable internet connection or access.

Contrarily, several respondents also discussed more creative ways of collecting input and engaging with stakeholders using technology. For example, the City of Fort Lauderdale in Florida conducted virtual walk-throughs using drones and implemented online mapping tools to gather input. The Horizon Foundation in Maryland created an interactive map after conducting a virtual walk audit to document additional feedback on a capital project. The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (RPC) developed interactive map dashboards and utilized Google

Figure 13. Social Media Scavenger Hunt Contest Organized by the Broward MPO in 2020 (Source: Broward MPO)

Street View, ESRI Surveys, and "I-pad based data collection" methods. They also emphasized the importance of working with downtown development committees and various government departments in their efforts. The Broward MPO developed ESRI story maps, "multimodal mobile workshops," and virtual scavenger hunts to provide detailed information about ongoing projects and education purposes (Figure 13). Such outreach efforts can provide an excellent opportunity to collect a variety of feedback by drawing audiences that may not otherwise be interested in participating in the engagement process.

School Organizations/Schools

In response to the question on utilizing school organizations/schools for Complete Streets engagement, survey respondents discussed several ways, including collaborating with Parent Teacher Associations and Organizations (PTAs/PTOs), Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs, school administrators and board members, and providing internship opportunities. Several respondents described partnering with educational institutions to host specific events (e.g., bicycle safety rallies and open street events) and working closely with SRTS programs and coordinators to conduct walk audits and advocate for speed enforcement in school zones. The City of Ann Arbor, Michigan, organized youth and college focus groups on specific topics with Ann Arbor Public Schools and the University of Michigan. A planning and engineering firm, Robert and Company partnered with PTAs to conduct engagement through monthly newsletters. In New Hampshire, the City of Keene received a SRTS grant and coordinated with school representatives to develop and implement community education and outreach programs. Unfortunately, they noted that the state no longer allows Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grants to be used for such non-infrastructure efforts.

Lastly, a few local government and community organizations (such as the County of San Diego, CA; NYCTS; and Bike&Walk Montclair, NJ) hire student interns for specific projects, surveying, bicycle education, and social media marketing tasks.

Community Events

On using community events for Complete Streets engagement, survey respondents reported organizing a variety of events, including pop-up booths, bike rides, walking tours, walking audits, walk to school days, car free days, bike months, community fairs, charrettes, guest lectures, and open houses for education, safety, and feedback purposes. The City of Ann Arbor, Michigan, hosts open houses at a neighborhood community center. The Town of Wethersfield, Connecticut and California DOT (commonly known as Caltrans) also conduct open houses and workshops to disseminate information and obtain feedback. In Louisiana, Bike Baton Rouge, a local non-profit, holds events in partnership with the Center for Planning Excellence and other agencies. The Broward MPO organizes events in partnership with municipalities throughout the county, including bike rides, walking tours, walking audits, and walk to school days to promote Complete Streets and engage with local residents. The Bike&Walk Montclair in New Jersey conducts casual bike rides in and around the town, in addition to bicycle education programming events.

In another example, a local health department invited a national public health, planning, and active transportation expert to host a series of community conversations. The New York Coalition for Transportation Safety (NYCTS) and Richmond City Health Department, VA also host guest speakers on transportation safety and other topics. In New Hampshire a partner agency, Pathways for Keene, organizes road races every year to raise funds for the local trail system. Similarly, the City of Fort Lauderdale attends neighborhood events to share information on projects, gather feedback on scope, and educate community members about safety, as well as organize community bike rides across the city. The Palm Beach TPA in Florida found charrettes to be particularly successful in engaging with community members.

A number of respondents also reported utilizing public meetings for sharing information, collecting input, and discussing project progress. Two community organizations, BikeWalkKC and Missourians for Responsible Transportation, use public meetings to gather feedback on legislation and set priorities, particularly regarding equity. An advocacy group in Indianapolis, Health by Design conducts public meetings for information sharing and collecting feedback.

Figure 14. A Community Event for Seniors (Source: Dave Owen on Flickr)

Figure 15. "On Air" – A Pop-Up Activity Booth for Engaging with Children and Teens around a Regional Transportation Plan

Figure 16. Parklets at a Parking Day Event in 2018 (Source: Sarah Shaughnessy)

Figure 17. A Parklet with Green Space and Chess Tables Made of Re-Purposed Pallets (Source: Mari Brunner)

Figure 18. Walking School Bus at an Elementary School (Source: Sarah Shaughnessy)

Other Methods

Other methods of community outreach and engagement discussed by the respondents include conducting technical trainings, organizing targeted stakeholder meetings, using postcard mailing, providing free driver education programs, and distributing Complete Streets infographics for educating and promoting Complete Streets and gathering input.

i.   Examples of Complete Streets Outreach and Engagement Conducted

When asked for a description of any Complete Streets outreach and engagement conducted, one factor that was emphasized by respondents consistent with the literature review is the importance of collaborating with key stakeholders, such as neighborhood associations, local non-profits, and community organizations who have strong social connections with community members, in addition to other stakeholders, such as planning and health departments, and economic development organizations. For instance, the Sacramento Area Bicycle Advocates in California worked with neighborhood associations who have the "closest relationship" with residents to implement a Slow and Active Streets pilot project, which involved community engagement via Zoom and social media surveys. The Deer Park Neighborhood Association in Louisville, KY worked with neighborhood associations, the local councilman's office, and the Louisville Metro Government to implement improvements to a road corridor and raise awareness about the inadequacies of existing transportation alternatives. In Florida, the City of Fort Lauderdale went to low-income neighborhoods on several neighborhood events for the Crosswalk Initiative, asking people to identify locations that need crosswalks. Additionally, the city partnered with Homeowner's Associations (HOAs), YMCAs, and housing authorities in order to reach targeted community members in the most accessible manner. A Caltrans representative shared the importance of conducting focus group discussions pre-pandemic in collaboration with neighborhood associations, who helped them reach out to a wide pool of residents.

Some of the organizations also provided detailed examples that involved employing a variety of engagement methods and activities and "meeting the community on their turf" along with partnering with key stakeholders. For instance, the Palm Beach TPA in Florida recently executed an extensive public engagement plan for a multimodal study that identified transit, bicycle, and pedestrian improvements along US-1 in Palm Beach

County. The plan included a range of outreach methods such as in-person workshops, design charrettes, online comment maps, in-person interviews, social media posts, and quality of life and transit surveys (Figure 19 to 21). The in-person workshops and charrettes were hosted at local community centers, clubhouses, art centers, event places, and town and chamber halls. The team also invited key interest groups from diverse backgrounds to participate in the process. As a result, the effort received excellent feedback with over 450 event attendees, over 130 comments on the online map, more than 100 stakeholder and personal interviews, and over 100 survey responses.

Figure 19. Participants Involved in an Intersection Design Activity at a Charrette (Source: US-1 Multimodal Corridor Study – Connecting Communities in Palm Beach County, May 2018)
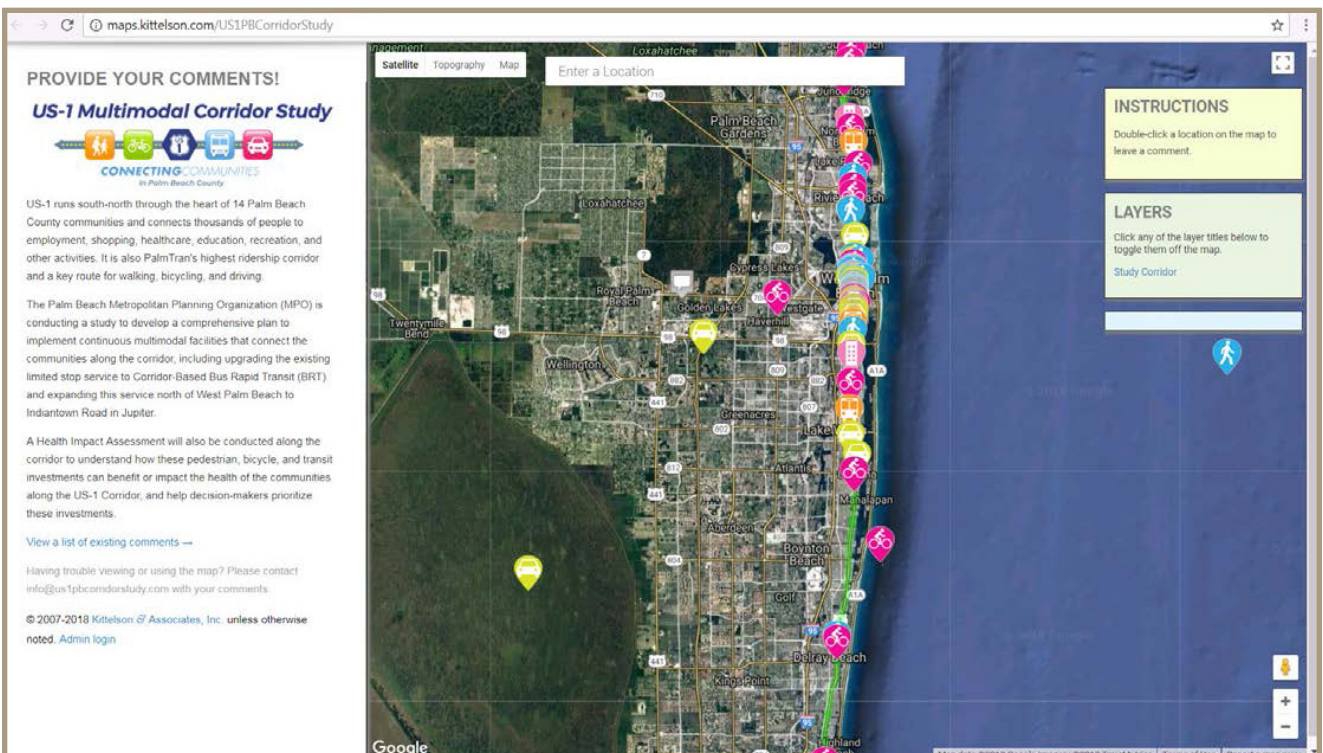

Figure 20. Screenshot of the Interactive Comment Map (Source: US-1 Multimodal Corridor Study – Connecting Communities in Palm Beach County, May 2018)

Figure 21. "Build A Street" Activity at a Charrette (Source: US-1 Multimodal Corridor Study – Connecting Communities in Palm Beach County, May 2018)

The City of Ann Arbor (MI) also updated its comprehensive transportation plan through strong public engagement from the beginning to the development stages of the plan. The engagement involved focus groups with the general public, seniors, and minority populations; behavioral, perception, and comfort surveys conducted online and in-person; public open houses, committee meetings, and pop-up events; online interactive map activities; and emails and social media campaigns (Figure 22 and 23). The city received a great deal of responses to their efforts, comprising about 120 focus group participants, 4,400 survey responses, 6,300 interactive map entries, and 150 event participants. It might be interesting to explore how these organizations specifically targeted vulnerable communities and developed their outreach plan, as well as what their successes and challenges were. For instance, the Palm Beach TPA website includes flyers for the mentioned community events in three languages (English, Spanish, and Creole), which is one way to reach out to diverse communities. Similarly, the City of Ann Arbor promoted their surveys "through social media channels, emails to residential groups, and emails to project stakeholders" in an effort to connect to a variety of audiences.

Figure 22. A Public Open House (Source: City of Ann Arbor Comprehensive Transportation Plan, Draft Final, November 2020)
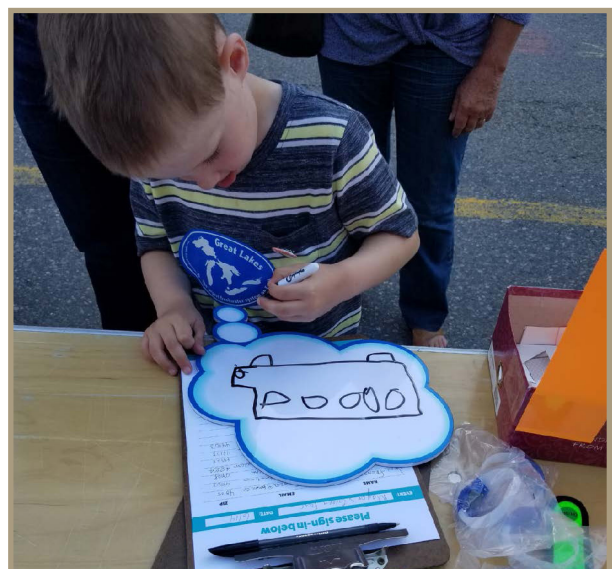

Figure 23. Engaging with Children Through a Pop-Up Event (Source: City of Ann Arbor Comprehensive Transportation Plan, Draft Final, November 2020)

In another example, the City of Keene organized a one-day tactical urbanism/placemaking event, installing temporary bike lanes, parklets, and crosswalks using low-cost materials such as traffic tape, potted plants, and free-standing plastic bollards to garner feedback on proposed street improvements for a specific corridor (Figure 24). The event was a partnership between the city, a local hospital, and the regional planning commission that was reportedly "very successful" and received very "good feedback." The city is interested in planning similar events; however, they no longer have access to a funding source.

Several state DOTs, regional governments/planning authorities, and advocacy groups also mentioned about collaborating with similar agencies to advance participation in Complete Streets, which could subsequently lead to community engagement efforts. For example, the Horizon Foundation has a local coalition with more than 20 partners that shares Complete Streets updates and information related to bicycle and pedestrian budgets and ongoing projects. Similarly, the Central Massachusetts RPC has provided support to every town in their region in applying for "Tier 3 project funds" by incorporating Complete Streets into their planning tasks such as economic and master plans. The Massachusetts DOT launched an emergency response initiative during COVID-19 called "Shared Streets & Spaces," holding webinars and multiple media engagements to help cities and towns in reimagining their streets, sidewalks, curbs, and parking spaces in support of public health and safer mobility.

Figure 24. Complete Streets Transformation of a Wide Section of Roadway - Before (left) and After (right) (Source: Mari Brunner)

Figure 25. New Jersey Ambassadors in Motion (NJAIM) Volunteers Painting a Crosswalk at Trenton, New Jersey

Apart from these examples, many of the respondents shared that they use more traditional methods for community outreach and engagement, such as emails, websites, social media, public meetings, community events, workshops, trainings, surveys, and focus groups, which are covered in more detail in the previous section of this report.

j.   Tools for Developing Outreach Plans

When asked about the tools used for developing a Complete Streets outreach plan, survey respondents reported applying different methods, tailoring the outreach strategy to the local context and the target audience, and referring to public engagement toolkits and best practice guidebooks. They emphasized working with a diverse set of partners, such as local partners and municipal staff and councilmembers at various levels of government, to build positive relationships and understand a community's needs. The Newport Heath Equity Zone in Rhode Island utilizes one-on-one conversations, relationships with city councilmembers, and resident participation to develop their outreach plans. In Arkansas, the Frontier MPO collaborates with a diverse set of government partners and medical providers and emphasizes the inclusion of communities of color. A City of Fort Lauderdale (FL) representative highlighted that an outreach strategy "needs to be diverse and fit the target audience." As such, while developing a neighborhood plan, the city "works with the neighborhood representatives to understand the best way to reach their neighborhood, any upcoming events and activities and any key stakeholders to reach out to." A Broward MPO representative emphasized the use of diverse platforms and formats, from in-person events (such as public meetings) to walking audits and online interactive media.

The City of Ann Arbor (MI) maintains an "in-house public engagement toolkit" that provides a framework for developing an outreach plan. They rely on the collective expertise of internal staff and consultants, including public engagement professionals to design and execute outreach programs. Similarly, local and regional organizations such as the Bloomington-Monroe County MPO, IN and the County of San Diego, CA consulted resources from non-profits like America Walks, SGA, Transportation for America, and AARP. For example, the County of San Diego referred to AARP's 2009 Complete Streets for Older Adults guidebook for understanding the unique needs of older adults, which then informed their own guide on best practices and regional examples for implementing "Complete Streets for all Ages."

Regarding the timing of outreach efforts, Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership (PA) relies on developing a "comprehensive stakeholder analysis and risk management plan" to identify and analyze key stakeholders or the target audience early on in the process. The City of Tigard, Oregon, found getting feedback from stakeholders and community members during the planning stages before beginning the outreach activities as extremely helpful. Two other community organizations also echoed the importance of timing but found it difficult to engage with the community during the design and planning stages of a project. For instance, a respondent from Wisconsin found public engagement to be limited during the early stages of a local effort that identified roadways for Complete Streets projects until a roadway was selected and scheduled.

Figure 26. A Parklet in Montclair, New Jersey

k. Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

As shown in Table 2, approximately half (249 or 47.8%) of the total respondents reported that their organization either advocated for or implemented social distancing related measures during the COVID-19 pandemic. Of those organizations, the majority advocated for or implemented outdoor dining plans (38.2%), while a slightly smaller share of organizations focused on opening streets for pedestrians (36.2%) and expanding sidewalks (32.8%) (Table 2). It is also important to note that the outdoor dining initiatives and other initiatives were implemented at a much higher rate of 57% and 56% respectively than the open streets (34.6%) and sidewalk expansion (31.6%) efforts (Figure 27). This indicates that expanding outdoor dining and other initiatives were more popular initiatives than opening streets and expanding sidewalks.

Approximately 10% of the respondents selected "other," when asked to describe the social distancing related measures their organization had either advocated for or implemented during the pandemic. Of those respondents, many shared that their focus included installing quick-build bike lanes and safety projects, expanding bike paths, closing lanes for pedestrians and bicyclists, expanding bike share and bike racks, implementing slow streets and "no thru streets" programs, and installing parklets and traffic calming measures.

	Frequency	Percent
Social distancing related measures	249	
Opening streets to pedestrians	188	36.1%
Expanding sidewalks during pandemic	171	32.8%
Expanding outdoor dining	199	38.2%
Other	50	9.6%
Note: The frequencies do not add up to the total 249 (or 100 in percent) as the categories are mutually inclusive.		

Table 2. Total Frequency of Pursuing Given Social Distancing Measures
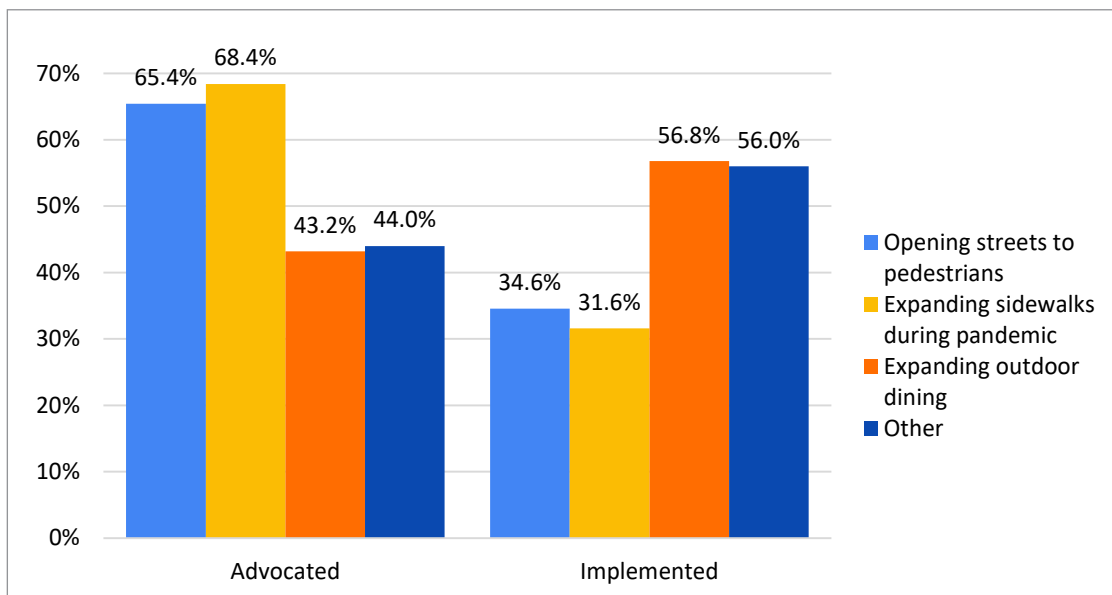

Figure 27. Frequency of Advocating for/Implementing Given Social-Distancing Measures

IV. Key Findings

This research investigated how Complete Streets outreach and engagement activities are approached, planned, and implemented by organizations across the country. In particular, it analyzed the goals of public engagement, their methods, partner organizations, and target groups. Findings indicated that most respondent organizations implement Complete Streets engagement as a tool for mobilizing support and education as opposed to collecting feedback. A fair share of the respondents utilizes traditional outreach and engagement methods such as public meetings, emails, and social media announcements for engagement, while other organizations apply a wide range of methods, including online interactive maps and dashboards, design charrettes, pop-up events, and temporary demonstration projects.

Several respondents also emphasized the importance of partnering with local community organizations and key stakeholders in both the development and execution of an outreach plan. They highlighted how an outreach plan should fit the target audience and comprise a diversity of methods from public meetings to interactive comment maps and noted the vital role partnerships play in reaching out to wider audiences as well as specific stakeholder groups. A few responses also discussed the abundance of tools and resources that are available to help guide public outreach and engagement activities. Such open and free resources could help agencies expand their public engagement strategy and toolkit as desired by some respondents.

V. Next Steps

This research summarizes how Complete Streets public outreach and engagement is implemented by organizations across the country. It includes information on why and how Complete Streets engagement is conducted and how it targets vulnerable populations, along with respondent examples of successful engagement efforts. The next step for this research is to develop case studies from a select number of the examples highlighted in the report. To do so, the authors plan to conduct individual interviews or focus groups with select representatives in order to establish in-depth guidance on the best practices in developing and executing public outreach and engagement plans.

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Evaluating Complete Streets Public Engagement Survey

Welcome to this online survey by Smart Growth America!

You are invited to take part in a research study that is being conducted by Smart Growth America in partnership with the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center at Rutgers University. The purpose of the research is to collect information about effective and notable **Complete Streets outreach, educational and engagement** activities. As part of this effort, we would also like to know the challenges you face and even the methods you have tried that have not worked well. Your responses, both your successes and failures, can be great learning opportunities for communities around the country.

Making our streets safer for all users requires efforts on multiple fronts. Changing road designs can create safe space for different users (bicyclists, pedestrians, cars, buses, etc.), but often it is not enough to eliminate crashes. **Engaging road users through outreach and education is an important step for safety** and helps to ensure all voices are heard in the planning process. Outreach can mean anything from collecting input during the planning process of a new design or educating users how to safely share the road.

Digital Consent to Take Part in Anonymous Survey

We do not foresee risks to subjects participating in this study. Your participation in the study will take approximately 15 minutes. **Your responses will be anonymous.** No information will be collected that can identify who you are other than the information collected for the gift card, which will NOT be linked to your responses.

The research team comprises of the only parties that may see the data, except as may be required by law. If the findings of this research are professionally presented or published, only group results will be stated.

If you have questions about taking part in this study, contact Charles Brown, Principal Investigator, by calling (848) 932-2846 or emailing charles.brown@ejb.rutgers.edu.

By beginning this survey, I acknowledge that I am 18 years of age or older and have read and understand the information. I agree to take part in the survey, with the knowledge that I am free to withdraw my participation in the survey without penalty.

Please print a copy of this consent form for your records.

If you are 18 years of age or older, understand the statements above, and consent to take part in the study, select "Yes, I consent" to begin the survey. If not, please select "I do not consent" which will exit you from this screen.

○ Yes, I consent; I am at least 18 years old and I wish to complete the online survey.

○ I do not consent, and I do not wish to participate.

Q1 What organization are you associated with?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q2 Please select the description below that best describes your organization:

○ State DOT

○ Regional government or planning authority

○ Local government

○ Advocacy group or community organization

○ Other (please describe) _____

Q3 If you would be interested in providing additional details on the outreach and engagement you have used or participated in your community, as well as to receive a gift certificate, please provide your contact information.

○ Name _____

○ Email _____

○ Phone _____

Q4 How was your Complete Streets policy passed?

○ State DOT

○ Regional government or planning authority

○ Local/ Municipal government

○ Grassroots Organization

○ Other (please describe) _____

Q5 What goals do you hope to achieve in conducting Complete Streets engagement?

○ Education

○ Building Support for a project/ program

○ Project feedback

Q6 How often do you specifically target the following stakeholder groups for Complete Streets engagement in your community (such as youth, differently abled, vulnerable populations, minorities?

	Always	Sometimes	Never
Youth	○	○	○
Differently Abled	○	○	○
Residents over 65 years of age	○	○	○
Minority Communities	○	○	○
Low Income Communities	○	○	○

Q7 How do you collect feedback from community members and stakeholders?

○ Public Meetings

○ Surveys

○ Social Media

○ Other (please describe): _____

Q8 Which social distancing related activities has your organization implemented and/or advocated for?

	Implemented	Advocated
Opening Streets to Pedestrians	○	○
Expanding Sidewalks during Pandemic	○	○
Expanded Outdoor Dining	○	○
Other (specify)	○	○

Q9 Does your municipality/state/region participate in any kind of active transportation network link with neighboring jurisdictions?

○ Yes (please describe): _____

○ No (please describe): _____

Q10 Does your municipality/state/region have a Complete Streets Task Force or Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Group?

○ Yes (please describe): _____

○ No (please describe): _____

Q11 Please provide a description of any Complete Streets outreach and engagement conducted by your organization or partnering organizations?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q12 Who are your key partnering organizations?

_____

Q13 How have you used _____ to engage the community in Complete Street topics?

		Please describe:
social media		
technology		
student organizations/ schools		
community events		
other:		

Q14 What tools have you found useful in developing your outreach plans?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix B
Survey Questionnaire - Number of Responses

	Number of Responses
Total	**521**
Q1 What organization are you associated with?	**413**
Q2 Please select the description below that best describes your organization:	**515**
Q3 If you would be interested in providing additional details on the outreach and engagement you have used or participated in your community, as well as to receive a gift certificate, please provide your contact information.	**297**
Q4 How was your Complete Streets policy passed?	**359**
Q5 What goals do you hope to achieve in conducting Complete Streets engagement?	**319**
Q6 How often do you specifically target the following stakeholder groups for Complete Streets engagement in your community (such as youth, differently abled, vulnerable populations, minorities?	**106**
Q7 How do you collect feedback from community members and stakeholders?	**102**
Q8 Which social distancing related activities has your organization implemented and/or advocated for?	**249**
Q9 Does your municipality/state/region participate in any kind of active transportation network link with neighboring jurisdictions?	**67**
Q10 Does your municipality/state/region have a Complete Streets Task Force or Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Group?	**71**
Q11 Please provide a description of any Complete Streets outreach and engagement conducted by your organization or partnering organizations?	**59**
Q12 Who are your key partnering organizations?	**54**
Q13 How have you used _____ to engage the community in Complete Street topics?	**50**
Q14 What tools have you found useful in developing your outreach plans?	**43**