



# FEATURE PRESENTATION: MPO IMPLEMENTATION OF VIRTUAL PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT





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# Virtual Public Outreach at SJTPO

## New Jersey STIC

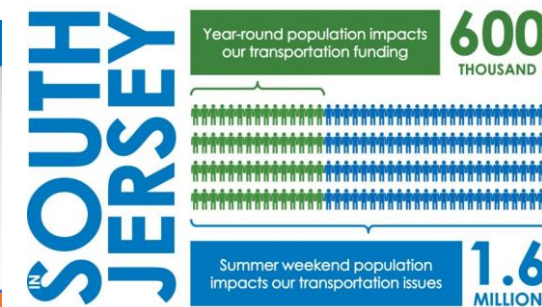
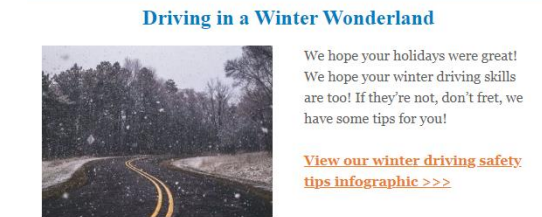
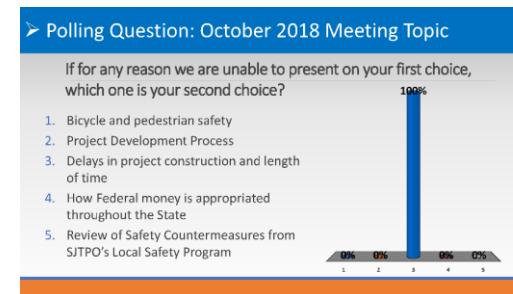
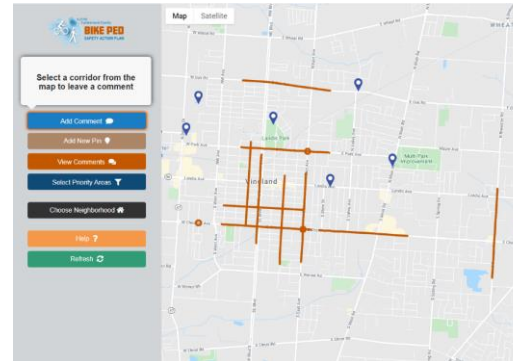
Wednesday, February 5, 2020





# Overview of Virtual Outreach at SJTPO

- Social Media
  - Polling
  - Direct messaging
- E-Lists
  - Monitor subscribers
- *On the Go* newsletter
- Videos
  - Spanish Translation
- Online Survey
  - Interactive Mapping
- Public comment webpage
  - Monitor analytics
- Real-time keypad polling
- Infographics



# Social Media

- **Twitter (425) & Facebook (73)**
- LinkedIn (52), YouTube, & Flickr
- Vital in distributing information
  - Meeting times and materials
  - Roadway-user statistics
  - Partner agency announcements
- Engagement methods
  - Polling, Graphics, Hashtags
  - Direct messaging
- Monitor data quarterly
  - Growth and engagement
  - Determine effectiveness and tailor approach



# Social Media (cont'd)

- Lessons learned:
  - Don't be too formal
  - Always include a picture (beware of copyright laws)
  - Requires a lot of ongoing maintenance
  - Be careful what you share
  - Be prepared – how you will respond to critical comments
- Pros:
  - Flexible (time, location, etc.)
  - Great for getting message out
  - Direct messaging seems promising
- Cons:
  - Online demeanor
  - Need a large image library
  - Overall, significant investment





# E-List

- Our Uses:
  - Meeting announcements
  - Public comment opportunities
  - Newsletter
- Pros:
  - Many subscribers (574)
  - Easy to manage
  - Low cost (Mailchimp, free)
- Cons:
  - Not very engaging
    - ~30% open rate
    - ~8% click rate
    - Too many emails = unsubscribes
  - Junk folders?
- Notes:
  - Sign-up on every webpage
  - Ask permission on sign-in sheets



## Driving in a Winter Wonderland



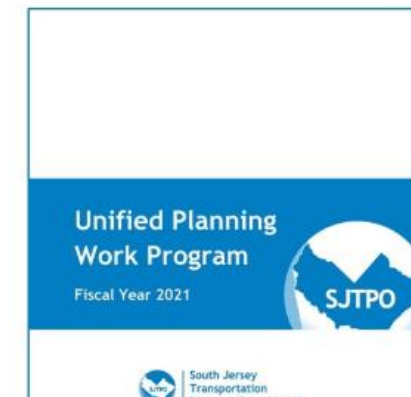
We hope your holidays were great!  
We hope your winter driving skills  
are too! If they're not, don't fret, we  
have some tips for you!

[View our winter driving safety  
tips infographic >>>](#)

## Share Your Thoughts with Us

On Monday, December 16, 2019, we announced the start of the Draft FY 2021 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) comment period. The UPWP details the federally-funded transportation planning efforts we will support from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021.

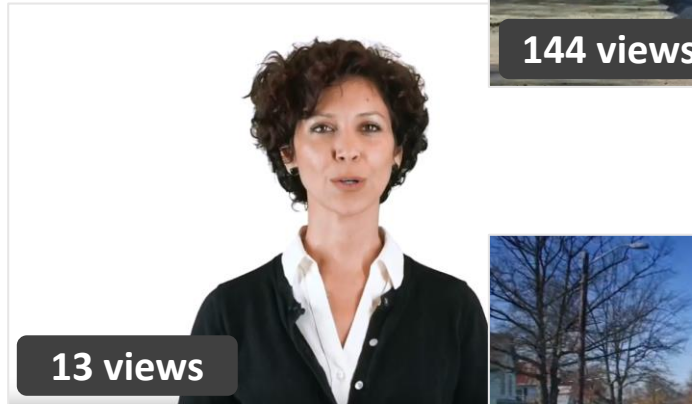
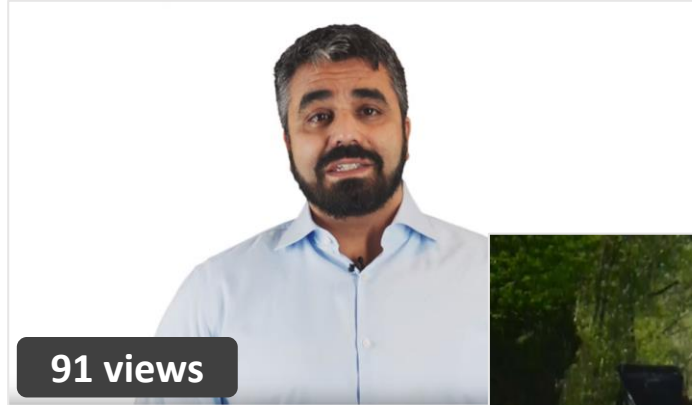
**Comments will be accepted  
until Friday, January 31, 2020**





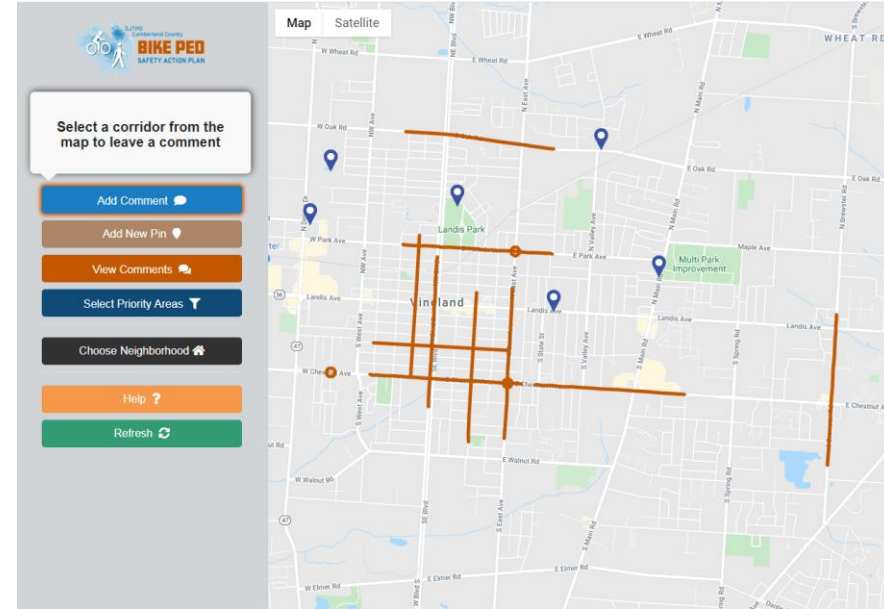
# Videos

- Projects:
  - About SJTPO
  - Regional Transportation Plan
  - Cumberland County Bike/Ped Safety Action Plan Overview (English and Spanish)
  - Safety Countermeasure videos (coming soon)
- Pros:
  - Videos are engaging
  - A wider opportunity to spread the message in your words
- Cons:
  - Expensive\*
  - Only as effective as your distribution method



# Online Surveying

- Projects:
  - South Jersey Trails
  - Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)
  - Cumberland Co Bike/Ped Safety Action Plan
  - Public Involvement Plan (PIP)
  - Federal Certification Public Comment
  - Access for All Transit Plan



- Pros:
  - Flexible (location, schedules, etc.)
  - Map exercises are fun
  - Good for introverts
  - Inexpensive
  - Data is already digitized
- Cons:
  - May not be able to follow-up if responses are unclear
  - Too many questions limit response
  - Opportunity to build relationships is limited
  - Creating map surveys may require some know-how

# Public Comment Webpage

- Too many project webpages
  - We felt obligated to create them
  - Public would not always know where to go to give input
- SJTPO centralized input last year
  - Comment periods
  - Project-specific opportunities
  - General comments
- Contact information and links to staff directory and social media

The screenshot shows the SJTPO website's public comment page. The header includes navigation links: Announcements, RFPs, Employment, FAQs, Staff Directory, Document Library, Login, and a search bar. Below the header is a row of icons for ABOUT, PLANNING, SAFETY, PROGRAMS, and GET INVOLVED. The main content area features a large blue banner with the title "Public Comment" and text stating: "This page announces formal public comment periods conducted according to federal regulations as well as project-specific public comment opportunities. General comments are also welcomed. There is one formal public comment opportunity now available." To the right of the text is a photo of people at a public meeting. Below the banner is a sidebar with a list of links: NEWS (ON THE GO), CITIZEN'S GUIDE, EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS, PUBLIC COMMENT (highlighted), and TITLE VI & EJ. At the bottom of the sidebar is a "CONTACT INFO" section featuring a photo of Melissa Melora, Public Outreach Planner, with her email address mmelora@sjtpo.org. The main content area below the banner has a section titled "Formal Public Comment Periods" which explains the 30-day and 45-day comment periods and lists steps for formal public comment periods.

**Public Comment**

This page announces formal public comment periods conducted according to federal regulations as well as project-specific public comment opportunities. General comments are also welcomed.

There is one formal public comment opportunity now available.

**Formal Public Comment Periods**

The SJTPO conducts formal 30-day public comment periods prior to the adoption of these three key planning documents: the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). A formal 45-day public comment period is held for the Public Involvement Plan (PIP).

Formal comment periods are also held when these documents are significantly changed or amended. For instance, for the TIP, a comment period is held when adding or deleting projects, or in the event of a project scope or project schedule change that results in a new conformity analysis. Further details on public comment periods are provided in the Public Involvement Plan.

**Steps for Formal Public Comment Periods**

Formal public comment periods include the steps listed below to involve the public.

- Place notification in the legal section of regional daily newspapers, as deemed necessary
- Place notification on the SJTPO website and social media platforms with an option for submitting comments via e-mail
- Provide notification to a listing of representative interest groups, stakeholders, and agencies in the

[www.sjtpo.org/public-comment](http://www.sjtpo.org/public-comment)

# Real-time Keypad Polling

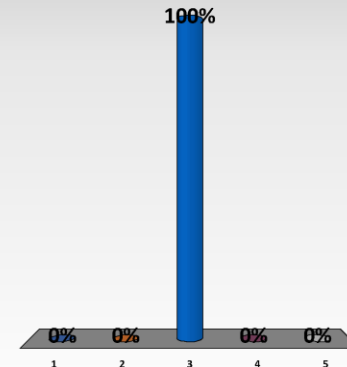
- Uses:
  - TIP and RTP Public Meetings
  - CAC meetings
- Pro:
  - Simple way to gather input
  - Data is compiled instantly
  - Users see comments reflected
- Con:
  - Does not allow open ended answers
  - Multiple answer questions can confuse users
  - Limited by number of keypads
  - Tech issues



## ➤ Polling Question: October 2018 Meeting Topic

If for any reason we are unable to present on your first choice, which one is your second choice?

1. Bicycle and pedestrian safety
2. Project Development Process
3. Delays in project construction and length of time
4. How Federal money is appropriated throughout the State
5. Review of Safety Countermeasures from SJTPO's Local Safety Program





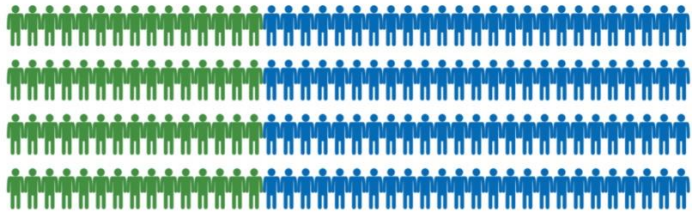
# Infographics

- Just starting to utilize infographics
- Eye-catching way to communicate complex or “wonky” info
- Great for social media

**SOUTH  
JERSEY**

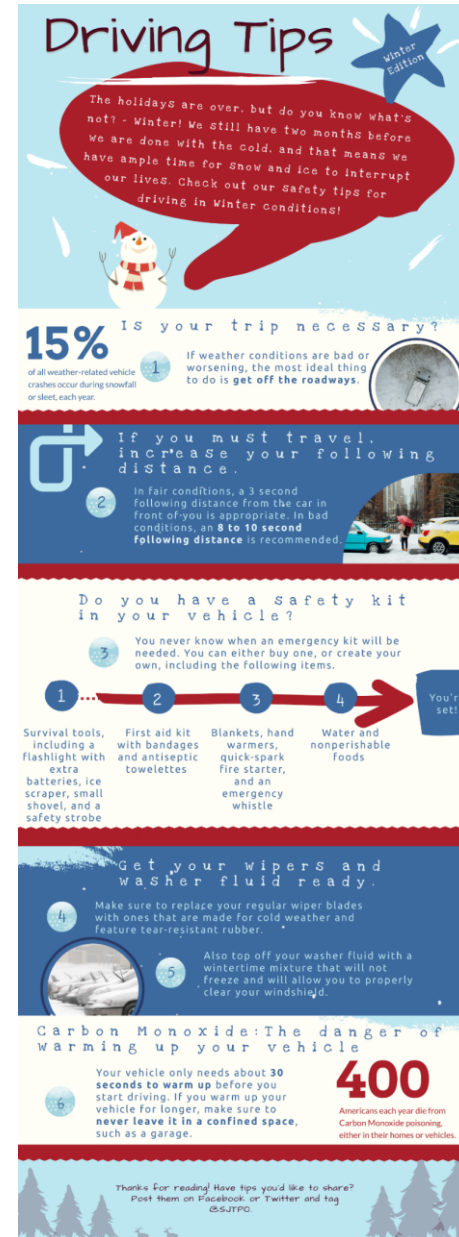
Year-round population impacts  
our transportation funding

**600**  
THOUSAND



Summer weekend population  
impacts our transportation issues

**1.6**  
MILLION



# Our Lessons Learned

- Start small - test methods on projects, learn from mistakes, then expand
- Social media - Select platform(s) and commit
- Scrutinize before you share
- It is only as effective as your ability to reach people
- Visuals are critical
- Collect data and use it to tailor your approach
- Plan for public without internet access



# Questions and Comments...

## Alan Huff

Program Manager – Safety Initiatives & Public Outreach

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## Melissa Melora

Public Outreach Planner

[mmelora@sjtpo.org](mailto:mmelora@sjtpo.org)





**Melissa Hayes**

Senior Manager, Outreach

**Ted Ritter**

Manager, External Affairs



# Virtual Public Engagement

## NJ STIC Quarterly Meeting

February 5, 2020



Melissa Hayes & Ted Ritter

North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority

# Online Surveys: Lessons Learned

- Get to the questions
- Keep it short
- Use several surveys



 North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA)  
Sponsored · 🌐

Plan for the Future!



**PLAN 2045**  
Connecting North Jersey  
NJTPA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Help improve your community? Take a quick survey to help shape your future.


The NJTPA wants your input for Plan 2045: Connecting North Jersey, our latest long-range transportation plan for the region. We have divided our survey into...



[PLAN2045SURVEY.ORG](http://PLAN2045SURVEY.ORG) [Learn More](#)



👍 Like    💬 Comment    ➦ Share

# Social Media



Create Post



 Would you ride in a driverless car or shuttle?



Yes  

No 23  


🕒 1 week ▼ Remove Poll


 Photo/Video  Get Messages


 Feeling/Activity  Check in


 Poll  Support Nonprofit



 If you had the option would you rather travel by rail or bus?




 Rail

 Bus


🕒 1 week ▼ Remove Poll



# Social Media

**North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA)**  
December 9, 2019 · 🌐


Do you travel the Bridge Street Bridge in Newark and Harrison? There are two public meetings TOMORROW (2-4 in Newark and 6-8 in Harrison) to present potential alternatives for the replacing or rehabilitating the bridge. Details: <http://njtpa.org/.../Public-Meeting-Bridge-Street-Bridge-Stud...>




1,852  
People Reached


369  
Engagements


Boost Post


 3

5 Comments 12 Shares

 Like

 Comment

 Share





JAN  
28

**Public Meeting: Main Avenue Study, City of Passaic**  
Public · Hosted by North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) and Passaic County · 1 co-host pending [?]

★ Interested

✓ Going

 Share

...

 Today at 2:30 PM – 8 PM  
Happening Now · 41° Cloudy

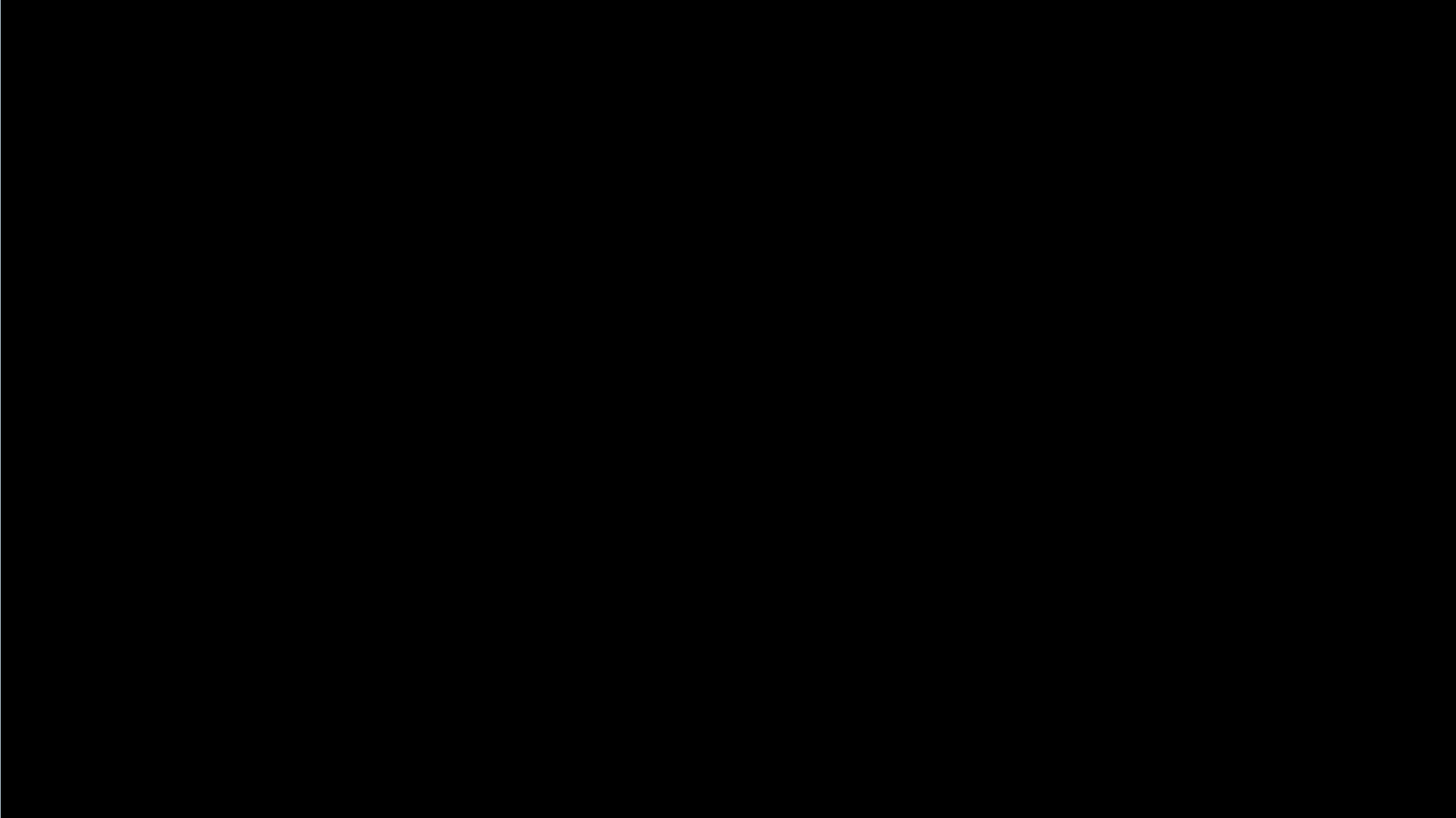
 255 Madison St, Passaic, NJ 07055-4107, United States [Show Map](#)

About

Discussion



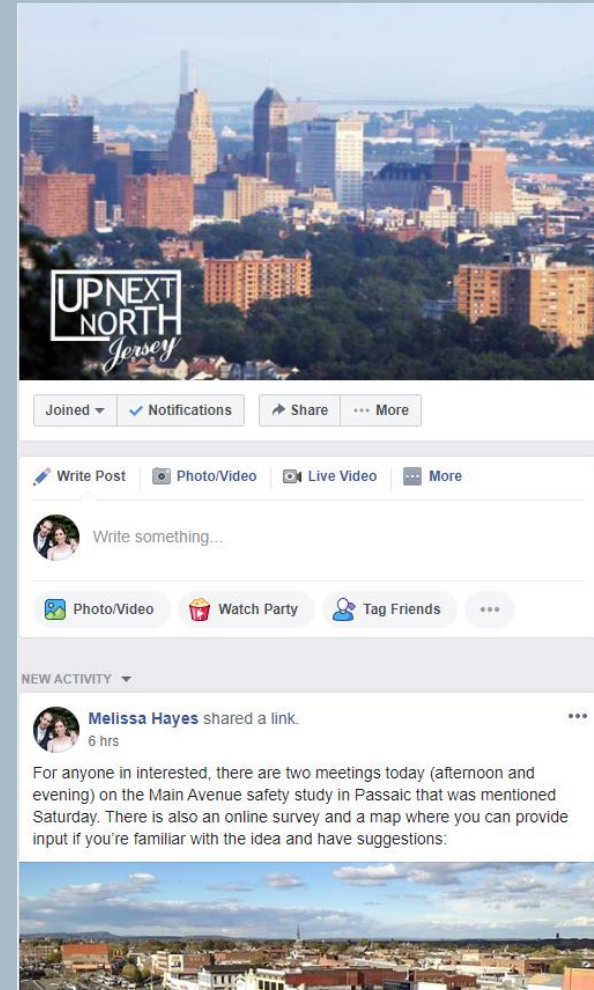
# Videos



# One Cool Thing



# UpNext North Jersey





# Public Involvement Toolkit





# Thank You!

*Defining the Vision. Shaping the Future.*



**Melissa Hayes**  
[mhayes@njtpa.org](mailto:mhayes@njtpa.org)

**Ted Ritter**  
[tritter@njtpa.org](mailto:tritter@njtpa.org)



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Find Us On  
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TO OUR CHANNEL



# Alison Hastings

Manager, Office of Communications & Engagement

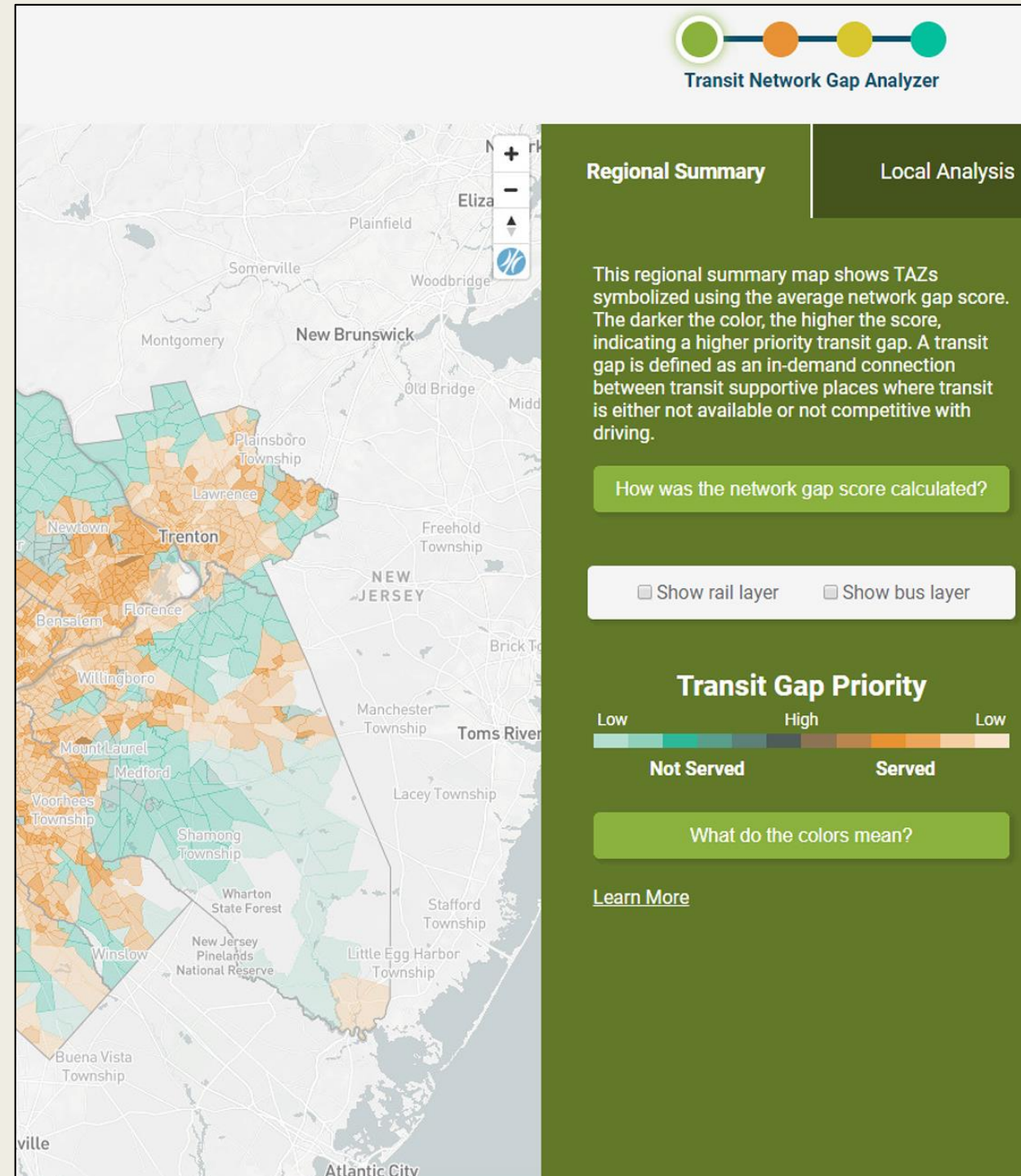
# DVRPC'S EXPERIENCE WITH VIRTUAL PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Alison Hastings, PP/AICP,  
Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

NJ State Transportation Innovation Council  
2/5/2020

# Virtual Public Involvement Techniques

- Online mapping tools
- Outreach using short videos
- Virtual Public Meetings
- Online surveys





# Online Mapping Tools

- Long history of webmaps
- Collecting information through mapping tools
- Started using custom platform for **TIP public comment** periods before 2011
- DVRPC's FY2020 NJ TIP:
  - 82 issues/topics:
  - 77 written comments
  - 69 individuals
- 22% on specific projects

**DELAWARE VALLEY**  
**dvrpc**  
REGIONAL  
PLANNING COMMISSION

**TIP** Draft FY2020 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for New Jersey (FY20-FY23)

Click to Search & Comment on Draft TIP Projects

Submit a General Comment on the Draft TIP or Statewide TIP (STIP)

Enter your public comment here

full name

email

county

submit

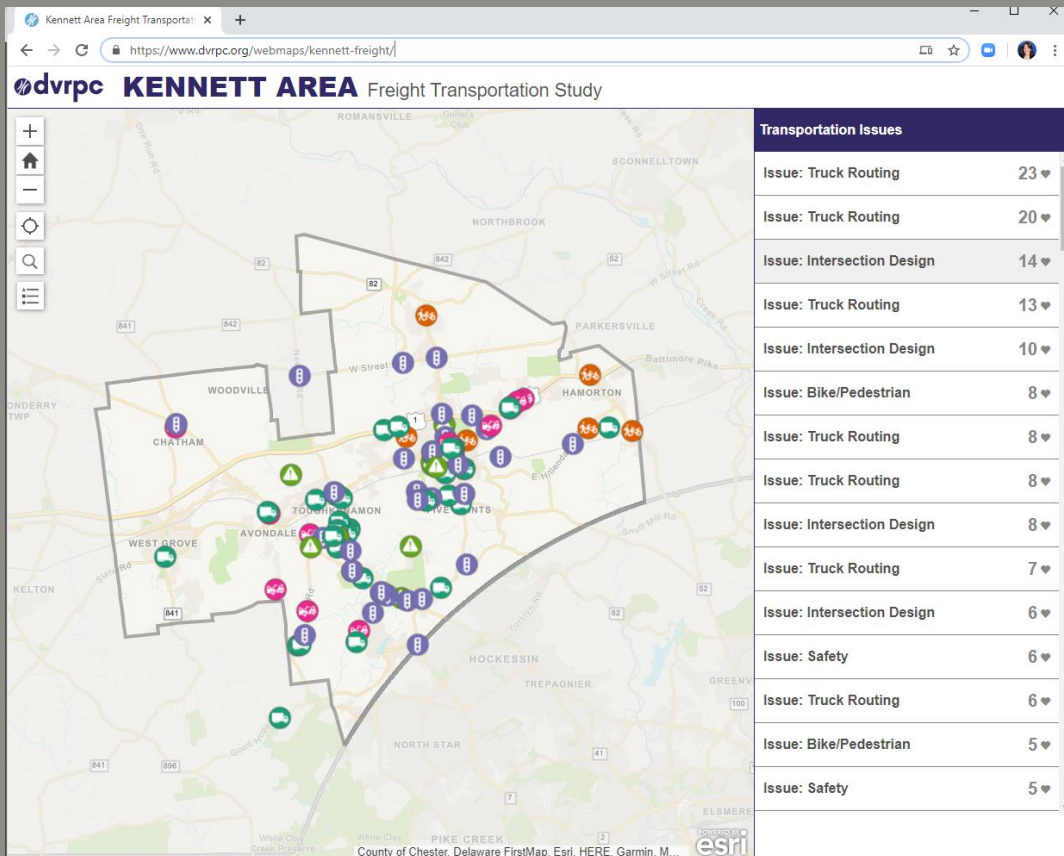
Click to Search & Comment on Draft TIP Projects

All Categories 77 results. List / Tile

- CR 537, CR 628, and CR 660 Guiderail Installation York Rd (CR 660) (M.P. 4.32) DB #D1804
- Route 130, CR 545 (Farnsworth Avenue) DB #12346A
- Route 130/206, CR 528 (Crosswicks Rd) to Rt 206 Amboy Rd DB #12346
- Mill Street Bridge Rehabilitation/Replacement DB #T8D2
- Route 206, Monmouth Road/Julietown Road Intersection Improvements (CR 537) - Julietown DB #9212C
- Route 38, Nixon Drive to Pemberton Road DB #15385

Map showing the Delaware Valley region with various project locations marked.

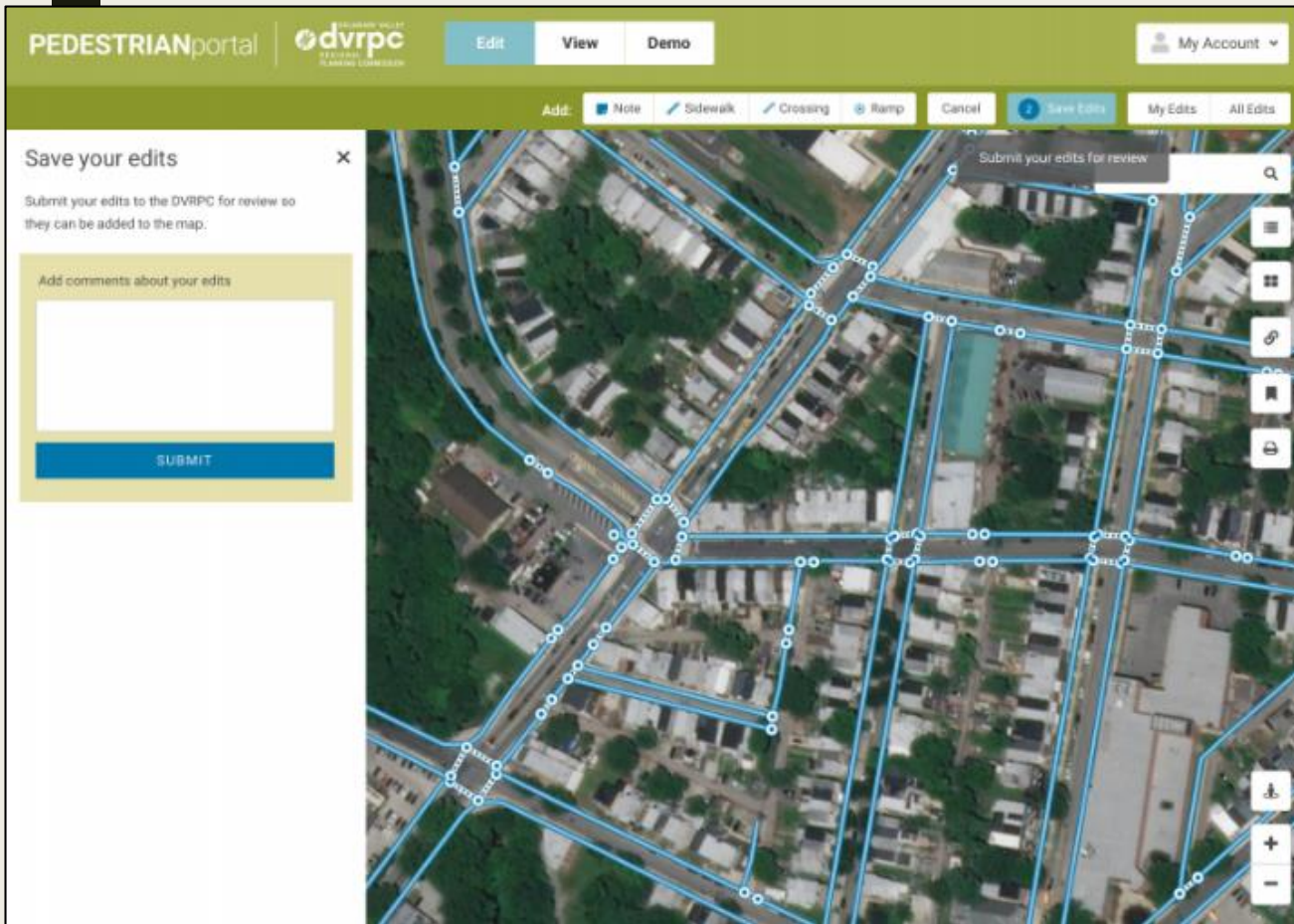
# Online Mapping Tools



## Area study – Kennett Area, Chester County, PA

- Wikimap; relied on social media campaign; targeted ads
- Complemented in-person meetings
- 102 issues identified through 150 comments
- Users code the issue themselves
- Other users could make additional comments on already identified or vote up

# Online Mapping Tools

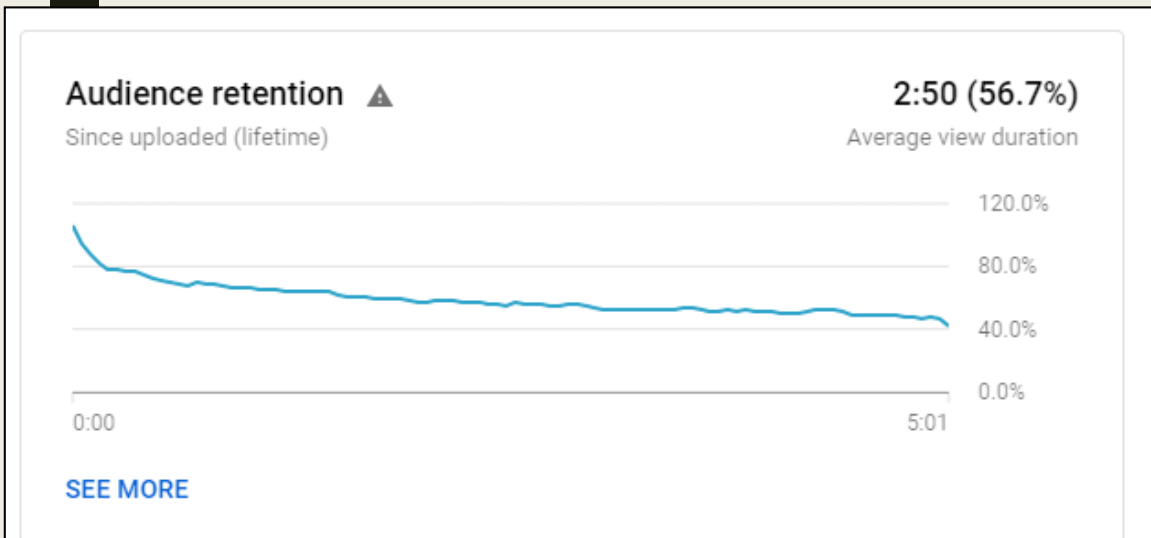


## Sidewalk Inventory / Pedestrian Portal

- Crowd-sourcing ideas. Any registered user could:
  - “ground-truth” data
  - contribute “edits” to the network
  - Suggest improvements
- System for approving edits
- System for uploading pedestrian plans
- Status: in development



# Short Videos



## Connections 2045 Video Series

- YouTube analytics/algorithms drive “organic” views
- Shorter is better; channel average 1:55 minutes
- Seems to work best when sent before an in-person meeting
- Heavy lift but gets the most engagement of all social media posts
- Staff interest up



# Virtual Public Meetings

- Starting in June 2013 - Have offered webinar/conference call option for **Public Meetings** on TIP/Long-Range Plan
- Old platform required users/viewers to preregister
- New platform (Zoom) can provide a link for users/viewers – no pre-registration required

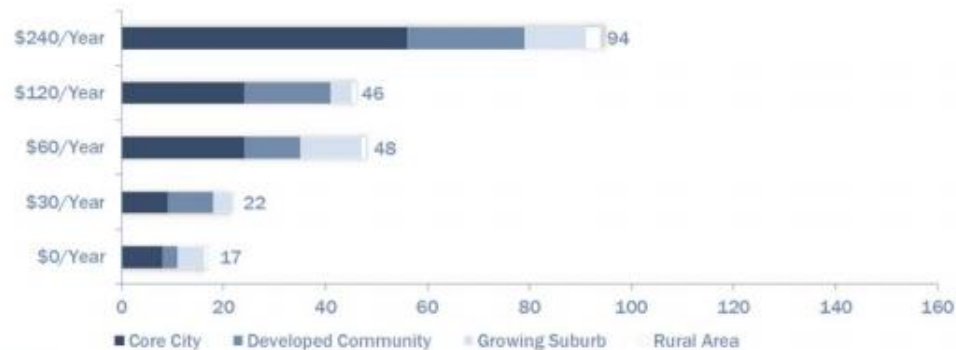
- DVRPC has lots of experience with **virtual meetings**
- Goes best when one staff member is dedicated to technical assistance and moderating online discussion



# Online Surveys



Amount of Additional Funding per Household per Year

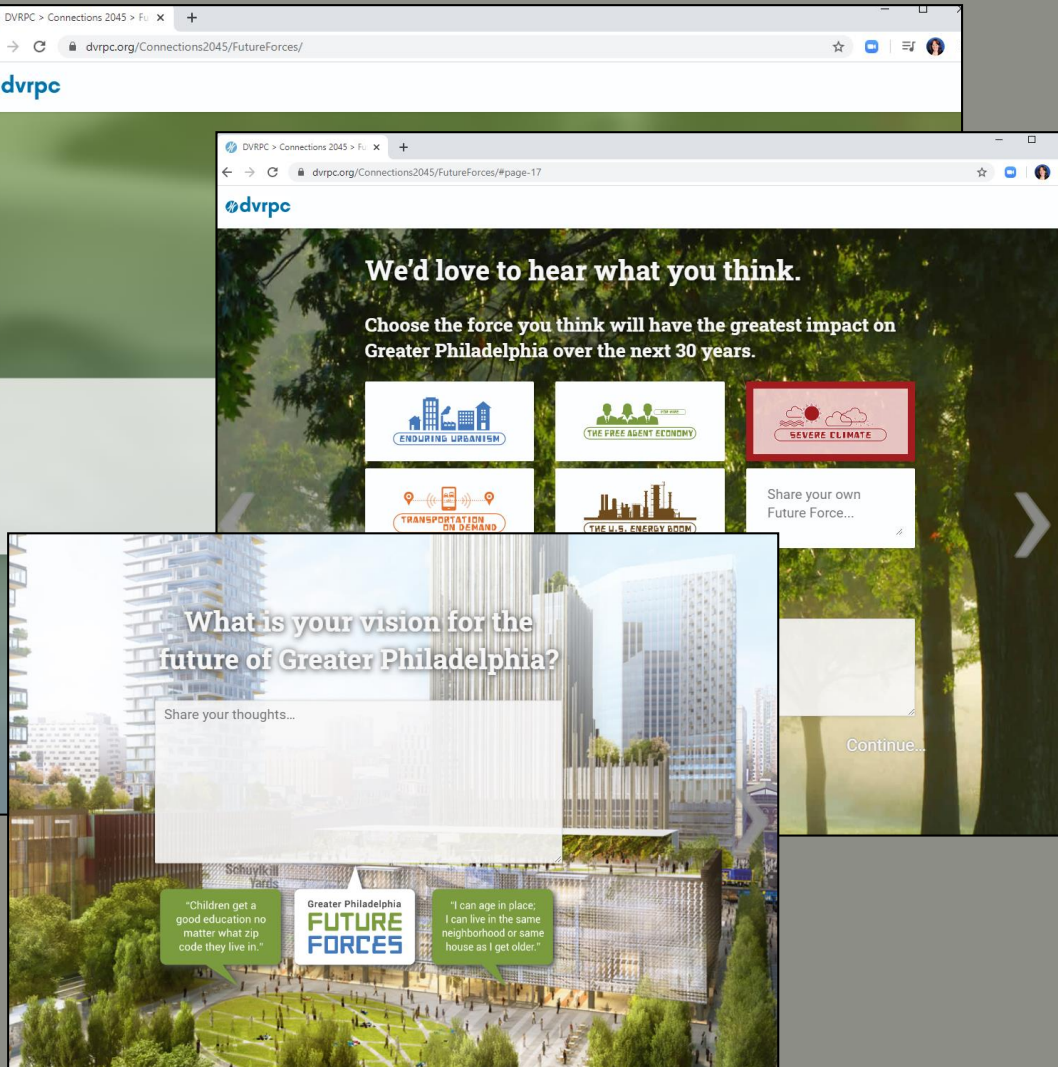


Source: DVRPC 2013

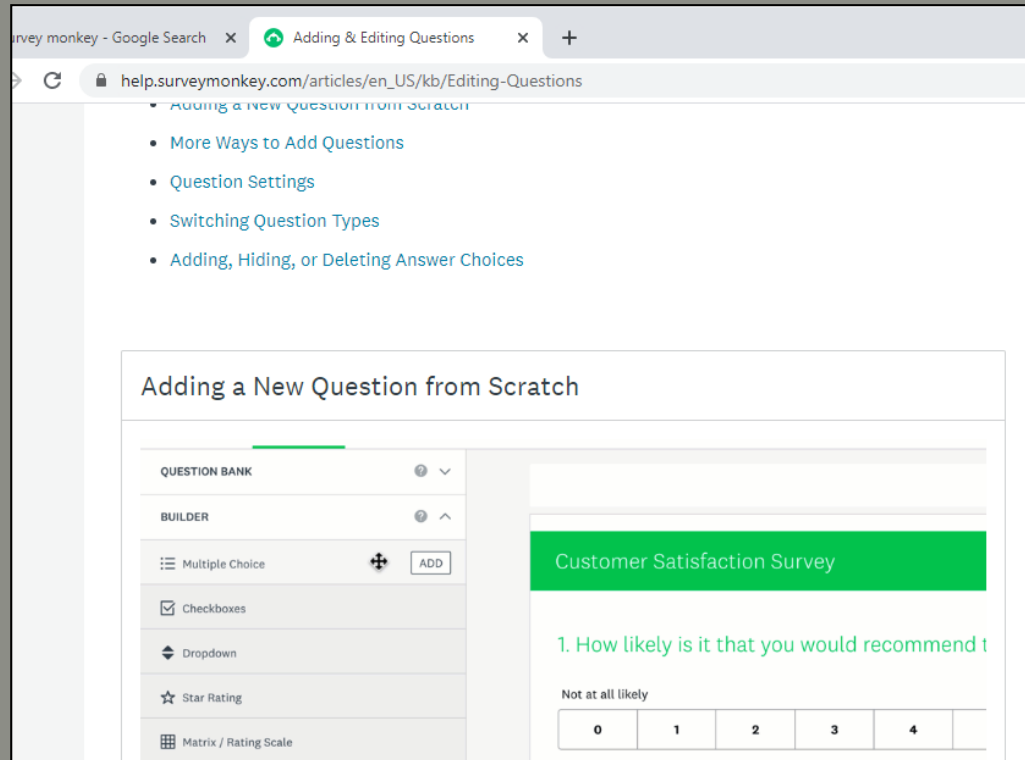
- Custom platform
- Primary goal: Education
- First launched in 2012
- Very in depth; focused on getting participants' preferences:
  - Community type
  - Transportation projects
  - Willingness to pay
- 1,900 sessions started
- 253 completed surveys
- 70 comments
- Results point to respondents being "people in know"
- Won a USDOT Innovation Award in 2014

# Online Surveys

- Custom platform
- Primary goal: Public Input
- Launched in 2016
- Recreated in-person visioning workshops
  - *Same presentation/content*
  - *Very similar questions*
- 18 pages to navigate
- 678 starts/entrances
- 381 completed surveys
- 120 users left comments



# Online Surveys



## Survey for LRP 2050 Outreach

- Primary goal: Public input into 2050 vision
- Learning from previous surveys:
  - *Make it very short, use simple language, and make it visually interesting (ex. 5 questions)*
  - *Design question(s) so that resulting data can be combined with other data we're collecting during visioning process*
  - *Ask some kind of demographic or geographic question to see who's taking the survey.*
  - *Not using a custom platform*



# Thank you!



Source: Katie Binder

Alison Hasting, PP/AICP

Delaware Valley Regional Planning  
Commission

Manager, Office of Communications &  
Engagement

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<https://www.dvrpc.org/GetInvolved/>