

Research Summary

Using Online Surveys and Facebook Ads to Solicit Customer Feedback

The Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) developed the Tracker system to assess agency performance in pursuit of its mission “to provide a world-class transportation system that delights our customers.” MoDOT customers expect the agency to “provide outstanding customer service.” One method of demonstrating this tangible result is to measure whether Missourians view MoDOT projects as the Right Transportation Solution (RTS).

History

For the past ten years, the RTS survey has been conducted to gauge the public’s perception of MoDOT’s performance on specific projects across the state based on attributes such as safety, convenience, congestion, easier to travel, better marked, how often respondent used this section or roadway, when the respondent learned about the project, whether the project was the RTS and open-ended comments on a specific project. The survey also included questions about meeting needs, safety and functionality if bicycles or pedestrians were part of the project.

Each district chose a small, medium and large project to include in the annual survey which was mailed to 600 residents within each project area. A consultant compiled and analyzed the results and prepared a final report. Based on this

data, a composite measure was included in the annual Tracker publication to gauge the percent of customers who think that completed projects are the Right Transportation Solution.


The challenge

Although the survey results have been useful, the challenges are in how and to what degree the survey results are utilized by each District along with the timeliness of the results. The MoDOT Executive Team asked the Design Division to re-evaluate the survey and determine how to continue to validate the planning process with the goal of improving the communication and design of future projects..

The solution

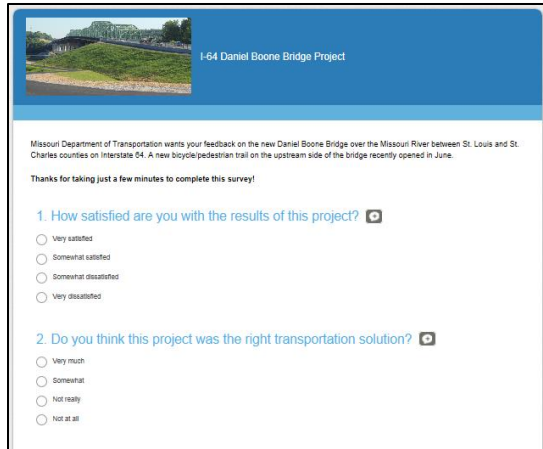
A team, comprised of staff from the Design, Communications and Transportation Planning Divisions and the St. Louis District, was formed. After brainstorming other methods, they selected **an online survey using SurveyMonkey® and deploy it using social media (primarily in the form of a MoDOT Facebook targeted ad).**

Both an urban and a rural project were chosen for this pilot. The urban project was the recently completed **I-64 Daniel Boone Missouri River Bridge project in the St. Louis District**. It also included a bike/pedestrian component. The rural selection was an **ADA project in Buffalo, MO from the Southwest District**.

 The [online survey](#), a simpler version of the previous mailed survey, was posted to the MoDOT major projects website, the St. Louis District website, the St. Louis District Facebook page and publicized in press releases, on partner websites and in partner newsletters and news media.



In addition, as part of a District communications and marketing plan, a Facebook ad was purchased which targeted people who lived within a certain radius of the project.




Screenshot of Daniel Boone Bridge Project Survey

The Facebook ad included a picture of the project with a link to the survey (see example below for the Daniel Boone Bridge Project).



Screenshot of the Facebook ad

Survey results

 The Facebook ad for the Daniel Boone Bridge project was posted from July 5-22, 2016. [It reached 77,000 people with 1,831 website click-throughs.](#) Overall survey

responses totaled 612, with 314 coming from the Facebook ad and roughly the other half resulting from the District's marketing efforts. In addition, there were 261 written comments.

The survey results were overwhelmingly positive with 95% of respondents indicating that the Daniel Boone bridge project was the Right Transportation Solution with 79% responding "very much" and 16% responding "somewhat."

Benefits

Case Study: Daniel Boone Bridge project

Reduced cost: The Facebook ad cost \$506.74 compared to a cost of approximately \$2,200 per project for the 2015 mailed survey. Half the survey responses were at no cost to MoDOT as they were generated based on the District's marketing efforts.

Improved response rate: The 2016 online survey obtained 612 responses for one project. The 2015 mailed survey had an average number of responses per project of 160.

Real-time feedback: The survey was deployed upon completion of the project, when the public was using the bridge. It yielded immediate feedback on the project to the District on which it was able to take action. In addition, the public provided feedback on other projects and needs outside of this specific project.

Real-time results: Survey results were received and could be analyzed immediately compared to waiting several weeks for a consultant to compile and analyze the mailed survey results.

Real-time dialogue: The MoDOT and District Facebook sites allow for a dialogue, rather than just the completion of a survey. MoDOT was able to engage respondents as well as allow the public to engage with each other. Some respondents answered questions by other users in a positive way. This also allowed MoDOT the opportunity to educate.

Survey customization: The core set of questions in the 2016 online survey could be tailored to the specific project. A photo was included to help the public understand what the survey was about. In addition, MoDOT was not constrained to a small number of projects per survey as it was for the 2015 mailed survey.

Demographic information: The Facebook ad results showed an equal gender and age range representation. This feature is automatically provided by Facebook. No demographic questions were included in the 2015 mailed survey.

Repeatable: This method of survey deployment can be repeated for any size project in a District.

Given the positive results and benefits already cited for the pilot project, each District can conduct this easily implementable survey and use the results to improve, validate and continue their public engagement process.

Conclusions

This pilot project demonstrated an innovative method for conducting a public survey which satisfied the concerns of the MoDOT Executive Team while continuing to validate MoDOT's planning process.

The Executive Team is excited by the real-time results and real-time dialogue of this innovative approach and wants to explore the use of this mechanism for future outreach efforts.

This new survey methodology is being deployed statewide with each District able to select relevant projects. Each district will benefit from the real-time deployment as well as feedback and dialogue from the public. Comments received from the public can be reviewed and addressed immediately.

To aid implementation at the District level, a survey template and a marketing plan have been

developed and are available for use. The Facebook ad is easy to administer and can be managed on a total cost basis.

Project Information

PROJECT NAME: Right Transportation Solutions (RTS) Facebook Pilot

PROJECT START/END DATE: July through December 2016

TOTAL RESEARCH PROJECT COST: \$1,107.93 (includes \$506.74 for the Facebook ad)

REPORT NUMBER: cmr 17-004 (summary only). See also [Innovations Showcase handout](#).

FUNDING SPONSOR: Missouri Department of Transportation

LEAD CONTRACTOR: Facebook

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