Public scrutiny and agency accountability are at an all-time high. Agencies are looking for a better understanding of the issues that are important to their customers. In an era of strained financial resources, it is necessary to order priorities that are important to the people that support the transportation system through taxes and fees. The Public Engagement Planning (PEP) program at the Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI) provides research innovations and coordinated support to sponsors in the areas of public engagement planning and public opinion research.

Expertise
- Public Engagement Planning
- Virtual Forums/Open Houses
- Qualitative Research
- Turnkey Public Opinion Survey Design and Implementation
- Travel Behavior Research
- Geographic Analysis
- Social Media
- Using Technology to Enhance Engagement
- Customer Satisfaction Programs
- Workshop Development and Facilitation

Selected Sponsors
- Battelle Memorial Institute
- Bi-State Regional Commission
- Colorado Department of Transportation
- Denver Regional Council of Governments
- Federal Highway Administration
- Michigan Department of Transportation
- Ohio Department of Transportation
- Oregon Department of Transportation
- Texas Department of Transportation
- Wisconsin Department of Transportation

Selected Projects
Real-time Ridesharing Technology to Support Differential Tolling by Occupancy

The field of transportation is increasingly relying on effective communication with citizens, particularly using new technologies. TTI’s work in real-time ridesharing reflects this change, in a first-of-its-kind project testing use of a smartphone social carpooling app called Carma with toll road discounts. Sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration and locally managed by the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority, participants are using the system to find carpooling drivers and riders to share trips, and saving money on tolls as well. This new form of crowdsourcing mobility through sharing information holds promise as a way to increase the efficiency of our transportation system.
TTI’s Mission

To solve transportation problems through research, to transfer technology and to develop diverse human resources to meet the transportation challenges of tomorrow.

Selected Projects
Blanco, Lee and Llano County Transportation and Economic Development Plans

Meeting the public engagement needs of a rural populations poses specific challenges, such as lack of Internet access, citizen experience with planning processes, and potential distrust of outsiders. TTI worked with the Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG) and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to find public engagement solutions to the challenges facing development of new plans for the rural counties of Blanco, Lee and Llano County. Researchers developed Community Involvement Strategies, recommending local advisory committees, cohesive project branding, websites, local presentations, press releases, social media outreach, a regional survey disseminated at public meetings, local libraries, businesses and online.

Bridging the Transportation Knowledge Gap in Five Simple (but not so easy) Steps

Recent quantitative and qualitative research by TTI demonstrates that Texans understand little about their transportation system and how it is paid for, which limits their ability to participate in policy decisions that affect their future. To bridge this understanding gap, TTI is developing an outreach effort, beginning with a character-driven, five-part video series, to explain the state’s transportation problem and potential solutions, entitled The Road Fairy: A Tale of Transportation in Texas. The video series will form the foundation of a broader public engagement effort in future years.

Texans Talk Transportation: Development of an Online Community

In order to develop transportation policy effectively, legislators should be provided with the opportunity to tap into the views of a broadly representative group of citizens who reflect the expansive range of political, demographic and geographic characteristics that define the state of Texas. Input from this representative group of Texans can be achieved through developing an online community, a communication model that is being explored in other states. This research effort would develop such an online community. The community would allow for the development of tools such as online surveys and group discussions to determine what public opinion is regarding certain transportation policy initiatives. The interactions between researchers and the community and among community members with each other will identify knowledge gaps and misperceptions.

Public Outreach for the Interstate 35 (I-35) Corridor

As part of a larger effort to develop a comprehensive approach to meet the needs of the I-35 statewide now and into the future, a series of listening sessions and focus groups were held with the business community and the general public. TTI researchers leading this effort organized and facilitated five listening sessions with the business community throughout the corridor, and conducted 14 focus groups with the general public.

For a full list of featured projects, visit http://tti.tamu.edu/group/pep/projects/.

About TTI

The Texas A&M Transportation Institute, established in 1950, seeks solutions to the problems and challenges facing all modes of transportation. The Institute works on over 700 research projects with over 200 sponsors in the United States and abroad at all levels of government and in the private sector. TTI is recognized as one of the finest higher-education-affiliated transportation research agencies in the nation. TTI has saved the state and nation billions of dollars through strategies and products developed through its research program. TTI research has a proven impact — resulting in lives, time and resources saved.

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