

# Transportation Outreach Planner

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## Public Outreach Strategies

### Transportation Fairs and Special Events

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#### Recommended Target Groups

##### Education

College Education  
High School Diploma  
No High School Diploma

##### Language

Creole  
Other  
Spanish

##### Disability

Hearing Impaired  
Other  
Physically Challenged  
Sight Impaired

##### Income

Low Income  
Middle to Affluent

##### Vehicle Ownership

Non-vehicle Owner  
Vehicle Owner

##### Race and Ethnicity

Race and Ethnicity

## Age

Seniors

Working Age Adults

Youth

## Strategy Class

- General

## Strategy Types

- Civic Engagement
- Educational
- Promotional

## Description

Transportation fairs and special events are used to attract community members to learn more about transportation and specific projects or programs. They are typically one-day events and heavily promoted to encourage people to attend. Special attractions and noted personalities are often used to draw participants. Such events focus on visual elements, such as exhibits, videos, and maps or models of projects. These type of events can be undertaken with multiple agencies and provide a good way to strengthen interagency collaboration.<sup>1</sup>

## Special Uses

Transportation fairs and special events can be used to:<sup>2</sup>

- Disseminate information
- Create interest and promote a project or program
- Encourage public involvement
- Educate the public

## When to Use

Transportation fairs or special events are one-time events. They help to attract people to participate in transportation planning. Public agencies hold fairs and special events to highlight a new project(s) or program(s), or to disseminate information. They can also be held to attract new members to advisory committees or to recruit volunteers. Many agencies also use these events to create good will with communities and educate the public.

## Cost

**\*\*\* High (\$10000 to \$50000)**

The costs of organizing a transportation fair or special event can be high, depending on the complexity of the event. Costs include graphics, photography, exhibits, location rental, special permits (if needed), equipment rental, and staff time. Additional expenses include take-away souvenirs, including buttons, maps, brochures, or imaginative graphics.<sup>4</sup>

Low (up to \$999)	*
Moderate (\$1,000 to \$9,999)	**
High (\$10,000 to \$50,000)	***
Very High (Above \$50,000)	****

*Disclaimer:* The cost estimates provided are intended to be a guide. Project costs will vary depending on the size and nature of the project.

## Time

**\*\* 6 months to a year**

A transportation fair or special event requires a great deal of support staff within an agency, and the work required can be substantial. Finding an adequate site can take advance preparation. Inviting agency representatives and special guests, as well as preparing displays and handouts can take a great deal of time. Staff also needs to coordinate logistics and any technical issues that may arise.<sup>5</sup>

1 to 3 months	*
6 months to a year	**
Multiyear	***

*Disclaimer:* The time estimates are approximations. The duration of a project may vary depending on various factors, including size and budget.

## Implementation Guidelines and Suggestions

The following serve as recommended guidelines and suggestions for organizing a transportation fair or special event: <sup>3</sup>

- **Determine the purpose of the event.** The purpose will determine the format of the event, the displays, activities, and the people who will be invited to participate. In addition to transportation fairs, below is a list of various types of special events that agencies can undertake:
  - Bike to Work Day
  - Bike or Walk to School Day
  - Bicycle Rides
  - Transit Day
  - Transit Tours for Seniors, Youth, and the General Public
  - Transportation Career Fairs
  - Conversation Cafes and Meetings (encourage informal discussion of issues)
- **Identify the staff needed to plan, coordinate, and oversee the event proceedings.** It is important to identify early on the person or team who will be responsible for planning and coordinating the event. Specific tasks should be assigned with clear deadlines. Everyone who is part of the planning team should be familiar with the timeline and the expectations of the event. The following include some of the basic planning tasks that need to be assigned:
  - Inviting special guests
  - Reserving location space and equipment
  - Coordinating transportation of materials and staff
  - Organizing and overseeing the registration process
  - Coordinating volunteers
  - Marketing and publicizing the event
  - Overseeing set-up
- **Develop a plan for how the event will be structured.** Well-structured events provide a balance between presentations and activities that enable participants to express their thoughts and interact with others.
- **Determine who will be invited to attend.** The nature of the event will help to determine who the target audience will be. If the event is held in a target community, community leaders should be invited to attend. The following are the groups that should receive notice of the event and an invitation: advocates, community leaders, public officials, civic organizations, residents from the community, the media, and the general public.
- **Select the location.** Once the nature of the event has been established, it is possible to identify the location that is most suited. The amount of people that will be attending and the planned activities will dictate the space that is needed. The location should be accessible and have access to ample parking and public transportation.
- **Determine if special guest speakers or a moderator will be needed for the event.** A transportation fair or special event often does not require a moderator on the day of the event. However, it is possible to schedule presentations, brief talks, or to introduce featured attractions, such as celebrities. Special guest speakers, top officials, and recognized experts may help to generate interest and boost attendance. Special care should be given to selecting speakers who are good presenters and who can engage the audience.
- **Establish budget and determine if sponsors are needed.** Once the event location, speakers, and maximum number of participants have been established, it is possible to generate a budget for the event. Agencies may need to identify financial sponsors; thus maximizing resources and broadening the number of participants.
- **Publicize the event.** Invitations should be sent at least one to two months in advance, with reminders sent two weeks before the event. Information about the event should be publicized to the media, special interest blogs, community leaders, civic clubs, and special interest groups.

- **On the day of the event make sure key staff and resource people are available to answer specific questions and help participants.** Sufficient staff must be assigned on the day of the event to greet participants, conduct registration, set-up displays, and oversee general logistics. Such individuals should be easy to identify and should have sufficient information to be able to answer questions and address problems.

## Recommended Target Demographics

A transportation fair or special event can serve as an effective strategy to reach a wide variety of demographic groups. Such events can be tailored to the needs and interests of the target audience, whether it is youth, the elderly, non-English speaking populations, or other demographic group. These types of events help to establish credibility among the target population, allowing for effective outreach.

## Lessons Learned/Challenges

Below are key points to keep in mind when coordinating a transportation fair or special event: <sup>6</sup>

- **A fair or special event can supplement public involvement techniques.** Such events help to attract people who may not attend formal public meetings.
- **Transportation fairs and special events do not meet Federal standards for continuing public involvement.** Although transportation fairs and special events can enhance public participation requirements, they cannot replace the formal public hearing process where the public's statements are recorded in a more formal manner, and where residents have the opportunity to speak before appropriate authorities.
- **Advance planning and making sure everyone understands their responsibilities will help the event run smoothly.**

## Case Studies

The City of Palo Alto holds a variety of special events as part of its "Way2Go" promotional campaign to encourage the general public to try different modes of transportation. The events include: Walk to School Day, Bike to School Day, Bike to Work Day, the Mayor's Bicycle Rides and Special Events, and Senior Transit Tours. The City of Palo Alto received a Certificate of Recognition from the Environmental Protection Agency for the Commuter Choice Leadership Initiative for its efforts (<http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/news/displaynews.asp?NewsID=206&TargetID=107>). <sup>7</sup>

The South Florida Regional Transportation Authority (SFRTA) holds an annual "Dump the Pump" Day to encourage residents to take transit for a day. They offer free rides on Tri-Rail to anyone who wants to take the train, and they have a variety of activities at the transit stations to create a fun-filled experience, including live broadcasts from several radio stations. The event has been a success, in some cases causing Tri-Rail to break passenger ridership on the day of the event. <sup>8</sup> "Dump the Pump" Day is a national event sponsored by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA). They provide a Dump the Pump Toolkit to local agencies interested in organizing the event. ([http://www.sfrta.fl.gov/docs/newsletters/2011/E-newsletter\\_July\\_Aug.pdf](http://www.sfrta.fl.gov/docs/newsletters/2011/E-newsletter_July_Aug.pdf)). <sup>8</sup>

## For Further Information

The following sites provide information on how to organize fairs and special events:

- **Event Planning Guide:** [http://www.cdc.gov/SafeChild/images/Safe%20Child\\_Event%20GUIDE-a.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/SafeChild/images/Safe%20Child_Event%20GUIDE-a.pdf) <sup>9</sup>
- **Best Practices, Getting Started:** <http://www.conventionplanit.com/modules/RFP/repository/getting%20started.pdf> <sup>10</sup>

## Sources

1 U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), "USDOT FHWA/FTA Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making: Transportation Fairs," August 2002, 29, FHWA, 17 August 2011 <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/reports/pittd/contents.htm> .

2 FHWA, "Transportation Fairs".

3 FHWA, "Transportation Fairs".

4 FHWA, "Transportation Fairs".

5 FHWA, "Transportation Fairs".

6 FHWA, "Transportation Fairs".

7 City of Palo Alto, "Way2Go Program, " City of Palo Alto, 11 August 2011,  
<http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/news/displaynews.asp?NewsID=206&TargetID=107>.

8 South Florida Regional Transportation Authority, "Tri-Rail Breaks All Previous Ridership Records on Dump the Pump Day 2011," 8 November 2011, [http://www.sfrta.fl.gov/docs/newsletters/2011/E-newsletter\\_July\\_Aug.pdf](http://www.sfrta.fl.gov/docs/newsletters/2011/E-newsletter_July_Aug.pdf).

9 Centers for Disease Control, "Event Planning Guide," 8 November 2011,  
[http://www.cdc.gov/SafeChild/images/Safe%20Child\\_Event%20GUIDE-a.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/SafeChild/images/Safe%20Child_Event%20GUIDE-a.pdf).

10 ConventionPlanit.com, "Best Practices, Getting Started," 8 November 2011,  
<http://www.conventionplanit.com/modules/RFP/repository/getting%20started.pdf>.