

SOCIAL MEDIA

Description

Social media is an innovative approach to engage audiences of all types in the planning, development, and operations of transportation projects and programs. Social media sites are primarily used for social interaction; however, they have recently been used to disseminate project details, including scheduling, benefits and other relevant information. These sites can also be used to receive information from users of the transportation system. It is a cost effective approach to engage and inform an audience that may not participate in traditional outreach methods. Like other outreach strategies, social media's effectiveness depends heavily upon the quality, timeliness, and accuracy of the information.

Target Market

Social media interaction allows individuals to engage on their own time and in their own way. This may include input into almost any plan, program, or proposal from busy professionals or single parents who are often unavailable to attend a public meeting or open houses. Providing an informative, relevant message broadens the reach and hopefully, the effectiveness of the message. Social media sites such as Twitter should be used to notify followers of meeting times and locations as well as project updates.

How Will This Help?

- Instant dissemination of information to travelers that is current, accurate and relevant.
- Provides unique opportunity for expanded discussion by engaging audiences that may not participate in other forums.

Success Stories

- For Austin, <http://capmetro.org/> provides access to a number of social media sites for updates.
- For San Antonio, <http://viainfo.net/> uses social media to help riders find route information.

Implementation Issues

Users must be confident that the information they receive has real value and that their comments are being received and acted upon. Contributors will also want to know that their comments are affecting decision-making. Staffing for the social media function must be sufficient to ensure that comments and questions are addressed promptly, that updates are meaningful and relevant, and that the contributor is not posting merely for the sake of posting. The effectiveness of this technique should be measured in the quality (not the number) of posts, multiple daily updates, and to ensure that comments and questions are addressed promptly.



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Cost:	Minimal to Moderate
Time:	Indefinite
Impact:	Local/Region
Who:	Lead Agency
Hurdles:	May Exclude Some