National Association of
City Transportation Officials

Linda Bailey
Executive Director

120 Park Avenue, 20th Floor
New York, NY 10017
nacto@nacto.org

www.nacto.org

# NACTO's 2/6/18 Webinar – Unanswered Questions
## "Public Engagement that Counts"

***Thank you for tuning in to our webinar! As we were not able to answer all your questions during the event, we have compiled responses to all unanswered questions. If you have any further questions, comments, or concerns, do not hesitate to reach out to events@nacto.org.***

## *Questions for All*

1. In my experience, reaching underrepresented audiences can be challenging, could you provide more information which innovative/alternative methods worked better than others?
    a. MnDOT: One of our key takeaways was that our tools and techniques were fine to reach underrepresented audiences, we just needed to be more intentional and where and how we used them. For example, the same strategy of doing surveys on iPads at community events and workplaces reached our more typical audiences and underrepresented audiences. The key to reaching the underserved populations was figuring out which events and workplaces we should go to in order to reach the groups we needed to. Figuring that part out required partnerships with community leaders and organizations within the communities we were targeting. For example, we worked with an organization that does work with the Hispanic community in Minnesota and they recommended that we conduct surveys after mass at key churches in the community. They helped us connect with the churches to get permission and schedule a time, and we worked with them to translate our survey into Spanish to provide that option as well. For us it wasn't about developing a whole new strategy, it was about being more targeted in how we used our existing tools. I will add that it takes time to develop the relationships needed to have partners within key communities help you, if you don't already have existing relationships. Accounting for that time in your project timeline is critical to success.

    a. NYC DOT: A good way to do this is by researching the network of community organizations where you are working. In the past, I've used Facebook to map out a network of community organizations that I could reach out to. I began with a community organizations or service provider that was well-known and then looked at what groups they "liked" and then what those groups "liked" and kept going from there. It actually helped me get a sense of where people were finding community in a specific project area and allowed me to reach out to groups with confidence. Once you get enough community groups involved, you can also ask them for help on who to reach out to.
    Be especially sensitive when setting up outreach around houses of worship. Make sure to secure permission to set up an outreach station rather than simply locate a pop-up station outside or nearby and expect people to walk by and participate. I liken our role to that of a vampire: we

have to be invited in. If you're invited in, then people are expecting you and are ready to participate and excited that you're there. If you're simply located outside on a day of worship, your presence may be seen as an affront to a holy day and will work against the very goal you are trying to reach.

   b. PHL: Each community is different therefore some engagement tools work better for some than others. I would suggest first identifying the network you're looking to serve. Then research existing engagement opportunities such as community events, and ongoing educational or health resources. Find out what the needs of the community are then work together to create innovative ways to address those needs.

2. What are some good ways to encourage local residents to think big about potential improvements to their streets and community?

   a. MnDOT: We've found that reframing the conversation around big-picture issues and priorities rather than specific types of solutions can help draw out a broader, more creative set of ideas.

   b. NYC DOT: I agree with Katie that you first want the folks you're working with to agree to a baseline or a broad concept - that there's a problem that needs to be solved. But then you follow up with the potential opportunities that exist.

      I frame our work mostly as a literacy project. Most people have never thought critically about the built environment, their streets or cities beyond what they have experienced. To them what exists has always existed and why would it be any other way? Ultimately, our goal is to name the things the public is seeing and could see in the future. We want to teach people our language so they can be a part of the conversation.

      Note: I do think StreetMix does a really good job of this. Tech community: we need more tools like this.

3. What are some of your strategies to work through community backlash? Both from the perspective from the internal team to outward public facing.
   a. NYC DOT: Good question. The idea is that this process helps prevent backlash from happening by involving people early and often and having them be a part of the change on the street. That said, it's not a sure bet. Even if we reach 1000 people, it's still a drop in the bucket when it comes to the amount of people affected by the project. I think the key to the process is it's timing, which I'll outline below:
      1. Meet with your decision-makers and introduce them to the process (but not a street design or a specific project).
         a. Begin by introducing the problem you're trying to solve, some potential design treatments, and presenting the public process you plan to take and ask for feedback on places to go and people to reach out to. You want to make sure that when you come back to them at the end, they

have confidence in the work you've done. When I haven't done this step, I'll always be met with a "Why didn't you talk to X, Y, or Z?" and that can overrule the multitudes of voices that have participated in the process.

b. Invite decision-makers to attend all outreach events you plan, but give them a short window of when to attend. These folks are often super busy and, in my experience, will show up at the earliest time you allow. If your set-up is late in any way or if you're not up and running, inviting them can do more harm than good. If you give them a window of time when you have enough feedback up on a post-it board, or you can show some evidence of people having participated, you can both ensure that you're there when they're there AND you can prove that people are interested in the work you're doing.

2. Phase 1 of outreach - establish a baseline
    a. As I mentioned in the webinar, you don't want to go out and start asking for feedback on a design. Instead, ask questions that can get people to think big picture and agree to a problem (i.e. lots of speeding on a street or people are scared to ride bikes).
    b. Note: Unless we're attending an event, we have a strict "no advertising" policy. Our outreach is designed to engage passersby - the people who have never engaged with the government before. Giving too much notice encourages the usual participants (and often NIMBYs) to seek you out and harass your Ambassadors and co-opt your booth.
3. Crunch the data from Phase 1
4. Phase 2 of outreach - come back with a plan based on the feedback you received
    a. This is the time when you can measure the appetite for your project. Make sure to include a timeline of work you've already done so people trust your process.
5. Present this back to your decision-makers and hopefully they will have trust in the process.

ii. As I mentioned above, you may still experience some backlash to a project. You can never clue EVERYONE in. But if you believe in your outreach process, you can use the data and stories collected to overrule the outrage. If it's about convincing an elected, you can prove that people support what you've done and you can stand by your work.

b. Internally, we do a lot of training for our team so they can handle the uncomfortable situations they sometimes encounter. They are taught de-escalation and negotiation strategies. We are about to do bystander intervention training to have them prepared for the potential street harassment they encounter. (Hollaback is a good resource for this.) Ultimately, this team ends up with a really thick skin and will probably become excellent politicians one day.

4. Technology is good. But how do you get feedback and input/response from those who do not have technology? Do you want to engage them? Knocking - door to door? What specifically?

a. MnDOT: Any good engagement strategy has a mix of tools. Technology can be very useful in expanding your reach with fewer resources. However, not everyone has access to technology or prefers to communicate in that way. This is especially true in some underserved communities. That's why having a mix of traditional engagement methods is important. The key is to figure out who you need to reach and what is the best way to reach them, and to tailor your engagement strategy to fit the needs of the project. Examples of low-tech ways we've reached people are attending community events with survey (paper or iPad depending on the group), attending existing meetings, public meetings, public hearings, working with employers to get feedback from their employees (either through special sessions or setting up in breakrooms).

b. NYC DOT: We absolutely want to engage people who do not have access to technology and our whole program is designed around doing just that. The key is to go to where people are - where they gather, where they find their community. When you dig a little, you will find that almost everyone has some kind of affinity group and you can work through existing networks and grassroots leaders.

   We do not do door-knocking as that is too unpredictable and time-consuming. (I know that I, for one, will never answer the door for someone I don't know.) Instead we visit busy corridors, parks, movie theaters, houses of worship, rec centers, senior centers, shopping centers, retail corridors, community events, concerts… you get the idea.

   That doesn't mean we don't use technology. All of our Ambassadors are equipped with a Smart Phone so we log all our data on the spot. That omits the lengthy data entry process that often accompanies good data collection efforts.

c. PHL: Our goal is to engage EVERYONE especially those who have historically been overlooked due to barriers such as the digital divide. To identify the best method for engaging any group is to connect with that group and find out the best way to do so. Create both tangible and digital materials; attend community meetings and events in your service area to engage face to face and learn additional ways to reach people.

5. Is the public engagement process for each of the speakers becoming the status quo, or do you still have to "fight" to convince your agency when to use this process? Or pick and choose the "battles" of when to apply real public engagement?
   a. Better engagement has been a big focus for MnDOT in recent years. Many of the tools and strategies we used on the project I spoke to are becoming standard practice. Having the data to show what was effective and what different things cost really resonated with our leadership. I think the data really helped us make the case as to why it's important to do different things and made everyone more comfortable doing this type of engagement on future projects.

   b. NYC DOT: This field is still really new for Transportation Planning. I think there's a lot of excitement around the idea of public engagement and I'm lucky to have support at the highest level. We were able to make it into our agency's Strategic Plan. That said, we are still proving what we can do and selling the idea of our services. Not everyone was clear about what our role would be when we first started. As we learn from our successes (and make changes based on our failures) we are able to prove internally and externally that a process like this CAN work. Our agency is so large that we can't support every project, so we are strategic about which projects will utilize pieces of our service.

6. A lot of times poor public engagement often shapes long-term plans in the community. When the point comes to implement, do any of the presenters have examples of coming back to the community and checking in before the final plan goes in the ground? i.e. community asked for bike lanes 6 years ago, this coming year the funds are available, community may want protected bike lanes now ...but there is no platform to capture the change in wants/need.
    a. MnDOT: The key is to do quality public engagement at all levels of planning and project development. We do engagement at the planning level, which helps set our investment priorities, but we also do engagement as projects are selected and as projects are scoped. More and more, we are trying to show how all those processes are connected. Regardless of whether the same exact individuals are involved at every point, we try to show what we heard before and it informed where we are now in the process. Just a note: this is an ideal state we are working towards – we by no means have it perfectly executed at this time.

    b. NYC DOT: Another good question here. I've been wondering about this myself, and haven't yet cracked the code. The hope is that the giveaway we provide the team helps them remember they engaged with us, but I don't know if they will connect that experience with the change they see on the street later. This is kind of a long game though. We want people to be literate in the changes they are seeing, so the more we are out there educating about what we do, the more people will understand why a change is being made and can know how to use whatever new thing is being installed. In the short term though, we have done deployments where the team goes back out before or while a project is being implemented to ground the project and give a sense of history.

7. How is all this great data translated into quality analysis and decision making?
    a. MnDOT: We analyzed our engagement data in a number of ways to look at who we reached, how we reached them, what it cost, what we heard collectively and by subsets of participants. All this data feeds into our decision-making process. However, it's important to note that engagement was one of many factors in that process. We didn't just take the engagement results and say "this is our plan." We had to balance what the public wanted with what our technical experts felt was important with the political realities of the state. Having good engagement analysis helped elevate the public input to the same level as these other considerations. It also helped us highlight where the final decisions were in line with public input and where they differed, which helped us know how to explain and frame our decisions.

    b. NYC DOT: Our data is summarized into a project deck delivered to Project Managers alongside all cleaned data. Depending on the project, we may supply heat maps, geocoded datasets, desire line summaries, survey data, and block by block delivery need analysis. It is up to the Project

Manager to weigh what they learn from our data against the traditional traffic stats and technical data that they have collected. Ultimately the idea is that they are able to make a more nuanced judgement call.

8. For stakeholder feedback and consensus on a transformational project, what is the most effective way to get feedback and consensus?
    a. NYC DOT: Consensus can be pretty difficult to reach. In our more transformational projects we really seek to get people to agree that the status quo is no good before beginning to talk about what the future may hold. Once folks agree on the problem, you can introduce possible solutions and perhaps have participants prioritize them. I think it's really important here to try and get people to think beyond their personal experience. Perhaps you have them prioritize solutions as themselves, and then have them prioritize those same solutions by roleplaying as a different person with different experiences. If they are tasked with, say, thinking about wheelchair ramps, they may be able to empathize with other road users.
    Most people don't think about a city as a series of decisions made by a whole bunch of different people, rather they perceive it as static, with all decisions made by someone called "THEM/THEY." (i.e. "They're putting in ANOTHER Starbucks" or "They screwed up our street!) We have to teach people to see into the future by understanding that the present was made up of past decisions.

9. It seems like both NYC and Minnesota conduct engagement in-house, rather than through various consulting firms, which can lead to inconsistent engagement of different types and levels. Can all the speakers explain their staffing and how the positions are funded? Was the work always done in-house or was there a point when it shifted from consultants to paid staff people within the department?
    a. At MnDOT we do a mix of engagement in-house and through consultants. It all depends on the specific project. Some are entirely in-house, others are entirely consulted out, but most fall somewhere in the middle. For the specific project I talked about, we had a consultant help us with developing the engagement strategy and the logistics and data analysis side of things. But we as staff did the bulk of the activities ourselves. We feel it's important that, whenever possible, we develop a relationship with the community directly. There will inevitably be some inconsistencies between projects based on who is working on them, budget, etc. Something we've been working on at MnDOT over the past few years is to develop internal policies and best practices around engagement expectations. That way there isn't as big of a difference among our different efforts.

    b. NYC DOT: We had done mini-versions of this internally before launching the Street Ambassadors, but to my knowledge, we never hired any consultants to engage at this level. Our staff is paid through the City line due to a reallocation of headcount from a division that collected money from parking meters. Their job was replaced by a muni-meter (AKA a robot), making their role obsolete. The unions and the City do their best to retain headcount (use it or lose it!) so we got creative with a new role.

c. PHL: Our engagement efforts with Indego have been in-house. It is important for us to connect with trusted community leaders such as Community Ambassadors to help with engagement efforts. The City of Philadelphia also has a full time Inedgo Community Coordinator tasked with building and maintaining outreach and engagement efforts.

10. How long did the development of your engagement/development plans take? Or, were they iterative?
    a. MnDOT: We developed an initial public engagement plan at the start of our project with the help on our consultant. It wasn't too huge of an effort but required some time. The plan helped us get started but it also evolved over time as we got into the process and learned more.

    b. NYC DOT: We're constantly putting together outreach plans for future engagement. Once a project is flagged for needing a higher level of engagement/data collection, we do our research and plan to conduct outreach for maybe a month out. Sometimes our plans are made several months in advance because we try to be in the neighborhood or at the project site when we'll get the most response. (i.e. We'll wait for a warm summer day to engage cyclists making their way to the beach even though we made the plan for the engagement back in January.)

11. The terms community development, outreach and engagement have all been used. I wonder if you could share how you define each of these terms and what you consider to be the difference between them.
    a. MnDOT: "Engagement" and "outreach" are frequently used interchangeably. We prefer the term "engagement" because it implies more of an active relationship.

    b. NYC DOT: I'm with Katie here. I suppose "outreach" is education and campaign focused and "engagement" is about collecting and utilizing feedback. As far as "community development," I would say that is working with to uplift and empower a group of people to determine their own outcomes, rather than engage the community to support or provide input on an outcome set by another party.

    c. PHL: I would define outreach as the time and service you provide to others. Engagement is more of a two-way street, were you and the group you're working to service come together. Outreach is the first step, but engagement is what creates a sustainable partnership.

12. How can some of these strategies be used for small agencies for a staff of 3 people? It can get very overwhelming.
    a. MnDOT: Things like Facebook targeted advertising is really easy and cheap to do and can dramatically expand your reach. Even going to community events can be scaleable – choose events that will get you a lot of participation or events that reach specific folks you aren't getting through other means.

    b. NYC DOT: This is certainly a lot of work and can definitely lead to staff burnout. I agree with Katie about trying to find community events with large turnout to get the most bang for your buck. If your community is small, perhaps you could set a regular monthly engagement day at a local mall or retail hub. Kind of like FDR's fireside chats. Maybe if you have something constant that people can expect and you set it at a level that you can manage, you could get a good level of engagement over time.

13. Any advice for consultants on making the case to a public sector client who just wants to "check the box"?
    a. NYC DOT: The reality is that the public does hold very valuable knowledge that can help us make better decisions. If you frame the process as data collection, you can potentially make the case that this is more than just sales. (If you do frame it this way, please make sure to actually value the data you are collecting.)

14. Did you face any pushback from participants when asking demographic information, particularly about race and gender?
    a. MnDOT: Yes. Some people didn't understand why we were asking for that information or didn't think it should matter. However, all our demographic questions were optional and open-ended, so those folks just didn't answer them (or provided snarky answers). Collectively, I'd say more people valued it than not.

    b. NYC DOT: Our surveys are conducted verbally and all data is entered into SurveyMonkey via smartphone. We save our sensitive information requests for the end and we pass the phone over to the person being surveyed and allow them to complete those questions themselves. Gender identity and race are offered as options with the ability to select more than one. For age, we ask people to write in since as we found that the data sources we use for comparison do not uniformly band ages together the same way.

       (PS For gender, it is important to respect the range of genders that exist. Our question is worded as "What is your current gender identity?" and we allow respondents to select as many that apply. This includes options for genderqueer/gender non-conforming/gender fluid, trans male/trans man, trans female/trans woman, "prefer not to say," and an write in option if we missed something.)

    c. PHL: We do not receive much pushback when asking demographic information. We let participants know that if they do not feel comfortable sharing that information they do not have to.

15. How many people did you speak with on average at each outreach event?
    a. MnDOT: It really varied by event – what it was, where it was, how long we stayed. We had a statewide focus for our project so we were doing events all over Minnesota. For example, we collected surveys at a parade in a small town in rural Minnesota for a couple hours and maybe had a dozen conversations. We also attended the Minnesota State Fair in St. Paul for all ten days and talked with thousands of people. However, I wouldn't say one was more successful than the other because they met different needs.

b. NYC DOT: The numbers really depend on the event. There are days when the team talks to hundreds of people and others when they have quality conversations with about 15. We don't aim for any kind of quota because sometimes it's these low-number, quality conversations that really take a project to the next level. The key is that you want to go out there again and again. If possible, try to research locations and events where you will get the most bang for your buck, but do expect that there will be some days where you hear from fewer people. And honor those voices because those are folks that would have certainly been left out of a traditional outreach process in the past.

c. PHL: This number varies depending on the event and type of outreach. I think it's valuable to acknowledge the importance of quality over quantity. Sometimes you can attend an event and only reach 10-15 people, but the insight you'll gain from those participants can be valuable to your organizations and continued outreach efforts.

16. What is the pay rate of ambassadors in Philly & in NYC? How does that compare to Planner pay rates?
    a. NYC DOT: This is an entry-level full-time position bound within our Civil Service system (a legal framework for hiring in the city). The title is Community Associate and the salary is set by an external agency (the Department of Citywide Administrative Services) and follows the legal requirements set for all salaries in the city. I give that long caveat because the salary is lower than that of the Planners, but it also has fewer educational and experience requirements than that role, allowing us to choose from a wider range of applicants. The titles used for City Planners almost all require a master's degree or a number of years of experience to qualify as an equivalent. This can be a huge barrier to entry to the planning field and results in a homogenous Planning workforce. (Please see the Planning Accreditation Board's 2016 Annual Report for stats on the lack of diversity in planning schools. Urban Planning as an industry needs to do more to recruit underrepresented voices to our field.) To counter that, we intentionally use the Street Ambassador program to bring in new voices to our workforce. We train the team in standard industry tools to prepare them for future employment as Planners. We don't expect our staff to stay in this role forever, rather we expect them to grow rapidly upwards or outwards in the agency, thus earning new Civil Service titles and ultimately earning a Planner's salary (without having to go to grad school!). We expect Ambassadors stay in the role for around 2 years, and our first several years have averaged out to meet that expectation.

    b. PHL: Our Community Ambassadors are paid a $3,000 stipend and serve from March - Oct. The work we're looking for from our ambassadors is different from that of a planner. Our ambassadors are tasked with connecting Indego to the community through rides, classes, and events. Take a look at our Ambassador Toolkit for more details.

17. I work for a bicycle advocacy organization and lead our neighborhood based "Bike Advocate" program. Do you have any tips on how to merge our hardcore followers with other neighborhood groups?
    a. NYC DOT: I think the key here is to find other groups and support their causes before asking them to support yours. There was a great webinar by America Walks a couple of weeks ago that framed bicycle and pedestrian advocacy in the lens of The New Jim Crow and the very real

issues that the Black Lives Matter movement has been championing. You can apply this lens to street harassment and the MeToo movement as well. These are the issues that are the forefront for a population that may not prioritize bike advocacy or pedestrian advocacy because of historic and systemic racism and sexism. So I think as advocate, it's important to go to the local organizers of those movements and ask "how can I help?" and "how can my cause be of service to you and include your concerns?" before you say "how can you help my cause?"

18. Are there any good resources to use as a template or guide to do this in our city?
    a. NYC DOT: Not yet, let's make one! I will say that I am always inspired by the good work of the Center for Urban Pedagogy and look to bring their philosophy into the way cities can communicate with the public.

    b. There are a lot of great resources on the Better Bike Share website to help guide community engagement efforts. http://betterbikeshare.org/

19. Do you believe in engagement fatigue?
    a. MNDOT: Yes. I think engagement fatigue is a very real thing. It's important to be cognizant of it when planning your engagement efforts. Make sure you are asking real, substantive questions and explaining how they will impact decisions. Combine engagement efforts when possible. We were updating two of our statewide plans at the same time. Rather than have two engagement efforts, we conducted the engagement together.

    b. NYC DOT: For sure. You don't want to keep going out and asking the same questions over and over again. People want to see results. Make your timeline clear and set an end date for your input process.

20. I'm working in Public Health in Canada at the municipal level and we're very interested in the equity lens applied through Vision Zero. The engagement discussed today seems like a great way for transportation and public health to work together. Do any of you work with Public Health staff. If yes, to what depth?
    a. MnDOT: We work with the Minnesota Department of Health on a number of initiatives, some engagement related and others not. We lead and support many of each other's efforts, and sometimes conduct projects jointly. We see Health as a very important partner in transportation decision-making.

    b. NYC DOT: Yes, we work with the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene on a number of initiatives in areas with high health risks. We have a very active health department who engage in lots of ground-level communication. They have built trust in neighborhoods and communities that may be wary of changes to the built environment because a historic lack of access to power. Working with them is a good first step in establishing a baseline of understanding around active transportation and Vision Zero. (Plus, sometimes they have money! It's our connection with the Department of Health that lined up the funding for our educational transportation games.)

21. Autonomous or self-driving vehicles are coming! What public engagement methods would you use to collect data to plan for autonomous vehicles? Something different, or tried and true methods? What kind of data would you attempt to collect? How would you incorporate AV education in your outreach to get informed opinions?
    a. MnDOT: AVs were part of our engagement with our recent plan update. It's too soon to be asking about specifics but we had some questions that tried to gauge how people felt about the coming technology changes and what they thought it would mean for transportation in the state. This included a little bit of education/context about the trend to frame the questions. I think the same strategies to get input would work, but the types of questions we ask, specifically surrounding AVs will change as the technology comes. Right now, the questions are broad and general but they will get more specific over time.

    b. NYC DOT: Because our unit sits within the division that concentrates on operational and sometimes capital street improvements, we have not yet been tapped to engage on autonomous vehicles. But my gut reaction is to keep the "go to where the people are" pop-up engagement style and maybe develop some kind of game or future scenario to allow people to envision what the future might look like.

## *Questions for Minnesota DOT*

1. I work for a State Agency as an Environmental Planner and there is much resistance from the team and, sometimes the public, for active transportation and multi modal transportation. How do I engage the project development team (PDT) to follow these planning concepts for multi mobility and complete streets? I would definitely like to use various community engagement, other than the workshops we usually do which attract the "Mikes", in our future public engagements.
    a. I'd definitely recommend using a variety of engagement techniques to make sure you are truly hearing from the community and not just stakeholders. We were able to split out the feedback we received by "stakeholder" and "public" input. What we found in that the public has different priorities for the transportation system than our typical stakeholders/partners. Specifically, the public was much more concerned with the environment. Being able to show this data to decision-makers – showing them that their priorities were different than the public's – helped us push some policy initiatives more strongly than we otherwise would have been able to. You may find something similar when you do your engagement.

2. You mentioned that different groups had different ideas about what should be planned. Did you re engage these groups, reframe your plans or do other analyses based on this first analysis?
    a. We did the analysis of the feedback we received after we completed our engagement. That's when we learned that there were noticeable differences in priorities among different populations. We developed an engagement summary report which highlighted some of these key differences and distributed it online and to our contact list. However, we admittedly could've done more to close the loop with folks. This information was used as we developed the policy direction for the updated plan. There were a few policy areas that ranked lower in the overall prioritization but that we included more strongly in the plan because they ranked

high among specific subsets of the state's population.

3. Were any incentives used to encourage Facebook survey responses? If so, what?
    a. We didn't use any incentives to encourage Facebook survey responses. We just paid to have our post with the link to the survey boosted in people's newsfeeds through Facebook's targeted advertising program. We found that we got good survey completion from the ads without offering any special incentive.

## *Questions for NYC DOT:*

1. Where do you find street ambassadors?
    c. Our original team of 10 found us through our the city's formal NYC Jobs website. We did not actively recruit the first team of ten, but we looked for skill-sets like customer service, community organizing, and the ability to speak more than one language. (We had 700 applicants in the original push, and have had around 200 every time there is a posting.)

    Now that we are engaged in the CUNY ServiceCorps program, we are hoping to see applications from undergrads who have worked for us.

    One of the most commonly asked questions to our Ambassadors in the field is "How do I get your job?" It would be awesome if we could figure out a way to encourage those folks to apply, but, of course, that is tied to if we have a vacancy or not.

2. Inbar, How many staff do you have at any given time?
    a. I've been allocated a headcount of 10. Due to turnover and a long hiring process, we are sometimes down to 6 or 7. Our staff is supplemented via the CUNY ServiceCorps program and we are applying to participate in the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development's Summer Youth Employment Program.

3. How often does the street team get deployed?
    a. The team has active deployments scheduled throughout the year, in all seasons.

    In the warmer weather seasons (mid-April - end of October), the team is split into two, with half the team working Sunday - Thursday and the other half working Tuesday - Saturday. Weekend coverage is built into their schedule so we can make sure to accommodate festivals, street fairs, events, and simply catch people when they're at ease. They have office days on Tuesdays and Thursdays, which is when we train them for upcoming deployments, develop outreach strategies with our planning teams, sort and catalog photos, and crunch the data we collected in the field.

    This means we are actively deployed 5 days of every week in our active outreach season with weekend coverage. Often, we break down these days so that the Ambassadors can go out in teams of two or three. It is important that there is always a buddy (we never send them out alone). The only active deployment day when all 10 are together is on Wednesdays and we often use those days for large surveying efforts when we can split them into five teams of two. In the cold-weather season, the team hunkers down to a Monday - Friday schedule.

The past two years, our winters have concentrated on Merchant Surveys, but we are always evolving so we may plan these better in the future. (It can be quite cold in our winters and inclement weather throws off the scheduling.)

4. What was the online mapping program used for public outreach?
    a. The original input map I showed was our Vision Zero input portal. Following the success of that map, we put out a bid to create project-based input portals which can be found at www.NYCDOTfeedbackportals.nyc. We're currently updating these portals, so you can expect more functionality around March. (Hopefully we can get a better website name, too!)

5. Is the planning information on the City website easily understood by the public and reflective of public engagement?
    a. Probably not! Though we do hope that our project portals can serve the public in this way. Right now the portals are mostly managed by the project managers themselves, who are busy doing street design work, so they are at different stages of information sharing. We are working to standardize the publishing timeline and storytelling component of the portals, but that's still a work in progress. We've been trying things that haven't been done on a large scale before, so there is certainly a level of experimentation going on.

       We need to do a better job of advertising what we do, and our website is a great place to start. I've been strategizing about this with some of my communications peers.

6. What is a strategy to summarize information coming in from different sources (i.e. online, versus street ambassadors, etc.). Do you summarize together or separately by type of feedback received?
    a. The Ambassadors are responsible for summarizing all in-person engagement. The online portals are tied directly to the project managers, so they tend to do the data crunching for online efforts.

7. What were some of the costs associated with the NYC engagement program?
    a. Because we reallocated existing headcount, the team did not come at an additional cost to the City. That is, we did not have to create a new budget line to pay salaries.

       The original costs were mostly associated with buying materials and uniforms. We are lucky to have an in-house Graphics team and a municipal sign shop, so our printed materials are covered in the general budget of our Agency.

       But to give you a sense of the cost of giveaways (which you may remember are our tool to get folks to talk to us), we will often put in an order of about $25,000 at a time. On average, one conversation comes to about $2.

8. How might we as ambassadors from other cities collaborate with each other? Where are you? Who are you? Shout out from Atlanta bike share program!
    a. I think it would be really great to start a national conversation on this kind of work and potentially some kind of annual conference. (NACTO, perhaps we can develop a track at your conference to gather folks working in this field?) This work is difficult so it would be amazing to share strategies and support one another in this work!

9. What "giveaways" have you found most successful?
    a. My favorites are our reusable tote bags (the kind that are washable and can tuck into a little pouch) and sunglasses. The ONLY way to get cyclists to stop and talk to you is by offering them bells or lights, which are required by law.
    b. Stay away from water bottles (too bulky and often poor quality), smartphone attachments (like card holders), and promotional materials that don't serve another purpose.

10. Have crashes in those areas referred to in you presentation (before the project initiation) been reduced?
    a. NYC has experienced a significant drop in pedestrian injuries and fatalities since enacting Vision Zero. For more stats and info, check out this press release.

11. Can we get a copy of the survey mentioned during your presentation?
    a. We have some standard survey questions, but most are custom to the project. If you get in touch directly, I'm happy to walk you through some of them.