

# Transportation Outreach Planner

Demographics > Age > Seniors > Site Visits

## Public Outreach Strategies

### Site Visits

#### Quick Links

#### Toolbox Navigation

- [Recommended Target Groups](#)
- [Strategy Class](#)
- [Strategy Types](#)
- [Description](#)
- [Special Uses](#)
- [When to Use](#)
- [Cost](#)
- [Time](#)
- [Implementation Guidelines and Suggestions](#)
- [Lesson Learned/Challenges](#)
- [Case Studies](#)
- [For Further Information](#)
- [Sources](#)
- [Provide Feedback](#)

#### 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

- Promotional
- Educational
- Civic Engagement

## Description

Site visits are defined as tours of actual or proposed project areas, corridors, or impacted areas. They are generally used to evaluate a project or site, conduct community outreach, or to determine the feasibility of a project. Participants typically include agency staff, public officials, community leaders, consultants, as well as members of the media. Site visits are also referred to as field visits or site tours.<sup>1</sup>

## Special Uses

Site Visits can be used to: <sup>2</sup>

- Assess the physical environment for a proposed project
- Compare similar sites
- Inspect how a facility or plan is being implemented
- Monitor progress or evaluate a project
- Educate stakeholders, community leaders, and the media

## When to Use

Agencies can use site visits at the start of a project to assess a proposed site and determine how the project is likely to impact the surrounding community. Site visits can also be used for planning purposes to help people understand the issues, barriers, or challenges facing a community and to better assess alternative strategies. In addition, site visits can be used to evaluate or inspect existing projects. It is also possible to use site visits to enhance outreach efforts.

## Cost

### **\* \* Moderate (\$1000 to \$9999)**

The cost of organizing a site visit can be moderate, particularly if traveling long-distance. Costs include staff time, vehicle rental, or transportation costs, as well as supplies and printing expenses. In some cases, agencies may also incur the expense of videotaping or photographing the site visits in order to have a visual record of what was seen and experienced.

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

### **\* 1 to 3 months**

Coordinating a site visit can take several months. Inviting guests, coordinating schedules, developing the itinerary, and making the travel arrangements can take considerable effort and staff time.

1 to 3 months

\*

*Disclaimer:* The time estimates are approximations. The

6 months to a year  
Multiyear

\* \*  
\* \* \*

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 coordinating site visits: <sup>3</sup>

- **Identify the site and determine the goal of the site visit.** Whether an agency initiates a site visit or the request comes from the community, agency staff should work with community leaders to establish the goals of the visit.
- **Assign the person who will be leading the site visit.** One person needs to be assigned as the leader of the site visit. That person will be responsible for verifying attendance, overseeing the logistics, maintaining the site visit on schedule, and dealing with any emergency that may arise.
- **Work with community leaders to establish the itinerary and identify potential participants or guest speakers.** The goal of the site visit will help determine the itinerary and the list of persons who will participate. Community leaders can help agencies to identify special points of interest and persons who can serve as guest speakers or tour guides. Depending on the time that is available and the intent of the site visit, agencies may consider incorporating the following activities in the site visit:
  - Orientation meeting to provide background information on the site
  - Interviews with local residents or stakeholders
  - Meeting with project leaders to allow participants to ask questions regarding what they have seen
  - Closeout session to enable participants to discuss what they learned from the site visit
- **Schedule the site visit at convenient times.** Special consideration must be given to the scheduling of the site visit. It is best to hold a site visit when the site is most active or when people can see the conditions in question. However, it is also important to work with the community and the participants to make sure the date, time, and other logistics are conducive to participation.
- **Determine arrival and departure time, as well as the meeting location.** In some cases, agencies may select to have participants gather in one location and leave together for the site. It is also possible for participants to gather at the site itself. In both cases, it is important to inform every one of the meeting time and/or the specific time of departure. Agencies may want to leave a designated person behind at the site to help those who arrive late. A sign with instructions of how to meet the group at the next location is also helpful.
- **Coordinate the transportation.** If transportation will be provided, agencies should reserve the vehicle(s) ahead of time based on the expected number of participants. The vehicle should be comfortable and be accessible to persons with disabilities or mobility limitations. If a large van or bus will be used, arrangements should be made to obtain a portable microphone so that people are able to hear the leader or any discussions clearly. If the site visit will be a walking tour, care should be taken to ensure that people with mobility limitations are able to participate.
- **Determine what types of materials should be provided to participants.** Materials should include a detailed itinerary with the times and address of each stop, a map of the site, and information on the purpose of the visit. Participants should also receive background information on the project site or community, and any other material that is relevant to the site visit. It is also helpful to provide participants with a list of things to look for when visiting the site.
- **Schedule time after the site visit for participants to discuss what they saw.** At the end of the site visit, set aside sufficient time for participants to discuss what they experienced. A written record should be prepared of the discussion, including a list of participants, items for further follow up, and other relevant observations.

### Recommended Target Demographics

Site visits are useful tools among all demographic groups, as long as the site is accessible. They are excellent for conducting community outreach, particularly among underserved communities, such as non-English speaking populations. Through the site visits agencies are able to build relationships and better understand the specific issues

and concerns that communities face. In most cases, those who participate in site visits include advisory committee representatives, elected officials, neighborhood activists, community leaders, and business representatives. However, it is possible for agencies to allow members of the general public to participate by publicizing the event and informing people that they need to call in advance to reserve a space. 4

## Lessons Learned/Challenges

Below are key points to keep in mind when coordinating a site visit: 5

- **A site visit should be led by a person who is familiar with the area and the issues.** The person who is leading the group must be able to answer questions and provide background information.
- **The person leading the site visit should present the information free of judgment so that participants are free to express their thoughts and observations.**
- **It is important to have a contingency plan in the event there are weather conditions or other issues that may make the site inaccessible.**
- **Agencies may consider videotaping the site visit and posting the video on the agency's website in order to make the site visit more accessible to those who cannot attend the tour and to the general public.**
- **Prior to holding the site visit, it is important to identify any accessibility, mobility, security, or safety issues that may arise.** For example, some facilities may require those who are visiting the site to undergo special security checks or safety training. Agencies should also check with their legal counsel to determine if they need to obtain special insurance or provide participants with a liability release agreement.

## Case Studies

The Portland Bureau of Environmental Services uses site visits to help maintain ongoing, face-to-face contact with businesses and residents affected by a project. The purpose of these visits is to discuss the project and identify and resolve design and construction issues, such as access, parking, construction hours and impacts. Taking community members to the site provides an opportunity to identify and discuss concerns, issues, and public involvement opportunities (<http://www.portlandonline.com/bes/index.cfm?a=255006&c=50847>).

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) sponsors youth-based training programs to promote awareness of careers in transportation. The training program includes site visits to construction sites and meetings with industry leaders. Participation in these training programs allows a diverse group of inner city, rural, and urban school children to be exposed to transportation-related programs and careers ([http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/public\\_involvement/case\\_studies/wisconsin/index.cfm](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/public_involvement/case_studies/wisconsin/index.cfm)).

## For Further Information

The following sites provide information on how to organize various types of site visits. They also offer tips and other useful information.

- **Conducting Effective Site Visits ? Boston University MG455:** <http://www.compact.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Boston-University-Conducting-Effective-Site-Visits.pdf>.<sup>8</sup>
- **Site Visits:** [http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/tboxsitevisits.pdf/\\$FILE/tboxsitevisits.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/tboxsitevisits.pdf/$FILE/tboxsitevisits.pdf).<sup>9</sup>
- **Site Visits, CDC:** [http://www.cdc.gov/workplacehealthpromotion/assessment/assessment\\_interviews/site-visits.html](http://www.cdc.gov/workplacehealthpromotion/assessment/assessment_interviews/site-visits.html).<sup>10</sup>

## Sources

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), "USDOT FHWA/FTA Public Involvement

Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making: Site Visits,” August 2002, 29, FHWA, 17 August 2011

<<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/reports/pittd/contents.htm>>.

<sup>2</sup> FHWA, “Site Visits.”

<sup>3</sup> FHWA, “Site Visits.”

<sup>4</sup> FHWA, “Site Visits.”

<sup>5</sup> FHWA, “Site Visits.”

<sup>6</sup> Portland Bureau of Environmental Services , “Bureau of Environmental Services Public Involvement Policy,” 1 November 2011, <<http://www.portlandonline.com/bes/index.cfm?a=255006&c=50847>>.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), “Increasing Community Awareness Through Youth Career Training Programs, Wisconsin Department of Transportation,” 25 October 2011, FHWA, 31 October 2011, <[http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/public\\_involvement/case\\_studies/wisconsin/index.cfm](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/public_involvement/case_studies/wisconsin/index.cfm)>.

<sup>8</sup> Boston University, “Conducting Effective Site Visits – Boston University MG455,” 1 November 2011, <<http://www.compact.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Boston-University-Conducting-Effective-Site-Visits.pdf>>. 8

<sup>9</sup> Forestry Commission, Involving People in Forestry Toolbox: Site Visits,” 1 November 2011, <[http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/tboxsitevisits.pdf/\\$FILE/tboxsitevisits.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/tboxsitevisits.pdf/$FILE/tboxsitevisits.pdf)>. 9

<sup>10</sup> Centers for Disease Control, “Site Visits,” 25 April 2011, CDC, 1 November 2011, <[http://www.cdc.gov/workplacehealthpromotion/assessment/assessment\\_interviews/site-visits.html](http://www.cdc.gov/workplacehealthpromotion/assessment/assessment_interviews/site-visits.html)>.