

Transportation Outreach Planner

Demographics > Age > Youth > Youth Outreach Strategies

Public Outreach Strategies

Youth Outreach Strategies

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

- Innovation

Strategy Types

- Civic Engagement
- Educational
- Promotional

Description

Youth outreach strategies for transportation generally refer to educational programs designed to show students how transportation affects their lives and how they can make a difference in the field. Most transportation youth programs seek to increase awareness regarding transportation related issues, encourage transit use, and attract future professionals to transportation related careers. Although youth programs tend to target students from kindergarten to high school, some youth programs also target college students.¹

Special Uses

Youth outreach activities can be used to:

- Educate future generations regarding transit use and transportation safety
- Create greater understanding of how transportation planning works and how to get involved
- Encourage youth to explore careers in transportation
- Develop future leaders and civic engagement skills

When to Use

Youth outreach programs can be used as long-term strategies to raise awareness about transportation and commuting alternatives. It can also be used to teach future generations about civic involvement. By working with schools and youth organizations, agencies are not only building relationships with the youth, they are also establishing partnerships and connections with adults. As a result, youth outreach strategies can be useful for connecting with hard-to-reach populations.²

Cost

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

Creating and implementing a youth outreach program can represent a moderate expense for agencies, depending on the type of activities that are undertaken. Programs that involve school presentations will be substantially less expensive than programs that include field trips and special lesson plans. Most youth programs require staff to oversee the activity and supervise the youth. Other expenses include the production of instructional materials, such as games, books, maps, handout, etc. Transportation costs must be taken into account for field trips, special tours, or any other type of activity that involves transportation. Finally, if a curriculum is developed, agencies will need to hire educational consultants to develop the program. However, agencies can also adapt the curriculum from existing youth programs (see For Further Information). The cost of the youth program will depend on the activities that are undertaken and the number of youth that will be involved.

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

*** Multiyear

Youth programs require a long-term commitment in order for the program to be effective. A one-time presentation is not enough to make a long-lasting impression. Agencies must be committed to reaching out to schools and youth organizations on an on-going basis in order to establish a connection with the youth. This can be accomplished through annual classroom presentations, participation in career fairs, and other special events. The more visible agencies are among youth, the more likely that their message will reach the targeted youth.

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 creating a youth outreach program:

- **Determine the youth audience that will be targeted.** Although it is possible to have a youth outreach program that targets children from five years of age to young adults in their early twenties, it is important to note that different age groups require different outreach strategies. Depending on the resources that an agency may have available, it may be more cost effective to target a specific age group. Below is a listing of the main developmental stages and examples of age appropriate youth activities and materials:³
 - **Children:** 5 to 11 years of age (games, puzzles, and cartoons)
 - **Adolescents:** Teenage years - 12 to 16 years of age (books, maps, and information on how to use public transportation)
 - **Pre-adults:** Late teenage years to early twenties - 17 to 20 years of age (career information, internships, and summer jobs)
- **Determine the objective of the youth program.** The objective of the program will help to inform the types of activities that are organized. Agencies can use the list below to identify the activities that are most suited to meet their objective:
 - Educate and Promote
 - School curriculum with lesson plans
 - Simulation games
 - Transit tours
 - Field trips
 - Special events or presentations
 - Contests
 - Recruit Future Professionals
 - Career fairs
 - Internships
 - Job shadowing
 - Mentoring
 - Summer camps
 - After school clubs
- **Work with the local school system to design and develop the program.** Schools are often asked to incorporate a variety of educational activities in their existing educational program; however, in many cases they do not have the capacity or resources to implement such activities. Prior to developing a youth program, therefore, agencies should consult their local school system to determine what is feasible. For example, there may not be sufficient resources to conduct field trips, but it may be possible to hold a special assembly or to incorporate a special curriculum into the regular lesson plans. The consultation should include private and parochial schools. Furthermore, agencies should involve school administrators, teachers, and students in the design and development of the youth program in order to ensure that it is relevant and appropriate to student's educational level.⁴
- **Establish partnerships with local youth groups or community organizations that serve youth.** In addition to working with schools, agencies can also conduct effective outreach by working with youth organizations. These organizations provide yet another vehicle for reaching youth and carrying out youth-related activities.⁵
- **Obtain parental/guardian consent for field trips, tours, internships, summer camps, or any activities that**

require adult supervision. The consent form includes the purpose of the activity, date, time, number of children, grade, and number of chaperones. It should also state any costs associated with the event, emergency contact information where the parents can reach a person in charge, as well as emergency contact information for the parents/guardians. Finally, the form should include a disclaimer regarding any possible liability. Agencies should contact their legal advisors for such a statement.

- **Track participation and evaluate the program to identify areas of improvement.** To ensure that the youth program is reaching its objective, it is important to keep track of the youth activities that are undertaken and the number of youth that participated. It is also important to evaluate the success of each activity to determine what worked and what should be avoided. Particular attention should be given to comments and suggestions from youth participants.

Recommended Target Demographics

Youth, generally defined as persons from five to 20 years of age, represent a diverse demographic with different needs and interests; therefore, youth activities must accommodate such diversity. Activities must be appropriate to the learning ability and physical ability of each age group. In some cases, special outreach strategies may be needed to attract certain youth populations such as non-English speaking youth.

Lessons Learned/Challenges

Below are key points to keep in mind when organizing a youth outreach program: ⁶

- **Establish relationships with schools, as well as parents.** When agencies involve parents in the youth programs, the parents also learn from the experience. This helps to create greater community involvement and interest in transportation related issues among adults.
- **Be aware that adults may not have the same perception of time as youth.** Youth may define "short-term" as days and weeks and "long-term" as months. Furthermore, youth tend to be interested in immediate action and may have limited tolerance for long processes.
- **Recognize youth for their efforts whenever possible.** This will serve as an incentive for continued participation.
- **Work with local colleges and universities.** These institutions of higher learning can serve as partners in helping to create a strong youth outreach program. Since they are also interested in recruiting future students to study engineering, construction, and planning, they can help to create interesting and educational programs that encourage students to learn more about the field of transportation.
- **To reduce barriers, activities should have minimal or no fees, and should be held at times and locations that are convenient to participants.**

Case Studies

The Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) agency helps students to learn about public transportation and safety through a variety of educational programs. They offer dynamic presentations and hands-on tours for grades 1 to 12. They also created a special curriculum for grades 1 to 5, called "On The Go." In addition, DART offers students unpaid internships and job shadowing opportunities. They also offer an on-line simulation game, hold annual poster contests and organize special events to engage students (<http://www.dart.org/transiteducation/transiteducation.asp>).⁷

Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) promotes safety and awareness of public transportation to local youths through the VTA Youth Outreach Program (YOP). The program is designed to encourage students to learn and experience the benefits of public transportation. It includes a class presentation where students learn transportation etiquette, how to read schedules, and how to plan a trip. The program also offers a "Class Pass" that enable teachers to take students on a field trip on the VTA buses and light rail for free. Thousands of students have participated in the program since it was created. (<http://www.vta.org/services/yop.html>).⁸

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Missouri University of Science and Technology have created a K-12 program that is intended to help students learn about transportation and encourage future careers in the field. They provide a Summer Institute and a variety of unique tours and field trips. They have also created a "Roads, Rails and Race Cars" after-school club with interesting activities that keep students interested and involved, including tours to the university laboratories where students can see a concrete stress test and other interesting activities. This program shows how it is possible to work with local universities to create innovative techniques for reaching youth (<http://matc.unl.edu/education/tours.php>).⁹

The New Jersey DOT (NJDOT) developed Transportation Education Program as part of its Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). They committed to engage students as part of their 2030 efforts. The program includes a teacher handbook that is available to all New Jersey schools. Although the handbook is designed for students in the eighth grade, the activities can be adjusted to the appropriate grade level. The goal is to "enable...students to think critically about both the benefits and challenges posed by an increasingly complex and sophisticated transportation network" (<http://www.nj.gov/transportation/works/njchoices/pdf/education.pdf>).¹⁰

For Further Information

The following sites provide useful information and resources for creating youth outreach programs:

- **Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Universities and Grants Programs:** Promotes transportation workforce development through various education programs for college-bound and K-12 students. These programs include the Dwight David Transportation Fellowship Program (DDETFP), the Garrett A. Morgan Technology and Transportation Education Program (GAMTTEP), and other activities that expose K-12 and college students to transportation related carriers and activities (<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/tpp/ugp.htm>).¹¹
- **Transportation Workforce Development, Education/Outreach Programs:** This site provides useful information regarding outreach activities and educational programs for K-12 and college bound students (<http://www.nhi.fhwa.dot.gov/transworkforce/education.asp>).¹²
- **Best Practices for Youth Programs:** Provides recommendations for creating effective youth programs based on best practice research (<http://www.unitedwaytoronto.com/downloads/whatWeDo/reports/YouthBestPractices-FinalPublicReport.pdf>).¹³

In addition to the above links, below are the sites to the South Florida School Districts:

- **Broward County Public Schools:** <http://www.browardschools.com/>
- **Miami-Dade County Public Schools:** <http://www.dadeschools.net/>
- **School District of Palm Beach County:** <http://www.palmbeachschools.org/>

Sources

- 1 Bonnell, Jennifer and Tom Zizys, "Best Practices for Youth Programs," February 2005, United Way of Greater Toronto, 14 January 2012, (<http://www.unitedwaytoronto.com/downloads/whatWeDo/reports/YouthBestPractices-FinalPublicReport.pdf>).
- 2 Federal Highway Administration, "Transportation Enhancement Activities: Youth Conservation or Service Corps," 12 January 2012, FHWA, (http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/transportation_enhancements/guidance/gmemo_youth.cfm).
- 3 Bonnell, Jennifer and Tom Zizys, "Best Practices for Youth Programs."
- 4 Bonnell, Jennifer and Tom Zizys, "Best Practices for Youth Programs."
- 5 Bonnell, Jennifer and Tom Zizys, "Best Practices for Youth Programs."
- 6 Bonnell, Jennifer and Tom Zizys, "Best Practices for Youth Programs."
- 7 Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), "Transit Education," DART, 14 January 2012, (<http://www.dart.org/transiteducation/transiteducation.asp>).
- 8 Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), Youth Outreach Program (YOP), VTA, 14 January 2012, (<http://www.vta.org/services/yop.html>).
- 9 University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Missouri University of Science and Technology, "K-12 Tours and Outreach," Mid-America Transportation Center, 14 January 2012, (<http://matc.unl.edu/education/tours.php>).
- 10 New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT), "Transportation Education Program: Teacher Handbook," NJDOT, 2 February 2012, (<http://www.nj.gov/transportation/works/njchoices/pdf/education.pdf>).
- 11 Federal Highway Administration, "Universities and Grants Programs," 22 December 2011, FHWA, 10 January 2012, (<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/tpp/ugp.htm>).
- 12 Federal Highway Administration, "Transportation Workforce Development, Education/Outreach Programs," FHWA, 10 January 2012, (<http://www.nhi.fhwa.dot.gov/transworkforce/education.asp>).
- 13 Bonnell, Jennifer and Tom Zizys, "Best Practices for Youth Programs."