Core Principles for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Engagement in Transportation Options Programs

Introduction

This document presents a set of core principles and recommended actions for delivering Transportation Options (TO) programming among Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Spanish-speaking communities in Oregon.

To develop these core principles and recommended actions, ODOT convened an advisory group of Oregon TO providers to share case studies, best practices, and lessons learned from their work in local communities. This document shares a selection of case studies; these and other community conversations and programs from around the state have informed the core principles and recommended actions presented here.

Contributors:
- Kiki Dohman, Cherriots
- Marne Duke, Metro
- Kathy Fitzpatrick, Mid-Columbia Economic Development District
- Edem Gomez, Rogue Valley Transportation District
- Kathy Kleczek, NW Transportation Options
- Brian Potwin, Commute Options
- Alexandra Zimmerman, formerly with Go Lloyd
- Sydney Cape, Alta Planning + Design
- Cathy Cibor, Alta Planning + Design
- Anna Gore, Alta Planning + Design
- Stephanie Millar, Oregon Department of Transportation

Purpose/Problem Statement

Through talking with community organizations and community members, TO providers across Oregon have heard that many Spanish-speaking Oregonians lack trust of government agencies, have personal security and safety concerns associated with using transportation options, and have not historically been engaged or included in government transportation projects in a meaningful way. Due in part to these factors, existing TO programming has had varying degrees of success in supporting the use of transportation options by LEP Spanish-speaking community members in Oregon.

To address these issues, an advisory group of Oregon TO providers collaborated to develop a set of core principles to support LEP Spanish-speaking Oregonians in using transportation options and to guide future TO programming. These core principles are the basis for the recommendations in this document:
- Build trust between LEP Spanish-speaking communities and TO providers

- Identify individual and cultural needs and barriers to using transportation options
- Identify appropriate and viable solutions to transportation challenges and help individuals and communities overcome those challenges
- Address and improve the perception of and access to transportation options
- Build confidence in using transportation options

Case Studies

The case studies on the following pages describe outreach and engagement experiences, best practices, and lessons learned from several TO providers in Oregon. These case studies and other community conversations and programs from around the state informed the core principles and recommended actions presented in this document.

NW Transportation Options

Overview

NW Transportation Options (NWTO) is responsible for transportation options outreach and education in the Clatsop-Tillamook-Columbia County Region. With an aging regional population and growing Latino/a/x community, NWTO pays special attention to Limited English Proficiency, including inviting more people to the conversation. Authentic conversation is the best way to provide relevant information. Conversation is a two-way dialog, not just announcements and asking for help. NWTO strives to frequently listen, rather than speak, and offer more than ask.

NWTO has established a connection with local Latino/a/x support organizations by approaching them and attending regular open meetings, with the intent of establishing relationships and getting to know people in the groups over time. NWTO staff do not bring their own agenda to the meetings most of the time, and because of this, requesting something of the group is not "out of the blue" and is more of a true exchange. When NWTO is invited to attend and participate in an event, they send a representative that is able to communicate effectively in a culturally appropriate manner.

Purpose/Goal

The purpose of this effort is to establish a lasting channel for effective communication between the local Latino/a/x community and transportation providers, employers, and other human service providers to provide needed services to the entire community.

Audience

The target audience for outreach messaging is the larger Spanish speaking audience in the region, that could be served or better served by transit and other transportation options.

Key Partners/Collaborators
- Consejo Hispano
- Northwest Regional Education Service District

Key LEP Engagement Strategies

- Be available for virtual and in-person meetings as much as possible
- Say "yes" when invited to meetings or events
- Send a Spanish speaking representative with cultural awareness
- Follow through with the promised support
- Be early, stay late; offer to help set up and clean up
- Actively engage

Lessons Learned/Recommendations

- Collect information to disseminate early
- Collaborate and go out of your way to help
- Bring giveaways
- Share your contact information at an event and ask others for theirs
- Reach out afterwards to thank event participants or sponsors
- Say thank you (especially in Spanish!)

Rogue Valley Transportation District

Overview

Rogue Valley Transportation District (RVTD) aims to incorporate outreach to LEP Spanish speaking communities in all of its transportation outreach activities and major outreach campaigns. This includes marketing, graphics, service updates, planning, and in-person outreach. The work of engaging and reaching out to LEP Spanish speaking communities is ongoing and woven into the work of RVTD. Serving this population is important, as 14% of RVTD's greater service area is made up of persons identified as being Hispanic/Latino/a/x and there is a vibrant and well-established Latino/a/x community in Southern Oregon.

Strategies include translation of important documents and graphics, culturally competent in-person outreach, and paid advertising in established LEP communication channels. Additionally, RVTD has culturally competent and Spanish speaking staff attend outreach events, allowing for better outreach outcomes.

Purpose/Goal

The purpose of this effort is to serve and reach all groups in the community. LEP and Spanish speaking community members are not an insignificant portion of the community or ridership. Effective outreach to this community and others allow RVTD to be more effective in their work and the goals of the Statewide Transportation Options Plan.

Audience

The target of this outreach is to both communities who are predominately LEP Spanish speaking and identify as Latino/a/x and Hispanic. Much of service messaging is aimed at current transit riders.

Key Partners/Collaborators
- Latinx Interagency Networking Committee (Jackson County)
- Latinx Interagency Networking Committee (Josephine County)
- Cultural Outreach Coordinator: Medford Police Department and City of Medford (Lilia Caballero)
- Caminos Revista (Local Bilingual Monthly Magazine and News Site)
- Housing Authority of Jackson County
- UNETE: Center for Farm Worker and Immigrant Advocacy
- Latino/a/x Programs and Outreach Support: Southern Oregon University
- Latino Outreach Programs: Rogue Community College
- Head Start of Jackson County
- Local Businesses: La Fiesta, El Gallo, El Tapatio, La Gran D, Harry and David
- AARP
- Jackson County Library System
- Local Jurisdictions: City of Talent, City of Medford, City of Phoenix especially have staff and programs aimed at reaching out to these communities.

- Local School Districts: Medford, White City, Phoenix/Talent, Ashland, Central Point (Incredibly important in reaching out to families. Established trust, and schools are often seen as safe locations making them great locations for outreach events.)
- La Clinica

Key LEP Engagement Strategies
- Material and literature translation (e.g., marketing, education, TO messaging, important documents, etc.)
- Paid advertisement in established marketing/communication channels popular in the community
- Social media outreach and messaging aimed to reach the LEP community
- Marketing aimed to reach the community
- Regular and frequent attendance at important events and meetings, including:
  - Latino/a/x Interagency Committee (LInC) meetings
  - Partner meetings
  - Community events: Fiestas Patrias, Multicultural Fair, Latino Health Fair
- Aiming outreach at important locations in the community: businesses, schools, trusted partners.

Lessons Learned/Recommendations
- Maintain strong relationships and continued communication with key partners and collaborations; do not just sent program information
- Send a Spanish speaking and culturally competent staff member to outreach events

Metro *Let's Go/Vámonos* Programs

Overview

Beginning in spring 2017, Metro staff and community partners embarked on a research project to inform how multiple Metro programs communicate with people of color in our region. Metro uses the guidance and knowledge gained from communities through research on how to engage in meaningful and culturally relevant ways.

In 2018, Metro began work to focus efforts on further research, pilot project testing and implementation of TO programs to build on previous research findings. Work was conducted with two community partners as lead implementers of programming, with Metro and contractors acting in advising and support roles. Community partners were contracted to fulfill work and staff compensated for time and expenditures. Through community workshops and planning with partners, the team devised a multi-year program to provide TDM services through popular community centers.

Purpose/Goal

The overall project goals were to create programs, information resources, and tools to make it easier, safer, and more convenient for the many people of color in the region who are already participating in travel options, and for those considering using them – out of need or choice. Additional project objectives were to:

- Identify the unique needs and preferences of people of color about using travel options through a variety of research techniques
- Verify and expand upon research findings through pilot outreach projects, run in collaboration with local partners
- Inform and equip regional partners on the results of projects to benefit their work engaging people of color

Audience

The pilot projects were used to inform future work with all BIPOC communities in the region.

Let's Go Rosewood, in partnership with the Rosewood Initiative, identified seven major communities/languages spoken and were included in all outreach materials. The community center serves immigrant populations with high LEP and non-literacy rates.

Vámonos Cornelius partnered with Centro Cultural, a primarily Spanish-speaking community group focused on the many Spanish-speakers and Latino/a/x communities in Cornelius, where over 60% of their population identify as Latino/a/x. Further focus was given to youth and the elderly to capitalize on existing programming opportunities.

Key Partners/Collaborators

Let's Go Rosewood

- Rosewood Initiative

- PBOT SRTS
- City of Gresham
- Oregon Walks

Vámonos Cornelius
- Centro Cultural
- City of Cornelius
- Washington County

Key LEP Engagement Strategies
- Multi-language community workshops to determine barriers and needs to TO participation
- Community informed messaging and marketing materials
- Artwork from local artist for materials
- Community mapping at events and production for distribution
- Community-specific photography for use in projects
- Multi-language marketing materials available at community centers and events
- Travel training and resources (low-income fare sign up) at community centers
- Incorporate travel training into existing programming for youth and seniors
- Multi-language travel kiosk

Lessons Learned/Recommendations
- Be flexible to meet needs: Acknowledge when your original goals aren't appropriate or relevant and be open to adapting to meet community needs
- Have an open mind: The program shouldn't follow a script. Be open to creating something from the ground up
- Keep the community at the forefront: Make sure anything you create or organize reflects the community
- Meet people where they are: Utilize existing programming, events, and partners to make the program accessible
- Go beyond public involvement: Collaborate in a way that allows for ownership and empowerment
- Distribute materials in places where people are already picking up resources and send out an email or post on social media to let the community know they're available
- Getting people to show up to events/trainings can be difficult—experiment with different times of day, get the word out using different channels, and provide food, compensation and childcare

Recommended Actions

The following recommended actions are grounded in lessons learned from community engagement efforts around the state, as described in the case studies. These recommendations do not claim to be exhaustive, but they are intended to be a starting place for improving engagement with LEP Spanish speaking communities.

1. Address Limited English Proficiency Throughout the Project Life Cycle

The life cycle of a project begins with setting goals and allocating resources (i.e., budgeting). Building LEP considerations, engagement, and translation/interpretation into the project goals and budget will help ensure that your organization prioritizes LEP audiences and has the funding and capacity to address LEP needs throughout the project. Additionally, when engaging Spanish speakers is a stated priority in program planning and has funds specifically allocated in the budget/grant up front, it can be easier to justify among leaders and other stakeholders.

Additional Recommendations/Considerations

- **Be specific about community involvement:** When establishing goals and planning projects, be specific about how and when LEP organizations and community members will be involved. This will inform your budget (and schedule) and provide more structure for following through on stated goals.
- **Plan for costs in advance:** When budgeting or applying for grants, consider the following expenses:
  - Ongoing meetings, communications, and follow-up with community organizations
  - Translation/transcreation of content and resources, as well as additional labor needed to incorporate translations into materials, websites, tools, etc.
  - Interpretation services for meetings, trainings, classes, etc., including additional time needed for event logistics
  - Spanish speaking staff for outreach events
- **Incorporate time in the schedule:** Project schedules will also need to incorporate enough time for ongoing dialog with and feedback from community organizations and/or community members, as well as time for planning, executing, reviewing, and incorporating translation/ interpretation into project materials and activities

2. Build Trust and Relationships Over Time

A recurring theme from the three case studies was to go beyond *informing* partners of the work your organization is doing. As described in the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation, "inform" is the lowest level of engagement. Organizations should strive to consult and involve community organizations early and often, and ultimately collaborate and empower on an ongoing basis. Going beyond providing information will allow your organization to gain the trust of the communities you serve.

The NE Transportation Connections white paper, "Bringing TDM Solutions to Communities of Diversity,"

(see Appendix) discusses the importance of gaining trust in underserved communities and provides suggestions for doing so, including:

- **Maintain a respectful, open, and reliable presence**: As mentioned in the NW Transportation Options case study, this may include being available for meetings as much as possible and saying "yes" when invited to meetings or events. NW Transportation Options also suggests attending meetings on an ongoing basis, even when you don't have a topic to discuss. That way it's a natural collaboration when there is a transportation-related topic to bring to the table.
- **Listen instead of talking:** Take the time to learn about the community's needs and the community organization's mission and do not place your agenda at the forefront. For instance, the initial goal for Metro's *Let's Go/Vámonos* programs was to increase the use of transportation options. Community engagement efforts made it clear that the communities were already using transportation options out of necessity, but weren't always having good experiences doing so. Upon learning this, Metro shifted their goals and approach to address the community's stated needs.

Additional Recommendations/Considerations:

- **Accommodate limited capacity:** In most cases, community organizations do not have the time or capacity to take on additional work. Make yourself available to support, eliminate barriers when possible, and limit your requests.
- **Compensate for time and services:** In the Metro *Let's Go/Vámonos* case study, work was conducted with two community partners as lead implementers of programming. The community partners were contracted to fulfill work and staff compensated for time and expenditures.

3. Identify Needs, Barriers, and Opportunities

Transportation/mobility needs, barriers to using transportation options, and program opportunities can vary drastically by community. It is important to set aside your own agenda and be open to hearing directly from the community about their needs. The following steps can help identify needs and barriers, highlight opportunities, and provide solutions:

1. **Do your own research:** Before asking for anyone's time, learn what you can about the community and its residents. This could include reading about the neighborhood history and/or local current events, conducting or reviewing a demographic analysis, or assessing the viability of available transportation options.
2. **Listen to the community:** Conduct a needs assessment to help identify what might help community members use transportation options more often or more successfully. The assessment could be in the form of community surveys, workshops, focus groups, interviews, or other informal conversations with community members, organizations, or employers. You may consider contracting with a CBO that has strong ties to the community to help facilitate the effort. Regardless of the format, meet the community where they are, provide culturally appropriate and in-language materials, and compensate for the participants' time with local, culturally-relevant incentives. Survey or discussion questions may include:

a) How are you currently getting around? What existing transportation options do you have access to, and what is your experience with them?
b) What are your transportation challenges? What is difficult about getting around?
c) What would make a given transportation mode (e.g., biking, walking, transit, etc.) easier to use?
d) How do you access community information? Do you utilize any community resource centers or hubs?
e) Do you participate in any local programs or attend ongoing events?

3. **Highlight opportunities:** Compile information from community partners, your initial research, and the needs assessment, to help you identify opportunities. Determine how much flexibility you have within the project, and be realistic with yourself and the community about what can be offered. Consider the following as you identify opportunities:
a) What can the project do for the community?
b) How can the project be leveraged to address community needs and barriers?
c) Where are there opportunities to collaborate with the community?
d) How can the project help improve mobility or help community members improve their own mobility (e.g., improved services, one-on-one support, access to resources/information, etc.)?

4. **Identify and offer solutions:** Be transparent about what's possible within the scope of the project, but to the extent possible, be flexible and work with community partners to design solutions that address community needs and barriers, even if that means pivoting from the original plan or goals. When offering solutions, slow down and leave space for community input, and stay flexible in case plans need to change in response. Be sure to collaborate with partners before taking any actions. You likely won't be able to address *all* barriers and concerns, so be clear about what you can and can't do. Tips for open and honest communication include:
a) Make people feel heard and acknowledge their experience
b) Offer to find solutions/resources where possible
c) Acknowledge when you don't know the answer and come up with a plan to find it
d) Evaluate your solutions frequently, with community input
e) Advocate for community members by elevating their concerns to decision makers, or community partners that might be able to advise/help

4. Use Plain Language, Transcreation, and Culturally Appropriate Content
This section includes recommendations and best practices for developing plain language resources and transcreating materials.

Plain Language Best Practices
Literacy barriers are as serious as language and cultural barriers when it comes to people accessing services or understanding information. Use the following strategies to develop plain language materials:
- Use simple and short sentences
- Include the most important information at the top

- Use shorter syllable words, and everyday words
- Avoid transportation jargon and acronyms
- Incorporate blank space, bullet points, and visual hierarchies
- Aim for a target reading level of 5th grade
- Use the first person and active voice

For more information, see the ODOT Plain Language Style Guide (see Appendix).

Transcreation Best Practices

As mentioned in the case studies, translating materials into the community's native languages is necessary to inform your audience. Translation and transcreation are sometimes used interchangeably, but it is important to point out the difference. Translation is replacing the words in one language with corresponding words in another language, while transcreation is more focused on conveying concepts and themes. In general, transcreation is a more effective practice for reaching LEP communities. Consider the following best practices for transcreation:

- Work with a local transcreation vendor, if possible
- Provide the transcreation vendor with guidance on tone and overall goals for the piece they are transcreating
- Define transportation words that they may not be familiar with and provide context for terms or phrases
- Keep very technical terms in English, or ask the transcreator for their recommendation
- Request that they review the material once it has been designed to confirm it has been formatted correctly

For a bank of Spanish transportation terms, see the ODOT Safe Routes to School Spanish Glossary of Terms in the Appendix.

Additional Recommendations/Considerations

Other recommendations for developing and distributing culturally appropriate content include:

- **Feature relevant, appropriate imagery:** Make sure your materials include illustrations/photos/graphics that represent the community you are serving.
- **Utilize in-language publications to distribute your messages:** As mentioned in the RVTD case study, paid advertisement in established marketing/communication channels popular in the community can be helpful in reaching those you wish to serve.

5. Evaluate, Modify, and Improve

Tracking accomplishments, results, and lessons learned is important to any community program. Consider administering a survey, holding a focus group, or facilitating community conversations to learn how helpful the program has been, how it can be improved, and what other resources or support community members would find useful. Consider forming an advisory group or ongoing community conversations so that you can hear from people throughout the life cycle of the project. Modify the

program based on what you hear from the community. Be transparent with the community you are serving by letting them know:

- How you've taken their feedback into account
- How you've followed through on the support you promised
- Efforts that are still in progress
- How you plan to modify/improve the program
- Ways that they can share their feedback or follow up with you

APPENDIX

Bringing TDM Solutions to Communities of Diversity

Northeast Transportation Connections

Angie Rivera-Malpiede
Eric Herbst
Jesse Livingston
Karly Andrus
Kenneth Boden
Lacey Champion
Tricia Stevens

1/30/2019

Introduction

Transportation demand management (TDM) solutions are becoming increasingly important as city planning evolves to accommodate the needs and desires of a less car-centric culture. Instead of spending millions to increase capacity, cities that manage demand can build more cost-effective infrastructure, improve public health, lower environmental impacts, and create more connected and sustainable communities.

TDM covers a wide range of issues that include biking infrastructure, pedestrian safety and mobility, accessible and affordable public transit, car- and vanpool networks, parking solutions, shuttle services, active traffic management, roadspace reallocation, telework plans, and first/last-mile connections. These issues take unique forms in each community, and as such they must be approached with flexible strategies driven by the community itself. Effective change can only be achieved by ongoing interactions with community members in which we listen to them describe the mobility challenges they face as well as the viability of proposed solutions.

This necessity for informed planning comes with its own set of challenges and complications. Sensitivity to cultural norms, overcoming language barriers, gaining trust, and developing relationships with key community leaders are just a few of the steps that must be taken in order to conduct successful outreach to diverse communities that comprise a range of ethnic groups, age brackets, and income levels. This paper will summarize the important questions that must be asked when approaching TDM in communities of diversity. It will advocate for development led by community members at a grassroots level and outline successful strategies gathered from the work of Northeast Transportation Connections in the neighborhoods of northeast Denver.

Northeast Transportation Connections

Northeast Transportation Connections (NETC) is a transportation management association (TMA) serving the northeast Denver region. There are currently about 150 TMAs in the United States. Each works with federal, state, and local governments as well as a variety of public and private organizations to provide TDM solutions to their areas of service.

In 2017, NETC entered into a contract with the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) to provide TDM to communities affected by the Central 70 project — a refurbishment and expansion of Interstate 70, running through the Globeville, Elyria Swansea, Northeast Park Hill, Stapleton, and Montbello neighborhoods of northeast Denver. These neighborhoods include historically underserved populations with some of the most culturally diverse and lowest-income demographics in the Denver metro area. The already troublesome mobility challenges in this region threatened to become severe as highway construction and roadway detours began, and they have been compounded by both private and city development occurring at the same time in the same limited space. Add to this a lack of infrastructure updates spanning multiple decades and the situation begins to look like a perfect storm, prompting the need for innovative programs to address a wide variety of issues in each neighborhood.

One of the first such partnerships between a TMA and a DOT in the nation's history, this outreach effort provides an extraordinary opportunity to study the viability and efficacy of TDM programs aimed at communities of diversity affected by a major construction project. However, the lessons of NETC's ongoing work in these communities need not apply only to this type of scenario; rather, they point to universal issues endemic to such populations and can provide a model for TDM outreach conducted in similar communities across the world.

Effective Outreach Strategies

The most crucial step in successful outreach to underserved communities of diversity must be to speak personally with community members in order to hear their concerns and ask for their input on the types of programs they feel would be useful to them in their daily lives. As simple as this process may seem, it is overlooked time and again by organizations attempting to help diverse populations. Determining ahead of time which programs to institute in a particular community often wastes both time and money, as these programs are apt to falter due to lack of community buy-in or simply a misapprehension of what is and isn't needed in a particular region.

The inverse of this problem is also true in many cases: When we assume there is a mode of transportation a community will not use, it is often due to cultural stereotypes and generalizations about the lives of low-income residents. For example, the recent introduction of dockless scooter-share services such as Bird, Lime, and Razor into major cities would at first glance appear to be a luxury activity for well-to-do citizens; however, NETC found that residents of the Globeville and Elyria Swansea neighborhoods were eager to try the scooters and expressed dissatisfaction that their communities seemed to have been omitted from the initial roll-out.

The assumption that because poor people don't have credit cards they must therefore be unable to participate in scooter sharing, bike sharing, or similar services fails to take into account a basic fact of current technology: 77% of Americans now own smartphones, according to the Pew Research Center. This number is up from just 35% in Pew's first survey of smartphone ownership conducted in 2011.[1] Smartphones are now affordable across all income levels, and they can be easily linked to a bank account through sharing apps, obviating the need for a credit card. However, we shouldn't assume that everyone will be willing to provide their personal details to such apps; some will have concerns about immigration status or other issues. There are often no easy answers to the "digital divide" that can lead so easily to discriminatory services and programs. We must listen to community members, avoid generalizing about what will work for a certain population, and sometimes provide multiple programs to address the same issue. Diverse communities require diverse solutions.

---

[1] Pew Research Center: http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheet/mobile/

Gaining Trust

Gaining the trust of a community is not easy. It can often feel as though we are not making progress in implementing our programs, but we may in fact be slowly building trust that will eventually allow these programs to succeed. In building trust, it is important to maintain a respectful, open, and reliable presence. We must show up to meetings and listen instead of talking. If we advertise that we will be available to community members at a certain time and place, we must be there and stay for the whole time allotted, even if attendance is low or nonexistent.

In historically underserved communities, residents are usually not inclined to take advantage of programs or services because they fundamentally do not believe the organizations providing them have their best interests at heart. They have been burned before and are hesitant to give it a second, third, or fourth chance. We can anticipate that when we initiate a program people will be slow to adopt it. It will take time to prove that our efforts are sincere. For example, in the neighborhoods affected by Central 70, NETC did not simply roll out a monthly transit pass program; staff first attended events and gave out free day passes so that residents could see first-hand their willingness to follow through on the promises of assistance they had made. Initially, registration for the free monthly passes hovered at around 10-15 participants, but word of mouth soon spread to their neighbors, and the program became trusted and utilized. Currently about 60 people receive passes each month. The process of gaining trust and launching the program spanned the entire first year of NETC's outreach work in this community.

NETC's outreach to employers and employees in the region encountered a much higher willingness to try proposed solutions, but it came with its own set of challenges. Face-to-face meetings with employees proved the most successful strategy. Mailers sent to local businesses were useful in setting up initial meetings, but their overall effectiveness was difficult to gauge. Alsco—a linen rental and workwear company—offered NETC staff the most access to individual employees, setting up monthly meetings which employees were encouraged to attend. This resulted in a high rate of participation in NETC's programs. Because they received tangible benefits such as free transit passes or money for carpooling, employees eagerly awaited these meetings and readily engaged with NETC staff. At businesses where such in-person access was limited, participation was significantly lower.

Partnering with organizations that are already trusted in the community can go a long way toward establishing credibility and raising participation. Acting as gatekeepers and reliable sources of information, these partners can help new programs gain a foothold much more quickly than would otherwise be possible. Community members themselves can also be ambassadors to the larger population, vouching for the sincerity and utility of outreach efforts.

With technological, social, and political factors constantly changing, it is vital to solicit input from community members in order to gain a current understanding of transportation issues specific to their lives. Often this requires speaking to them in person, as this will provide information and insight that might be missed by surveys alone. Such personal communication will allow for informed program development that is effective, appealing to the target users, and sensitive to their cultural norms.

Cultural Sensitivity

The average American now spends 40% of their income on housing and transportation.[2] In the Denver region, the average is 50%.[3] How does one navigate this reality if one makes $12,000 a year? Affordable transportation programs are essential to those living below the poverty line. However, these programs are frequently underused despite their clear benefit to the community.

For instance, in working with low-income Denver neighborhoods that have a majority Hispanic population, NETC has encountered a perception that "trains are for rich white people"—a sentiment clearly at odds with rail usage in major cities like Chicago and New York and therefore not a deeply rooted cultural prejudice. This reluctance to use Denver's rail network is the product of several factors, one certainly being the lack of first/last-mile connectivity to rail stations in these neighborhoods. However, it is important to note that the light rail and commuter rail systems in Denver have not been effectively marketed to Spanish-speakers, resulting in very little impetus for cultural change; nor have low-income residents historically been offered an affordable transit pass, Denver being near the top of the list of mid-sized U.S. cities with least affordable public transit.[4] A low-income fare program was instituted very recently by Denver's Regional Transportation District (RTD), but the results have yet to be evaluated.

Translation

The essential fact here is that diverse populations most likely cannot use a service if they haven't been informed about it in their native language. A lack of properly translated promotional materials can easily lead to a misunderstanding of how to use the service or whether the service is accessible to a particular community. In some cases, a community may even be completely unaware of the existence of a service, as NETC found to be the case with a shuttle program in the Globeville neighborhood.

One of the main requests NETC staff received when asking residents which programs or services would be most beneficial to them during the Central 70 construction was for a community shuttle to local grocery stores. Located in a food desert, Globeville residents without access to a car must attempt to use the bus, and they often have trouble getting back home with all of their shopping bags. The surprising fact in this situation was that a community shuttle already existed in this neighborhood, but residents didn't know about it due to a lack of marketing. Using Spanish-language flyers delivered by the Postal Service's Every Door Direct Mail service to all homes in the Globeville zip code, NETC was able to revive the shuttle program, picking up residents at various spots in the neighborhood and then dropping them at their front doors with their groceries.

---

[2] Bureau of Labor Statistics: https://www.bls.gov/news.release/cesan.nr0.htm
[3] Bureau of Labor Statistics: https://www.bls.gov/regions/mountain-plains/summary/blssummary_denver.pdf
[4] ValuePenguin survey: https://www.valuepenguin.com/most-and-least-affordable-cities-commuting

In order to run successful programs in an ethnically diverse community, a thorough survey must be made of all languages spoken in that community. In an area as small as 10 square miles, Denver residents speak many languages, including Spanish, English, French, Karen, Amharic, Burmese, Somali, Maay, Japanese, Mandarin, and Vietnamese. Each language must be evaluated separately to determine the percentage of monolingual speakers and the resulting need for translated materials.

In conducting outreach to employees of local businesses who spoke Karen (a language group from the Myanmar region), NETC encountered issues of literacy. Not only was this population largely non-English-speaking, some had difficulty reading materials in their native tongue. Brochures printed in Karen provoked interest but sometimes caused confusion. Of course in a situation where outreach staff do not read or speak the target language, it can be difficult to determine whether the confusion stems from lack of literacy or from improper translation and colloquial misunderstandings. Languages are sometimes written less formally and more phonetically by native speakers, in which case a "perfect" translation may actually be more difficult to parse.

Decisions about verbal translation often must be made on the fly during meetings. In a situation where employees are puzzled by the information being offered, the best solution is to request assistance from the group. Finding an employee whose English is good and asking them to help translate can overcome many difficulties, as they will most likely speak the target language in the same dialect and using the same idioms as their coworkers. Gauging the success of translation is not easy, but keeping an eye on who is and is not engaged with a presentation in a particular room can serve as a guide. Stopping to ask whether certain members of the group are having trouble understanding the presentation is never a waste of time and will pay dividends in program participation.

Not every word associated with TDM will have a culturally recognized equivalent. For instance, when attempting to translate the words "shuttle bus" into Spanish, NETC found that many residents did not understand the term because shuttle buses are not commonplace in Latin America. The most literal translation of the word — "lanzadera" — was actually understood to mean "space shuttle," a fact which would not be immediately apparent from cursory research. NETC consulted with multiple translators, but ultimately it was the community members themselves who provided the word most likely to be recognized: "camioncito," meaning "small truck" or "small van." On the surface this would seem like an inaccurate translation; however, the word had already been adopted by the Spanish-speaking community in this region as a result of their previous experience with shuttle services that employed vans.

Translations must also be attuned to particular words or phrases that could be culturally insensitive. In the best case, these can be viewed as ridiculous, and in the worst case as offensive. Cultural norms often go hand-in-hand with terminology.

Cultural Norms

When evaluating the potential community buy-in for a particular program, other cultural factors besides language must be taken into account. It is important to consult with

representatives from the community to gain a sense of the values, taboos, and etiquette of each culture whose members may use the program. Often there may be hidden factors that could keep the program from catching on, and this community expertise can help uncover them.

When setting up a carpool network for employees along the I-70 corridor, NETC learned that many Hispanic women were driven to and from work every day by their husbands. Driving with strangers was frowned upon, considered both unseemly and unsafe. By introducing these women and their husbands to each other, NETC was able to build trust and form carpools that would not otherwise have been possible.

Offering financial incentives can also go a long way toward overcoming cultural barriers, as economic necessity is often the bottom line for struggling families. As long as we listen and do not try to force anyone to do something they aren't comfortable with, these types of issues can sometimes work themselves out.

Populations do tend to self-segregate, which can present a problem for TDM implementation. People naturally and understandably want to be with people who are like them, whose values and experiences they share. In a perfect world, we would be able to form multi-ethnic carpools to businesses in close proximity to one another; however, issues of class can also impede these types of programs. Employees may not feel comfortable riding with someone they perceive as being of lower or higher economic status due to a lack of familiarity with that person's life experience. Again, these should not be viewed as insurmountable obstacles but rather as challenges to be overcome with listening and communication.

Cultural norms also affect outreach through media. Each community has specific T.V. and radio stations they prefer, as well as local newsletters and magazines they read. To effectively reach a specific population, these outlets must be understood and utilized. Direct in-person or door-to-door outreach is frequently the most successful, but it isn't always possible to speak to every resident in a neighborhood or every employee in a business district. A wide range of people can be contacted through a careful selection of media outlets. It can be tricky to determine which ones to use, but this issue can usually be cleared up by talking to community leaders and members of city or ward councils who know their districts/wards inside and out.

Identifying Community Leaders

Connecting at a grassroots level is often the only truly successful strategy when working with culturally diverse communities. And yet, a large percentage of the population simply may not have enough time in a given day for an in-depth conversation about transportation issues. Those living and working below the poverty line have more pressing concerns, such as getting their kids to school or to the doctor, getting themselves to work or to the grocery store, and finding time to socialize and strengthen the bonds that keep their community together. Whether or not their morning bus is on time is usually more important to them than an abstract discussion of possible future improvements.

Add to this the fact that many communities harbor an entirely justified mistrust of those who would come in from outside and tell them how they should be living. In our experience, as well-intentioned as most TMAs, nonprofits, and community development organizations are, the majority do not allow their development to be led by community members, and therefore they have a tendency to exhaust the trust and patience of those they are attempting to help by forcing uninformed solutions on already overworked and marginalized people.

It is a mistake to assume that those living in poverty are less willing or able to understand broader issues of city planning. They may have significant knowledge of these issues and care a great deal about them, but they may not have the mental bandwidth to fully engage with them on a daily basis. Coming to an occasional community meeting is often the extent of involvement they can manage.

This is where community leaders come in. Engaging with key people who have influence in a particular cultural group is invaluable to the overall achievement of TDM goals. These are often elders, tribal leaders, or religious figures such as pastors. In northeast Denver, a group of *comadres* ("co-mothers," or female elders) formed a group called the GES Coalition, employing residents as neighborhood block captains. NETC staff consulted with the Coalition about the implementation of new programs and found that the programs began to market themselves. Residents started recommending them to their neighbors, even going so far as to put flyers in their neighbors' mailboxes on their own initiative.

The Coalition later approached NETC to ask about mobility during the Central 70 construction, and staff were able to set up a meeting with CDOT to address their concerns. NETC also gave CDOT boots-on-the-ground information about the most commonly used walking, biking, and driving paths through affected neighborhoods so that construction crews could avoid blocking them. This back-and-forth between community leaders and NETC staff led to a working relationship that benefited all parties involved.

In conducting employer/employee outreach along the I-70 corridor, NETC was able to join forces with business associations such as Globeville Civic Partners and the Elyria-Swansea-Globeville Business Association. These local stakeholders already possessed an informed and engaged audience, offering to include NETC outreach information in periodic email blasts to their mailing lists.

Such partnerships can be invaluable when considering sustainability of programs and economies of scale. One organization cannot do everything, and a particular outreach project may have a limited time-frame. Keeping abreast of the work being done by other groups in the region can lead to an extended lifetime for TDM programs. In terms of managing one's own time and resources, it is also helpful to be able to steer interested community members to a partner organization doing more specialized work that can better address their needs.

Political Neutrality

Employers themselves can be considered community leaders, as they are the gatekeepers for the flow of information to their employees. In approaching businesses that would be affected by Central 70 construction, NETC staff sometimes encountered misdirected anger about the

project from business owners who assumed that NETC was synonymous with CDOT and must therefore bear responsibility for the confusion and disruption they were experiencing.

This is where we find one of the most important TDM strategies for outreach to historically underserved communities. Staying politically neutral in regard to the work of DOTs, city governments, private contractors, and other groups can mean life or death for an outreach project. If community members perceive an organization to be on one side of a particular issue, this could well determine the entirety of their opinion about that organization. Because organizations doing TDM work are most often coming into affected communities from the outside, they are more likely to be perceived as adversarial to community interests no matter how useful their programs may be. Members of underserved communities tend to see all outside forces as a unified and uncaring horde of unkept promises and daily humiliations. They have no inclination to distinguish one outsider from another unless they are given reason to. Once we make it clear that we are there to serve rather than to judge or to burden, doors will open to a surprising extent.

In the case of northeast Denver employers, NETC heard many similar messages: "The city does not care about me or communicate with me." "Everything is being rezoned without regard for my business." "Developers are putting my property taxes through the roof." Through consistent conversations, staff was able to explain to business owners that NETC was an independent organization using DOT funds purely to provide services that would help ameliorate the effects of construction. Once this was established, the situation was diffused to the point where employers were eager for assistance and happy to start broadcasting outreach information to their employees.

When all a commuter or resident knows is that they can't get on or off the highway where they used to be able to, shoe-leather diplomacy goes a long way. We must listen and not discount their concerns, making it clear that we are there to meet their needs no matter which way the political wind may blow. An attitude of humility and service is essential to successful work under such conditions.

Flexible Programming

Once the need for a particular program has been determined, community buy-in has been established, and the program has been launched, the most important element to reckon with is flexibility. A program cannot live on the strength of its merits; rather, it must constantly adjust to changing expectations and logistical factors.

Talking to community members to determine what will or won't work is just the first step. This dialogue must be maintained, because there may be obstacles that even community members themselves do not anticipate. Leaders can sometimes overestimate community buy-in. Community members may not fully understand how a program will operate until they experience it first-hand. A program tailored to a current set of circumstances may become obsolete when something in these circumstances changes, even something small.

In some cases, community members may ask for a particular program that they do not end up using for one reason or another. Having initiated and operated multiple shuttles in the northeast Denver region, NETC found that some of the shuttle routes had extremely low or nonexistent ridership and therefore had to be canceled. This is an example of flexible programming in action. A service that does not catch on or turns out not to be viable should not be viewed as a failure; instead, it should be seen as an intermediate step in the process of crafting a successful version that will address evolving needs.

In other cases, an unanticipated need may arise from the implementation of a program. In launching a transit pass program for neighborhoods affected by Central 70, NETC partnered with Denver's regional transit authority, RTD, to offer free monthly passes to residents who income qualified. Many residents did not income qualify, but they expressed a need to use transit for occasional trips such as doctor visits. As a result, NETC began giving out day passes in addition to the monthly passes.

Programs must be kept fluid based primarily on community input. Modeling an idea is all well and good, but ideas tend to be rigid and limited to the circumstances perceived at their inception. As a result, we often begin the process of development from a relatively narrow scope that views particular goals as paramount when they are actually no more than points in a larger picture, moments in a larger time-frame. To a person with a hammer, everything looks like a nail. We must keep our eyes and ears open in order to learn the true placement of the nails; then we may design a hammer best suited to the situation.

Of course limited resources can be a challenge in testing many iterations of a program, but this only highlights the need for consistent contact with the target community, making sure resources are not being wasted. For instance, NETC established an "activity shuttle" that offered local families the chance to take their kids to free days at the Denver Zoo, the Museum of Nature and Science, and other cultural amenities. Parents requested the shuttle because they wanted to give their kids the opportunity to get out of the neighborhood and participate in these free programs, but they did not have the transportation resources to get them there. Despite this anticipated need, the activity shuttle saw very low ridership after several months of operation. NETC retooled the program, offering the shuttle vans to neighborhood organizations trying to find transportation for their own field trips. The GES Coalition used one of the vans for eight weeks to bring kids to a free summer camp, an opportunity of which they had been unable to take advantage due to lack of transportation. Another community partner, the Valdez-Perry Library, took kids to the Denver Zoo, a Family Fun Center, and downtown for a holiday craft fair and book reading. In this way, a program that saw very low participation was transformed into a highly successful program by listening to the needs of the community.

In the realm of business outreach, NETC may almost appear to have metamorphosed into an entirely different organization in the space of a year's work. This has been due to engaging with people on their terms and changing expectations radically based on their feedback. Both major and minor tweaks to programs have been necessary, as even nominally successful ones aren't successful for every workplace. If an outreach effort does not hit the sweet spot for a particular work culture, it must be adjusted, often depending on the size of the workforce. Larger companies tend to have less individual access to their employees, resulting in lower program

participation. Some businesses are excited about programs but have been unable to implement them in their current form. At RK Mechanical—a large construction and manufacturing company—an RTD FlexPass initiative was found to be too laborious for HR managers to handle effectively. NETC altered the program so that the employees were required to do most of the work to participate, and results were more favorable.

Consulting with the Community

If the heart of flexible programming is soliciting input from community members, then there is one more aspect to the process that is absolutely essential: We must meet with them during times that are convenient to their daily schedules. Office hours and community meetings must be held at times of day and on days of the week when the maximum number of participants will be available—be it morning, noon, or night. Legitimate communication cannot take place when only a handful of people have been contacted. NETC holds office hours at times of day and in locations where the community is already gathered. These include pickup times at local schools and hours when nonprofits such as Elyria Swansea's The GrowHaus offer free food to residents.

In the same vein, it is crucial to hold several meetings about a particular program during the design phase. Participants who cannot make it to one meeting may be able to attend a subsequent one. If low turnout continues to be an issue, surveys can be a useful tool to collect information and opinions. However, these should be used sparingly in communities that are being targeted by multiple organizations at once. Working in the region affected by Central 70 construction, where many groups were attempting to gather data for potential development, NETC found "survey fatigue" to be a real issue. As with other facets of the process, community members have limited time and bandwidth for answering lists of questions. As a result, it is a good idea to keep surveys as short as possible.

Meeting fatigue can also be a problem. In some overexposed neighborhoods, even the classic offer of free food will not attract residents to a meeting. NETC has approached this problem by hiring trusted community members to assist with programs. When designing a Walking School Bus initiative in which groups of children walk to school under the supervision of an adult, NETC staff hired local mothers to talk to their neighbors, gather input, and assess want and needs. Sending mailers directly to homes is another effective strategy, as it does not require residents to go anywhere or do anything in order to obtain information. Text message mailing lists can also be a low-commitment alternative, although some community members may not want to give out their phone numbers or may have cell phone plans that charge them per text.

Surveys can be easier to implement when working with employers, as they have the clout to ensure employee participation. At Alsco, one of NETC's strongest company partnerships, NETC staff receives monthly feedback from employees; this is, however, a best-case scenario. In the instance of NETC's Try Transit program, staff never meet participants face-to-face and must survey them to find out if they are using the free transit passes provided and whether / how often they continue to use public transit after leaving the program. Staff also send out emails asking if participants would mind tracking their commutes on My Way to Go, a trip-tracking website operated by the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG). This is a labor-

intensive process, but it is appropriate for the circumstances in order to solicit useful data. Some populations are simply more difficult to connect with.

Feedback about programs runs the gamut from great success to lessons learned, and we should never be afraid of it. If we develop a wide range of programs to address the expressed needs of a community, then the community will tell us which ones to focus on, which ones to adjust, and which ones to abandon. TDM is not an exact science; it must mutate to fit the form of each region. As such, we are not the owners of the programs we develop. We are merely the stewards of these projects until they gain enough support and engagement to flourish on their own.

Conclusion

When we initiate development in culturally and economically diverse communities, we must ask several questions, including: What will outreach look like? Who are programs for? Who will actually use them? How will they be executed? How will they be evaluated?

The best way to answer these questions meaningfully is through communication. Working in a bubble of ideas and intentions that is disconnected from reality does no one any good. It wastes resources and time, and it fails in its basic purpose: to help those in need. If we want to understand these needs and figure out how to address them, we must listen and learn from the people who experience them every day. They are the best source of data and often the best source of ideas for programs that will create lasting change.

This communication can only be facilitated by meeting communities on their own terms. We must speak to community members when it is convenient for them, and we must contact them in their native language, translating outreach materials with their help and utilizing the media outlets they prefer. We must seek out community leaders and ask their advice in order to fashion programs that will be sensitive to cultural norms. We should never make assumptions about what a community will or won't find useful. We should ignore stereotypes about cultural groups or those living in poverty, and we should treat them as the best source of information and ideas to address their needs. Lastly, we must ensure that our solutions are flexible, constantly evaluating them with community input to verify their viability.

Successful development led by community members can only occur when we start from a position of openness and collaboration. Listening and learning are the cornerstones of effective transportation demand management in communities of diversity, and there are a multitude of successful strategies waiting to be discovered if we begin our search by asking for their diverse perspectives.

ODOT Writing Style Guide

Contents

The ODOT Style

If you are taking time to write something, shouldn't you *write so they'll understand*? That's our goal with this guide: to help you create written materials that your reader will be able to understand.

This guide presents **requirements you must follow** when you are creating **material aimed at the public**. This includes introductory sections, such as an "overview" or an "executive summary," that are part of technical, legal and other materials that may not otherwise fall under the plain language law.

Plain Language

Plain language is required by law in Oregon. If you are creating *material aimed at the public,* you must follow plain language rules!

This can be summarized as using:

- **Simple, everyday words.** This includes avoiding the use of too many words, staying away from jargon and avoiding alphabet soup (acronyms!).
- **Short sentences and paragraphs** limited to one topic.
- **Active voice** instead of passive voice.
- **First person** instead of third person. Use "we" and "you."
- **Effective formatting.** Make your page easy to read. Good graphic design and layout makes understanding easier.
- **Proper grammar and punctuation** that avoids common errors.
- **Easy-to-understand project terms.** We have a cheat sheet to help you convert those technical terms to layperson terms.

Let's look at these in more detail.

Keep It Simple

Plain language is aimed at helping people understand what you are saying. When complex material is turned into material people do understand, studies show readers think the writer (you!) is smarter than when they're presented with material they can't understand.

This goes against the belief that plain language "dumbs down" your work; in fact, it's the opposite.

- Use simple, clear words and omit needless words. In other words, don't be wordy! Use tools in MS Word to see if your writing is easy to understand.
- Acronym usage: AVOID ALPHABET SOUP! Spell out; acronyms are only okay when the acronym is universally known, such as DMV.

Example

Don't: Additionally, using a replacement cost methodology to ascertain the value of major assets can be an effective tool in communicating and demonstrating the efficacy of lower-cost investments such as maintenance and preservation that prolong an asset's life versus high cost replacements that are accelerated by allowing an asset's condition to degrade. (0.0 on the Flesch Reading Ease of scale: higher scores, up to 100, are better.)

Do: We can also look at how much it costs to replace a major asset, such as a bridge. When we do that, we see how much more efficient it is to maintain the asset than to replace it. These maintenance efforts can allow us to use the asset longer and keep it in better shape so that when it is time to replace it, it won't be as expensive. (75.5)

How to

Know your audience. Start by thinking of your audience, and use words they understand.

Avoid:

- Words you have to define. If you think the audience won't know what you mean, it's time for some plain language.
- Acronyms. Spell it out instead. Avoid alphabet soup.
- Jargon! Find an easier way to explain something. Example: Instead of "aggregate" use "gravel."

Use built-in tools. Use the Flesch Reading Ease (higher is better) and Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level (lower is better) scales in Word. Look under the *Review* tab and then *Spelling & Grammar.*

Use a cheat sheet. Think about the power of the words you choose. Your initial choice might be just perfect, but here are some examples of words that might be simplified to increase readability. These are just a few; perhaps you can create your own tool with the words you use often

Shorter is Better

Keep your sentences short. Keep your paragraphs to one idea.

Short sentences increase the ability for someone to understand your meaning. Short sentences also improve your ease of reading ratings!

Paragraphs that only cover one topic – and thus, don't run too long – keep your reader engaged. You'll lose them quickly with long sentences and long paragraphs: shorter is better.

Before: The purpose of this project is to identify ways to keep local residents, long-distance travelers and freight moving while providing a reliable alternate route to U.S. 101, given expected land use development patterns for the area under consideration.

After: This project will identify safe, reliable alternatives to U.S. 101. Future growth in the area will make it more difficult to travel this route, so we need to identify options now.

Before: Risk management focuses on the identification, evaluation and prioritization of threats to transportation assets, followed by the commitment of appropriate resources to monitor them, address challenges and threats they may present, and maximize potential beneficial opportunities created by uncertainty.

After: Risk management focuses on evaluating threats to transportation assets and being prepared to respond to those threats. When we respond, we want to...

How to Do It

If you have three or more commas in a sentence, you may need to break the sentence into smaller parts.

A paragraph can be one sentence. It must be just one sentence if you are changing topics!

Go Active (Not Passive)

Avoid using passive voice in your writing. Passive sentences often do not identify who is performing the action, and they often obscure who is responsible.

What is active voice?

In an active voice sentence, the person or agency that's acting is the subject of the sentence. "You must complete the form."

What is passive voice?

In a passive voice sentence, the person or item being acted upon is the subject of the sentence. "The form must be completed."

A sentence in the active voice says who does what to whom. HINT on passive voice: If you can add "…by zombies" at the end of sentence, it's most likely passive.

> **Don't:** The issue in the plate distribution system is being resolved. (By whom?!)

> **Do:** We are resolving the issue in the plate distribution system.

Active voice combined with present tense make your writing clear and direct. But don't fret over tense; turning your sentence into one with active voice is more important – especially in government. Why? Because passive voice often hides who is responsible! Active voice helps us be transparent.

> **Don't:** Guardrail installation, curve straightening and roadside debris removal are being done as part of this project.

> **Do:** We are installing guardrail, straightening the curve and removing trash as part of this project.

Examples:

> **Passive:** New regulations were proposed.

> **Active:** The federal government proposed new regulations.

In a few cases, passive voice may be appropriate.

For example, you can use passive when you don't care or it doesn't matter who is doing the action!

- "Baby Sophia was delivered at 3:30 a.m. yesterday."

Also, you can use passive when there are multiple actors.

- "If you don't pay your royalty fee, your privileges will be revoked."

In the example below, all the passive voice constructions are underlined. Turn them around and make them active!

It was determined during the meeting that a unified theme and objectives need to be established. The action was taken to meet with Jim Smith to finalize the objectives, and expected outcomes were discussed for the event.

We Love First Person

Using pronouns instead of proper nouns pulls readers into the copy. It helps them relate to it, because it's more personal.

> **Okay:** The Oregon Department of Transportation values safety as its number one mission, and the department encourages citizens to write in about their safety needs.

> **Better:** We value safety as our number one mission, and we encourage you to write in about your safety needs.

When you are explaining a process or making a request, using first person helps your reader understand what you are saying. It also increases the "friendliness" of your document by referring to your reader with you, we, our, your, ours, yours, etc., and we can almost always use that assistance in communicating with our customers!

Noun/Proper Noun:	Instead, use pronoun:
The Oregon Department of Transportation	We
The addressee, the above named	You
ODOT's mission…	Our mission…

Example

> **Before:** The Oregon Department of Transportation has developed an updated planning level Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund Formula Fund allocation estimate. The estimate will assist Qualified Entities with developing a prioritized list of transit improvements for submittal to ODOT later this year. It also assists QEs with developing sub-allocation estimates as a starting point for the entity's local decision-making.

> **After:** Our team has been working hard to develop an updated planning level Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund Formula Fund estimate. This estimated amount will help you develop a prioritized list of transit improvements for submitting to us later this year. It will also help you develop sub-allocation estimates as a starting point for your local decision-making.

Possible exceptions: Don't use the familiar "you" and "we" (us, our, your, etc.) in:

- Testimony writing
- Legal notices

Use Effective Design and Formatting

There are industry-wide best practices for making documents easier to read and understand. Here are some of the most effective.

White Space

White space makes a document more visually appealing. Use it!

- Don't make a page all copy if you can avoid it. Add a graph, photo or table help to break up the text.
- When you have a ton of copy, writing across the whole page reduces readability. Can you use columns or reduce the margins?
- Text that is left justified is easiest to read. Avoid full pages of force justified text.

Font

Font size needs to be big enough for older populations to read, but because we are required to make all of our documents accessible if requested, you don't have to go too big on font size. In fact, too big makes it less readable.

- In most font styles, 10-12 point is large enough.

Serif fonts (Palatino, Century Schoolbook) are the most readable text. Sans serif fonts (Arial, Helvetica) are good for headlines and documents that will be printed from the web.

Other

- Use **examples** to illustrate, if appropriate ("show" vs "tell").
- Use **bullets** to help increase readability.
- Use **tables** to make complex material easier to understand.

Avoid Common Errors

Grammar

Use complete sentences. A complete sentence must contain at least a subject (noun or pronoun) and a verb (action word).

> **Exceptions:** Question words (Why?) and commands (Go!) are complete sentences, because the subject and verb are unwritten but implied. If they were written out completely, they might be:
>
> - Why did you do that? ("You" and "did" are the implied subject and verb.)
> - You go over there. ("You" is the implied subject.)

Make sure your subject and verb agree. This means that the subject and verb agree in number. They both need to be singular or both need to be plural.

> **Wrong:** Our staff are heading to Washington.
>
> **Right:** Our staff is heading to Washington.
>
> **Also right:** Our staff members are heading to Washington.

Beware of dangling modifiers and incomplete sentences. A dangling modifier is a word or phrase that modifies a word not clearly stated in the sentence. A modifier describes, clarifies, or gives more detail about a concept.

> **Wrong:** As ODOT's key facility for incident response, managers of the Operations Centers are important. (The managers are not the key facility for incident response.)
>
> **Right:** As ODOT's key facility for incident response, our Operations Centers are vital. Managers play in important role.
>
> **Also right:** Our Operations Centers are key in incident response. That's why managers of these centers are so important.

Commonly Misspelled and Misused Words

Use our cheat sheet to avoid using words that are spelled correctly but are actually the wrong word, such as accept/except, dessert/desert, effect/affect, insure/ensure, Capitol/capital, who/whom, which/that, lie/lay, etc.

Punctuation

Be careful of comma placement. It can drastically affect your meaning!

- When it comes to eating people, differ in their tastes.
- When it comes to eating, people differ in their tastes.

Quotation marks usually go outside your punctuation marks (periods, exclamation points, question marks, commas), even if you "disagree!"

Apostrophes show possession or join two small words.

- Use an apostrophe + s ('s) to show that one person/thing owns or is a member of something.
- Use an apostrophe after the "s" at the end of a plural noun to show possession.

Capitalization

- Capitalize the first word of a sentence.
- Capitalize names and other proper nouns.

That's it! Do not capitalize improper nouns, such as manager, section, branch, etc.

> **Wrong:** ODOT is a multimodal agency. The Department has six Divisions.

> **Right:** ODOT is a multimodal agency. The department has six divisions.

Simplify Project Terms

We keep an updated cheat sheet of plain language terms that can be used to describe projects in online and printed publications and materials. This is not a thorough list. Share with us your favorite or most-used, and we'll add them to the list.

Our Style Preference

"Style" refers to many parts of speech that can be used correctly but differently – for example, whether or not you put a period at the end of items in a bulleted list. It's grammatically correct either way; it's just a matter of style. And depending on which style guide you use, you'll do it one way or another.

Consistency is the goal. When we're consistent in our communication, it helps the agency reach its goals. Our Communications Section uses the Associated Press, or AP Style Guide as our standard for print or electronic publications produced for the public. AP Style uses commonly accepted journalistic standards for usage, spelling, grammar and punctuation. It is also the standard style guide for most U.S. newspapers, magazines and public relations firms, so it is widely accepted and easy to understand. There are many other style guides available, but we strive for consistency. If your material is aimed at the public, it should follow the ODOT style.

All Communications Section employees have access to an online AP Stylebook. Feel free to ask your Communications Section representative your style question. (Some staff in community affairs and project information positions have access, as well.)

Common ODOT Situations

We've created an alphabetical listing of common questions and errors that we see here at ODOT. The list is updated on our intranet.

Our Tools

We have tools available to help. Using them makes your life easier and helps you ensure that your written materials get to the right people and represent ODOT in the best light.

GovDelivery

GovDelivery is our email distribution tool. It is used for communicating ODOT news and information to customers and stakeholders. We do not use it to send out messages on behalf of other organizations unless there is an ongoing partnership with that organization and the information in the message is related to ODOT's mission.

Link to GovDelivery User Guide.

Templates

Don't reinvent the wheel. Use one of our predesigned templates for your most common tasks.

The ODOT Look

We have a "look," and it's important that we stick to it, so the public can recognize what comes from us. Our publications and materials should be consistent and professional.

All employees, contractors and consultants who generate publications are expected to follow the guidelines in our Brand and Publications manual and use our templates. The guidelines ensure a consistent voice from all of ODOT, across the state.

And are you using photo in your materials? Your first choice should always be ODOT-produced images. Check out our Flickr Photo Library for a huge collection.

Safe Routes to School Phrases

- ABC Quick Check // ABC Chequeo Rapido
- Cocoa for Carpools // Chocolate caliente para viajes compartidos
- Contact Us // Contáctenos
- Cross with caution // Cruzar con cuidado
- Drive 20 mph or less in school zones. // Maneje a 20 mph o menos en las zonas escolares.
- Drive Safely. The Way to Go. // Maneje Seguro. Como Debe Ser.
- Drive with Caution, Kids in Motion // Maneje con precaución, niños en movimiento
- Feet First Fridays // Viernes de Pies Primero
- For more information, please contact…// Para más información, por favor contactar...
- Go Slow, Share the Street // Vaya despacio, comparta la calle
- Golden Sneaker Competition/Contest // Concurso del Tenis Dorado
- Grab a jacket and pull on your boots. // Agarra una chaqueta y ponte sus botas.
- Grab your helmet. Hop on your wheels! // Agarra tu casco. ¡Súbete a tus ruedas!
- Green your trip to school! // ¡Haz que tu viaje a la escuela sea verde!
- Look out for Kids! Drive Safely. // ¡Ojo con los niños! Maneje con cuidado.
- Mindfulness Monday // Lunes de Conciencia Plena
- More Feet on the Street // Más pies en la calle.
- School Routes are Everywhere. Drive Like It. // Las rutas escolares están en todas partes. Maneje como debe ser.
- School's in. Watch out for kids. // La escuela ya empezó. Cuidado con los niños.
- Share the road. The Way to Go. // Comparta la calle. Como Debe Ser.
- School Streets, Safe Streets // Calles escolares, calles seguras
- The first step to pedestrian safety is yours; Be alert when you walk! // El primer paso hacia la seguridad de los peatones es suyo; ¡Esté alerta cuando camina!
- Take our survey // Responda nuestra encuesta
- Walk and Bike with your family while social distancing.// Camine y ande en bicicleta con su familia mientras practica el alejamiento social.
- Walk+Roll to school // Caminar + Rodar a la escuela
- Walk+Roll to school day // Dia de Caminar + Rodar a la escuela
- Walk with Us // Caminar con nosotros
- Walking Wednesdays // Miércoles de caminar
- Watch out for kids! // Cuidado con los niños!
- Welcome back to school! // ¡Bienvenido de nuevo a la escuela!
- Winter Walk+Roll to School Day // Dia de Caminar + Rodar a la escuela durante el invierno

Safe Routes to School Terms

A

Activity // Actividad
Access // Acceso
Accessible / ADA Accessibility // Accesible / Accesibilidad
Active Transportation // Movilidad activa // Transporte activo
Adult // Adulto
Art Contest // Concurso de arte

B

Back to School / Regreso a la escuela
Barriers // Barreras / obstáculos
Bicycling // Andar en bicicleta
Bicyclist, "A person bicycling" // Ciclista, "Una persona en bicicleta"
Bike // Bicicleta
Bike Gear // Equipo de bicicleta
Bike Lane // Carril de bicicleta
Bike Rack // Estacionamiento para bicicletas
Bike Ride // Paseo en bicicleta
Bike Rodeo // Rodeo de bicicleta
Bike to School Day // Día de andar en bicicleta a la escuela
Bike Trains // Trenes de bicicletas
Bikeabout or Bike Audit // Auditoría de bicicletas
Bingo Card // Tarjeta de bingo
Brochure // Folleto
Bus // Autobús
Bus & Walk // Autobús y Caminar
Bus Route // Ruta de autobus
Bus Stop // Parada de autobús

C

Car // Automóvil o caro
Caregiver // Cuidador
Carpool // Compartir el Automóvil
Children // Niños(as)
City // Ciudad
Collision // Colisión
Community // Comunidad
Community Based Organization // Organización comunitaria
Community Engagement // Participación de la comunidad
Complete Streets // Calles completas
Construction // Construcción
Corner Greeters // Anfitrión de esquina

Corridor // Corredor
Crash // Choque
Crossing // Cruce
Crossing Guard // Guardia de Cruce
Crosswalk (marked) // Cruce peatonal marcado
Crosswalk (unmarked) // Cruce peatonal
Crosswalk (raised/elevated) // Cruce peatonal elevado
Curb // Borde
Curb Ramp // Rampa de la acera

D

Driver, " A person driving" // Conductor, "Una persona manejando"
Driveway // Entrada de acceso vehicular

E

Earth Day // Día de la Tierra
Education // Educación
Encouragement // Animar
Engagement // Participación
Engineering // Ingeniería
Equity // Equidad
Evaluation // Evaluación
Exercise // Ejercicio

F

Flow of Traffic // Flujo vehicular
Flyer // Volante

H

Health // Salud
Helmet // Casco
Helmet Fit // Ajuste del casco
High-Visibility Crosswalk // Cruce peatonal de alta visibilidad
Holiday // Festivo o feriado

I

Infrastructure // Infraestructura
Interactive Map // Mapa interactivo
Intersection // Intersección

L

Lawn Sign Safety Campaign // Letrero de jardín con campaña de seguridad
Lesson Plan // Plan de Lectura

M

Map // Mapa
Mobility // Movilidad

N

Neighborhood Navigators // Navegantes de Vecindario
Newsletter // Boletin
Non-Infrastructure // Sin infraestructura

O

Oregon Safe Routes to School // Rutas Seguras a la Escuela del estado de Oregon
Online Survey // Encuesta en línea
Open House // Reunión Abierta
Outreach // Alcance comunitario

P

Parent // Padre / Madre/ Padres
Parent Teacher Association (PTA) // Asociación de padres y maestros
Parent, teacher, student association (PTSA) // Asociación de padres, maestros y estudiantes
Park // Estacionamiento
Park & Walk // Estacionar y caminar
Path // Sendero
Pedestrian, "A person walking" // Peatón, "Una persona caminando"
Pedestrian Beacon // Baliza Peatonal
Physical Activity // Actividad física
Pick-Up & Drop-off Zones // Zona para recoger y dejar
Playspaces // Espacios de juego
Promotores / promotores
Public Engagement // Participación pública
Public Meeting // Reunión pública
Public Spaces // Espacios públicos
Public Transportation // Transporte público
Public Workshop // Taller público
Punch Card Challenge // Concurso con Tarjetas Perforadas

R

Ramp // Rampa
Recreation // Recreación
Rectangular rapid flash beacon // Señal con Advertencia Rectangular y parpadeante
Reflective/reflectivity // Reflexivo / reflectividad
Remote Learning // Educación a distancia
Resources // Recursos
Rider // Pasajero
Ride the bus // Tomar el autobús

Road // Carretera/ Calle
Roundabout // Rotonda
Route // Ruta

S

Safe Passage Program // Programa de pasos seguro
Safe Routes to School // Programa de Rutas seguras a la escuela
Safe Routes to School Coordinator // Coordinador del programa de Rutas Seguras a la Escuela
Safe/Safety // Seguro / Seguridad
Safety Project // Proyecto de seguridad
Safety Tips // Consejos de seguridad
Scavenger Hunt // Búsqueda de tesoro
School // Escuela/ colegio
School Access Point // Punto de acceso escolar
School Champion // Campeón de la escuela
School District // Distrito escolar
School Enrollment Boundary // Límite de inscripción escolar
School Pool // Viaje compartido a la escuela
School Tally // Cuenta de la escuela
School Traffic // Tráfico escolar
School Zone // Zona escolar
Scooter - Kick // escúter o scooter
Scooter - Electric // escúter o scooter eléctrico
Sidewalk // Acera o banqueta
Signals // Señales
Six Es of Safe Routes to School // Las Seis E's del programa de Rutas Seguras a la Escuela
Skateboard // Patineta
Social Distance // Alejamiento social
Speed bump/Speed hump // Tope / Reductor de velocidad
Speed Feedback Sign // Medidor de Velocidad
Speed Limit // Límite de Velocidad
Stakeholder // Constituyentes
Stop Sign // Señal de Alto/Pare
Street // Calle
Streetlight // Alumbrado de la calle
Suggested Walking/Biking Route // Ruta sugerida para caminar / andar en bicicleta
Survey // Encuesta
Sustainability // Sustentabilidad

T

Tactical domes // Guía táctil
Tally Form // Formulario de conteo
Tips // Consejos
Tipsheet // Hoja de consejos
Toolkit // Estrategias Disponibles
Traffic calming // Reductor de Velocidad
Traffic Playground // Parque de juegos de tráfico

Traffic Playground Courts /Traffic Playground Parks / Temporary Traffic Playgrounds // Patios de recreo de tráfico / Parques de tráfico / Patios con juegos de tráfico temporales
Traffic Safety // Seguridad de Tráfico
Traffic signal // Semáforo
Tree Mural // Mural de árbol
Transit // Tránsito
Transportation Tuesday // Martes de Transporte

U
Upcoming Events // Próximos Eventos

V
Visibility // Visibilidad

W
Walk // Caminar
Walk + Roll // Caminar + Rodar
Walk and Roll Day Extravaganza // Celebración del día de Caminar y Rodar
Walk + Roll To School Day // Día de caminar y rodar a la escuela
Walk to School Wednesdays // Caminar a la escuela los miércoles
Walk Audit // Auditoría de infraestructura para caminar
Walking School Bus(es) // Autobús caminante
Wheelchair // Silla de ruedas
Workshop // Taller comunitario

Y
Yield // Ceder el Paso
Youth // Juventud