

The conclusions

- Walk-by visioning can reach people that don't usually participate [but want to!].
- Participants can be reached in places they use daily. [bus stops, places they pause, etc.]
- Visually based materials maximize understanding and transcend language barriers.
- People were engaged by the interesting informal process.
- Individuals' opinions expand on meetings with neighborhoods or advisory groups.
- Informality attracts participation.
- Confidentiality ensures participation.
- Encounters with participants can be short chats between buses and still provide useful information.
- Longer conversations can reveal more in-depth information for the researcher.

public participation tools

[walk-by visioning]

WalkBoston makes walking safer and easier in Massachusetts to encourage better health, a cleaner environment and vibrant communities.

- Our education and advocacy programs give voice to people to make their communities more walkable.
- Working with government agencies, we influence state and local transportation policies and designs.
- We develop and implement innovative programs that address social and physical barriers to walking.
- Our work especially benefits those who depend on walking the most: people with lower incomes, the disabled, seniors and children, and people with disabilities.



MAKING MASSACHUSETTS MORE WALKABLE

45 School Street | Boston MA 02108 | 617.367.9255 | www.walkboston.org



MAKING MASSACHUSETTS MORE WALKABLE

Walk-by visioning

WalkBoston received a grant from the Federal Transit Administration in 2009 to explore ways to find new tools to increase the number and diversity of people participating in community planning. This research developed an entirely new method of public participation we call Walk-by visioning.

The need

Researchers noted that there were community members that were not participating in planning: transit dependent people, individuals with low incomes or limited English proficiency, minorities, immigrants, students, business owners and employees, and those unable to attend evening meetings. WalkBoston found that many people excluded themselves from participation because they are not comfortable speaking up at meetings and are discouraged because meetings are dominated by people more experienced with meeting procedures and verbal than they are.

The evolution

Six Boston transportation studies were reviewed and the researchers found examples of public participation that unintentionally omitted some community residents. WalkBoston sought alternatives including bringing the planning process to the meetings of existing neighborhood groups and carrying out quick surveys of people waiting at bus stops. By experimenting with a combination of surveys and bus stop interviews, WalkBoston devised a new method of reaching out, based on showing people photos of possible improvements and giving them a simple method of expressing their opinions.

The approach

To engage community members who did not usually participate in planning, WalkBoston devised a new method of reaching out. It was intended to reach all people, including those of limited English proficiency, by eliciting opinions from individuals in an anonymous and informal way.



Walk-by visioning in progress

How to conduct walk-by visioning

- 1: Photoboard — Place foam-core boards showing ideas for improvements were placed on easels, with labels in multiple languages added where appropriate.
- 2: Site layout – Provide space for standing and thinking while viewing photoboard giving feedback.
- 3: Invitation – Introduce researchers, invite curious individuals to explore photo boards and offer opinions. Emphasized confidentiality. Do not record names.
- 4: Stickers — Distribute colored dot stickers. [red=1st choice, green=2nd choice, etc.]
- 5: Opinions — Ask individuals to place stickers on improvements they would like to see, ranking photos by 1st choice, 2nd choice, etc. Be sure to thank participants.
- 5: Evaluation — Count stickers on photoboard to record preferences shown. Note valuable suggestions and the number of participants.

The conclusions

- Merchants were delighted to be personally contacted about planning for their street.
- Brief, in-shop interviews were generally approved of.
- Limits on participation in planning had been:
 - Time constraints: meetings held during business hours; long process; inability to attend meetings stretched over many months
 - Limited staff coverage of shop during meetings.
 - Not familiar with planning process, need for input.
- All merchants expressed opinions about pedestrians.
- Opinions showed unique business perspectives rarely shared at public meetings — need for new crosswalks, snow removal & parking.
- Participation and results can be designed to supplement public planning efforts and add business concerns to the process.
- Informality attracts participation
- Confidentiality ensures participation.
- Visuals provide an opening for a conversation, maximize understanding and transcend language barriers.

WalkBoston makes walking safer and easier in Massachusetts to encourage better health, a cleaner environment and vibrant communities.

- Our education and advocacy programs give voice to people to make their communities more walkable.
- Working with government agencies, we influence state and local transportation policies and designs.
- We develop and implement innovative programs that address social and physical barriers to walking.
- Our work especially benefits those who depend on walking the most: people with lower incomes, the disabled, seniors and children, and people with disabilities.



MAKING MASSACHUSETTS MORE WALKABLE

45 School Street | Boston MA 02108 | 617.367.9255 | www.walkboston.org

public participation tools

[one-on-one merchant
interviews]



MAKING MASSACHUSETTS MORE WALKABLE

One-on-one merchant interviews

WalkBoston received a grant from the Federal Transit Administration in 2009 to explore ways to find new tools to increase the number and diversity of people participating in planning. One of the methods that was most effective was called One-on-one Merchant Interviews.

The need

Customary methods of reaching out to the public through project advisory committees and neighborhood meetings did not typically include merchants or their representatives. Meetings with merchants' associations were scheduled as one-time events so that business people could attend [especially during business hours.] One result was that merchants received most of their information about planning projects through the media or through unplanned contacts with people who attended the meetings.

The evolution

WalkBoston compared 6 transportation studies in Boston to see if business owners or employees were routinely included in project advisory committees. The research team found scant evidence that shopkeepers were directly participating or that their views were being heard.

The research team elected to try reaching all businesses through direct contacts in their stores or ground floor offices during the daytime. These contacts would be informal, brief, non-demanding, and anonymous [in terms of recording the names of participants.]

The approach

The research team tested whether merchants were aware of planning studies on their streets. The interaction was brief – an introductory explanation about the project, followed by five questions and time for opinions and suggestions from the merchants or their employees.

A photoboard provided easy to understand information that was interesting and generated a lot of responses. The five questions were straightforward and easy to respond to. The interviews were brief, anonymous and informal.



One-on-one interviews in progress

How to Conduct a merchant interview

- 1: Photoboards — Bring a foam-core board with photos and maps of concepts being explored that could affect the merchant directly
- 2: Invitation — Introduce researchers, invite managers or employees to observe the photoboard and comment with ideas or suggestions. Emphasize confidentiality.
- 3: Questions — Ask questions such as:
 - Did they know about the City's project
 - What % of customers walked to their store
 - What might be done to benefit pedestrians
 - What sidewalk conditions could be improved
 - What street crossings could be improved
- 4: Thanks & notations — Be sure to thank participants. Do not note names. Note opinions about pedestrian needs.