



# Resident Priorities Transportation Surveys

## DESCRIPTION

**Resident priorities surveys** are important tools for transportation planning and collecting public feedback. Effective long-term transportation planning requires strong public outreach to explore public priorities and gauge reactions to specific projects, developments, or policies under consideration. When properly executed, resident priority surveys can provide a mechanism to efficiently collect wide-scale feedback. This feedback can be incorporated into planning visions, policy goals, and infrastructure projects, augmenting traditional public meetings by collecting feedback from a diverse coalition of constituents.

Priority surveys ask residents to help articulate a vision for future development and investments. Key questions include the following:

- What are the most important issues related to urban and transportation planning in the community?
- What features and patterns of development make a community special and are worth preserving?
- How should development and infrastructure be prioritized in the future?

Public engagement, which traditionally has been conducted at town halls and community meetings, can now be expanded online through resident priority surveys to reach a wider audience in the planning process. Through a series of well-developed priority questions, agencies can learn more about what matters to participants who either reside or work in their community.



## HOW WILL THIS SURVEY HELP ME?

- > **Engage the public:** These surveys allow the public to feel heard and can help foster a dialogue with a community.
- > **Build support:** Effective planning requires public consultation and input. These surveys can greatly enhance the credibility of a planning vision and let the public know their views have been considered.
- > **Spot trends:** If repeated, these surveys can help spot changes in priorities based on evolving resident needs.
- > **Identify opportunities:** With effective prioritization question design, these surveys can reveal less obvious opportunities that have strong public support.
- > **Update a transportation plan:** Insights from this survey can become key inputs into an agency's transportation plan.



## SUCCESS STORIES

### 2045 Tri-County Transportation Plan MetroQuest Survey (2018)

**Administration Method:** Survey website

**Recruitment:** Extensive public outreach (e.g., leveraged social media, mailers, community events, new media)

**Sampling:** Convenience sample

**Report available at:** <https://tinyurl.com/y8wvhfpw>

Administered as part of long-term transportation planning for the Hillsborough, Pasco, and Pinellas metropolitan planning organizations, the survey sampled over 9,000 people. The survey was conducted online through the It's TIME Tampa Bay website. Several recruitment methods attracted participants to the survey website. A paper survey option also was made available. The survey, which relied largely on 1-5 rating questions, allowed the public to weigh in on transportation and growth priorities, three future growth scenarios, and several projects, developments, and policies.

## COST

Low - Medium \$\$\$\$

## TIME

Short - Medium

## METHODS

On-Board Tablet Paper

## CHALLENGES

Recruitment Weighting

## EXPERTISE

Priority Question Design Visualizations



## COST CONSIDERATIONS

Survey costs vary by recruitment and retrieval methods:

- Links on an agency website will be free. These surveys can often leverage news media (TV news segments or online stories) to recruit constituents, so assistance from media outlets to promote the survey should always be explored.
- Advertisements, online panels, address-based sampling, and paper surveying will significantly increase costs (though may increase representativeness).
- The use of specialized survey software for planning studies, like MetroQuest, can also add to project costs.

## STUDY ROADMAP

### 1 QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN/ADMINISTRATION

A well-designed survey will include questions to ensure effective sampling, weighting, and analysis of key study objectives. Solidify the survey goals at the project's outset to ensure the proposed method and questionnaire achieve the stated goals.

#### Priority Question Design:

A variety of question options exist to support resident priority analysis. The appropriate choice(s) vary based on the study objectives and desired quantitative rigor of the analysis.

#### Administration Method:

**Online:** Online outreach connects to a broader audience than a public meeting. The online survey format also allows for complex questionnaire design (e.g., MaxDiff or vision concepts), which provides the quantitative rigor needed for effective resident priority surveying. Paper or call center surveying may prove viable as a complementary option for those unwilling or unable to complete the online survey.

### 2 SAMPLING/RECRUITMENT

Sampling approach will vary depending on the contact options available to the agency and the budget available for the study. Resident priority surveys are often conducted using diversified recruitment. While diversification can lead to more completions, it may diminish knowledge of representation within the final sample. A few primary recruitment methods include:

- **Public Meetings:** This is a convenient and complementary method for collecting sample, but public meeting attendees tend to be nonrepresentative and often hold strong views.
- **On a website:** This option allows those from the public who visit the relevant website (e.g., the agency site) to participate. This can be a convenient way to acquire sample, but it also comes with biases associated with those visiting the website.
- **Emailing a link to a contact list:** This option likely provides wider reach depending on the size and composition of the email list. This approach also allows for more strategic invitations and reminders to prospective respondents. This method also has the biases associated with the contact list.
- **Address-based sampling:** Survey invitations could be sent in the mail via postcard. This approach is more expensive but allows broader reach and more control over the geographic and demographic representation of the sample.
- **Online Panel:** Can be an efficient and cost-effective method for recruitment, particularly in larger communities where enough panelists reside to justify minimum fees.

### 3 ANALYSIS

#### Survey Weighting

Weight and expand the survey data to represent the population for the study area. Weighting should account for geography and demographics.

#### Analysis

Analysis will largely depend on the priority question design. Analysis of satisfaction questions involves simple tabulations that summarize areas where residents are most or least satisfied, while budgeting exercises can be analyzed using similar techniques. Cross tabulating results across demographic variables can increase complexity and is best carried out in specialized software (R, SPSS). MaxDiff requires more technical expertise (mathematical and software), but there are software packages which can help simplify analysis steps and aid in interpreting results.



For more information visit the  
Statewide Survey Colloquium:  
<https://bit.ly/SurveyColloq>



#### Important Considerations!

These surveys should use simple but effective techniques to elicit trade-offs that reveal ranked priorities and visioning exercises that facilitate informed choices on planning concepts to maximize their value in decision-making.

#### > Tradeoff Questions

Including trade-off or prioritization exercises can enhance the applicability and usefulness of the survey. Techniques that are both relatively robust and simple include MaxDiff and budgeting exercises.

**MaxDiff:** Experiments that ask about the best and worst option in a choice set. Respondents repeat this for six or more choice sets, each with different combinations of options. This is more complex to analyze and construct than a rating scale, but far simpler than stated preference. Requires careful development and some statistical knowledge.

MOST IMPORTANT	PRIORITY	LEAST IMPORTANT
✓	Roads	
	Transit	
	Sidewalks	✓

Above, indicate which **ONE** area is **MOST** important to you. On the right, indicate which **ONE** area is **LEAST** important to you

**Budgeting:** A simpler alternative to MaxDiff is budgeting questions that ask respondents to allocate a fixed budget among competing priorities.

PRIORITY	\$
Roads	\$75.00
Transit	\$20.00
Sidewalks	\$5.00

Imagine you have \$100 to spend on transportation improvements. Please allocate those \$100 to the area(s) of your choice.



#### ENVISIONING TOMORROW

A visioning exercise allows residents to imagine and guide the future of their community. Rendered images, such as those from SketchUp or AutoCAD, allow residents to envision the outcome of the planning process. Dedicated survey software allows sophisticated visioning exercises to be included within online instruments.

