



Virtual Public Involvement at VTrans



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What is Virtual Public Involvement?

Traditionally outreach relies upon attending in person meetings. Virtual Public Involvement (VPI) is not intended to replace traditional in-person methods of outreach, but instead diversify these methods. VPI is more than just online meetings and includes a wide variety of techniques (see Figure 1).

How can VPI techniques augment our existing work?

VPI can help us

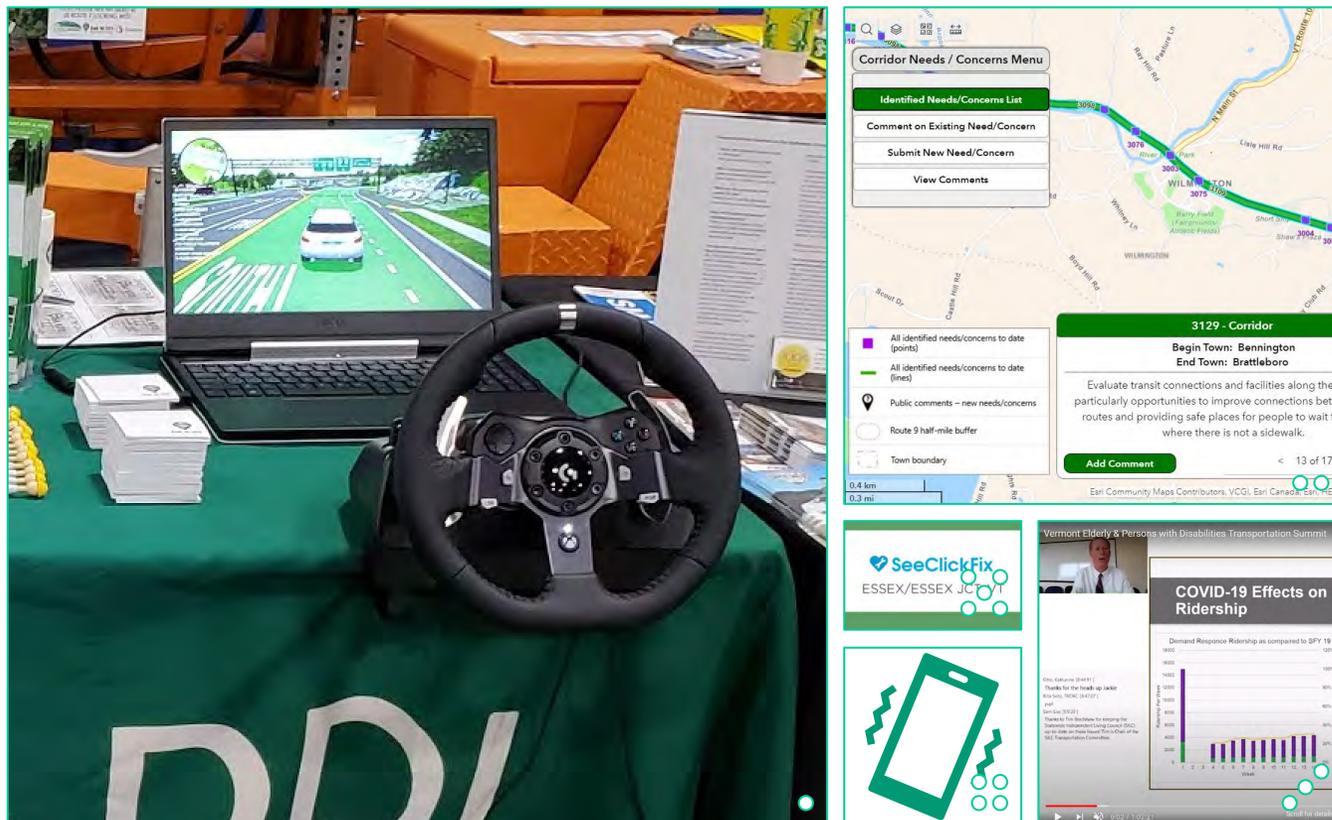
- improve our outreach and communication with traditionally underserved communities (e.g. low income, single-headed households, minorities).
- streamline our engagement processes.
- explain innovations to partners and the general public in easy to understand ways.
- target feedback where stakeholders can provide meaningful direction to a project (e.g. project alternatives)

How can I implement VPI?

Your VPI initiative doesn't have to be big or implemented by others!

It can be as simple as:

- Adding color to a plan drawing so it is easier to “read” quickly
- Using poll during online meeting to gauge how the attendees feel (like the “clickers”!)
- Creating a short video to introduce your project on the project webpage.



○ Project visualizations ○ Crowdsourced Maps and Mapping Tools ○ Virtual Town Halls/ Online meetings ○ Do it yourself videos ○ Mobile Applications

Figure 1. Methods for Virtual Public Involvement

VTrans VPI Projects

Over the last few years VTrans has used VPI techniques for several projects, including:

- [VTrans On Road Bicycle Plan Phase 1 \(2016\)](#) – Wikimap
- [Exit 16 Diverging Diamond Interchange \(DDI\) Project \(ongoing\)](#) – Project visualization (videos and driving simulator), interactive maps, project videos
- [Route 9 Corridor Management Plan \(2021\)](#), [Vermont Rail Plan \(2021\)](#), [State Freight Plan \(ongoing\)](#), and [Reducing Repeat Damage Tool \(2021\)](#) – Public Comment Tool using crowdsourced mapping

Learning from the Exit 16 DDI Project, the following elements were essential for larger projects:

- Clear vision and developing a Public Involvement Plan
- Clear communication with Public Information Consultant
- Working out where to share materials in person and virtually – local venues and events, as well as partnering with local groups.

Looking for inspiration?

The FHWA [Virtual Public Involvement Website](#) has many examples and a listserv. In August 2021 the AOT VPI Collaborative was set up in Microsoft Teams to connect VTrans and RPC staff who use, or would like to use, VPI techniques. Contact [Katharine Otto](#) to be added to the MS Team.

References and Credits

Images and graphics by VTrans staff, except See Click Fix (<https://seeclixfix.com/>). Project Visualizations (Exit 16 Diverging Diamond Interchange Project), Crowdsourced Maps (Public Comment Tool from Route 9 CMP), Virtual Town Halls (VT E&D Summit 2020), Do it yourself videos (2021 Transportation Leadership Institute Presentation), Mobile Applications (See Click Fix)

Special thanks to Mike LaCroix for sharing his experience with the DDI project