

TCRP B-43 USE OF WEB-BASED CUSTOMER FEEDBACK TO IMPROVE PUBLIC TRANSIT SERVICES

FTA Regional Conference
May 14, 2015

Dr. Kari Edison Watkins, PE, PhD
Assistant Professor, Georgia Tech



Toolkit Outline

- Summary
- Part 1:
 - Ch. 1-1 – Understanding Web-based Feedback
 - Ch. 1-2 – Managing Web-based Feedback
 - Ch. 1-3 – Web-based Feedback Tools
 - Ch. 1-4 – Case Study Summaries
 - Ch. 1-5 – Lessons Learned and Future Research
- Part 2: Web-based Feedback Tool Selection Guide
 - Ch. 2-1 – Categories of Web-based Feedback
 - Ch. 2-2 – Tool Types and Features
 - Ch. 2-3 – How to Use the Tool Selection Guide
 - Ch. 2-4 – Tool Selection Guide
- Appendices



Defining Customer Feedback

- Feedback is:
 - Any communication generated by transit users and other members of the public and directed at the transit agency
 - Listening to and reacting to input from customers and other stakeholders
- **Unsolicited** feedback is:
 - Comments and complaints that flow into the agency without being directly requested by agency staff
- **Solicited** feedback is:
 - Initiated by the agency to address specific needs or issues



The Customer Perspective

BENEFITS	CHALLENGES
Real-time feedback	Equity and accessibility
Safety and security	Public acceptance
Increased public participation	Privacy concerns
Reduced call center wait times	Lack of personal contact
Enhanced agency image	



The Agency Perspective

BENEFITS	CHALLENGES
Cost effectiveness	Negative feedback
Increased outreach and documentation of needs	Loss of direct, personal two-way communication
Lists of interested future participants	Need for internal processes, policies, and protocols
Interagency communication and coordination	Resource requirements
Reporting	Need to manage public expectations
Rider retention	How to measure impacts



Case Studies

- Transit Agencies

- Charlotte Area Transit System
- CT Transit
- Denton County Transportation Authority
- Los Angeles Metro
- MBTA Transit Police
- TriMet
- Transit communications professionals

- Non-transit Organizations

- Amtrak
- City of New Haven
- Software developers
- Transit customers and advocates



Why Use Web-based Feedback?

COLLECT UNSOLICITED COMMENTS

- Time-sensitive issues
- Ongoing concerns and commendations

ACTIVELY SOLICIT COMMENTS

- Policy and planning activities
- Public opinion polling

ENCOURAGE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

- Building community through dialog
- Open houses and public
- Education via dialog with customers

MANAGE FEEDBACK

- Comment tracking
- Contact management
- Reporting and analysis



Types of Feedback Tools

ISSUE REPORTING

- Customer info mobile app
- Security-related mobile app
- Community issue reporting tools
- Web-based forms
- Social media

CUSTOMER RESEARCH

- Online surveys
- Live polling
- Feedback panels

ONLINE PUBLIC COMMENT FORUMS

- Idea management
- Online public meetings
- Map-based forums
- System-building games

FEEDBACK MANAGEMENT

- Social media dashboards
- Internal tracking
- Customer relationship management



Defining Features

- User identification
- Visibility of comments
- Dialog
- Immediacy
- Geography-based
- Level of support needed
- Cost to agency



Application-specific Features

- Customization
- Market penetration
- Control of data
- Training and support
- Accessibility
- Translation services
- Mobile photography
- Reporting functionality
- Ranking and prioritization
- Data processing
- Custom automated and personalized responses



Tool Selection Process

Step 1: Identify Candidate Tools

Use toolkit tables to identify best-fit and good-fit tools that meet agency needs



Step 2: Compare Tool Features

Review features of best-fit and good-fit tools to guide selection



Step 3: Select Web-based Feedback Tool

Refer to tool information sheets for more details on preferred option



Step 1: Identify Candidate Tools

Best-fit and good-fit tools for collecting time-sensitive or on-going unsolicited comments

Table 1 Best-Fit Tools for Agency Need: Collect Unsolicited Comments

	Type of Tool	Time-Sensitive	Ongoing
1.1	Customer Information Mobile Application	+	+
1.2	Security-Related Mobile Application	++	+
1.3	Community Issues	+	++
1.4	Web-Based Forms		++
1.5	Social Media	++	++
2.1	Idea Management		+

++ Designates Best-Fit Tools

+ Designates Good-Fit Tools



Step 2: Compare Tool Features

Features for best-fit and good-fit tools based category and subcategory of agency need

Table 5 Tool Features for Agency Need: Collect Unsolicited Comments – Time Sensitive

Tool Number	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.5
Type of Tool	Customer Information Mobile App	Security-Related Mobile App	Community Issues	Social Media
Best-Fit:	+	++	+	++
Features:				
User Identification	Anonymous	Optional	Optional	Minimal
Visibility of Comments	Private	Private	Agency Option	Optional
Dialog	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Immediacy	No	Yes	No	Yes
Geography-Based	Geo-referenced	Geo-referenced	Geo-referenced	Geo-referenced
Support Needed	Tech Support	Tech Support	Set-up needed	Min Support
Cost	Paid	Paid	Freemium	Free



Step 3: Select Best-Fit Tool

1.5 Social MediaIssue Reporting

Description: A series of interactive online applications that encourage users to interact with one another, create content, and share information.

Uses: Users may submit comments, photos, and/or video directly to agency maintained pages and user accounts. Late buses, nice or rude operators, broken equipment, and desired service changes may all be common topics of comments.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Many individuals are already using social media tools for personal communications and can easily participate.	Social media channels may limit the length of posts (especially Twitter) which may make it difficult to convey details about an incident.
The widespread use of social media on mobile devices makes it easy for riders to share feedback about transit conditions in real time so that agencies can respond quickly to time-sensitive issues.	The public nature of social media conversations may compromise rider privacy.
Social media channels make it easy for individuals to document issues and concerns with photos and videos.	The amount of time dedicated to responding and monitoring social media could be resource intensive for agencies.

Features

User identification	User is identifiable through minimal personal information, such as a first name, screen name, email address, or Twitter handle.
Visibility of comments	Most comments are sent publicly, such that followers of the transit agency would at least be able to see them. Users and agencies do have the option to send more private direct messages.
Dialog	These tools are specifically designed with the intent of facilitating a discussion between the agency and the public. Agencies may choose to respond only to selected comments.
Immediacy	Designed to allow the agency to monitor and respond to comments in real time, all service hours, all days; agencies may choose to set parameters to manage customer expectations and agency resources.
Geography-based	Using smartphone GPS, comments can be tagged for location (geo-referenced).
Support Needed	Technical support is not required and necessary set-up is minimal.
Cost	Typically free, but some premium social media accounts do have a cost, which varies by account type.

Notes: Some social media tools also allow for polling of followers, or can be used to disseminate links to surveys not hosted on social media platforms.

Needs this tool fulfills: Best Fit: Collect Unsolicited Comments (Time-sensitive, Ongoing), Encourage Civic Engagement (Building Community); Good Fit: Solicit Comments (Policy and Planning), Encourage Civic Engagement (Open Houses, Education)

Example Tools: Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Google+

- Description
- Uses
- Advantages / Disadvantages
- Features
- Notes
- Addressed needs



Lessons Learned

- One size does not fit all
- People want to be acknowledged
- Accentuate the positive
- Manage expectations
- Look before you leap
- Use customer feedback to educate
- Measure your success
- Build stakeholder support
- Web-based tools may save money
- Integrate new and old systems
- Working with vendors
- Maintain a level playing field



Future Research

- Identifying metrics
- Standardized feedback categories
- Understanding rider access to technology



Thank You!

Kari Watkins

Georgia Tech

Civil and Environmental Engineering

kari.watkins@ce.gatech.edu

Kathryn Coffel

Kathryn Coffel Consulting, LLC

kathryn@kathryncoffelconsulting.com

Susan Bregman

Oak Square Resources, LLC

susan@oaksquareresources.com

