



MEMORANDUM

To: Dan Amstutz

From: Matt Smith & Alyson Fletcher, Nelson\Nygaard

Date: February 25, 2020

Subject: Arlington Sustainable Transportation Plan FINAL Public Engagement Strategy

INTRODUCTION

Public engagement is critical to successfully developing, and more importantly, implementing a community wide transportation plan. A successful engagement strategy not only informs the planning process by identifying community priorities and goals, it identifies potential roadblocks and pathways around them.

The most important consideration in an engagement strategy is reaching as many stakeholders as possible, representing different perspectives and life situations be they geographic, social, economic or other. As such, the below public engagement strategy was developed to do just that.

This Engagement Strategy provides a framework for inviting Arlington community members to share in the development of a Sustainable Transportation Plan. It can be revisited, evaluated, and updated over the course of the project based on feedback and engagement results.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT GOALS

Public engagement is being conducted to:

GOAL: Build awareness of and excitement for the plan

- Acknowledge community concerns
- Share the plan goals, progress, timeline, and next steps
- Communicate why feedback is important and how feedback is being used

GOAL: Reach a variety of constituents and community interests to create recommendations that are comprehensive and equitable

- Target traditionally underrepresented stakeholders in public process, i.e. Communities of Concern - such as people of color, people with disabilities, the elderly, and people with low incomes
- Learn about perceived issues and whether those vary by user group
- Provide varied types of activities and venues through which to provide feedback, recognizing that certain demographics may need specific engagement techniques
- Leverage existing stakeholder networks to engage wider community

GOAL: Inform plan priorities and actions

- Identify where the public experiences issues and what scenarios need to be addressed
- Generate solutions for future projects and maintenance that are sensitive to sustainability concerns
- Identify programming opportunities
- Communicate next steps & foster ongoing community support

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

For the Arlington Sustainable Transportation Plan, most outreach elements will be the responsibility of the Town. Nelson\Nygaard will assist staff to provide all information, analysis and findings in support of the event or task. For each engagement task, the task Lead and Support role is defined, as is the general timeline for launching or holding the initiative.

The below strategy is presented in order as to when each element would occur by month.

TASK 1: PROJECT LAUNCH COMMUNICATIONS

1.1 Press Release

The Town should issue a press release announcing the kickoff of the Sustainable Transportation Plan process. The release should provide a general project overview, timeline, outreach program (as described below) and link to the online survey.

Lead: Nelson\Nygaard (drafting)
Support: Town of Arlington (refining draft, leading distribution, and press responses)
Timing: Soft Release – Complete on Town News Page
Plan for Additional Release around Time of Online Survey Launch

1.2. Project Website

A web-based landing area for information that could include:

- Project Overview
- Project Timeline
- Documents Library
- Survey Link(s)
- And more...

Lead: Town of Arlington (Site/Page hosting, Writing and Posting Updates) - <https://www.arlingtonma.gov/town-governance/all-boards-and-committees/sustainable-transportation-advisory-committee>
Support: Nelson\Nygaard (Creating a project brand that will be used on the site, submitting deliverables that would be posted by the Town)
Timing: Established by February 2020 and Linked in Press Release

1.3. Social Media

Social media – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. – can be a powerful engagement tool to gain insights from the public about various project issues and concerns. However, the risk of it turning negative, often from a select few, can undermine a project.

We recommend using social media on a limited basis for the project, primarily for project announcements such as meeting information and updates and links to other outreach tools (e.g. online surveys). Using it to vet strategies and other plan elements should be avoided.

Nelson\Nygaard can advise the Town on their social media strategy if needed and provide raw branded materials the Town can adapt for use on their platforms.

- Lead:** **Town of Arlington** (Site/Page hosting, Content, Providing pixel sizes for web banners and social media thumbnails)
- Support:** **Nelson\Nygaard** – branded templates for web banner and social media announcements for the Town to adapt and distribute
- Timing:** **Spring 2020** (At time of survey launch and save the dates)

1.4 Flier / Postcard Announcements

Nelson\Nygaard can supply drafts of outreach fliers that the Town’s staff and “Street team” can take to events, bus stops, and more around town to draw attendance to key events.

- Lead:** **Nelson\Nygaard** (Draft flier using brand)
- Support:** **Town of Arlington** (Editing, Finalizing, Printing, Distribution)
- Timing:** **2 weeks in advance of in-person events**

2. INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

The Nelson\Nygaard team will conduct up to a total of eight (8) meetings during a period of two days on-site, that could be conducted either as interviews and/or as focus groups (where more than two people may represent interests). Nelson\Nygaard will seek assistance from the Town to identify and coordinate interviews and/or focus groups, including identifying priority people or groups, scheduling times, procuring meeting locations, reminding stakeholders, etc. The Town and/or project ambassadors could host additional meetings if more than 8 are deemed helpful as part of this process.

2.1. Focus Group(s)

Focus groups should be arranged to learn about and discuss topics and issues in which many stakeholders are directly linked. For example, we would recommend a focus group with Town departments responsible for various transportation facilities planning, design, construction and maintenance (including Planning and Community Development, Engineering, Department of Public Works, etc.).

The goal of focus groups as part of this process is to engage voices less heard in Arlington’s planning processes, especially those that could stand the most to gain from strategies that could promote more sustainable transportation options and safety improvements. Given some groups may be harder to organize and reach, we propose hosting meetings across two different days in the process – one day of meetings in March to engage those easier to organize and one later in

June, aligning with mobile workshops to meet people where they are as part of a “plan van” type of engagement at housing locations.

Sample target groups include:

- Seniors: Disability Commission, Council on Aging, Senior Housing
- Youth: family, school travel, Safe Routes to Schools (travel survey expected to go out to schools early to mid-March)
- Car-free lifestyle representatives/interest groups
- Low-Income Groups: Arlington Housing Authority housing, Housing Corporation of Arlington housing, etc.

Lead: Nelson\Nygaard

Support: Arlington (coordination, booking venue, outreach and reminders to stakeholders, hosting additional meetings as needed)

Timing: Targets – A round of meetings in March, a round of meetings in June

3. SURVEY

Surveys are an excellent way to obtain information about transportation conditions, concerns and opportunities. We recommend conducting at a minimum, one survey communitywide (see Task 3.1), but if staff capacity is available at the Town, we would recommend targeted surveys aimed at populations with specific mobility needs.

3.1. Online Survey

Nelson\Nygaard with input from Town staff and the committee will develop an online survey (through www.surveymonkey.com) to obtain initial thoughts and opinions about transportation priorities. Questions should aim to get information about how people travel within and to and from Arlington, why they make the mode choices they do, and what they would like to see change over time.

A link to the online survey should be shared with as many groups in Town as possible through as many channels as possible: email distribution lists, links on the Town website, flier distribution at public meetings or events, etc.

In order to meet seniors, school-age children, and other populations of concern, Nelson\Nygaard will ensure the survey includes questions that address their unique issues. Nelson\Nygaard will develop a paper version of the survey so that it can be taken to Senior Centers, Schools, and Housing locations by the Town of Arlington’s street team.

Lead: Nelson\Nygaard (survey development, hosting, and answer-processing)

Support: Arlington (distribution and on-going promotion)

Timing: April 2020 – End of June 2020 (Promote at Forum and Mobile Workshops)

4. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

4.1. Public Forum

The Town of Arlington should host a Sustainable Transportation Plan Forum to introduce the community to the project, provide an overview of existing conditions and seek feedback during an open house session at the close.

The purpose of the meeting is three-fold: 1) the meeting formally introduces the public to the plan process; 2) the public receives an overview of current transportation conditions throughout the community; and 3) the meeting provides an opportunity for the public to provide their thoughts and opinions about transportation in Arlington, identify elements of the network that they like or dislike (including areas where safety is a concern), and to provide their own vision for future sustainable transportation in Arlington.

Lead: **Arlington** (Event coordination, hosting, and staffing)

Support: **Nelson\Nygaard** (Supporting content development. Meeting participation and additional assistance optional on a time and materials basis.)

Timing: **Late May or early to mid-June 2020** (Avoiding Annual Town Meeting and other planning meeting conflicts)

4.2. Mobile Workshops

While the Town will lead most engagement activities, it is important for the consultant team to receive direct input from the community. As described in the proposal, we recommend the Nelson\Nygaard team's outreach efforts to focus on two "mobile workshops" which will enable our team to reach residents and stakeholders while they are actively moving about and engaging within the community. This is particularly important given that Arlington is a community with an active, engaged, and educated citizen base.

We propose to integrate with existing events rather than create a separate outreach effort, such as Town Day, the Arlington Farmer's Market, Porch Fest or other events recommended by the Town or Advisory Committee.

Our mobile workshops will employ different engagement techniques, which could include interactive maps, guides, and touchpad-based input tools, likely in a visible pop-up tent that is easily transported by car. We have successfully employed this approach in Newton and Boston and other communities across the county.

4.2.1. Mobile Workshop #1

The first mobile workshop would be held in the early summer (likely in June) to gather input from residents, business owners and visitors at various locations and potentially an existing event like the Farmer's Market. Using a "Plan Van" approach, we could drive around town to pop-up on the street where people are to gather input. The purpose of this mobile workshop would be to provide a second opportunity for the public (who were unable to attend the Public Forum, or did not know about it) to learn about the project, review some existing conditions, and provide some initial feedback.

Optionally, pending feedback from the STPAC: During the mobile workshop day, Consultant Staff would also lead a short “Walkshop” and “Bikeshop” tour to extrapolate input on key Arlington transportation issues from a focus group of stakeholders.

Lead: Nelson\Nygaard
Support: Arlington (coordination, permits if needed, support staffing)
Timing: May - June 2020

4.2.2. Mobile Workshop #2

The second mobile workshop would be held in Fall 2020 during an event or festival to be determined. The purpose of this workshop would be to present draft strategies to enhance Arlington’s transportation now and in the future, collect feedback and

Lead: Nelson\Nygaard
Support: Arlington (coordination, permits if needed, support staffing)
Timing: September 2020

4.3. Public Forum #2: Draft Plan

Based on feedback from the Advisory Committee, we propose for the Town to host a second Transportation Plan Public Forum. This second meeting is recommended to introduce the public to the Draft Plan.

At the meeting, the Town would provide an overview presentation of the project findings, and the draft strategy. Following the presentation, there would be a series of exercises for the public to provide input – likely by topical tables (e.g. ped and bike, transit, car, etc.).

Feedback received at the event will be used to inform the final plan strategy.

Lead: Arlington (Event coordination, hosting, and staffing)
Support: Nelson\Nygaard (Supporting content development. Meeting participation and additional assistance optional on a time and materials basis.)
Timing: November 2020

4.4. Ongoing Optional Intercept Engagement: “Engagement-in-a-Box”

Nelson\Nygaard will help create a template for the Town to collect discrete feedback throughout the process, including activities like:

- passing out flyers promoting events
- collecting survey responses on paper at places where community members may have less access to computers
- collecting discrete info through intercepting or tabling at Town events

Like all engagement exhibits used as part of engagements on this project, this kit-of-parts set of materials will include a checkbox for people to fill out demographic info as well as what neighborhood they represent, from: Arlington Heights, Arlington Center, East Arlington, Morningside, and Other. They will also include lines for what the date and location of the event where data was collected so that context can be recorded with the source of the information.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY | SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION PLAN
Town of Arlington

Lead: **Arlington** (Tabling, Collecting Info, Distributing)

Support: **Nelson\Nygaard** (Creating tailored kit of parts for Town to Use)

Timing: Ongoing