

Success Through Failure

Project Background

- [Highway 2 Road Diet](#)
- This proposed 2018 project would have restriped Hwy 2 through Bagley to reduce it from a 4-lane section to a 3-lane (2 driving lanes with a center turn lane). The challenge we faced was that the closer the project came to fruition the more the community fought against it.

Public Engagement Challenge

- The challenge stemmed from our initial outreach with a booth at the county fair. Visitors to the booth were able to learn about the project and provide a 1-5 ranking of their support or dislike for the project. The results overwhelmingly showed "strong support" which skewed our perception of the community opinion.
- As the city council was preparing a final vote for support, they started to hear negative comments from the local business owners. So we began a much more in depth outreach campaign. The bigger challenge was that as more and more people learned about it, more and more people came out against it.

Public Engagement Tool

- Along with the initial county fair booth. The district staff increased public engagement with:
 - Face to face meetings with every business located on/near the corridor
 - Online survey conducted through the PECS office
 - Community targeted Facebook advertising
 - Gov Delivery email contacts
 - Multiple radio and newspaper interviews in the community and surrounding areas
 - Meeting with the Chamber of Commerce
 - Gov Delivery email list
 - Website
 - Brochure
 - Maps/layouts
 - FAQ list
 - Coordinated other community leaders, with similar a similar layout, to provide answers from their own experience
 - Public meetings

Key Takeaways

- The project itself is unique as it was our first experience trying to bring a road diet to a community. The process was a learning experience as our first community interactions with the planning showed overwhelming support, in retrospect it was a small demographic that responded and it proved to be a blind spot as we moved forward. The more engagement we did, the more people we reached, which increased the amount of vocal residents against it.

Level of Engagement: Empower

- Even though the project failed, the experience we gained was quite valuable. It's special because we utilized new techniques and were able to generate a ton of interaction. It just so happens that led to the demise of the project, but the community was left feeling heard and MnDOT was responsive to their overwhelming input.

Quote

- “The district staff put in a lot of legwork and dedicated time with face to face interactions.” – TJ Melcher, Public Engagement Director

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Keywords

- Voice of Community, Road Diet, Strong Initial Support, Empower

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