
Transportation Demand Management: Testing How to Talk About It

Focus Group Report
June 2003



Prepared for:

Puget Sound Regional Council



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Funding for this report provided in part by member jurisdictions, grants from U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, Federal Highway Administration and Washington State Department of Transportation.

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1. Introduction and Methodology

APCO Insight, the opinion research division of APCO Worldwide, recently completed four focus groups in the Seattle/King County area on behalf of the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC). The focus groups were designed to test public attitudes and language concerning Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures – measures intended to reduce the number of single-occupancy cars on the road and thus minimize traffic congestion and maximize the value the region gets out of its infrastructure investments.

The immediate goal was to identify how to talk about TDM in such a way that it resonates with the public and thus can be used in a meaningful way by elected officials and planners. Another goal was to, if possible, recast the term “TDM” and find a new moniker that is appealing to the general public and elected officials alike. In addition, we planned to provide a strategy for communicating on this issue as we go forward.

Since TDM incorporates a wide variety of measures – from transit to fees and taxes, to incentives, to land use planning, to work-based programs such as vanpools, telecommuting, and flex-time – it is a complicated concept to describe. The focus groups were designed to help formulate an effective and intuitively easy to understand description.

In order to get a regional “feel,” two of the groups were conducted in Seattle, drawing from the Eastside and northern suburbs (North Groups), and two in the South King County community of Burien, drawing from the southern Eastside, southern suburbs and Pierce county (South Groups). Each group was screened to be representative of a different demographic/interest cohort to provide an idea of the tenor of conversation that may be expected from various segments of the public.

The following table shows the composition and timing of the groups:

	Group Composition	Date	Time
North 1	Seattle Residents/ Transit Users	Tuesday, April 29	6:30 – 8:00 PM
North 2	Attentive Public	Tuesday, April 29	8:00 – 9:30 AM
South 1	Non-Transit Users	Wednesday, April 30	6:30 – 8:00 PM
South 2	Area Opinion Leaders	Wednesday, April 30	8:00 – 9:30 AM

Group Characteristics

The following were the characteristics of participants in each group:

North 1 – Seattle Residents/Transit Users: This group included those who are currently practicing TDM including those who use public transit, vanpools or carpools, or walk, bike or telecommute to work. This group included a representation from lower socio-economic groups who are transit-dependent, although all participants were screened for minimal education/interest level to ensure a lively discussion.

North 2 – Attentive Public: This group included a mix of residents. This group included representation from lower socio-economic groups, again screened for minimal education/interest levels.

South 1 – Non-Transit Users: This group was recruited to represent the “skeptical” audience who may be characterized as being somewhat resistant to alternative forms of travel other than general purpose auto travel. They tend to have more conservative or independent partisan views. Participants came from a mix of socio-economic groups.

South 2 – Opinion Leaders: This group included residents representing the upper socio-economic segment who are activists and/or opinion elites. These people were screened to belong to activist groups and speak out on public issues, but not necessarily transportation issues. They tended to be representative of more informed members of the community who help set the political agenda because of their active stance on political issues.

We recruited all participants from registered voter lists. Voters are more likely to have the ear of elected officials and are also generally more active and interested in policy issues and more likely to participate than non-voters. To further ensure

a more lively discussion, we screened participants for minimum media consumption and issue awareness.

Also, each focus group included a mix of demographic characteristics, including gender, race and age. Approximately 10-12 participants were seated per group.

It is important to note that the results of qualitative research should not be seen as a replacement for quantitative research utilizing probability sampling. While random-sample polling gives us the ability to make judgments about broader public opinion, the small numbers in focus groups and related factors (like group dynamics) limit qualitative research as a tool for measuring opinion and awareness.

However, focus groups are useful for identifying broad trends of opinion and attitudes by engaging carefully screened individuals in an in-depth discussion. Focus groups help to identify the language that animates the discussion of the issues related to transportation planning and solutions.

Discussion Guide Overview

The discussion guide for the focus groups was developed by APCO Insight in close collaboration with PSRC and based on a briefing by transportation experts from various agencies and organizations in Washington. The guide had several key objectives:

- To assess general attitudes toward transportation in the Puget Sound region.
- To examine unaided awareness of various transportation strategies, including Transportation Demand Management.
- To probe reactions to the debate around these strategies.
- To explore reactions to the various strategies, including specific elements of TDM.
- To assess believability and importance of the various benefits of TDM.
- To explore the language and labeling people use when talking about transportation strategies, including TDM.

The North groups were both conducted with the initial discussion guide. However, due to strong reactions to the presentation of the TDM strategies, the guide was changed for the South groups to get a more balanced response and better discussion.

The initial presentation of the TDM strategies was as a laundry list, without the mention of roads and with transit listed as a line item on par with other elements like fees and taxes.

The following table was presented to them for consideration:

TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY	
Alternatives to Single Occupant Vehicles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public education and promotion of options • Ride-matching services • Transit (Bus, Ferry, Rail) • Van and carpooling • Bicycle and walking pathways • HOV lanes • Park & Ride lots • Tele-shopping
Work-Based Strategies to Encourage Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial incentives for employers and workers • Alternative work schedules • Guaranteed rides home • Parking incentives and disincentives • Telecommuting
Land Use Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compact residential development • Compact employment and activity centers • Mixed land uses • Jobs-housing balance • Transit and pedestrian oriented design • Development impact fees/mitigation
Regulations to manage auto travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trip reduction ordinances requiring alternatives • Access and priority restrictions on roads • Ramp metering and express lanes • Preferential treatment for HOV users
Pricing changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking incentives and disincentives (tax) • Gas tax increases • Road and congestion pricing • Toll roads (for financing and/or permanently) • Mileage-based fees • Transit and vanpool subsidies

Based on reactions from the North participants, it was determined that this grouping of strategies was counter-intuitive and appeared to participants to be one-sided.

In the South focus groups, the presentation was changed to include roads and transit as two major categories and “related strategies,” which included the rest of the TDM elements.

Transportation Solutions	
Building Strategies	
CATEGORY	PROGRAM
Improve and add road capacity	Road and bridge widening, improving bottlenecks, and building new roads
Improve and add transit alternatives	Building light rail, monorail, ferries and expanded bus service, and park-and-ride lots
Related Strategies	
Regulate the use of roads	HOV lanes, ramp metering, restrictions on road uses
Workplace and commuter programs	Parking incentives and disincentives, trip reduction laws for employers, alternative work scheduling, financial incentives, telecommuting, guaranteed rides home, and van/car pooling
Enact land use and planning changes	Compact residential development, mixed land uses, jobs-housing balance, pedestrian and bicycle friendly planning, and development fees
Changing travel habits	Parking incentives and disincentives, higher gas taxes, congestion pricing of roads, toll roads, subsidies to commuters, public advocacy campaigns, higher usage fees

This appeared to more closely parallel participants' thinking and provide categories that they could intuitively grasp.

In addition, the South discussion guide was supplemented to include negative arguments about TDM to determine if these would challenge participants and possibly lead some to defend TDM, giving us a better grasp on the language they would use to do so.

In all groups, the discussion guide was carefully designed to avoid revealing the term "Transportation Demand Management" until near the end so that participants would not be biased by it.

The discussion guides for the North and South groups are found in the Appendix at the end of this report.

2. Executive Summary

The focus group participants universally felt that the transportation system in our region is a problem for them personally. They believed that there was a lack of progress on finding solutions in this region, pointing to excessive government process and lack of leadership as major stumbling blocks.

When asked about solutions to transportation problems, people first named roads and transit – big-ticket infrastructure items – then, on a second tier, they were able to name work-based and commuter programs, with which many of them were familiar. Only when probed did they come up with a third tier – various other strategies, including land use (which they called “city design” or “community design”), road regulations, and pricing. This is as if they were dealing off the top of a deck of cards, and the cards representing roads and transit always came up first. Later on in the deck they would deal out work-based programs. Only when they got to the bottom of the deck did they remember the other strategies.

A significant finding is that participants were unable to view TDM as a unified concept, especially when presented with a laundry list that included transit as a line item but neglected roads. This made them angry because they felt that they were being forced to make a choice they didn't want to make. They firmly believe that the region needs many solutions to its transportation problems and that “you need both” roads and transit.

When participants were presented with a slightly altered definition of TDM that pulled out transit and roads as “big items” and defined other TDM elements as “related strategies,” they were better able to understand the concept of TDM and to respond to its benefits. While some were skeptical about the difference these TDM strategies made, others were able to see that relatively small differences in traffic volume could make the difference between gridlock and free-flowing travel. This became especially clear to them when they remembered anecdotes or examples such as a minor holiday, University of Washington breaks, or Boeing schedule changes. These anecdotes could make important communications points.

Work-based and commuter programs were particularly popular and many believed that they had an impact. Many could name examples of companies which used them and quite a few had actually participated in them. Pricing strategies, on the other hand, were controversial with many participants saying they were coercive and unfair to lower income people, while others said they were necessary to get people out of their cars.

The creation of transportation options was universally endorsed as an important benefit of TDM but participants believed that the options had to be real, practical and easily accessible. For example, if the government creates disincentives

designed to get you out of your car, it should also create new transportation alternatives, like a first-class mass transit system.

Perhaps the most significant finding was that participants could begin to understand that TDM strategies were a way to make our major infrastructure work better and get the most out of our investment. This is related to the understanding that roads and transit are expensive and can quickly become overburdened or underutilized (respectively) if there are not the proper motivating forces to enact culture change.

This whole exercise, however, faced skepticism because it was seen as un-American – not being natural to our culture – pointing to the need to identify TDM with American values such as innovation and choices as well as efficiency and productivity.

In offering up language to describe TDM, participants used terms that were results-oriented, focusing on the benefits of the strategies to individuals and society. These terms – including people mover or reduce trips – were favored over process-oriented terms, particularly Transportation Demand Management. Participants reacted negatively to the term “Transportation Demand Management,” which was unveiled to them at the session’s conclusion.

3. Findings

Major personal concerns about transportation and transit

Transportation remains a major concern and a source of frustration for group participants. Concerns about the traffic situation were quickly paired with the perception that public transportation (transit) is inadequate, especially when compared to systems elsewhere. They frequently named BART in the Bay Area and the Metro in Washington, D.C. as models. People frequently referred to their personal experience – particularly commuting – indicating that transportation is not an abstract concern but a very personal one – one on which they have strong views.

“The roads are overcrowded, and public transportation is limited and inconvenient and sometimes unsafe.”

“I’m not pleased at all with our public transportation. I know people who live in New York who don’t even own a car. I don’t even have a bus that goes by my house.”

“The determining factor is where you live and work.”

“My commute used to be 20-30 minutes, now it’s grown to 60 minutes. I’ve made the adaptation. I shave in my car. It’s taking two hours out of my life every day, but I prefer to drive my car” rather than taking transit.

Sense of under-investment and lack of progress by region

Participants felt that not enough is being done to solve transportation problems and that collectively our region hasn’t been able to really start building something. They also pointed to Sound Transit as having wasted “billions of dollars,” indicating that even when we attempt to build something, we have yet to be successful.

“Everything is always done too late. They don’t plan ahead to fix the transportation system.”

“Traffic is horrible. The transportation system needs a lot of rework. We don’t have adequate roads to accommodate growth or good public transportation.”

“We need to build another freeway.”

“Sound Transit is just sitting there. The Sounder’s the only thing that’s gotten started.”

Frustration with government, process, perceived lack of a unified plan

Participants are also frustrated with what they perceive as government inaction and a lack of leadership. This feeling permeated the entire discussion and came up repeatedly as a barrier. They feel that the process is broken and they are skeptical that anything will be accomplished to make the transportation system work. Many felt their taxes to be misspent in a variety of different ways. For example, they feel that taxes such as gas and vehicle excise tax should be spent for transportation and they expressed irritation that, based on their perception, they are not. In addition, participants were not aware of a coherent transportation plan and they thought there were too many transit agencies acting separately off of “at least a half dozen different plans.”

“We need a better public process to make transportation improvements. The process has broken down.”

“There’s no leadership in this state to get anything done on budget.”

“We’ve lost faith in anyone” to be a leader.

“There’s no effective leadership team that can effectively communicate and convince people that this [the TDM-type approach] is a good idea.”

“The check and balance system is out of whack. The initiative system has spun out of control so that it’s easier to stop things than get them completed.”

“There’s not one big plan. There are half a dozen or more.”

Three-tiered awareness – 1) infrastructure (i.e., roads, rails, vehicles), 2) work-based programs, 3) other TDM

Participants demonstrated that they had three tiers of awareness among transportation measures. Building tangible infrastructure-based systems – either roads or transit systems - were top of mind. Work-based or commuter programs represent a second tier of awareness after infrastructure improvements, while other TDM strategies came to mind only after further probing. Support for these measures mirrored participants’ awareness of them.

See the big picture; want a combination of solutions, not to be forced to choose

Participants could see the big picture and wanted a “combination” of transportation solutions. They resisted the notion that we would have to choose between one or the other of roads versus TDM or roads versus transit. Efforts to focus their attention on TDM strategies were hindered by the exclusion of roads from the thinking. In this case, they thought they were being manipulated by an “anti-auto bias” and being pushed to make a choice they didn’t want to make. They said “you have to have both” roads and transit, as well as other solutions. However, once roads were acknowledged to be a part of the solution, participants were better able to appraise TDM measures as playing a role.

“We need a two-tiered system: both roads and transit.”

“We need a combination of both” roads and transit.

“Don’t just do one [strategy], do three or four different ones.”

“I don’t think [the TDM-type approach] is radical but I don’t agree that they can’t build enough roads.”

“Multiple solutions are better than one.”

When presented without roads, strategies deemed incomplete; felt pushed into a choice they didn’t want to make

Participants reacted negatively to a presentation of the TDM-type strategies without including roads as a solution and including transit as a mere line item. They felt the approach was coercive and one-sided. They wanted roads to be considered in any solution and for transit to be considered as a big item.

“There’s an anti-auto bias to this [the TDM-type strategies that don’t include roads].”

In arguments over transportation *“what we’ve heard is only one side or the other. This is just one side.”*

“It’s all very negative to cars.”

TDM not a unified concept

Especially with transit included, TDM was not seen as a unified whole. The combination of rail/transit and the other various solutions cluttered the concept and caused problems as people reacted negatively. This jumbling made it difficult to build the case for the more esoteric elements of the program. However, when

transit was considered as a large item separately and paired with roads, TDM was accepted as a number of “related strategies.” Some were able to see how these related strategies could help make infrastructure (roads and transit) work better by reducing the number of cars on the road and maximizing the use of the transit system.

Transit bigger than a line item; “ideal” system in mind

Mass transit was seen as a big part of the picture and not a line item among other TDM measures. It was volunteered as a top of the mind transportation solution on par with roads. However, people were quick to say that they would like a system like Washington, D.C. Metro or BART in the Bay Area. They were scathing about Sound Transit and some felt the bus system was “nasty”; however, some did use it and felt comfortable with it. High-speed rail and/or monorail were almost universally felt to be the wave of the future. However, there was doubt about this area’s ability to accomplish the ideal system, either economically or politically.

“I’m very spoiled. I used to live in San Francisco and I loved BART. Here, if you’re going east-west, you can count on horrible bus rides.”

“Related (TDM) strategies” acknowledged as part of solution

Setting transit aside as being a “big thing,” people were fairly well disposed toward the arguments expressed in favor of related TDM solutions. Participants had unaided awareness of many of these related strategies, including road regulation, workplace and commuter programs, land use and planning changes (they called these “city design” or “community design”), and changing travel habits. While they varied on their opinions of these, most people said they were necessary.

“I think [the argument for TDM-type strategies] is valid.”

The theme of it is to *“reduce trips, getting cars off the road.”*

“We may discover we don’t need so many roads or rails and we may save on a lot of expensive projects.”

Need knowledge of how much we’re doing, how much we could do, and what impact it would have

Participants did not know how many of the TDM strategies were in place or have a good idea of the potential for more effort and impact in this area. Basically, people asked for a way to measure these things. They wanted to know how much we’re doing now and how much conditions could improve if we did more, so that they could be the judge of the importance of TDM. They also wanted

measurement of results as we proceed to put strategies in place. Because of this lack of knowledge, participants had a difficult time agreeing on whether TDM provided less costly solutions or would have a real impact on traffic congestion (many feeling it might only prevent traffic from becoming as bad as it could be). This was not enough to render the concept meaningless, however; rather it pointed to a desire for more information.

“How are you going to measure it?”

“None of them [the TDM-type strategies] are working.”

“We’re doing some form of it already and we’re still in traffic jams.”

Could see how TDM could have an impact; aware that small behavior changes make a big difference in traffic

Many participants were able to cite examples of where even a small change in people’s travel behavior was enough to change traffic considerably. They pointed to minor holidays and when the University of Washington is not in session. They also thought of Boeing work patterns. These common examples of how little things make a difference could be important communications points. After considering them, participants could then see how such things as work-based programs would make a difference in addressing gridlock.

Workplace and commuter programs most familiar and most popular

Participants closely linked traffic congestion with the distance they must travel between home and work. Many knew of workplace and commuter programs, including telecommuting, flex-time, carpools, vanpools, and guaranteed rides home. Many of them work for employers who have some of these programs in place, and some have actually participated. Among the “related” TDM strategies (beyond transit), these were considered the most effective and received the broadest endorsement. People also frequently mentioned the link between transportation and jobs and the economy. This realization helped drive their priority for workplace and commuter programs.

“Telecommuting and flex-time are good. If you could get every employer in town to do them it would make a big difference.”

“I worked at Boeing for 23 years and bounced around from location to location and found that there are alternatives and a subsidized vanpool is what I’ve chosen. It works. Early mornings are pretty good, but afternoons are always a problem.”

“Telecommuting is strong but there are not that many jobs that will let you telecommute.”

“If there was a rule that so many people had to ride in a carpool, I’d be willing to change. So many people drive alone who could carpool.”

“What I’m really comfortable with is the alternative work schedule.”

Pricing strategies most controversial, with two schools of thought

There was a strong reaction in the North groups to measures they deemed coercive or punitive. Most of these fell into the category of pricing strategies. Many participants objected to “behavior modification.” The extensive list of fees, taxes and tolls presented to the North groups as part of a laundry list of TDM strategies also seemed to suggest to participants that the approach would be costly to the individual and that lower income people would be particularly – and unfairly – affected. A number of people focused on the mileage-based fees in particular as being negative. These participants felt incentives were a better way to go.

“Financial incentives are a good [strategy]. Reward us, don’t penalize us.”

“I don’t like the mileage-based fees. What right do you have to tell me I can’t drive?”

“I don’t like usage fees. They hurt lower and middle-income people. The rich people can afford to pay.”

“Don’t put on tolls. Make it more positive.”

“I don’t like the government making me do something.”

“I think it’s punitive. You’re taking from the 90% who drive cars to finance something for the 10% of those who do otherwise.”

On the other hand – particularly in the South groups – some participants felt that the “only way you’re going to get me out of my car” is through disincentives to drive. At least one of this group said gas taxes were the best way to go. These participants were acutely aware of the difficulty in changing behavior and “culture.” However, they felt that if you were going to provide disincentives you would need to provide real choices, such as convenient transit, for it to work.

“Someone has to do that [put on taxes] or we aren’t just going to stop using our cars.”

“I’ll pay taxes and tolls if it opens the roads so I have them.”

“If you were paying \$5 per gallon, you might think more about doing something like driving to the store.”

“What would stop my driving would be paying tolls or the higher gas tax.”

Measures seen as requiring “culture change,” “un-American”

Participants were highly sensitive that these measures, to work, would require significant cultural and lifestyle change. One summed up the feeling of the group that they were “un-American,” meaning this not in the traditional sense but in the sense of driving being such an American thing to do. This feeling led to the sense that it would be hard to make them work, especially without political leadership.

“You would need to change the culture. Anything that gets you out of your car would be a change in culture.”

“It’s un-American.”

“It would probably work if you could implement it, but the problem is you couldn’t implement it in America.”

“It’s premised on the idea that we can change culture.”

“People in this area are not going to give up their car. We can’t turn our head away from the personal value people place on the personal auto.”

“Choices” and “options” overwhelming benefit; but must be real and accessible

There was strong agreement on the benefit TDM offers of providing more choices or options for travelers. In one group – in which participants were asked to name the most important benefit – nearly every single participant named choices. This concept also appeared in the language they used to describe the related strategies.

“More transportation choices” is the biggest benefit.

“I don’t think [the argument for TDM strategies] is off the mark, but I think it’s hard to get people to take the bus. It’s nasty. But when I was in San Francisco, I loved taking BART, so if you could offer something like that...”

Major selling point for TDM: making infrastructure work better

The idea that TDM strategies play an important role in making roads and transit work better was a significant selling point. Participants liked the idea that TDM would help us get more out of our existing transportation system. They could grasp that infrastructure would become overburdened or, in the case of transit, underutilized unless there were incentives and disincentives to encourage use of alternatives.

“These strategies would help assure that the supply measures – the hard stuff – gets well used.”

“This [the TDM-type approach] offers more opportunity for successful outcomes making it so that the whole transportation plan is more likely to succeed.”

Results-based terms for TDM that emphasize benefits

People used results- or outcome-based terminology – based on what can be gained – rather than process-based terminology to describe the “related strategies” of TDM. They came up with a number of names and concepts related to the TDM measures. While they may not have identified the exact name, some of the language they used was quite relevant. In general, their themes are results-oriented, as opposed to the systemic approach of Transportation Demand Management. They are more likely to focus on what they (or society) get out of it, rather than the role it plays on the demand side of the equation. Some favorable terms were “choices,” “options,” “drive less,” “balance,” “commuter,” “people mover,” “reduce trips,” “flexibility,” “saving money,” “saving time,” and “invest together to save tomorrow.”

Examples of results-oriented names and terminology offered by participants included:

North 1:

- People Moving
- Save our Sanity
- Work Life Balance
- Getting There Together

North 2:

- Friends Make Friends Going Public
- Take the Bus, Save the Air
- People Mover
- Open Minds, Open Roads
- Seattle Moves

South 1:

- Reduce Your Trips
- Less Cars on the Road
- Quick Go
- The Big Ride

South 2:

- Flexibility
- Take Cars Off the Road
- Invest Together Today to Save Tomorrow

“Transportation Demand Management” Rejected

Most participants – with only a single exception – rejected the term Transportation Demand Management as being “clinical,” “boring,” “bureaucratic,” or at best “not very catchy.” While a small minority, also came up with process- or strategy-based terminology – including “Transportation Strategy 2030” (North 2 group) and “Multiple Solution Trip Reduction Plan” (South 1 group) – their group-mates were quick to dismiss these terms.

Used different language than planners for various aspects of TDM

Participants consistently used different terminology than planners. For example, they talked about “community (or city) design” rather than “land use planning”. In fact, they basically went blank when prompted, “Do you mean land use planning?” Other terms participants used included “carpool lanes” instead of HOV lanes and “malls where you can access transit” instead of Transit Oriented Development.

The term “mass transit” was also meaningful – and positive – to them, meaning as it does something beyond buses. Flex-time was also commonly used to refer to altering one’s work schedule to avoid travel at rush hours.

No replacement term for TDM was discovered

While the focus group discussions provided useful ideas about language to use or avoid when talking about TDM (See “Language” in the Recommendations section), the research did not result in a consensus on a single new term or name for TDM. Participants were asked to team together and suggest names (see “results-based terms” above), but they did not come up with any single name that was widely embraced.

4. Recommendations

While no clear replacement term for TDM was identified, the focus groups provided some significant guidance for TDM concepts, language, and communications tactics. Barring substantiation through quantitative research, the following recommendations are indicated:

Language and Strategic Recommendations

- **Define TDM differently.** When addressing the public, TDM should not be portrayed as a laundry list of programs and strategies, but should be grouped conceptually. TDM can be defined as a three-tiered structure: 1) transit (working in tandem with roads to provide essential infrastructure), 2) work-based programs that help people get between home and jobs or change their work patterns, and 3) related strategies, such as community design and road use regulation. Only in this way are people able to understand the nature of TDM as a concept and to appreciate its benefits.
- **Roads should *always* be part of the equation.** People feel “we need both” roads and transit. TDM should never be defined in terms of being anti-road or as embracing only non-road strategies.
- **Emphasize the need for *multiple solutions* to the transportation problem.** People recognize the need to approach the problem in a variety of ways, including many of the strategies in TDM. By emphasizing TDM’s ability to tackle the problem with multiple tactics, experts and officials are more likely to secure support for these measures.
- **Demonstrate how TDM strategies *work together* as an integrated package to provide *real alternatives (choices, options)* to driving alone.** For example, there is less likelihood of support for tolls and fees if the drivers paying them don’t see any real alternative, such as an extensive mass transit system. People support work-based strategies because they see how they work together to provide viable choices and solutions: incentives to businesses and employees provide motivation to use carpools, vanpools, and guaranteed rides home. The same goes for telecommuting and flex-time.
- **Communicate how TDM strategies can make infrastructure – such as roads and transit – *work better* by making the best use of our investments, getting the most “bang for the buck.”** The goal should be to show how these strategies are not supporting players but actually essential to getting the most out of our investments. People should ask: Why would you build a road if you don’t have TDM to keep it from being immediately obsolete?

- **Make the most of *popular work-based and commuter programs*.** Communications should put TDM's best foot forward. Programs like telecommuting, flex-time, and commuter programs can help provide the basis for a broader endorsement of the overall concept.
- **Emphasize the American virtues of *ingenuity and civic participation*.** In much the same way as recycling became an American thing to do, it is possible to gain support for TDM by emphasizing that it is not "un-American" but is in fact very much in keeping with American traditions.
- **Talk about TDM differently, focusing on *results*.** Whether the decision is to re-name TDM or just build supporting language around it, the focus should be on the outcome of such a program, not on its role in the supply-demand chain. Descriptions like "making the roads work better," "tapping multiple solutions," and "providing real choices" work better than process-oriented terminology like "demand management."
- **Describe strategies in terms *comprehensible to the public*.** Terms like "land use planning" and "transit oriented development" are not accessible to the public, whereas "community design" and "malls or shopping areas where you can access transit" are.
- **Develop and employ anecdotes and examples that are *familiar to people and that vividly illustrate points about transportation issues*.** For example, participants were familiar with holidays such as Presidents Day and times such as UW Spring Break when a small change in the traffic volume can make a big difference in reducing gridlock. These commonly known examples should be used to help make points about TDM.
- **Language to avoid.** Certain terms were red flags to participants and raised their opposition to TDM measures. These terms included "penalties," "behavior modification," and "disincentives." In talking about TDM, these terms should be avoided and/or replaced by positive counterparts like "incentives" and "choices."
- **Build a consistent theme and message points for TDM.** Whether a new name is identified or not, it is advisable to develop a theme based on the recommended language. This could be a very short description or catch phrase that resonates with the public and elected officials. An example would be: "TDM, Keeping People on the Move." Message points that support the value and benefits of TDM should also be developed. The theme and messages should be employed in all communications.

Next Steps

- **Develop a presentation based on the focus group results to be given to planners and elected officials to help them understand how the public sees transportation solutions and how best to communicate on them.** Although planners are not usually directly responsible for communicating with the public, they do set up much of the language around transportation. Both they and elected officials will be more successful in generating support for transportation solutions and getting them approved if they use concepts and language that resonate with the public.
- **Solicit partners for further research by presenting focus group findings to other transportation groups.** PSRC can also present the findings of the focus group research to leaders of other major transportation groups such as APTA and AMPO (or even other AMPO members) to test their interest in contributing funding towards the next level of public opinion research, a phone survey.
- **Consider quantitative research.** Although the focus groups gave us significant insights, we could refine our findings and be more confident of them, and subsequently better communicate them to others, if they were confirmed by polling. Our experience has shown that elected officials are more receptive to statistically reliable polls with accompanying graphs than to qualitative focus group findings.
- **Measure the costs/results of TDM.** PSRC should consider undertaking an analysis or study to determine the costs and benefits associated with TDM, in order to craft messages for the public in response to concerns that the programs cost too much and are ineffective.

APPENDIX

Discussion Guide – North Groups: April 29, 2003	A-1
Discussion Guide – South Groups: April 30, 2003	A-8

Discussion Guide - North Groups

Transportation Messages/TDM

North groups

Seattle, WA -- April 29, 2003

30281



1. Welcome and Introduction (5 minutes)

- Moderator introduction and introduction of research firm
- Our purpose this evening is to discuss the transportation situation in the Puget Sound area and what it suggests for the future quality of life here. I want to know what you think should be done and how you feel about various strategies that have been proposed.
- This is an open discussion, but as the moderator, it will assist me if we keep several things in mind:

GROUND RULES

- All views are welcome. However, please speak one person at a time so that I can understand what everyone is saying.
- The meeting is taped to assist me in reviewing what is discussed. The tapes are discarded once I have reviewed them. However, all individual opinions are completely confidential and you will not be identified in any report.
- My associate is also observing from behind the mirror to assist me by taking notes.
- To have a full discussion, it is important that everyone offers his or her views.
- Please feel free to express your views to other participants, not only to me. Discussion helps me better understand the opinion of the group.
- Differing opinions are welcome. It is more interesting to receive a range of views, so please freely express your views if your perspective on an issue is different.

2. General Attitude

- Before we talk specifics, generally, how would you rate the transportation situation in the region today?
- Looking five years down the road, do you think the transportation situation will be better, worse or about the same as it is today? (PROBE: Why do you take that view?)
- What are the key transportation issues that the region must address? (PROBE: Other than traffic congestion what are the main transportation issues facing the area?)

[LIST ON FLIP CHART]

- Thinking about your personal experience, how would you describe your transportation experience on a daily basis?
- Other than driving, have you tried different things to get where you need to go? What? Does it work for you?
- When you think about what should be done to improve transportation for you, what kind of things come to mind?
- How would you know if things were improving? What would an improved transportation system look like? What attributes would exist that don't exist now?

3. Unaided Awareness

- Have you heard anything about measures to relieve traffic congestion in the Puget Sound area? What have you heard?
- Which ideas have you heard that sound like they might improve overall transportation in the region?
- What strategies sound like they might work? Is there a group of strategies that have a common element?
- (PROBE: Decrease car use, expand roads, etc.?)
- Are there particular barriers to implementing strategies or policies to improve transportation? Are they being done? If not why not?

4. Unaided Strategies

- The discussion of transportation is often characterized by two basic strategies that work together to address congestion problems. Take a look at them:

CARD #1

STRATEGY A	STRATEGY B
Expand infrastructure to accommodate more cars	Find ways for people to make fewer car trips alone
What kinds of things would characterize this strategy?	What kinds of things would characterize this strategy?
Which make the best sense to you?	Which make the best sense to you?
What would you call the strategy that contains these ideas?	What would you call the strategy that contains these ideas?

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of strategy A?
[FLIP CHART: List strengths and weaknesses]
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of strategy B?
[FLIP CHART: List strengths and weaknesses]
- Is one or the other generally better for the Puget Sound region? Why?
(PROBE: or are they complementary?)

- (If anyone says “complementary”): Does one approach need more emphasis at this time in the Puget Sound region?
- What more would you need to know before supporting or opposing measures under one or the other strategy?

5. Choices for the Future

- Let’s think about the big picture for a minute. Here is a statement by a supporter of transportation policies that rely more on reducing the number of trips on the roads and less on building new roads and highways.

CARD #2

In the Puget Sound region, there are over 10 million car and truck trips on local roads and highways every day. Because of population growth, by 2030, that number is expected to rise to 16 million per day.

We cannot supply enough roads to accommodate this demand. The financial investment, the impact on the environment, and the consequences for the quality of life for Puget Sound area residents require another approach.

The key is finding ways to reduce car trips. We must develop a range of policies and programs that offer transportation options that reduce the demand for major additions to the road network.

These may include changes in land use, transit systems, changes in how roads are managed, tolls, fees, incentives, employer programs and other new investments that offer more efficient travel.

- What is your impression of this view for the future of transportation in the Puget Sound area? [PROBE: Does it go too far or is it a sensible characterization?]
- Where does this view miss the mark in your opinion?
- What kind of proposals would seem appropriate to deal with the challenge described here?
- Where should improved and new roads and highways fit in?
- In a phrase, what is the strategy we need to meet this challenge?

6. Elements of the Transportation Strategy

- The strategy is a diverse set of policies. From what you know now, which ideas are the most important?
- Now let's look at the policies that make up this strategy:

CARD #3

TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY	
Alternatives to Single Occupant Vehicles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public education and promotion of options • Ride-matching services • Transit (Bus, Ferry, Rail) • Van and carpooling • Bicycle and walking pathways • HOV lanes • Park & Ride lots • Tele-shopping
Work-Based Strategies to Encourage Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial incentives for employers and workers • Alternative work schedules • Guaranteed rides home • Parking incentives and disincentives • Tele-commuting
Land Use Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compact residential development • Compact employment and activity centers • Mixed land uses • Jobs-housing balance • Transit and pedestrian oriented design • Development impact fees/mitigation
Regulations to manage auto travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trip reduction ordinances requiring alternatives • Access and priority restrictions on roads • Ramp metering and express lanes • Preferential treatment for HOV users
Pricing changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking incentives and disincentives (tax) • Gas tax increases • Road and congestion pricing • Toll roads (for financing and/or permanently) • Mileage-based fees • Transit and vanpool subsidies

- Is there a theme that ties all these ideas together in your mind? What is the common goal this strategy tries to achieve?
- Are these policies consistent? Are there things here that seem out of place or in conflict?
- What are the best elements of this strategy? Which are you most comfortable with yourself? [PROBE: Why, why would you embrace this idea?]
- Are there elements of this strategy that raise concerns? Why? [PROBE: Would you resist participating in this?]

7. Perceived Benefits of “TDM”

- Taken together, what do you think the benefits of this approach are for individuals?

[LIST ON FLIP CHART]

- What about benefits for the community as a whole?

[LIST ON FLIP CHART]

- Are the benefits worth the changes that would be required for you to participate? [PROBE: WHICH CHANGES ARE YOU UNCOMFORTABLE WITH?]
- Here are some statements that have been made in support of the strategy described here. I'd like to know what you think...

CARD #4

BENEFITS?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced traffic congestion throughout the region • Energy conservation and fewer automotive emissions • More efficient use of existing road network which is used very inefficiently now • Less need for major investments in freeways and roads • More transportation choices for people

- Interim measure to allow time to catch up with investment needs
- Balancing supply and demand by reducing demand
- Lower cost transportation solutions

- Are these benefits likely? [PROBE: Why do they say this? Are they right? Does it make sense?
- Which seems the most important to you?
- Are there other benefits that are as important, or more important, that aren't on the card?

8. Labeling Exercise

- Let's divide into two teams. Pretend you and your team work at an ad agency and your mission is to decide as two groups what you will call this group of policies and to explain why it makes sense for you and for the community. Specifically:
 - What will you call your strategy?
 - How will people like you benefit from it?
 - How will it help the Puget Sound area be a better place to live in the future?

PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSION

REACTIONS TO "TDM" or the phrase "Transportation Demand Management."

Discussion Guide – South Groups

Transportation Messages/TDM

South groups

Seattle, WA -- April 30, 2003

30281



2. Welcome and Introduction (5 minutes)

- Moderator introduction and introduction of research firm
- Our purpose this evening is to discuss the transportation situation in the Puget Sound area and what it suggests for the future quality of life here. I want to know what you think should be done and how you feel about various strategies that have been proposed.
- This is an open discussion, but as the moderator, it will assist me if we keep several things in mind:

GROUND RULES

- All views are welcome. However, please speak one person at a time so that I can understand what everyone is saying.
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- My associate is also observing from behind the mirror to assist me by taking notes.
- To have a full discussion, it is important that everyone offers his or her views.
- Please feel free to express your views to other participants, not only to me. Discussion helps me better understand the opinion of the group.
- Differing opinions are welcome. It is more interesting to receive a range of views, so please freely express your views if your perspective on an issue is different.

2. General Attitude

- Before we talk specifics, generally, how would you rate the transportation situation in the region today?
- Looking five years down the road, do you think the transportation situation will be better, worse or about the same as it is today? (PROBE: Why do you take that view?)
- What are the key transportation issues that the region must address? (PROBE: Other than traffic congestion what are the main transportation issues facing the area?)

[LIST ON FLIP CHART]

- Other than driving, have you tried different things to get where you need to go? What? Does it work for you?

3. Unaided Awareness

- Have you heard anything about measures to reduce the number of trips on roads in the Puget Sound area?
- Which ideas have you heard that sound sensible?
- What strategies sound like they might work? Is there a group of strategies that have a common element?
- Are there particular barriers to implementing transportation programs that work?

[PROBE: IS THERE A PLAN? WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?]

4. The Debate

- Let's think about the big picture for a minute. Here is a statement by a supporter of transportation policies that rely more on reducing the number of trips on the roads and less on building new roads and highways.

CARD #2

In the Puget Sound region, there are over 10 million car and truck trips on local roads and highways every day. Because of population growth, by

2030, that number is expected to rise to 16 million per day.

We cannot supply enough roads to accommodate this demand. The financial investment, the impact on the environment, and the consequences for the quality of life for Puget Sound area residents require another approach.

The key is finding ways to reduce car trips. We must develop a range of policies and programs that offer transportation options that reduce the demand for major additions to the road network.

These may include changes in land use, transit systems, changes in how roads are managed, tolls, fees, incentives, employer programs and other new investments that offer more efficient travel.

- What is your impression of this view? [PROBE: Does it go too far or is it a sensible characterization?]
- Where does this view miss the mark in your opinion?
- What kind of proposals would seem appropriate to deal with the challenge described here?
- Isn't this an excuse to keep from investing in roads THAT ARE DESPERATELY NEEDED?

5. Elements of the Transportation Strategy

- Supporters of policies to reduce use of cars on area roads have lots of ideas – which one's have you heard of that make sense?
- Are there any that seem trivial or that you would object to?
- OK, LET'S LOOK AT ELEMENTS OF A TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY IN THE PUGET SOUND:

Transportation Solutions	
Building Strategies	
CATEGORY	PROGRAM
Improve and add road capacity	Road and bridge widening, improving bottlenecks, and building new roads
Improve and add transit alternatives	Building light rail, monorail, ferries and expanded bus service and park-and-ride lots
Related Strategies	
Regulate the use of roads	HOV lanes, ramp metering, restrictions on road uses
Workplace and commuter programs	Parking incentives and disincentives, trip reduction laws for employers, alternative work scheduling, financial incentives, telecommuting, guaranteed rides home and van/car pooling
Enact land use and planning changes	Compact residential development, mixed land uses, jobs-housing balance, pedestrian and bicycle friendly planning, development fees
Changing travel habits	Parking incentives and disincentives, higher gas taxes, congestion pricing of roads, toll roads, subsidies to commuters, public advocacy campaigns, higher usage fees

- Are you comfortable with the strategies described here?
- **Of the related strategies, is there a common theme that ties all these ideas together in your mind?**
- Are these policies consistent? Are there things here that seem out of place or in conflict?

- What are the best elements of this strategy? Which are you most comfortable with yourself? [PROBE: Why, why would you embrace this idea?]
- Are there elements of this strategy that raise concerns? Why? [PROBE: Would you resist participating in this?]

6. Perceived Benefits of “TDM”

- Taken together, what do you think the benefits of the related strategies would be?
- Are the benefits worth the changes that would be required for you to participate? [PROBE: WHICH CHANGES ARE YOU UNCOMFORTABLE WITH?]
- Here are some statements that have been made in support of the strategy described here. I’d like to know what you think...

CARD #4

BENEFITS?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced traffic congestion throughout the region • Energy conservation and fewer automotive emissions • More efficient use of existing road network which is used very inefficiently now • Less need for major investments in freeways and roads • More transportation choices for people • Interim measure to allow time to catch up with investment needs • Balancing supply and demand by reducing demand • Lower cost transportation solutions •

- Are these benefits likely? [PROBE: Why do they say this? Are they right? Does it make sense?]

- Which seems the most important to you?
- Are there other benefits that are as important, or more important, that aren't on the card?

7. Critics of TDM

[CONTEXT]

Critics argue that these related strategies are a waste of time and money and only divert resources from more important programs.

They also say that people prefer their cars and that few people actually ride public transportation in spite of the billions spent, so the problem isn't really solved.

They are particularly critical of trying to influence consumer behavior by using regulation and financial impacts to change what people choose to do.

- How would you answer some of these criticisms? Do they have a point?
- Do you think these related strategies will actually accomplish anything?

8. Labeling Exercise

- Let's divide into two teams:

TEAM ONE:

- Describe why related strategies should be part of any transportation plan in the Puget Sound;
- What will you call this set of strategies?
- What outcomes will result from implementation of your strategy?

TEAM TWO:

- Describe the shortcomings of the related strategies;
- Decide which elements you would keep
- Prepare questions for the proponents

PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSION

REACTIONS TO "TDM" or the phrase "Transportation Demand Management."