



MnDOT's Online Customer Community



TRB Presentation
January 2012

Your Destination... Our Priority





MnDOT Strategic Vision



- Global leader in transportation committed to **upholding public needs** and collaboration with internal and external partners to create a safe, efficient and sustainable transportation system for the future.
- Market Research serves to: uphold public needs, understand wants and needs, measure progress over time and support increased public trust and confidence.



MnDOT Market Research



Market Research Purpose:

- Provide customer insights to our leadership and expert offices

Market Research Use:

- Tool designed to reduce the risk in decision making
- Customer research is only one input in the decision process -- one leg of the stool. The other two are technical inputs and strategic planning [includes political] inputs



Adapting to Reflect the Changing Times

- Sustainable market research programs are:
 - Nimble – changes along with the consumer
 - Responsive – timely information
 - Proactive – exposes and close informational gaps
 - Innovative – leverages changing technology
 - Transparent – customers can see themselves in the process
 - Iterative – accommodates increasingly complex transportation issues
- To meet these **changing expectations**, new research techniques must be considered and **a mix** of research methods used.





MnDOT's Customer Research Program



- Types of Research / Programs:
 - Annual Omnibus Tracker
 - Online Research Customer Community
 - Ad Hoc Studies, such as MBUF [Mileage Based User Fee]





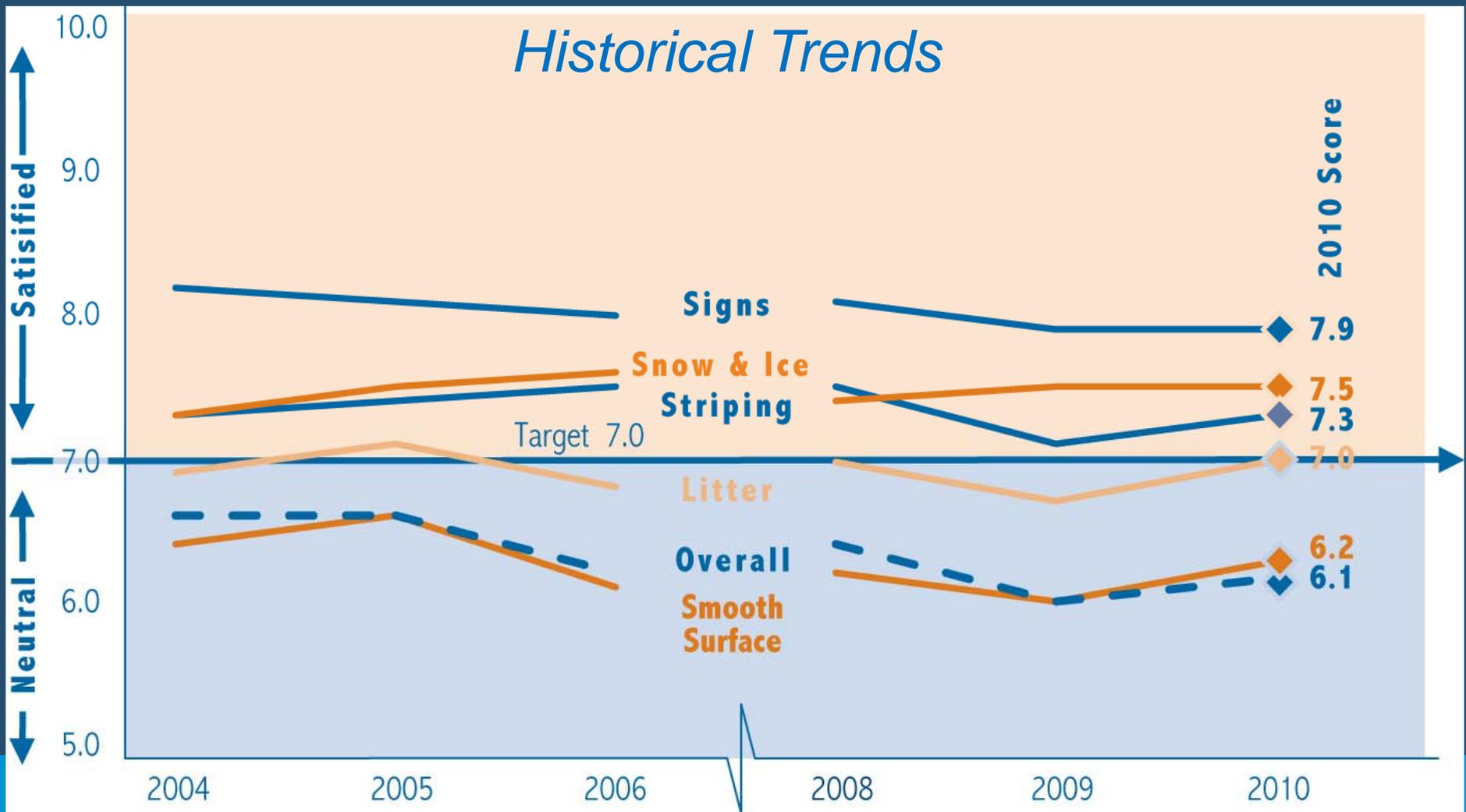
Annual Omnibus Tracker

- **Annual Telephone Study – tracks service performance measurement**
- **N=800 [match census criteria]**
- **Trending data to track perceptions of safety, service, communications, maintenance, etc.**
- **Reported 1Q each year**



OMNIBUS TRACKING ~ Maintenance Performance Measures

I want to know HOW WELL you think MnDOT is doing in each area. Use any number from 1 to 10; a '10' means they are doing an 'Extremely good' job in this area, and '1' means they are doing an 'Extremely poor' job in this area.



Note: No omnibus survey conducted in 2007



MnDOT Online Customer Community (OLC)



What is an Online Customer Community?



How it Works



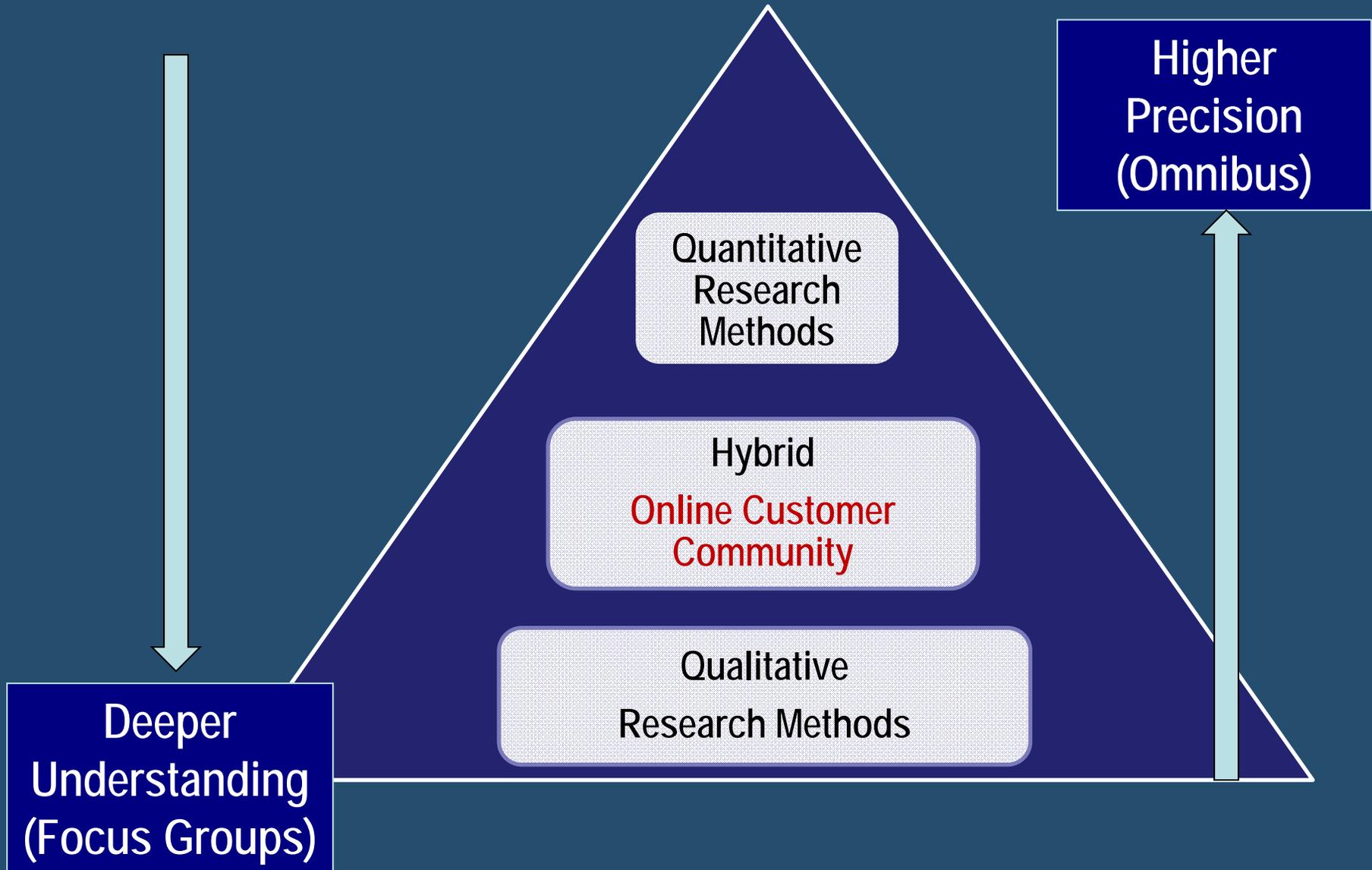
Topics Addressed



Closing the Loop & Acting on the Information



Understanding Research Methods



Higher Precision
(Omnibus)

Quantitative
Research
Methods

Hybrid
Online Customer
Community

Qualitative
Research Methods

Deeper
Understanding
(Focus Groups)



What is MnDOT's OLC?

- Opportunity for ongoing, customer feedback and interactions
- 600 Minnesotans [statewide]
- Customer transportation discussion group
- Carefully selected audience:
 - Outgoing sample census criteria: gender, age, income, ethnicity & geo
 - Return data is not weighted to census criteria:
 - *OLC data should be used 'as a guide' to inform us of the larger MN population response*
- OLC created for MnDOT to better understand customers and their transportation-related issues
- Opportunity for three-way communications – what's on *their* minds?





Reasons for using an OLC

- Many fortune 500 companies use private, online communities – it's just as appropriate and useful for government/public sector
- Meets our customers '**where they're at**' and allows them to respond when it's convenient for them – often generating more thoughtful responses
- Changes in technology make the internet an increasingly, viable option:
 - ✓ 1 in 4 U.S. HH no land line, cell only
 - ✓ 74% U.S. adults (18+) use the Internet
- More timely feedback for planning/decisions. It's timely, innovative and highly responsive to our customers. Fills a gap for decisions not easily supported by traditional research
- Doesn't replace existing methods – study objectives determine best study fit.





How MnDOT's OLC works

- 600 agreed to journey with us for at least a year
- They sign on weekly and see discussions and surveys
- Member appreciation (nominal incentives)
 - \$10 gift cards/mo for 'regular' contributors, purge and replace non-participants
- Intended to be useful for us; interesting and engaging for them
- Online tools to interact with customers:
 - Surveys, brainstorming, discussions, live chats, image galleries
 - New tools to interact: video clips, attachments easily attached





Mn/DOT Talk

- HOME
- ACTIVITIES
- PEOPLE
- RESOURCES



What's Happening This Week

Welcome back to Mn/DOT Talk

We hope you had a great 4th of July! This week in Mn/DOT Talk we have a new survey on logo signs posted along the interstates. Check out **Hungry yet?** to give us your thoughts on the topic. And if you didn't have a chance to log in last week, please take a moment to complete our other signs-themed activity, **What's Up?** and give your opinion about criteria being considered for alternative uses of our electronic overhead signs. Every member who completes both of these activities will be entered into a raffle to win **one of five \$15 Amazon e-gift certificates!**



Little Visitor - Lori T.

Then, in our latest discussion, **What Do You Listen To?**, let us know what radio stations you listen to while you're in your car.

We'd also like to thank Lori T. for posting this delightful photo of a little visitor to her farm this spring. Feel free to add your favorite local photos in the **Minnesota Treasures** gallery so that we can feature more of what makes Minnesota special in our weekly homepage announcements.

Since You've Been Gone

Your last visit was on 8-Jul-2011 10:15 PM

WHAT IS NEW

Some of the new activities since your last visit.

Discussion Contributions

What Do You Listen To?: 5
Bike riding and helmets!: 1

Survey Respondents

What's Up?: 2
Hungry yet?: 9

Who's Online



Mn/DOT Talk Home Page:
 New surveys & discussions posted every week



Some Topics Addressed:

- Construction Kick-Off – how to inform customers of construction projects, what they [specifically] want to know about projects
- Snow and Ice – timely post season feedback on S&I service, expectations during a snowstorm, weekend clearance expectations and safety message testing
- Roundabouts – general understanding, ease/comfort of use, how best to educate/communicate with the public
- Biking – reasons/barriers to biking, ideas to increase non-recreational use, bike map input
- Transparency & Public Trust – what does transparency look like, what an agency behaving transparently does? Topics of most interest and how much detail?
- Active Traffic Mgmt -- concept test of system (video), perceived benefits /value, tested symbol comprehension and named the program 'Smart Lanes'
- Smooth Roads – perceptions of road smoothness, driver impact from poor road conditions and [this summer] we'll drive customers over select roads to calibrate RQI
- Smooth Roads Ride Along – tested road smoothness (customers scored our pavements for smoothness as we drove them over varying levels of smooth/rough surfaces)
- Logo Signs – distance willing to travel from interchange/exit for services, inform the new 'attractions' postings
- Zipper Merge: understanding their interpretation of our intended lane drop merge scenario. Why won't Minnesotans use both lanes, was the question we tried to answer.





Closing the Loop & Acting on the Information:

MnDOT Process:

- 12 month rolling list of informational needs [leadership, districts/offices, steering committee, expert offices]
- Research summaries 2x monthly, updates reported in the off weeks
- Tracking use/decisions from results – a rule of engagement
- Closing the loop with customers – communicate how their feedback informed Mn/DOT plans/decisions . Video updates from Commissioner Sorel.





Mn/DOT A to Z	Home	Community Snapshots	FrontPage Reports
Payroll	<p>What is an online comm</p> <p>Mn/DOT created an online c dialogue with its customers related needs and issues.</p> <p>Mn/DOT will use the informa Members of this online custo Mn/DOT by sharing their per issues via online interactions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short video of Commis Mn/DOT (Aug. 2010) • Short video of Commis <p>About Mn/DOT's Online</p> <p>This online community consi population (age, income, ge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o 300 Greater Min o 300 Twin Cities <p>This is a private, invitation-c customer feedback, ideas ar brainstorming sessions, surv respondents to express thei</p>	<p>Daytime Headlight Use, Nov. 19, 2010</p> <p>Facebook and Twitter, Nov.16, 2010</p> <p>Curbing Highway Litter, Oct. 5, 2010</p> <p>Transportation System Draft Vision, Sept. 30, 2010</p> <p>Transparency Overview Oct. 25, 2010</p> <p>Late Merge, Sept. 17, 2010</p> <p>Interstate Logo Signs, Sept. 2, 2010</p> <p>What's on Customers Minds, Sept. 1, 2010</p> <p>Overhead Signs, Aug. 25, 2010</p> <p>Roundabouts, Aug. 9, 2010</p> <p>Smoothness of Roads, June 21, 2010</p> <p>Signage, May 26 2010</p> <p>Biking, May 12 2010</p> <p>Construction, April 27</p>	<p>Contact Us</p> <p>Quick Links</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > One Page Summary > FAQ > Question topics can be submitted (by office managers) through this form: Research Request Form <p><i>"An online community teaches Mn/DOT more about public opinion regarding some emerging topics such as transparency and government trust."</i></p> <p><i>Karla Rains</i></p> <p>community members how their input is used by</p> <p>community members (May, 2010)</p> <p>selected to demographically reflect Minnesota's</p> <p>s a day/seven days a week. It will provide</p> <p>ing, online interactions such as discussions,</p> <p>itude of issues. This type of setting allows</p> <p>their schedules allow.</p>
Benefits			
Workplace Environment			
Your Career			
Find People			
Find Help			
Documents			
About Mn/DOT			
Mn/DOT's Public Website			
511			





Y/E Feedback from the OLC customers (about the OLC)

“I am impressed that MnDOT is inviting a diverse group of people to give their opinions on a wide variety of transportation-related topics. Too few governmental agencies as well as corporations solicit opinions and ideas from their "clients" except on election days or by looking at the "bottom line.”

“A department of Government Pro-active; it must be mighty cold in hell! I love the fact that you are looking for input on how your department is run, the job it is doing and what is expected in the future! Great job! For me this says it all.”

“I am most pleasantly surprised that a State Agency would take the time and effort to get feedback from their clients.”





Y/E Feedback from the OLC customers (about the OLC)

"I have enjoyed knowing that I have a direct portal to express my concerns about the different issues involved with MN DOT's responsibilities. Also, i feel like my concerns are going directly to people who can make changes according to my concerns. I was surprised by the quick actions of reply to personal messages to MN DOT. I would like you to know that i appreciate what you have done with this community and thank you for empowering a few of us with such wonderful tools to communicate our concerns."

"I have learned a lot from seeing everyone else's thoughts and it is a welcome thing to be asked for my opinion. The information on how to enter into the zippered lanes at road constructions sites on highway was especially informative. and I thought the info given on roundabouts was needed and timely. Many good opinions on problems with getting used to using them correctly, signage etc The Amazon rewards were very helpful with our large family at Christmas and, in fact all year. Thanks."

It's nice to see that at least one government program is taking a more direct approach in learning what people are thinking, rather than the same small group of decision makers who may have gotten out of touch years ago. It's refreshing.



Some Study EXAMPLES: OLC Leads to Greater Understanding

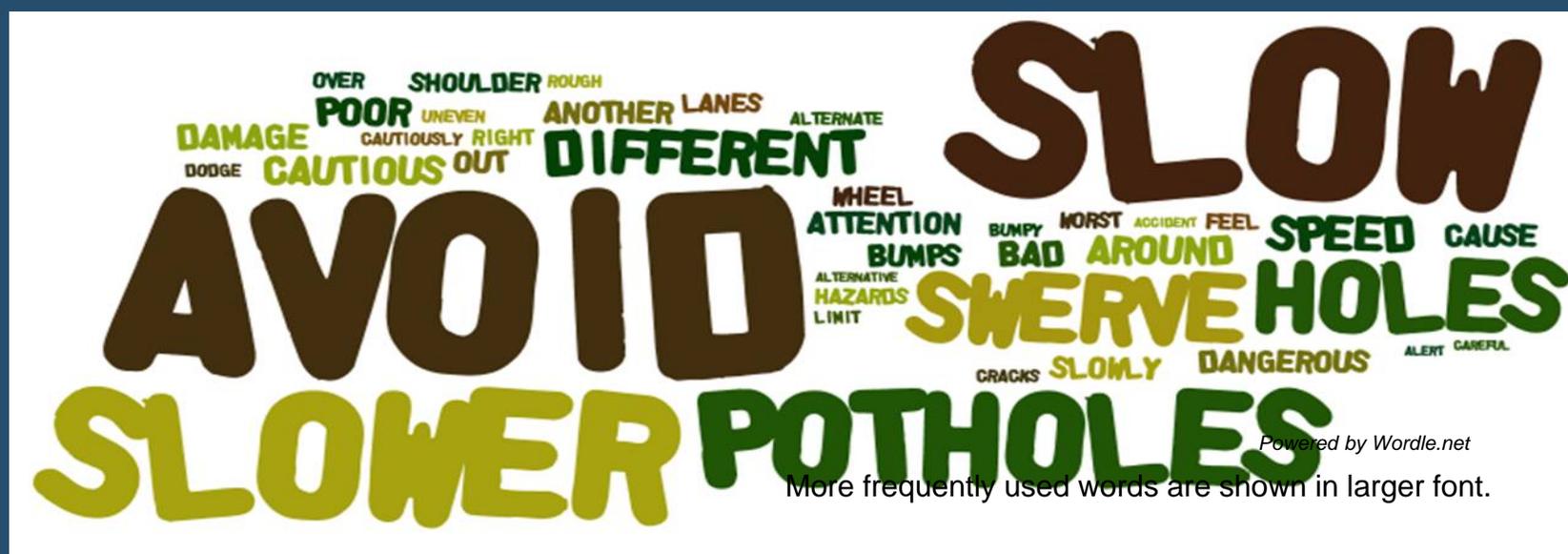
- Smoothness of Roads
- Late/Zipper Merge
- Transparency



Road Smoothness Online Customer Survey

Behavioral:

- About nine out of ten drivers say they drive *differently* when seeing/confronted with a poor road condition in front of them.
- Customers tell us that driving on roads in poor condition causes them to drive differently – which includes driving defensively, slowing down and swerving to avoid cracks that make for an uncomfortable ride or could appear to damage their vehicles.



Information captured not representative of the population, as a whole. This is intended to provide directional information about customer driving experiences

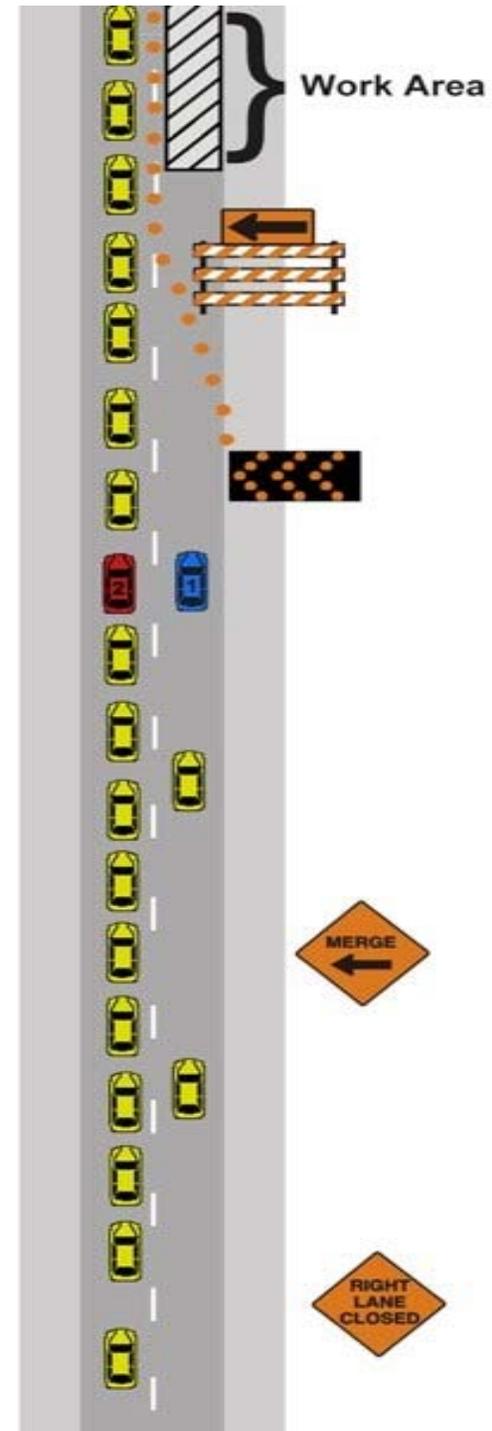
Customer Definition “poor road conditions” Encompasses Three Dimensions

How It Looks	How It Feels	How It Sounds
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>“Potholes, cracks.”</i> – <i>“Asphalt patches that aren't even with the rest of the roadway.”</i> – <i>“Cracked, lumpy, dingy, dirty, uneven, visibly over-repaired.”</i> – <i>“Many fixes on the seams ... looks like a spider web from multiple repairs.”</i> – <i>“Paint lines are difficult to see/worn.”</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>“A very bumpy ride, uneven.”</i> – <i>“If my soda is spilling all over, the road is in poor condition.”</i> – <i>“Like driving through a mine field to avoid the holes.”</i> – <i>“Feels like you are driving over a washer board. Just constant shaking or vibrating of the wheel.”</i> – <i>“Like you're riding atop an unbalanced clothes dryer as opposed to in a luxury automobile.”</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>“Excessive road noise.”</i> – <i>“Tire noise is louder and grating on the nerves.”</i> – <i>“So noisy that you can't hear the person sitting next to you.”</i> – <i>“Sounds like you should cringe while driving because the car will need servicing after getting off the road.”</i> – <i>“It sounds like you are riding a horse.”</i>



Late Merge/Zipper Merge Results

- Initial Awareness: 18% heard of this merging issue in media recently, 72% had not
- Current Behavior: shown a diagram of work zone with a lane drop in a congested scenario; most (80%) state they're early mergers, 18% late mergers.



Late Merge/Zipper Merge Results

So much for MN Nice: Among early mergers (**red car**):

- 18% would let late mergers in and wouldn't be bothered
- 65% would let late mergers in but I would be annoyed with them
- 14% would be upset enough to not allow them in

Late Merge Awareness: after viewing a video clip showing both lanes used until merge point and then taking turns cooperatively, this intended behavior was new to 40% (**60% claim to have already known, but only 80% actually were doing it**)



Late Merge/Zipper Merge Results

• WHY THEN? (if 60% know the intended behavior -- do only 18% late merge?)

- “I get over ASAP – I don’t want to be **“THAT GUY!”**”
- “...I usually think that those people are in a big hurry or very rude!”
- “...we all know people that want to cut in front of the line...”
- “It seems wrong initially”

• **Net, Net, we have multiple issues at play contributing to ongoing early merge behavior :**

- If aware, reluctant to act
- If not aware, think doing the right thing all along





Late Merge Recommendations

We can only change this through: **EDUCATION** and **COMMUNICATION**

- Broadly and boldly!
- Need enough people aware so that the intended behavior is 'common enough knowledge' that the majority don't feel the 'THAT GUY' stigma
- Communications Blitz – prior to and at the time of construction kick off, when we have their attention
- TV NEWS STORIES, State Fair presence - to help reach the masses, inexpensively





www.dothezippermerge.com



- “Do the Zipper Merge” educational campaign
- Raise public awareness and increase the number of motorists who use the zipper merge
- Campaign Components:
 - Outdoor billboards
 - Radios and television public service announcements
 - Website
 - Instructional video
 - Facebook page





Transparency: Our Understanding Grows....(OLC)

What Transparency Means:

...an honest and open effort by an organization to present its business to the public in an easy to understand manner...

Qualities of Transparency:

- Honesty
- Accessibility
- Disclosure
- Partnership; shared responsibility
- Timely

Topics of Highest (transparency) Interest:

1. Where transportation funds come from
2. How transportation funds are spent
3. Department goals and progress toward these goals (over time)
4. How projects are determined (prioritized) and by whom
5. Project timelines (and project progress updates)





THANK YOU!

Questions?

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