

# Unlocking the Audience

*Making Transportation Performance Reports that Work*

*presented to*

## **AASHTO SCOPM Task Force Communications Workshop**

*presented by*

**Cambridge Systematics, Inc.**

**Deb Miller**

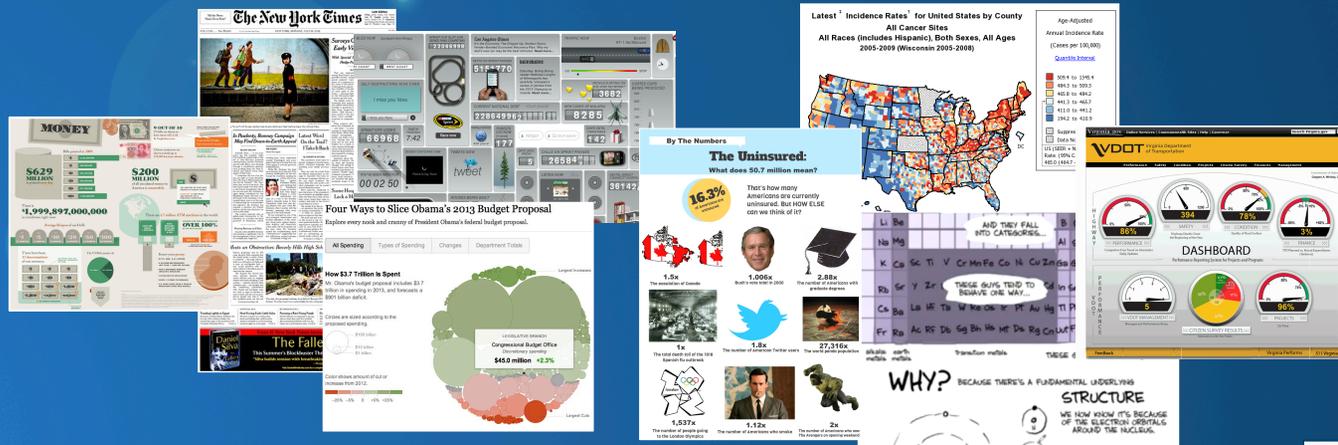
**March 25, 2013**

Transportation leadership you can trust.



# Project Overview

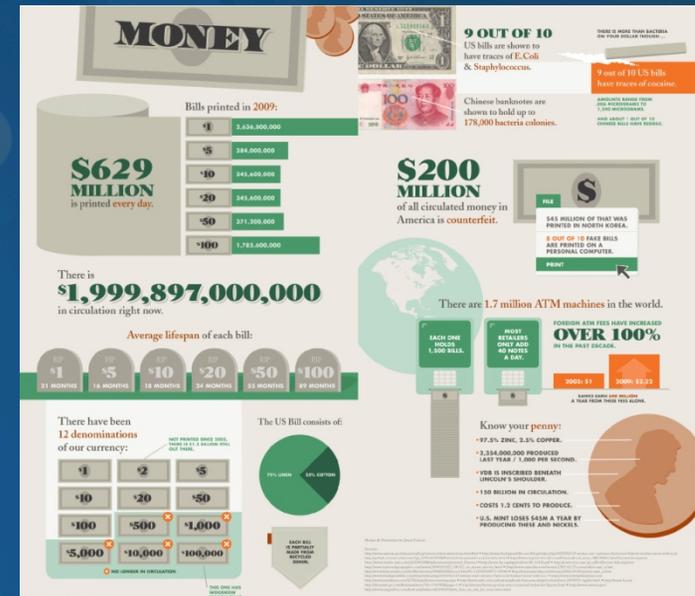
*Design an ideal transportation performance report that tells transportation stories that matter in a visually compelling way that the target audiences care about (general public, transportation professionals, elected officials).*



# Audience Preferences

## Data Visualization Experts

- Key findings and best practices
  - » Avoid distorting what the data have to say
  - » Encourage the eye to compare different pieces of data
  - » Maximize the “data-to-ink” ratio
  - » Shared visualizations can generate discussion



Source: www.richworks.in. For larger image, see <http://richworks.in/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/money.gif>

# Audience Preferences

## Data Visualization Experts (Cont.)

- Data visualization is a means of telling a story, and thus encouraging the viewer to reflect on the data
- The best kind of visualization, like the best kind of story, is one you can relate to



Source: Screenshot from OnwardCalifornia.com

# Audience Preferences

## Data Visualization Experts (Cont.)

### Contrasts Between Scientists and Lay Audiences (From *Making Data Talk*)

|  | Scientists | Lay audiences |
|--|------------|---------------|
| Sources and definition of acceptable evidence            | Narrow     | Broad         |
| Belief in rational decision making                       | Strong     | Variable      |
| Acceptance of uncertainty                                | High       | Low           |
| Level of interest in scientific topic                    | High       | Medium to low |
| Quantitative and science literacy                        | High       | Low           |
| Ability and interest to review extensive amounts of data | High       | Low           |

Source: *Making Data Talk: Communicating Public Health Data to the Public, Policy Makers, and the Press*

# Audience Preferences

## Words That Work

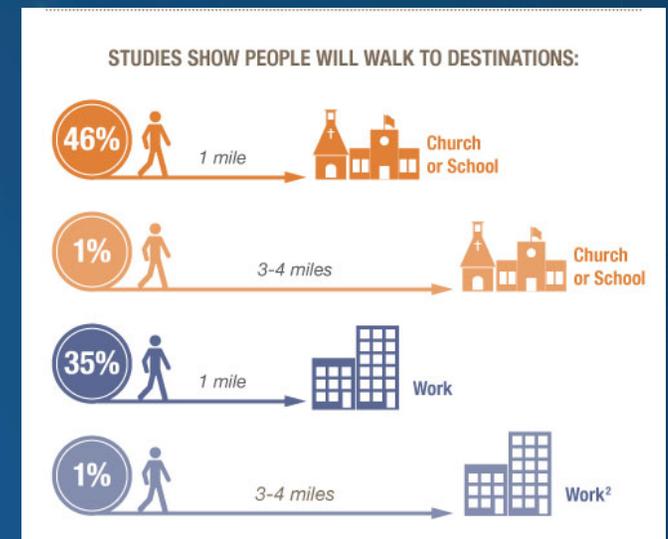
| Green Light Language           | Red Light Language              |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Accountability, responsibility | Maintenance, fixing             |
| Choice                         | Public spending, spending money |
| Comprehensive strategy         | Washington                      |
| Economy                        |                                 |
| Efficient traffic              |                                 |
| Long-term plan                 |                                 |
| State and local controlled     |                                 |
| Sustainable mobility           |                                 |

Source: AASHTO's *The New Language of Mobility*

# Audience Preferences

## Stories That Resonate

- Six general topics transportation professionals should focus on:
  - » Sustainable mobility
  - » Technology and modernization
  - » Long-term local planning
  - » Accountable spending
  - » Jobs and economic development
  - » Environmental impact



Source: Excerpt from Better Transportation Infographic by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

# Audience Outreach

## Outreach Meetings

- National Conference of State Legislators
- Congressional Staffers
- TPM Group
- AASHTO SCOPM Subcommittee
- IL Chamber of Commerce and Transportation for IL Coalition
- Council of State Governments
- Minnesota DOT On-line Community

## Participants

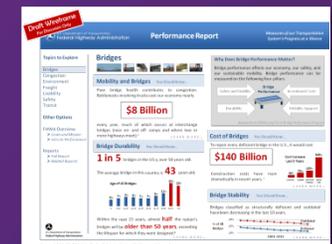
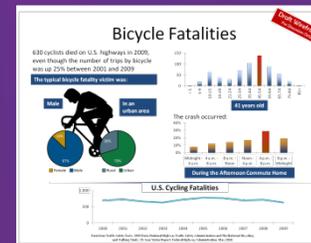
- ✓ General Public (over 200)
- ✓ Private Sector (about 10)
- ✓ Elected Officials (about 30)
- ✓ Transportation Pros (about 40)

# Audience Feedback

## What We Learned

- Personalize and localize
- Not just snapshots, trends, and context
- State-by-state comparisons
- Safety and funding primary interest
- Provide headlines and simple explanations
- Include an interactive tool

## Report Samples

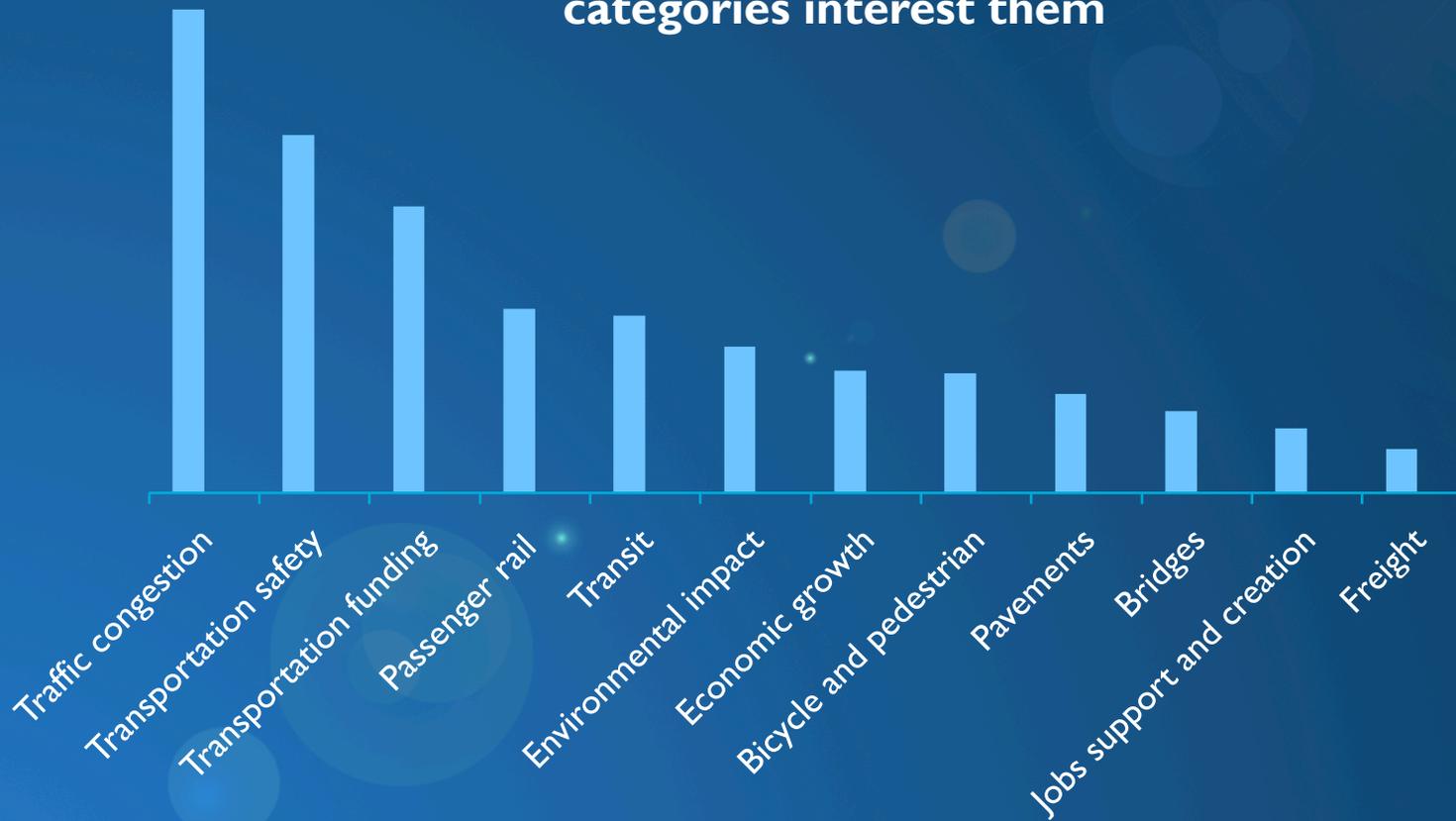


# Key Findings from MnDOT Community

- Interested in transportation topics that relate to *overall quality of life*. In particular, they have a desire to learn about *safety, traffic conditions, and budgetary funding*
- Interested in the ways transportation departments are being *proactive and planning for future transportation needs*
- Most interest when transportation info applies to *local news and facts* – alternatively, interest in transportation information diminishes as it becomes less local
- Most likely to share graphics that are easy to understand

# Key Findings from MnDOT Community

Residents share what transportation categories interest them



Compiled by: [communispace](#)

# Key Findings from MnDOT Community

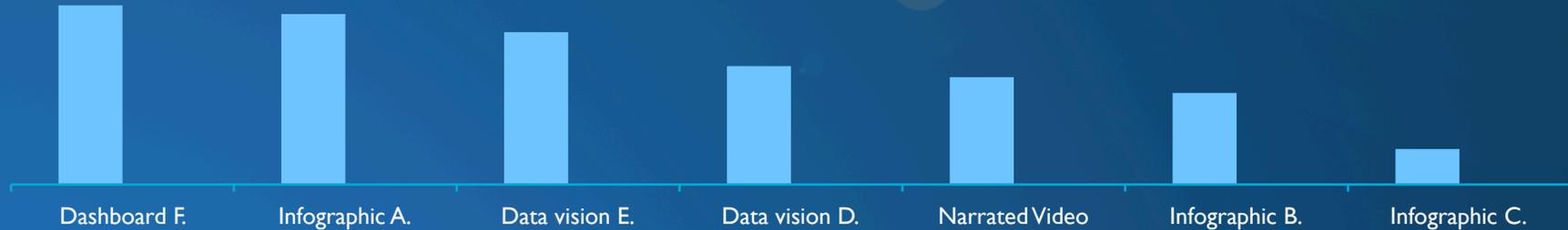
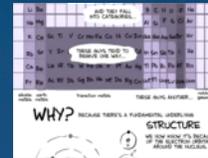
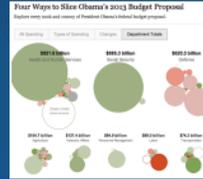
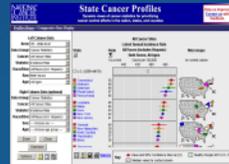
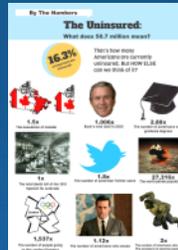
Residents share the geographic levels of transportation information that generate the most interest



Compiled by: [communispace](#)

# Key Findings from MnDOT Community

## Preferred display layouts



### Dashboard F.

- Clear/easy to understand
- Sleek
- Classy
- Straightforward
- Uncluttered

### Infographic A.

- Clear/easy to understand
- Easy to read
- Uncluttered
- Visually appealing

### Data vision E.

- Clear/easy to understand
- State by state analysis
- Subject matter is relevant
- You can manipulate the data
- Uncluttered

# What We Recommend

## To Reach Key Audience Groups...

- Be customer-centric, about transportation not FHWA
- Use narratives, connect to performance but don't lead with it
- Use headlines, simple explanations, put into context
- Reports need to be robust, changing
- Ability for users to share
- One report, provide for drill-down

## You Should Know...

- This is research to get insights and this represents “one way” we could do it, but it is one of many ways
- This is really preliminary; FHWA isn't going to put this out there tomorrow
- This is meant to be thought-provoking

# Sample National Transportation Performance Report Demo

Demo available at:

[http://camsys.com/FHWA\\_performance\\_report\\_demo/index.htm](http://camsys.com/FHWA_performance_report_demo/index.htm)

Please send comments to [dmiller@camsys.com](mailto:dmiller@camsys.com)

**THANKS FOR YOUR TIME!**