



## Pop-up Demonstrations As Public Engagement

**North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT)**

**Pop-up Demonstration Team:**

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## Pop-up Demonstrations As Public Engagement

Since the North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT) began developing its first 20-year Active and Public Transportation Plan, branded as ND Moves, staff felt it critical to reach out to the many advocates and users of the state's transportation systems. There was a number of public engagement methods involved in that effort, but the Pop-up Demonstrations were successful beyond our expectations. Getting and maintaining public interest in our modal plans has always been a challenge.

Bikes and pedestrians, as well as bus and public transit services are local, and connections to proposed statewide bike routes were needed to complete this planning effort. Design concepts that allow pedestrians, bikes, motorists, and transit to safely coexist are critical to activating public spaces. Active and public transportation connections to major local destinations, such as downtown, are required to maximize the benefits of these public investments.

Design concepts like traffic calming, shortened cross walks, curb extensions, buffered bike trails and other pedestrian amenities are concepts local governments, and their citizens, need to understand and use effectively to integrate travel modes safely.

Pop-up demonstrations are yet another name for small scale, low cost, short term demos that reflect the spatial implication of design concepts to gauge the community's reaction prior to full construction. We chose to call them 'Pop-up Demonstrations'.

Once we determined to use this method to garner public engagement in the plan, we invited communities statewide to participate



Rugby Volunteers Celebrate Installation

in an informational video conference (webinar) to explain the program and answer questions. There were nine communities that accepted our offer and their populations ranged from 2,000 to 70,000 people. These Pop-up Demonstrations were given limits of one intersection or one entire block for a period of one day to one month.

The NDDOT video conference content described what Pop-up Demonstrations consist of, as well as both NDDOT and each local public agency's responsibilities.

**NDDOT Provided Consultant Services to:**

- ◆ Coordinate planning, design, and installation
- ◆ Facilitate workshops to guide communities in concept selection, planning and design
- ◆ Create concept plans outlining design, materials, schedule and roles
- ◆ Develop customized data collection tools for demonstration evaluation, such as online surveys and hard copy surveys at the site

ND Moves Project Webpage



Volunteers Installing Enhanced Crosswalks

**Local Public Agencies Provided:**

- ◆ Identified location based on local goals
- ◆ Provided all demonstration supplies/materials
- ◆ Provided labor for installation (generally volunteers or city staff)
- ◆ Provided concept planning and event coordination and outreach
- ◆ Conducted pre- and post-demonstration evaluation(s) based on measures to assess local and state goals

The valuable public engagement data was collected in many different ways before, during, and after the implementation of each demonstration. Forms of public outreach included: public information posters; postcards; online surveys; online mapping, hardcopy surveys that participants could fill out at the site; and social media. Most communities used existing events (like Bismarck German Days, or a 4<sup>th</sup> of July rodeo) near the Pop-up Demonstration to create more public awareness of the demonstrations.

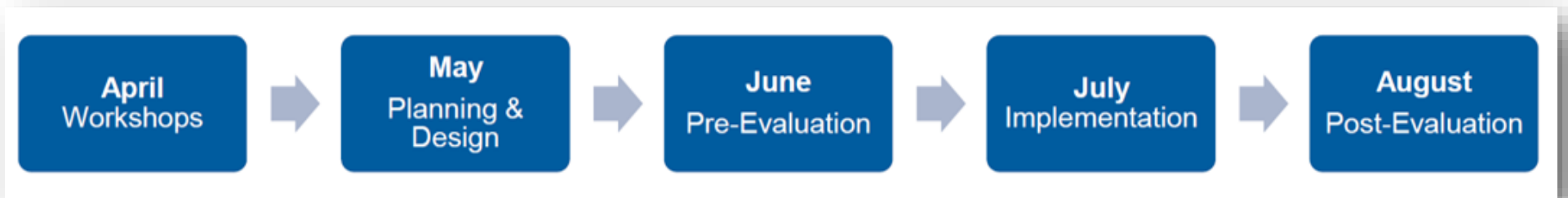
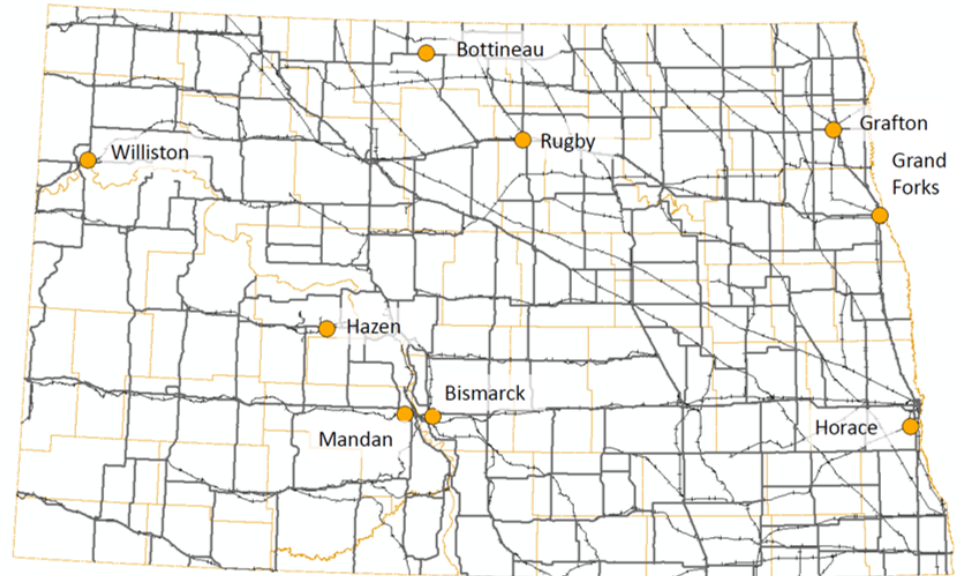
## Why did NDDOT undertake this effort?

Pop-up Demonstrations allowed NDDOT to:

- ◆ Create and maintain excitement locally and statewide for testing community design concepts fast and inexpensively
- ◆ Grow local interest and leadership
- ◆ Find an effective way to reach out and engage the public in concepts considered within ND Moves to improve safety when integrating modes of travel
- ◆ Test a new public involvement approach
- ◆ Introduce new concepts to a number of North Dakotans who wouldn't have typically been exposed to them

Most communities chose their downtowns as a critical local destination and how convergence of travel modes can be safely integrated to activate those public spaces. Pertinent concepts tested in these various Pop-up Demonstrations include:

- ◆ Curb bulb outs (extensions)
- ◆ Bike lanes
- ◆ Buffered bike lanes
- ◆ Back-in angled parking
- ◆ Roundabouts
- ◆ Sharrows
- ◆ Road Diets
- ◆ Landscaping and street furniture



Engagement Process Milestones

## What worked really well?

The demonstrations were very effective in collecting public interest and comments. These new concepts inspired a rich community dialog from motorists and pedestrians that experienced each demonstration concerning how effective the concepts might be, if made permanent.

Public comments were substantial, and greatly exceeded expectations. There were over 2,000 responses to the online survey and plenty of social media buzz concerning every aspect of these demonstrations. Other benefits included mode specific preferences, as people walking and biking had a positive response to concepts, while traffic calming techniques were not liked by motorists. It was also beneficial to have enhanced collaboration with other state agencies (ND Department of Health and ND Parks & Recreation) as well as interactions with local jurisdictions.



Posters Identified the Temporary Changes

These demonstrations appeared to be a highly effective means of getting public input on concepts that may be new to many communities. These efforts are intended to lead to informed decisions by motivated city officials on demonstrations that eventually connect local destinations with state bike routes as that system starts to materialize.

### Big takeaways:

- ◆ Bold colors can be both good and bad; If people don't like the color they may not like the whole concept and what it is trying to accomplish.
- ◆ Misunderstanding from the public that the Pop-up Demonstration (including colors and materials) was actually a permanent project.
- ◆ Use materials that can easily be changed, some Pop-up Demonstrations used a type of paint that was hard to wash off.
- ◆ Have an internal response team to respond to issues that were not anticipated.

A lessons learned document with input from consultants, communities and FHWA was developed to help us use this approach on future NDDOT public planning efforts.



Installations Usually Took Less Than One Day

## Our Motivation:

How can we stimulate citizen engagement statewide as well as locally? How can we devise a process that brings a very tangible human scale to long range modal plans? This effort gave us the opportunity to accomplish the goals above and enabled communities to test design concepts quickly and inexpensively. These short term, inexpensive Pop-up Demonstrations engaged the entire community in educational discourse about pedestrian facility improvement and public amenities.

Critical to the demonstrations' success was a very structured process. An approach where volunteers can keep track of necessary tasks, and end up with a successful Pop-up Demonstration. Each community had a wide variation of the number of staff and other local resources available to draw upon.

The process alone has engaged thousands of community citizens through the phases of concept development and execution. Local volunteers are now motivated and excited to make things happen. The value these 15 to 30 volunteers bring to their communities regarding leadership, will likely continue for many more years.

## Major Steps to conduct Pop-up Demonstrations:

- ◆ Webinar with interested communities / answer their questions / solicit participation
- ◆ NDDOT provided structured memos with information regarding steps and tasks
- ◆ Scheduled a local workshop to meet their organized volunteers, visit their sites and initiate the Pop-up Demonstration design effort
- ◆ Local promotional / education materials to build local support for funding
- ◆ Design Phase / NDDOT review and contract execution / promotional efforts
- ◆ Installation
- ◆ Monitor the demonstration
- ◆ Summarize and identify next steps

Each community chose their own concept and articulated a set of goals, such as better crosswalk protection or slower traffic, etc. Performance measures to measure before, during, and after were developed. Volunteers were organized to monitor these measurements as well.

A concluding demonstration summary report was prepared that included an analysis of public comment, the results of all comments, and a drawing that reflected successful concepts worthy of further consideration. This report will be helpful for city councils or commissions to consider pursuing permanent installations of successful elements.



NDDOT's Facebook Page Promoted Local Pop-up Demonstrations

Four of the nine communities are already moving summary recommendations toward realization. A fifth community put project plans on hold to test public reaction through this process and decided not to pursue the original permanent project due to comments received. All are well-informed decisions based upon information gained through these community Pop-up Demonstrations.

### Successes:

The post demonstration review suggested several major successes with these Pop-up Demonstrations:

1. Proved this method's viability to evoke useful comments
2. Garnered rapid public reaction (installed in less than one day with immediate and continuous responses)
3. Initiated conversations regarding new design concepts
4. Expanded public feedback
5. Offered mode specific preferences—people walking, biking, and using public transportation versus drivers
6. Enhanced collaboration with other state agencies and local jurisdictions



Temporary Roundabout in Mandan, ND

**ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS**

**DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS BRING ND MOVES DESIGN IDEAS TO LIFE!**  
This summer, nine communities across North Dakota are testing out new ideas for active transportation: Bottineau, Bismarck, Grafton, Grand Forks, Hazen, Horace, Mandan, Rugby, Williston

Demonstration projects use short-term, low-cost materials to spark long-term safety improvements for walking, bicycling, and driving. The projects help communities save money by testing new designs proposed as part of ND Moves. The projects are a partnership between the North Dakota Department of Transportation, North Dakota Department of Public Health, and local communities.

**BISMARCK**      **WILLISTON**      **BOTTINEAU**

**ND moves** active transportation & travel plan

What do you think? Have you tried out one of the demonstration projects? Take our brief survey to tell us what you think: [bit.ly/NDmoves](https://bit.ly/NDmoves)

ND Moves Website Promoted Local Pop-up Demonstrations

The sheer number of engaged citizens as measured by survey and social media activity exceeded all expectations. Social media reaction was substantial in every community and a conversation ensued regarding traffic calming and pedestrian facilities unlike other local issues these towns had experienced previously. Responses weren't all positive, as more citizens experienced these Pop-up Demonstrations from a vehicle. Traffic calming was not popular with motorists, but embraced by most pedestrians. It was important to know how the pop-up demonstrations were experienced, by foot or vehicle; so the results could include reaction from both user groups.

Long term success will take some time to materialize. A summary memo documented each Pop-up Demonstration that stated all the survey results and what elements might be carried forward to become a potential permanent installation, given their new informed perspective on these concepts. Some projects are already advancing toward implementation while others may take some years before all conditions converge to make them viable.



Collage of statewide Pop-up Demonstrations

## Evaluation Process

Pop-up Demonstrations are all about evaluations. Each of the nine communities devised a concept with stated goals, such as slowing traffic, increasing visitations, safer crosswalks, etc. Each community devised a matrix to measure how successful these goals became during the Pop-up Demonstration. Volunteers did the pre-demonstration baseline measurements (average speed, traffic counts, etc.) so they could compare how the concept performed during and after the demonstration was implemented.

Going forward, these nine communities have already defined measurements to test goals they desire in their public spaces. They have the tools necessary to test crossings for safe routes to school or other concepts they may choose to explore.

The results of these local monitoring activities, some quantitative and some qualitative, were summarized to help local decision makers make decisions regarding future improvements. These demonstrations also informed NDDOT's Active and Public Transportation Plan about the types of enhancements the public generally accepts or not.

## Innovative Public Engagement and Outreach

While traditional outreach approaches were also used to garner engagement, we chose to depart from our normal approaches and experiment with some techniques that stretched NDDOT outside its comfort zone. Public meetings, online surveys and mapping, demonstration webpage resources, stakeholder committees and coordination committees are traditional means NDDOT commonly uses.

Local community specific outreach tools were developed by the consultant team NDDOT hired to enhance public awareness. Additional forms of feedback collection included onsite comment poster displays, online and onsite survey instruments, Facebook, Twitter, individual interviews, and monitoring measures by local volunteers.

Volunteers met early one morning to do chalk layouts that required white tape and temporary paint to complete. As these valuable helpers



Volunteers Building a Temporary Planter



participated, the conversation began immediately with the workers to understand how shorter crosswalks, reverse parking and slow speed turns all contribute to a safer pedestrian environment. Educational materials were provided for newspaper press releases to let citizens know what was occurring and why, and how they can participate.

This effort provided genuine mode-specific public engagement that generated both qualitative and quantitative reactions to support decisions in a timely manner. The transparency provided by this methodology begins to change the public perception of transportation planning that is too complex to engage in meaningful conversations. This engagement tool will assist NDDOT with the design and development of this 20-year Active and Public Transportation Plan as well as other transportation planning efforts that can benefit from enhanced public engagement.



Local School Kids Created Sidewalk Art

## Any Questions?

Contact Staff

NDDOT Planning/Asset Management

Email: [Contact ND Pop-up Planning Staff](#)