

CLIENT

SEPTA: Southeastern
Pennsylvania Transit Authority

DATES

2021-2023

COLLABORATORS

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Portfolio Associates
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Meritt

REFERENCE

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BUDGET

~\$389,000

People
Reached



Over
7,000



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SEPTA's Bus Revolution project is a comprehensive bus network redesign, revisioning the system to reflect the changing needs of riders and potential riders in the region of 6 million people. Over the course of the four-year project, Connect the Dots has led Engagement Strategy and executed pop ups, in-person and virtual public meetings, a project bus tour, online and offline surveys, and online engagement and outreach. Each engagement phase layered a mix of tactics to raise awareness while supporting the incorporation of the voiced priorities of riders, focusing particularly on the inclusion of historically underrepresented groups. This effort has pioneered new forms of engagement for SEPTA, reaching over 70,000 participants so far to ensure that the needs of the public are being incorporated into the bus redesign, a transformative project with enduring impacts on the entire region

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

SEPTA Forward: Bus Revolution aims to improve bus transportation in the Philadelphia region, making it easier, faster, and more reliable. Launched in 2021, it is SEPTA's first comprehensive bus network redesign, aligned with the strategic plan "SEPTA Forward: A Vision for a Stronger Future."

CtD developed tailored engagement strategies for each phase of the project, prioritizing historically underrepresented communities, supporting outreach and engagement tactics throughout the multi-year project.

SERVICES PERFORMED

Working with multiple partner firms, CtD led the development of a multi-pronged outreach and engagement strategy to include a vast array of stakeholder and public voices across all phases of the project.

Phase 1: Developed network vision and public input opportunity.

- 330+ individuals engaged through in-person pop-ups at transit centers.
- 7,000+ online survey responses on trade-offs and network priorities.
- 130+ participants attended virtual Transit Talks.

Phase 2: Focused on two potential scenarios based on public input.

- SEPTA's project bus reached thousands at regional events, engaging with hundreds of people, particularly in historically underrepresented areas with high ridership.
- Virtual Community Conversations were held online in all service area communities, providing detailed information about the proposed network options to several hundred participants.
- An interactive online ArcGIS StoryMap allowed the public to explore information and provide feedback on the proposed networks.





Phase 3: Release of first draft of new bus network.

- In-person Open Houses were reimagined as fall-themed community gatherings with decorations, local food, games, DJ, and raffles. Hundreds participated, viewing the draft network and asking questions.
- Extensive outreach for each event, including community attendance, street flyers, relationship building with community groups, and more. Average of 60 community members per event, with largest events reaching over 300.
- CtD convened roundtables with SEPTA leadership, rebuilding trust in three key communities with past engagement distrust and high impact from proposed bus network changes.

Phase 4: Release of Updated Draft Network and communication efforts.

- CtD assisted in creating outreach materials, ensuring effective strategy and wording.
- Consultant team hosted 17 Open Houses, including seven by CtD, providing participants with the opportunity to view the Updated network and address questions with SEPTA with local community accessibility prioritized.
- Outreach conducted through phone calls, texts, emails, and creative postings in local Facebook groups and WhatsApp chats.
- CtD contributed to the creation of Transit Talks, virtual webinars for participants to learn about the Updated Draft Network.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

Engagement Outcomes:

- Bus Revolution garnered active participation from over 70,000 individuals in the initial three phases of public input. It will return in Spring 2023 with an updated draft bus network, additional public processes, and a clear implementation timeline.
- CtD's crucial involvement ensured integration of rider perspectives and needs across the region, ensuring the future network reflects their input with final plan set to be released in late 2023.

Insights and Implications:

- The upcoming updated draft bus network will integrate insights and feedback gathered from extensive engagement, resulting in a more responsive and rider-centered transportation system, accompanied by public processes and implementation timeline.
- The release of the final plan in late 2023 signifies a significant milestone in SEPTA's bus network modernization efforts. It reflects collaborative community input and sets the stage for an efficient and inclusive public transportation system.

