

Maximizing Data from Customer Feedback Surveys



Customer feedback surveys are an important source of data for transit agencies. This worksheet guides you through designing a survey that gives you valuable information to make decisions and respond to customer needs or pain points.

Step 1: Goals

What specific information do you want to get from this survey?
e.g. Popular origins and destinations
Would people in an area use the service if you expand to that area?

What do you think the response will be? What is your hypothesis?

Step 2: Resources

What resources do you have to distribute the survey and break down the data? (There is more information on page 3 about survey distributions)

\$ _____

Staff Hours _____

Other resources (eg. survey software): _____

Step 3: Your Audience

Knowing who you need to get information from will help you plan how to distribute it and what to ask.
Who do you want to hear from in this survey?

What are your goals in terms of survey result numbers? The standard for acceptable response rates is anything above 25% of your desired population, but as low as 5% can still give you good answers if you have a larger audience. The more responses you get the greater confidence you can have in your survey. There are online calculators to see how many responses you should aim for to be confident in your answers (see the good resources section on the next page).

How will you tell if your desired audience is responding? Are there screening questions you can ask at the beginning of the survey like "Have you ridden the Number 3 bus this month?" to weed out responses? This will help you see if you are reaching your target audience and eliminate answers outside of it. What screening question could you ask?

Step 4: Questions

Think hard about what information will help you make a decision based on your goals, and then how to get that from respondents.

With data collection, remember garbage in, garbage out. If you ask a bad or poorly worded question, you won't get helpful or usable data.

Good questions are:

- Clear- Specific and to the point
- Concise- Short questions written with simple sentences
- Neutral- Not leading respondents to any answer
- Written in simple language- Most public communications aim for a 6th-grade reading level

Break down all the specific information you **NEED** to achieve the goal of this survey:

Design questions to get those specific answers, remembering to keep it specific and clear. Multiple-choice questions give you quantitative data that is easier to analyze

Other things to consider:

- How long do you want your survey to be open for? Surveys with fewer questions don't need as long of a time period. Aim for 2-6 weeks depending on the survey length
- How does this survey work with your other customer outreach plans? Evaluate any existing plans at your agency to make sure you aren't constantly surveying people
- What tool will you use to break down the data? Do you have access to any software such as SPSS or Power BI to help break down or view data. A smaller data set can be analyzed easily in Excel or Google Sheets.
- Is this an opportunity to work with a local college for help with data breakdown? If you don't have the staff capacity or if there is a lack of skills, you could partner with a local college or university to see if a student would want to work on this as a project.

Good resources to look at for survey design and distribution

- [N-CATT Worksheet: Collecting and Analyzing Customer Feedback Data](#)
- [Oregon DOT On-Board Passenger Survey Guide](#)
- [Transit App Rider Happiness Benchmark report Spring 2024](#)
- [Enjoying loyalty: The relationship between service quality, customer satisfaction, and behavioral intentions in public transit](#)
- [NADTC: Transportation Survey Questions](#)
- [Public Transit Rider Origin-Destination Survey Methods and Technologies](#)
- [Conducting Onboard Transit Rider Surveys with Electronic Handheld Tablets: An Agencywide Consolidated Approach](#)
- [Identifying Massachusetts' Core Transit Riders Using Household Travel Survey Data](#)
- [Writing Good Survey Questions: 10 Best Practices](#)
- [Survey Research Methods: The Right Way to Reach Respondents](#)
- [How to identify and reach your target market with surveys](#)
- [The Complete Guide to Acceptable Survey Response Rates](#)
- [How many survey responses do I need to be statistically valid? Find your sample size- with calculators](#)

Step 5: Survey Distribution

What method works best with your goals and needs? It likely won't be just one, but look at your goals and what resources you have to see which method, or combination of methods, will work best. There are differences between paper vs digital surveys and how those can be used, and what drawbacks both have. Look at the table below to see a breakdown of some of the distribution methods.

Distribution method	Is it financially costly?	Costly in staff time?	Does it give you digital data?	Other Notes
On your website	No	No	Yes	Easy method of promotion. Does rely on people using the website
On your social media	No, unless you promote it. Ads cost between \$15 and \$200 a day	No	Yes	Easy method, does rely on people following you on social media
On your app	No	Potentially, depending on the backend work	Yes	Again depends on people's access and use of technology, and if you are able to add information like this to your app
On The Transit App	Cost isn't disclosed	No	Yes	Uncertainty about data ownership.
A QR code at transit centers or on the vehicle	Minimal printing costs	There is a small cost in installation	Yes	People can put a different QR over the one you use that could lead people to scam sites
Direct mailer	Yes, according to USPS estimate \$1000 for mailers to 1000 homes	Yes	No, unless you include a link or QR code	Helpful if you are targeting a specific geographic audience, or if you know your audience's addresses. You will need to manually enter data. You might need to purchase address lists
Paper surveys passed out on board or at transit centers	Yes	Yes	No	You can target specific routes, transfer centers, and stops easily, but you will have to manually enter data.

Step 6: Do the survey and evaluate the data! If you have any questions during the planning and design or with your data, email helpdesk@n-catt.org