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Issue 47

## Public Engagement from a Distance

In order to protect the health of all Ohioans, and in accordance with the executive orders issued by Governor of the State of Ohio, government agencies have been finding ways to conduct meaningful public engagement while practicing social distancing.

Ohio's General Assembly has *enacted legislation* allowing for open public meetings to be conducted virtually; ODOT's Office of Environmental Services has issued guidance on *how to conduct online engagement for NEPA processes*; and local governments throughout the state are experimenting with new digital techniques.

Many of the digital tools that are being relied on during the COVID-19 pandemic will broaden the definition and scope of public engagement on all future projects. Planners and engineers can use this opportunity to learn new techniques and help create new opportunities to gather meaningful feedback from their communities.

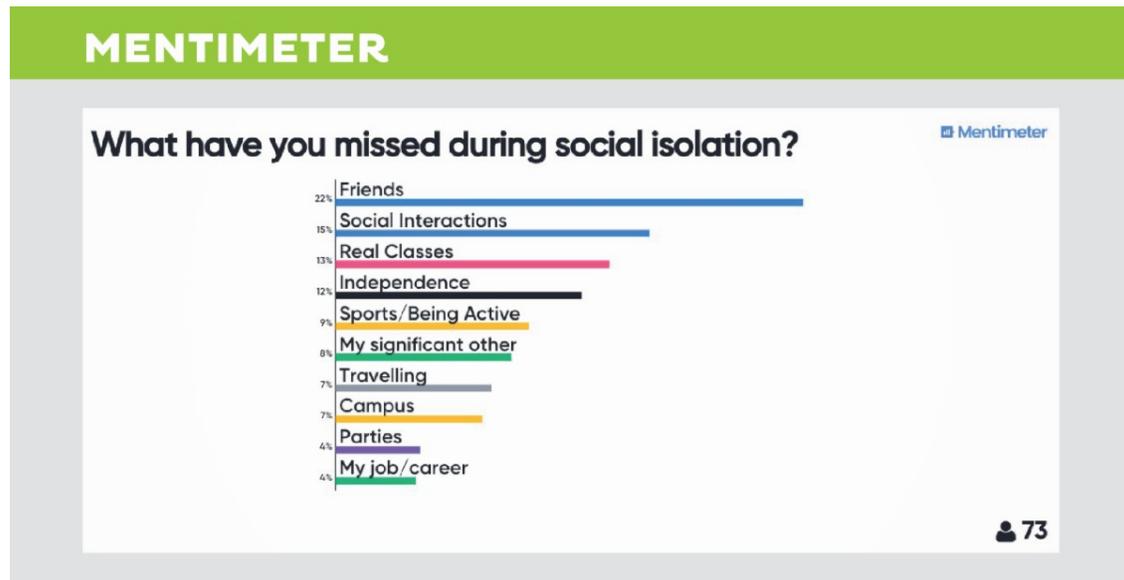
### Quick Tips for Successful Online Public Meetings

Whether you are planning a major public event or smaller stakeholder meetings, these strategies can help you design meaningful, online public engagement using a video conference platform such as Zoom, WebEx or other platforms.

- Send materials in advance.
- Plan ahead for reaching hard-to-reach groups. At a minimum, ensure meetings are offered at multiple times of the day and the meeting is well-advertised through community partners.
- Begin the meeting with a quick technology tutorial.

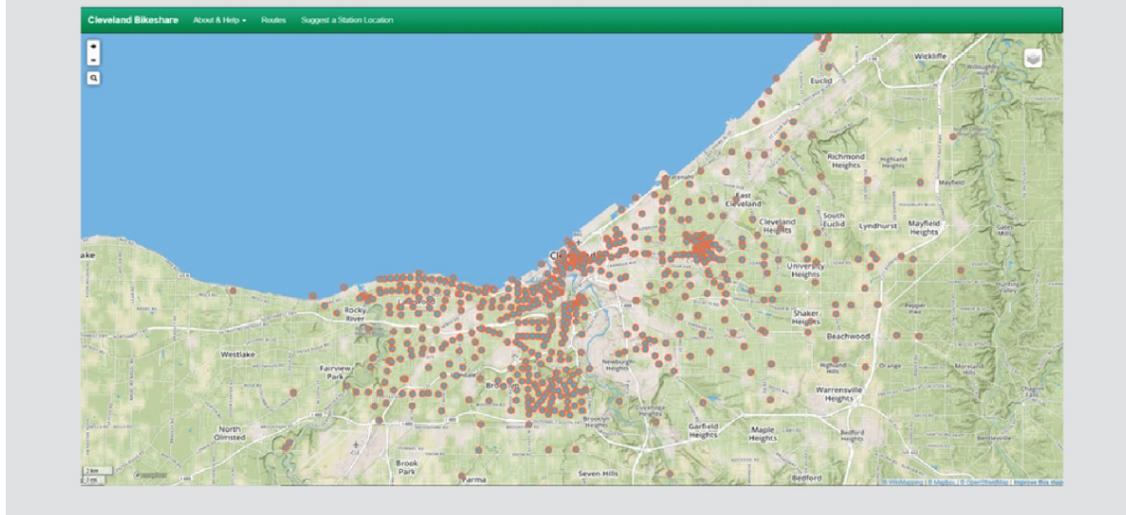
- The traditional format of a presentation followed by a Q and A session is a good place to start...
- ...But it's helpful to consider ways to keep your audience engaged even without things like eye contact or body language. One way to do this is to incorporate an interactive online polling tool into your presentation.
- Invite people to submit comments in multiple ways both during the meeting and as a follow-up – such as a phone hotline, email or Google form.
- Record live sessions and post them online.

### Conduct Digital Polling During Your Meeting



Live polling – such as *Mentimeter*, *Poll Everywhere* or built-in options in many video conference applications – allows you to ask meaningful questions during a virtual meeting. This can help with measuring public opinion, keeping audience members interested and tracking participants' progress during a training. For the best response rates, write succinct questions that can be answered with a yes or no or one word answer.

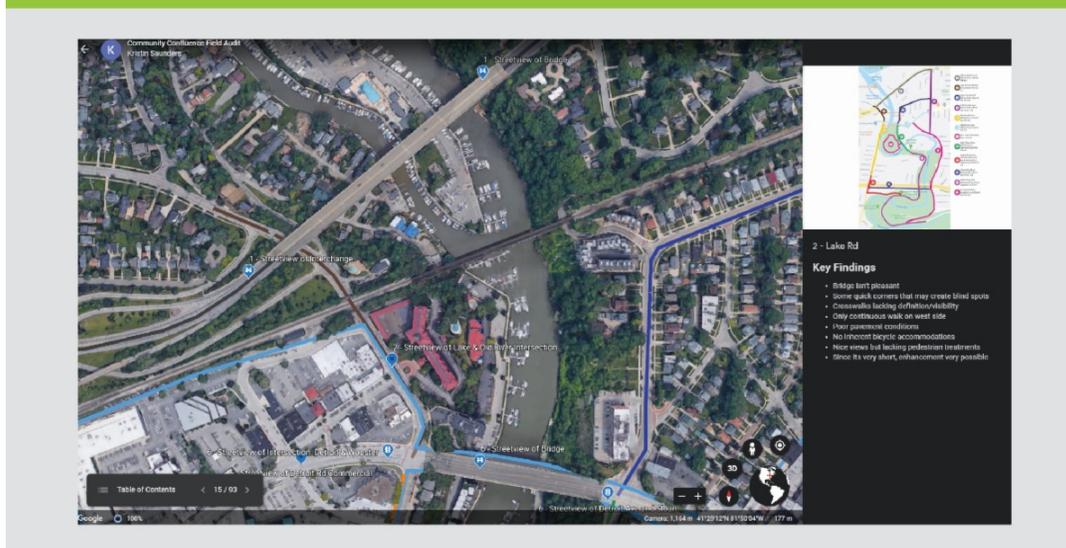
### Interactive Web Maps



Interactive, digital maps are another great way to gather stakeholder and public feedback during a meeting. [WikiMaps](#) allow users to draw their own biking or walking routes or point out difficult intersections. [ArcGIS Storymaps](#) can walk users through multiple, complex datasets while also asking for feedback. Or, a simple shared [Google map](#) can often do the trick if you just need high-level comments.

## Virtual Field Audits

### GOOGLE EARTH



**Walk audits** are in-person assessments of the conditions for walking or biking in a given area. While you can't host a group walk audit at this time, you can give people materials to conduct a solo walk audit while maintaining social distance:

- Customize a standard walk audit form to your project and ensure there are self-guided instructions. [AARP's Walk audit toolkit](#) is a good place to start
- Distribute forms to volunteers and partners and, if your project area is

large, assign individuals to specific locations.

- Compile feedback into a digital presentation to share with your participants. Consider using a map-based presentation format such as [\*Google Earth Projects\*](#) or [\*GIS Storymaps\*](#) to compile photos and virtually “walk” through the area together.

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## Additional Resources

- The Ohio Chapter of the American Planning Association has compiled COVID-19-related [\*tools and resources specifically for planners\*](#)
- Tips on public engagement from ODOT partner [\*Toole Design Group\*](#)
- The national Safe Routes partnership on [\*equitable engagement\*](#) given today’s circumstances



## Announcements

- Schools may be closed, but we can still celebrate Walk and Bike to School Day at a distance. Check out [\*some ideas\*](#) for the week of May 4th.
- And, May is (still) Bike Month! [\*Find resources from the League of American Bicyclists.\*](#)
- The National Highway Institute has a new, free [\*Bicycle Facility Design\*](#) web-based training course available to anyone seeking to learn more about planning and designing bicycling facilities.
- Interested in bicycle and pedestrian safety? Help ODOT update the Strategic Highway Safety Plan’s bicycle and pedestrian emphasis area plan on Wednesday, June 3. [\*RSVP\*](#) for meeting details!

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## Questions? Feedback?

Drop us a line, [\*bikeohio@dot.ohio.gov\*](mailto:bikeohio@dot.ohio.gov)

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## 2020 YEAR TO DATE DEATHS IN OHIO



**2**

BICYCLIST



**38**

PEDESTRIAN

## 2019 YEAR TO DATE DEATHS IN OHIO

**1** BICYCLIST

**39** PEDESTRIAN

\*As of April 30, 2020

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