AASHTO Innovation Initiative

[Proposed] Nomination of Innovation Ready for Implementation

Sponsor

Nominations must be submitted by an AASHTO member DOT willing to help promote the innovation. If selected, the sponsoring DOT will be asked to promote the innovation to other states by participating on a Lead States Team supported by the AASHTO Innovation Initiative.

1. Sponsoring DOT (State): California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)

2. Name and Title: Dr. Lima Saft, District 11 Innovation Team Chair

   Organization: Caltrans District 11

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Innovation Description (10 points)

The term "innovation" may include processes, products, techniques, procedures, and practices.

3. Name of the innovation:

Social Pinpoint

4. Please describe the innovation.

A virtual engagement hub to supplement traditional in-person meetings during the COVID-19 Pandemic. In October 2020, Caltrans District 11 released the Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Interstate 15 (I-

15)/State Route 78 (SR-78) Managed Lanes Direct Connectors Project ("Project"), which kicked off a 30-day public comment period for project scoping. This virtual "town hall" for the scoping period enabled stakeholders and the public to learn more about the Project and submit comments while adhering to local and state "stay-at-home" orders. The web-based platform expanded on traditional outreach methods with a broad set of tools allowing participants to engage with: (1) virtual public scoping meeting stations and pages with recorded scoping meetings and Project videos; (2) interactive map of the Project study area with drag-and-drop pin, comment, and mark-up features; (3) electronic surveys and polling; and (4) the Project timeline and milestones, social media, and contact information. The technology proved successful for project scoping and is now used in partnership by the San Diego Association of Government (SANDAG) and Caltrans District 11 on joint planning projects and programs.

5. What is the existing baseline practice that the innovation intends to replace/improve?

Traditional print and outreach methods for stakeholder and public comment, surveying, and engagement.

6. What problems associated with the baseline practice does the innovation propose to solve?

The COVID-19 Pandemic forced transportation officials and practitioners to rethink the status quo of stakeholder and community engagement and focus on deploying creative virtual methods to reach as many as possible. Social Pinpoint evolved as a platform best suited to overcome challenges of limited in-person meetings and avoid project scoping delays by providing a one-stop shop for continuous, active engagement, and ideation. The platform integrates ArcGIS data and shapefiles into simple online map, pin-drop, and commenting features that enable users to interact with project features, study areas, and neighboring impacted areas. Users are provided instructional videos and redirected to project polls and surveys. Caltrans District 11 and SANDAG utilize this virtual engagement platform to expedite data extraction and comment categorization throughout the project scoping period and to address public concerns early in the process.

7. Briefly describe the history of its development.

Developed by third-party firm for use by local governments and consultants to conduct virtual stakeholder and community engagement. Caltrans District 11 first used this web-based platform in partnership with SANDAG on the Project as part of the public scoping period in October 2020 and into the environmental review. The software has since been adopted by SANDAG with Caltrans District 11 for several partner programs and projects in 2021, including five Comprehensive Multimodal Corridor Plans and the Los Angeles-San Diego (LOSSAN) Corridor Regional Rail Alignment Study.

8. What resources—such as technical specifications, training materials, and user guides—have you developed to assist with the deployment effort? If appropriate, please attach or provide weblinks to reports, videos, photographs, diagrams, or other images illustrating the appearance or functionality of the innovation (if electronic, please provide a separate file). Please list your attachments or weblinks here.

1. YouTube Video: Welcome from the Corridor Director and How to Use Social Pinpoint
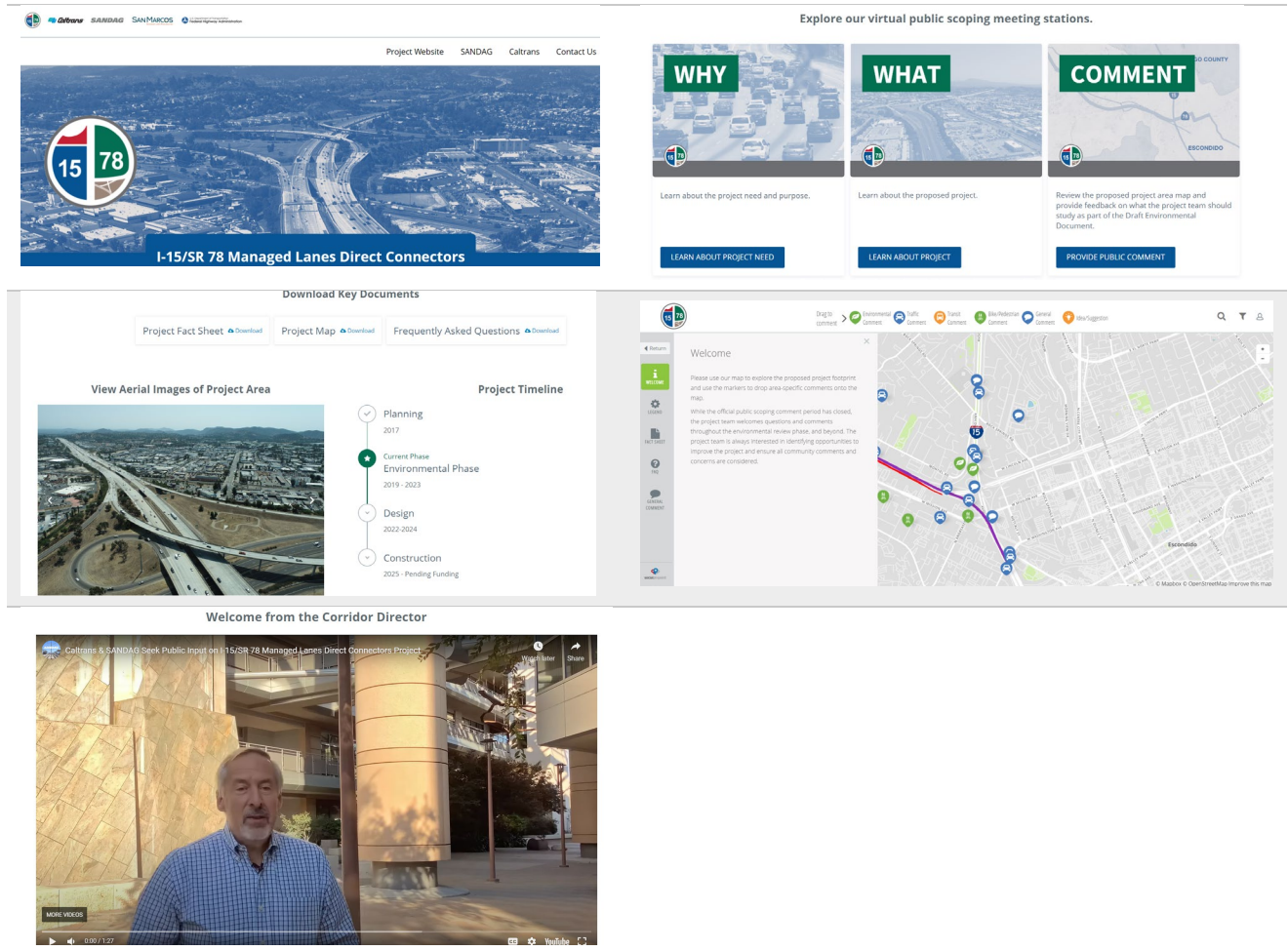
https://youtu.be/25JrIjWqrqo

2. YouTube Video: How to Use the Interactive Map Feature

https://youtu.be/EZcoTaHRz-E

3. YouTube Video: Oct 29, 2020 Virtual Public Scoping Meeting

https://youtu.be/kcHqEHhu3oM

Attach photographs, diagrams, or other images here. If images are of larger resolution size, please provide as separate files.

State of Development (40 points)

Innovations must be successfully deployed in at least one State DOT. The AII selection process will favor innovations that have advanced beyond the research stage, at least to the pilot deployment stage, and preferably into routine use.

9. How ready is this innovation for implementation in an operational environment? Please select from the following options. Please describe.

☐ Prototype is fully functional and yet to be piloted

☐ Prototype has been piloted successfully in an operational environment

☐ Technology has been deployed multiple times in an operational environment

☒ Technology is ready for full-scale implementation

Technology is ready for full-scale implementation and is used nationwide by metropolitan planning organizations and local governments. This includes the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG), Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG), and the City of Durham.

10. What additional development is necessary to enable implementation of the innovation for routine use?

No additional development necessary.

11. Are other organizations using, currently developing, or have they shown interest in this innovation or of similar technology? ☒ Yes ☐ No

If so, please list organization names and contacts. Please identify the source of this information.

Organization	Name	Phone	Email
San Diego Association of Governments	Tedi Jackson	+1 (619) 595-5313	tedi.jackson@sandag.org

Potential Payoff (30 points)

Payoff is defined as the combination of broad applicability and significant benefit or advantage over baseline practice.

12. How does the innovation meet customer or stakeholder needs in your State DOT or other organizations that have used it?

Virtual engagement enables flexibility from agencies and meaningful participation by stakeholders. Practitioners benefit from this type of innovation in the post-COVID-19 environment whereby hybrid virtual activities and virtual presences are expected to remain. The all-in-one consolidation of tools, surveys, and GIS-functionality offers agencies a suite of digital strategies to maximize potential reach and drive-down costs associated with traditional outreach methods. This provides time and resourced strapped agencies the capabilities to actively address community-identified issues in real-time and develop data-driven solutions.

13. Identify the top three benefit types your DOT has realized from using this innovation. Describe the type and scale of benefits of using this innovation over baseline practice. Provide additional information, if available, using quantitative metrics, to describe the benefits.

Benefit Types	Please describe:
Improved Customer Service	Virtual engagement hubs provide agency practitioners and partners with the virtual tools to reach a wide range of stakeholders in times of rapid change and uncertainty. Interactive features on the Social Pinpoint platform enable more functionality when hosting virtual project scoping meetings and documents, as well as for soliciting stakeholder feedback and comments beyond traditional review periods.
Organizational Efficiency	Consolidation of functional (public information offices) and technical units (subject matter experts) encourages alignment on stakeholder-identified issues and goals. Virtual presence allows agencies to save on time and resources compared with traditional in-person public meetings (space rental, a/v equipment, printing, etc.)
Other (please describe)	Virtual engagement hubs provide additional pages for non-English translations and accessible web formatting.

Provide any additional description, if necessary:

14 How broadly might this innovation be deployed for other applications. in the transportation industry (including other disciplines of a DOT, other transportation modes, and private industry)?

This web-based platform is currently in use in partnership by SANDAG and Caltrans District 11 on several planning projects and programs throughout the San Diego Region and is well-suited for a range of stakeholder and community engagement activities. The web-based platform and services are customizable for public- or private-sector use. Interactive map-based tools for stakeholder ideation and public comment allow agencies to address issues that extend beyond transportation and into community-identified concerns.

Market Readiness (20 points)

The AII selection process will favor innovations that can be adopted with a reasonable amount of effort and cost, commensurate with the payoff potential.

15. What specific actions would another organization need to take along each of the following dimensions to adopt this innovation?

Check boxes that apply	Dimensions	Please describe:
☐	Gaining executive leadership support	
☐	Communicating benefits	
☒	Overcoming funding constraints	Software licensing costs based on number of projects and length of uses.
☒	Acquiring in-house capabilities	Staff must be trained on back-end content moderation and software integration.
☒	Addressing legal issues (if applicable) (e.g., liability and intellectual property)	Sites may be subject to ADA compliance on web accessibility.
☐	Resolving conflicts with existing national/state regulations and standards	
☒	Other challenges	Outreach strategy must be developed to increase awareness and maximize use.

16. Please provide details of cost, effort, and length of time expended to deploy the innovation in your organization.

Cost: Costs of software utilization by public agencies variable depending on single, multiple, or annual unlimited project use. Single project is estimated at $2,000 and ten projects estimated at $10,000.

Level of Effort: Minimal technical effort required as design utilizes templates and requires simple back-end upload of webpage content, colors and branding, and forum moderation. Map-editing tools and ArcGIS integration available with training and support provided by software developer.

Time: 2 weeks to 1 month. Level of effort required similar to preparation for public workshop or outreach.

17. To what extent might implementation of this innovation require the involvement of third parties, including vendors, contractors, and consultants? If so, please describe. List the type of expertise required for implementation.

Agencies will need to work with third-party software developer to acquire license for software as a service. This will require resources upfront. Support and training are provided by software developer as project information and content will need to update on a regular basis. This may require time commitments on behalf of participating agency if consultants are not utilized. Agencies will need to be proficient in use of social media for online marketing of virtual engagement hub and pages.