

APPENDIX B

DivisionConnects Focus Group Findings Report



TO: Jason Lien, SRTC & Mike Tressider, STA
FROM: Shireen Khinda & Christine Varela, DH
DATE: October 14, 2020
RE: DivisionConnects Focus Group Findings Report – Round 1

DivisionConnects Focus Group Findings Report – Round 1

INTRODUCTION

As a part of broader public outreach and community engagement efforts, the DivisionConnects project team conducted two focus groups to engage the public in conversation about the future of the Division corridor. The following is a brief memo report recapping round one of the DivisionConnects focus groups which took place on October 7th and 8th, 2020 via Zoom.

In total, there were 14 focus group participants. Their perspectives and feedback are reflected in this report throughout four sections for the project team's review and consideration:

- **Key context** – Page 2
 - Recruitment details
 - Travel habits
- **Potential improvements** – Page 3
 - Challenges
 - Improvement ideas
- **Aspects to maintain** – Page 8
- **Inspiration for the future of Division** – Page 9
 - Admire
 - Avoid

Additionally, this report includes an appendix with the following content:

- **Appendix** – Page 10
 - Focus group recruitment methodology
 - Participant demographics
 - Focus group discussion questions
 - Also includes quantitative data captured during Zoom Polls



KEY CONTEXT

Recruitment details

Focus group participants were recruited through diligent email and phone outreach efforts. After building a list of contacts and engaging almost 400 organizations along the Division corridor, including neighborhood groups, churches, schools, government organizations, business development organizations and private businesses, 15 individuals responded with interest in volunteering for a 90-minute virtual focus group via Zoom. Of the 15 respondents, 14 participants were able to attend.

Participants were informed that their feedback and ideas, as well as thoughts from our other focus group participants, will help inform proposed alternatives and shape the Division Street corridor. Participants were encouraged to provide honest, open feedback and represent not only their own interests, but also the interests of their customers, employees and stakeholders where relevant.

Additional focus group recruitment details and participant demographics are provided in the Appendix.

Travel habits

At the start of the focus group discussion, two quantitative questions were asked using a Zoom Poll feature to better understand the participants' travel habits. (Note: One participant had to leave the focus group early and their responses were not captured in the poll questions.)

For Question 1 regarding modes of transportation used when traveling along Division Street, all but one of the 13 focus group participants who took the poll indicated they drive a car alone along Division Street. Additionally, five participants indicated they walk along Division, four participants take a bus, two participants use a scooter and one participant bikes.

For Question 2 regarding why they travel along Division Street, all participants who took the poll (13 individuals) indicated they go shopping, run errands or recreate along Division Street. Almost half of the participants indicated they live or own property near Division Street.

Discussion questions and further quantitative data regarding travel habits are provided in the Appendix.



POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS

Overall, participants' feedback reflected an understanding that Division Street is not ideal for any specific mode of transportation – driving, transit, walking, biking or using a scooter.

In particular, **several challenges** were identified by participants, such as:

- Safety
 - Lack of space when walking, biking or using a scooter next to vehicle traffic lanes
 - One participant shared, “I will occasionally walk, and it often feels a bit crowded or frantic. I don’t usually enjoy my experience walking on the sidewalk on Division.”
 - Another shared, “A separation between the sidewalk and the road personally would feel safer.”
 - Need for improved or increased number of crosswalks
 - One participant shared, “With the mall on Division, we feel there are issues of safety with jaywalking. There is no crosswalk at Wabash. We would value some other sort of crossing for pedestrians.”
 - Another participant mentioned that crosswalks were potentially challenging to navigate for children and individuals with mobility issues.
 - Another participant commented that getting around Hawthorne and across the big crosswalks was challenging, especially when accessing transit or shops.
 - Lack of enforcement around vehicle speed limits, driving behavior (excessive lane changes)
 - One participant shared, “The Ruby kind of thing is funky. There are some blind spots.”
 - Another shared, “South of the couplet, the car speeds there are high. Drivers are making decisions to improve their own position, and they are not looking for pedestrians, bikers. I don’t think it’s a matter of making the sidewalk better. It is the traffic that makes people feel unsafe.”
 - Noisy, intimidating and not enjoyable to travel along regardless of the mode of transportation
 - One participant shared, “Division is hectic and only used to get somewhere rather than to enjoy.”
 - Another shared, “There’s no reason to go on Division unless to visit a specific business.”



- Sharing roadways with large vehicles tight or dangerous
 - One participant shared, “People are panicking in small cars with large trucks and buses around them. People don’t drive by to see what is going on. They have their blinders on just trying to make it to their destination.”
 - Several participants echoed this sentiment.
- Crossing the intersection intimidating because of length or vehicles coming from several directions
 - One participant shared, “When you’re by the car wash, there’s not a lot of signage about what lane you need to be in. I would hate to be crossing there, it’s chaos.”
 - Another shared, “Wellesley and Francis are dangerous. It just feels unsafe as a driver and for the folks crossing and doing stuff.”
- North end of corridor particularly unsafe in inclement weather
 - One participant shared, “Wendle at the Y the traffic is very different. Coming down that hill can be quite dangerous. “
 - Another participant shared similar sentiments about the same location, saying “It’s really interesting going down that fast hill. Maybe there should be warnings to slow down in inclement weather.”
- Physical appearance
 - Lack of environmental niceties such as trees, shrubs, plants, benches
 - One participant shared, “I was thinking trees are appreciated but only early in their growth. Then they are impediments.”
 - Several empty lots or buildings considered unappealing
 - One participant shared, “Division feels sterile. Other corridors are more warm and pleasant looking.”
 - Another shared, “There are big lots, a sea of parking. Not a fan.”
 - Several businesses with uninspired facades
 - One participant shared, “Division is like a concrete jungle, there’s not a lot attractive. I travel mostly the north end of it. You don’t get a good feeling when you drive down it.”
 - Lack of appeal does not foster neighborhood feeling or desire to visit neighboring businesses
 - One participant shared, “When you’re on Division you don’t walk next door to neighboring businesses.”
 - Another shared, “It’s harmful for the community to not be able to access businesses on Division [through multiple modes].”
 - Another shared, “Division feels disconnected like you’re not driving through a neighborhood.”



- Speed & reliability
 - Division Street considered slow for car drivers & severely backed up during rush hours
 - Signal timings unideal for cars drivers, considered “off”
 - One participant shared, “From Wellesley headed north you can get backed up a lot. The signals aren’t timed well.”
 - Another shared, “I’m frustrated with light time for Francis.”
 - Medians preventing left turns
 - One participant shared that making left turns on Division is a challenge. They shared their experiences with often having to go around parking lots to be able to get back onto Division in the direction they needed to because of permanent medians on Division.
 - Another shared, “Someone mentioned this earlier. There’s a lack of left turns you can make. You have to go around the block several times to get where you need. It happens every time I’m on Division. I don’t judge, I just go around the block.”
 - Frequency of transit is considered slow
 - One participant shared, “Yes, we have an extremely enjoyable transit system and transit users, but transit is never fast enough. There is large room for growth in that sense. It’s also a matter of equity.” The participant’s other comments echoed sentiments around improving reliability and accessibility so that those who rely on transit for getting to work, appointments or critical services can rely on it.
 - Another shared, “I value the transit in all directions. It’s desirable, easy access. Should be frequent and timely.”
 - Another participant who is a frequent transit rider shared, “I don’t take the buses on Division because it takes longer than driving.”
- Land use
 - Re-zoning along Division to promote growth and safety
 - One participant shared, “The corridor has general, commercial and retail. Make it better for diversity in construction.”
 - Another shared, “The transition from large retail into neighborhoods on either sides of Division feels awkward.”



Participants expressed the need for improvement on Division Street regardless of the mode of transportation they take.

Several **potential improvement ideas** were brainstormed by the participants, including:

- Safety
 - Increasing physical space between car lanes and sidewalks
 - One participant shared, “There needs to be separation for walking and biking from the cars.”
 - Several participants in both focus groups echoed this sentiment.
- Biking
 - Adding bike lanes where possible on Division Street or neighboring north/south streets
 - One participant shared, “I would bike on Division if it was more biker friendly. In some areas it is illegal to bike. There are lots of east/west bikeways but perhaps all bikeways have to be off of Division.”
- Physical appearance
 - Creating opportunities for green spaces, such as low shrubs, trees, etc.
 - One participant shared, “Trees would be a huge help. We feel the heat when we’re walking. It’s a really big deal for transit users. Make people who are depending on transportation comfortable and safe.”
 - Another shared, “Developers are required to put a certain amount of trees in, but Spokane Police Department wants them removed so we don’t have any line of sight issues. I am not a fan of street trees, but I’m all for shrubbery.”
 - Considering aesthetics and nods to local culture through design when developing physical barriers, etc.
 - One participant asked, “Could we build nodes or key areas to make things more walkable and appealing?”
 - Another shared, “Maybe we could have a center green strip as a stopping point in a crosswalk so there is some relief.”
 - Another shared, “We could use friendlier materials,” regarding the use of more appealing, custom materials to create an inviting environment.
- Land use
 - Re-zoning at east/west connections to Division, so that large retailers are not backed up against residences
 - One participant shared, “Could there be more active, denser residential leading up to Division? Then things will develop more.”
 - Another shared, “Allow for mid-level living instead of residential right next to busy streets and businesses.”



- Transit use
 - Decreasing number of bus stops or considering dedicated bus lanes and/or signal priority to improve overall timeliness and traffic flow
 - One participant shared, “We can have dedicated bus lanes, but only with dedicated sidewalks.”
 - Increasing frequency of buses or number of buses that serve the route
 - One participant noted, “The level of transit that exists on Division should be maintained but also improved if possible.”
 - Improving accessibility of buses, including boarding platforms, benches, shelters, and physical location of stops
 - One participant shared, “On bus stops they should put coverings and awnings. There’s only usually a bench and sign.”
 - Another shared, “Maybe fewer stops, but more well identified safe stops might speed things up and also make it safer for kids and adults.”
 - Two other participants shared sentiments around bus stop locations at the north end of Division. One said, “There are people who want to join the YMCA, but say ‘I’m so far north and busing is my only option,’ and they don’t have the capacity to walk so far. The last bus stop is far away. We would have an interest in seeing that change so people have access to the YMCA and access to services that improve their health outcomes.”
 - Creating more permanent structures for transit as a way to support business growth
 - One participant shared, “If you were building raised ramps and more permanent structures, developers would want to build on Divisions and tenants would stay because it’s more established.”
- Speed & reliability
 - Optimizing signal patterns and timings
 - One participant shared, “I think it’s tough when you look at the traffic load on Division. One thing about Boise is a lot of the intersections have blinking yellow lights. If there’s no traffic, people can actually turn. This could help traffic flow on Division.”
 - Another echoed this sentiment, sharing, “They time their lights so well down there [in Boise]. It has ebbed in flowed on Division, but we don’t have it right.”



ASPECTS TO MAINTAIN

Participants also identified a few key aspects that they hoped would remain along Division Street, such as:

- Speed & reliability
 - The east/west connectivity
 - One participant shared, “It has good east/west connectivity. The roads/lanes are spaced well. You don’t have to be on Division the entire way. You can save a lot of time coming up Hamilton/Nevada.”
 - Another shared, “That is a good point. I want to echo that; the simplicity of getting onto and off of Division.”
 - General reliability of transit and driving on the Division corridor
 - One participant shared, “My kids feel good about transit on Division. It is consistent, reliable.”
 - Another shared, “Division feels efficient in a car. Gets you where you need to go. Works really well in the snow.”
 - Others echoed the sentiment about Division being more reliable than other corridors in inclement weather.
 - One participant shared, “Division feels like a freight corridor. There are parts of Monroe or Maple/Ash where lane lines are so narrow, I barely fit in turn lanes with my truck. Division feels more open, doesn’t have that problem.”
- Business presence
 - Easy access and strong visibility
 - Another shared, “I would love to see improved access for everyone and more people able to travel to businesses along Division so there will be stronger businesses and less of the ugly, empty lots and buildings.”
 - One participant shared, “Right now, signage is really good. You can see the businesses you’ve never been to. You can see them from quite a distance because of street level signage. Please take this into consideration if we think about bus only lanes, protected structures, to ensure visibility is as clear as it is now. Especially with how the traffic is, don’t want to have to make a last minute jag over to where you need to get to.”
 - One participant shared, “I appreciate it’s relevance; Everyone knows where Division is, so it makes it easy to direct folks to ‘by Division’ or ‘on Division’.”



INSPIRATION

Participants shared a variety of domestic and international streets, corridors or aspects of transportation infrastructure that they **admired**. The common themes here were a desire to optimize speed and reliability, physical appearances and land use along the Division corridor.

- At least three participants mentioned Boise, as noted in previous statements above, specific to light-timings and aesthetics.
- One participant shared, “I love traveling on Monroe. I’m more inclined to pull over and park to make a quick stop and visit businesses.”
- Another participant shared, “In Paris and Hong Kong, they have short shrubbery that help define where people should walk and cars should drive. Maybe to soften hardscape on Division this would be great. I’m all for more trees too to tick down the amount of concrete we have.”
- One participant commented, “Cedar Avenue in Minneapolis parallels one of the light rail lines. When the light rail went in, there was a land use comprehensive plan to re-energize the area. They thought about how that was going to develop as they developed the light rail. I think they did a really good job.”
- Another shared, “Canal Street in New Orleans is fairly wide like Division and has two lanes in each direction. Although it separates the French Quarter from the hotel district, it has a trolley in the middle and good connectivity.”
- Another shared, “In Barcelona, there are walking areas in the center of very busy traffic lanes, but they are very well protected. I felt safe and it seemed to work well for all modes.”

Some participants shared thoughts about other corridors they wouldn’t want Division to resemble, and want the project team to **avoid**.

- One participant shared, “I don’t want it to look like Aurora Street in Seattle.”
- Another echoed this, saying, “It has BRT, but the atmosphere is not any better.”



APPENDIX A

Focus group recruitment methodology

In preparation for focus group participant recruitment, DH developed a list of 378 organizations whose physical address is located along the Division corridor, between Monroe and Division on the west, and between Nevada or Hamilton and Division on the east. These organizations included neighborhood groups, churches, schools, government organizations, business development organizations and private businesses nearby and along the corridor.

DH then engaged contacts at all 378 of these organizations via email and phone calls across a three-week period to share the opportunity to volunteer for DivisionConnects focus groups, and/or participate in other public feedback avenues. DH staff sent two rounds of emails to the organizations on the list. DH also conducted two rounds of outreach via phone to over a hundred organizations on the list for whom we did not initially secure an email address. When additional email addresses were secured, DH emailed these organizations and then followed up days later via email again.

As a result of these organic outreach efforts, just 15 individuals responded to a Doodle poll indicating their willingness and availability to participate. DH then was able to confirm 14 participants total; seven for the focus group on October 7th and seven for the focus group on October 8th. One participant had to leave the focus group early and their responses were not captured in the poll questions.

Initial outreach email

Hi there,

Hope you're well and staying healthy! I'm reaching out to you about [DivisionConnects](#), a transportation and land use project focusing on the Division Corridor in Spokane.

As we envision the future of Division Street, we're seeking public feedback around how the highway can improve, what elements should remain the same and how Division can become more accessible for all modes of transportation in the long-term. This is an opportunity for community members and business owners to share their voices and present their needs so planning efforts include as many perspectives as possible.

There are multiple avenues available for community members like you to help shape the outcome of this project. Currently, we are seeking participants for virtual focus groups. These focus groups would be conducted in late September/early October and again in late October/ early November, and are a completely voluntary commitment to participate in two facilitated hour-and-a-half discussions with less than 10 other participants. If you are interested in participating, please fill out this [Doodle Poll](#) with your general availability. If you are selected to participate, we will follow up with additional details within the next two weeks.

If you'd rather provide written feedback, please follow the link to an [Interactive Map/Questionnaire](#) that will be available through the end of September. We appreciate any and all feedback as we embark on this effort. Please let me know if you have any questions. I look forward to hearing from you!



Participant selection email

Hi there,

Thank you for your willingness to participate in the [DivisionConnects](#) study! We are excited to inform you that you have been selected as a focus group participant. We appreciate you previously providing your availabilities via Doodle, and we understand that your availabilities may have changed since then. In order to best schedule all participants, please email us identifying any of the following dates/times which you are NOT available by the end of day Thursday 10/1:

- *Monday Oct 5 from 2pm-3:30pm*
- *Monday Oct 5 from 3:30pm-5pm*
- *Weds Oct 7 from 3:30pm-5pm*
- *Thurs Oct 8 from 2pm-3:30pm*
- *Thurs Oct 8 from 5pm-6:30pm*

We will then communicate with you next week as to the final date/time of your focus group, as well as provide you with further meeting details and instructions. Thank you again for your time, and we look forward to hearing from you!

Participant confirmation email

Hi there,

Thank you for your quick response. We have scheduled you for a virtual focus group session via Zoom on Thursday, October 8th from 5-6:30pm. I will send a calendar invite your way to act as a placeholder for the focus group session.

Early next week, I will follow up with the Zoom meeting link.

In the meantime, please feel free to fill out this optional demographic survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/3DN78TV>. It should be quick, and the information collected will only be used to help inform our future outreach efforts.

Participant demographics

DH developed an optional, anonymous demographic SurveyMonkey survey to understand the makeup of our final focus group audience. DH then distributed this survey as participants were confirmed, as outlined in the participant confirmation email above.

The following demographic data represents seven of the 14 focus group participants. DH sent a reminder to the focus group participants to encourage completion of this survey, but does not anticipate that there will be 100% completion. If there are any additional participants in the survey, DH will provide updated results. Here are the current results:



Age

If making assumptions about the age of all focus group participants, representation amongst younger audiences was lacking.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under 18	0.00%	0
18-24	14.29%	1
25-34	0.00%	0
35-44	42.86%	3
45-54	28.57%	2
55-64	14.29%	1
65+	0.00%	0
TOTAL		7

Household income

If making assumptions about the estimated yearly household income of all focus group participants, their incomes were generally diverse but did not likely fall under \$30,000.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under \$15,000	0.00%	0
Between \$15,000 and \$29,999	0.00%	0
Between \$30,000 and \$49,999	28.57%	2
Between \$50,000 and \$74,999	0.00%	0
Between \$75,000 and \$99,999	0.00%	0
Between \$100,000 and \$150,000	28.57%	2
Over \$150,000	42.86%	3
TOTAL		7

Ethnicity

If making assumptions about ethnic representation, the ethnicities of the focus group participants were predominantly White or Caucasian.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
White or Caucasian	100.00%	7
Black or African American	0.00%	0
Hispanic or Latino	0.00%	0
Asian or Asian American	0.00%	0
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.00%	0
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.00%	0
Another race	0.00%	0
Prefer not to say	0.00%	0
TOTAL		7



Gender

If making assumptions about gender identity, the genders of the focus group participants were equally balanced.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Female	57.14%	4
Male	42.86%	3
Other	0.00%	0
TOTAL		7

Focus group discussion guide and questions

The following is a brief version of the focus group discussion guide and approved questions.

Let's get into the discussion part of our session. The questions I will ask will fall under 3 topic areas.

We'll want to hear how you feel about Division now, or perhaps pre-COVID-19.

We'll also want you to keep in mind that we're planning for the future – ten years down the line. How do you imagine Spokane will be? How do you want the Division Street corridor to look and feel?

Keep in mind SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT's notes about what we do and do not have control over, but please share ideas or inspiration you have.

Remember - we want your honest, candid thoughts and feedback today. The goal of this focus group is not group consensus. Speak out. If you are representing an organization, whether a small business, church, nonprofit, social service, government organization, school district, neighborhood council or larger business, we hope you bring that perspective, as well as needs of your customers, stakeholders and clientele to the table.

For our first two questions, we will be using the polling feature.

[Below are two questions that were asked using the Zoom Poll feature. Both questions allowed participants to select multiple answers. Quantitative data such as cumulative responses are indicated next to the response options.]

Question 1: What mode(s) of transportation do you use when traveling along the Division Street corridor?

- a.) Take a bus (4 participants)
- b.) Use a scooter (2 participants)
- c.) Walk (5 participants)
- d.) Bike (1 participant)
- e.) Drive alone (12 participants)
- f.) Drive with others or carpool (8 participants)



Question 2: Why do you travel along the Division Street corridor?

- a.) I use Division to commute to/from work (3 participants)
- b.) I go shopping/run errands/recreate along Division (13 participants)
- c.) I live or own property near Division (6 participants)

For this next question, think about the primary way you travel along Division.

Question 3: If at all, how does traveling along Division feel? As you share, please also let us know what mode of transportation you use, as that can provide helpful context for us.

Probes: How else would you describe your experiences traveling along Division? Reliable/convenient, fast, enjoyable, safe?

Let's get into some future-focused questions now – think 10 years from now, how Spokane may be in the year 2030. To give you an idea of what 10 years ago can feel like, in Spokane 10 years ago, we were just breaking ground on the Kendall Yards construction, and Main Street in Downtown Spokane looked quite a bit different.

In 10 years, there may be technological advances we haven't thought about. Consider that the North Spokane Corridor may be completed too.

Question 4: What outcomes are most important for you/your organization to see in the Division Street corridor in the future?

Probes: Can you tell us more about that?

Question 5: What specific things, if any, about the Division Street corridor do you value?

Probes: Can you unpack that for us? Why do you feel this is important? What do you like about it?

Question 6: Which streets in Spokane or in other cities, if any, do you admire?

Probes: This doesn't have to be a wide or long corridor. It can even be a street you live on.

Tell us more about that. What aspects do you like/dislike? How do you travel along that street?

Question 7: Is there anything you were hoping to discuss today that we've missed?

[Initiate closing/recap of focus group themes/next steps]

Thank you all for your engagement and willingness to share with the group today.

We appreciate hearing your thoughts about how you experience Division now, what you value about the corridor, and what your vision and hopes are for Division in the future.



As I mentioned in the introduction, we are going to compile this group's feedback along with feedback from other focus group participants for the DivisionConnects project team.

As our outreach coordinators may have shared with you and SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT mentioned earlier, we are looking forward to connecting with you again for another round of focus groups in early November. During those sessions we will get into more specifics regarding proposed changes to segments of the Division Street corridor and will seek your feedback on these transit alternatives. Our team will be reaching out to schedule these with you in the coming weeks.

Thank you again for your time, and please reach out to us if you have any questions.