

Starter Kit for Communities and Agencies

This guide includes an explanation about what Street Story is, how information is collected, how organizations can use the tool in community engagement efforts, and how people can use the information collected to improve street safety.

To learn more about Street Story, visit Street Story's [Community Stories](#) page. To get updates about Street Story, sign up for our [newsletter](#).

Street Story was created by a team at UC Berkeley's Safe Transportation Research and Education Center ([SafeTREC](#)), with city planning, public health, engineering, social welfare and computer scientist backgrounds. Street Story was created with significant input from members of the public, agency and organization representatives and industry experts.

1. What is Street Story?

[Street Story](#) is a community engagement tool that allows residents, organizations and agencies collect local information about transportation collisions, near-misses, general hazards and safe locations to travel. The platform and the information collected are free to use and publicly accessible.

Street Story includes a survey about roadway experiences and a dataset of community input with maps and tables that can be downloaded. Once the surveys have been completed, organizations and agencies can use the information as part of community needs assessments, transportation safety planning or evaluations.

Street Story can be used to complement other forms of transportation safety information, including built environment characteristics or collisions reported to police. Street Story data is not a substitute for police-reported collisions. To access police-reported collision data, visit SafeTREC's Transportation Injury Mapping System ([TIMS platform](#)). Section 4 in this guide explains how Street Story data can be used with a number of other types of safety information.

Street Story data

Street Story collects quantitative and qualitative information about collisions, near-misses, general hazards and safe places to travel. Members of the public can provide information about a safety issue or safe place, and observations about that place, including information about the built environment, levels of injury and whether a collision was reported. Participants are able to provide a narrative about the incident or location. Street Story also collects some demographic information.

You can view and download Street Story information by going to the “See Data” tab on the platform’s main menu. You can request access to the survey narratives by emailing streetstory@berkeley.edu.

2. How is Street Story information collected?

Organizations and agencies share Street Story with members of the public, then members of the public use Street Story to provide feedback on collisions, near-misses, hazards and safe locations. Section 3 outlines how organizations or agencies can share Street Story with their community.

Members of the public can also use Street Story independently.

3. How can I use Street Story in my organization or agency’s community outreach efforts?

Community engagement is an important and necessary part of all transportation planning processes, including developing community needs assessments and long-range transportation plans, advocating and applying for funding for safety improvements, selecting the right safety improvements for a specific area, and evaluating how well a safety improvement has worked.

Street Story is designed to be used alongside other community engagement efforts. We recommend taking the following steps to develop community engagement efforts that fit your organization’s needs, and to learn more about innovative community engagement in the “Resources” subsection at the end of this section.

Steps for developing outreach strategies

1) Decide who you want to hear from and what you want to hear about

Before deciding which kinds of community engagement efforts you’re going to take on, define who your focus communities are and what you they can teach you. Focus communities can be broad (e.g., everyone travelling through, living, or working within a specific corridor), or they can be very specific (e.g., residents and employees of a retirement home). It may also be helpful to set goals for the number of people you plan to reach and the information you hope to collect through community engagement efforts. To learn more about choosing focus communities and beginning community engagement efforts, see links outlined in the “Resources” subsection.

Street Story collects information about the demographics of the people participating, which may help you determine whether you are hearing from the groups you intend to reach. Street Story is designed to be used online, but is also available in a paper

version for people who might not have digital access or feel more comfortable providing information or experiences on paper. For information about the paper version of Street Story, contact katembeck@berkeley.edu.

2) Speak with your focus communities

Once you've decided who your focus communities are and what they can teach you, think about how best to have conversations with these communities, including what languages you need to use and how to publicize your engagement efforts.

Currently, the online version of Street Story is only available in English and is available on paper in Spanish and English. We will make additional languages available on the online version of Street Story in the future.

When designing Street Story outreach, it will be important to share news about activities through commonly used media outlets in the community you're trying to reach. For some groups, this may include social media or email, while for others, outreach in person, or local print media and paper mail may work best.

When conducting community engagement efforts, you may need to use different facilitation techniques to collect safety information.

3) Partner with trusted organizations

When engaging with communities, it is important to partner with community leaders who are known and trusted by their communities. Here are some ideas about leaders and organizations to reach out to:

- Social service and community leaders
 - Affordable housing development managers
 - School principals or administrators
 - Food bank or health center managers
 - Senior center or retirement home managers
 - Public health departments
 - Dog walkers, post carriers, deliverers
- Advocacy groups
 - Pedestrian, bicycle and transit rider groups
 - Community housing groups
 - Disability advocacy groups
 - Public health advocacy groups
 - Unions

When using Street Story with partner organizations, here are a few things to think about:

- When talking about Street Story, tell partners that the platform is free to use and the information is both publicly accessible and anonymous.

- You can share postcard and flyer with information about Street Story.
- When working with others to hold events, consider the most appropriate way to get people involved in using Street Story. You can share the link to the Street Story website then ask people to complete the survey on their phones, or you can bring tablets for people to complete the survey on.

4) Be where your focus communities are

We suggest collecting information at:

- Parking lots or garages
- Grocery and shopping areas
- Senior centers and retirement homes
- Healthcare centers
- Bus stops
- Libraries
- Community centers
- Schools

Prior to an event, check whether the site has Internet access.

5) Attend and hold events that your focus communities will attend

Attending and holding events to publicize Street Story may mean going to events that aren't focused specifically on transportation safety in order to reach a wider audience. You can think about bringing Street Story to events like:

- Sporting events
- School events
- Block parties
- Digital literacy training workshops
- Cultural events
- County fairs

Prior to an event, check whether the site has Internet access.

6) Measure how well community engagement efforts work

Before launching data collection efforts, decide how to measure the effectiveness of your efforts. During engagement activities, you can collect information to measure how well activities are working. Once you've completed your community engagement efforts, you'll have information that you can share with the public, decision-makers, or funders about how well your efforts worked.

Guidelines for measuring the effectiveness of community engagement efforts:

- Who are you trying to reach with your engagement activities and how will you know when you are successful?

- What can focus communities teach you, and how will you integrate this information in your future work?
- How many people do you want to collect information from?

Street Story measures the following:

1. Number of total entries within a jurisdiction
2. Number of entries into each of the four categories, e.g., collisions, near misses, hazardous places, safe places.
3. Demographic information
4. Whether Street Story participants are first time users
5. How often participants attend transportation safety-related community meetings in order to show whether Street Story is collecting information from people who are or are not already participating in other community engagement efforts.

This information can be obtained in the “See Data” option on the Street Story website.

Community engagement resources

Here are a selection of resources that have helped us to put this guide together. Feel free to explore further:

- MetroQuest’s 100 Great Community Engagement Ideas:
<http://metroquest.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Guidebook-100-Great-Community-Engagement-Ideas-edu.pdf?alid=4974045>
- Use of Communication Technologies to Enhance Public Involvement in Transportation Projects
http://www.fdot.gov/research/Completed_Proj/Summary_EMO/FDOT-BDV29-977-32-rpt.pdf
- NACTO’s webinar “Public Engagement that Counts”
<https://nacto.org/event/nacto-webinar-public-engagement-counts/>

Ethical considerations

When having conversations about people’s experiences, it’s important to remember that the participant is in charge, and they can decide how much information they give and when they want to end participation.

When using Street Story, the survey and data available have been approved by the University of California, Berkeley Committee for Protection of Human Subjects. Participants should not share any personally identifiable information.

In order to protect people’s privacy, Street Story narratives are not accessible on the platform, but can be requested by emailing katembeck@berkeley.edu. Before sharing, we will review the narratives and remove any personally identifiable information.

Addressing the digital divide

The digital divide is a term used to describe the social and economic inequity related to access to and use of the internet and technology. When using technology to collect public feedback, it's critical to think about whether groups you are reaching out to have access to and are comfortable using web-based technologies. For more information, visit Pew Research Center's [series of articles about the digital divide](#).

There are a number of ways you can use Street Story with people who do not have access to reliable internet, data plans, smartphones or computers:

- You can host community events in areas with free, accessible wifi.
- You can bring devices, like tablets, that connect to the internet to community events.
- You can host events at locations that have devices that connect to the internet, like libraries, schools or job centers with publicly available computers.
- You can use the Street Story paper version.

Using the Street Story paper version

For information about the paper version of Street Story, contact katembeck@berkeley.edu.

Working with youth

As of now, people must be 18 years or older to enter information into Street Story. In order to collect information about youth experiences using transportation systems, parents or caretakers need to complete the survey.

4. How can my organization or agency use Street Story data in transportation safety efforts?

Organizations and agencies can use Street Story to collect public input that is part of community needs assessments, transportation plans, grant applications for safety programs or infrastructure, or evaluations.

Street Story information is publicly available at an aggregate level at streetstory.berkeley.edu, on the "see data" tab. These maps and tables can be downloaded and used in reports, outreach materials or funding proposals.

Street Story data complements other data sources about street safety, including police-reported collisions ([TIMS](#)), hospital-reported collisions, and built environment characteristics.