

Attachment D

Moderator's Guide Question Justification

The moderators guide is organized around question sets that each cover a common theme. Due to the “back-and-forth” nature of focus group dialog, these questions should be considered as comprising a general content framework or set of key discussion topics. The basic flow of discussion and specific questions addressed will be governed by the natural evolution of the conversation. In light of this, question justification is conducted at the level of question sets. Specifically, while individual questions in the moderator's guide may not be addressed in each focus group session, the topic will be covered to some degree with related questions and spontaneous discussion. It is these topics that are justified below.

Section I: Introduction

The introduction section welcomes participants to the focus groups, informs them on what they can expect during the session, and describes the procedures and ground rules for the focus groups.

Section II: General Driving (Warm-up Questions)

II-1) Warm-up questions:

The purpose of this set of questions is to “break the ice” among participants and get them engaged in the discussion. These questions will not provide research information, but are instead designed to be relevant to most participants and cover aspects of driving that most drivers will have something to contribute to the discussion.

Questions 1 and 2 ask the focus group participants to discuss their personal experiences with learning to drive.

Question 3 asks focus group participants to draw from their experience to think about what is most important if they were to try to teach someone else how to drive.

Section III: Speed Choices and Behaviors

The next set of questions relate to different components of the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985). This theory has been found to be predictive of behavior in other domains, and it has also been applied to speeding studies using questionnaires (Elliott, Armitage, & Baughan, 2005). The questions in the sections III-1 to III-5 are designed to provide additional qualitative insight into the factors associated with speeding behavior.

III-1) Basic factors affecting speed choice

Questions 4 and 5 ask about participants' usual speed-related behavior in different settings.

Question 6 asks about some of the factors that influence their speed choices. This is comparison information that provides a way to connect opinions about speed-related factors in later questions to self-reported behavior.

Questions 7 - 9 ask about participants' interpretation of the posted speed limit and how these interpretations vary for different types of roads. This information provides important context for interpreting statements about speeding behavior and it can provide guidance for developing measures of speeding that can be applied to the analysis of on-road data collected in the earlier phase of this study.

Questions 10 and 11 ask about participants' opinions about how posted speeds are set and how credible they are. This provides information that is useful for understanding driver compliance with posted speeds.

III-2) Driver risk perception

Question 12 asks about how risky participants perceive speeding to be and it is included to gauge their awareness of the relationship between speed and risk. Crash risk and severity increase the greater the travel speed is over the posted speed limit (FHWA, 1998).

Question 13 asks the speed participants think is unsafe. This question is important because one issue that researchers face when investigating speeding behavior is that there is no universal and accepted transition point between what constitutes safe and unsafe speeds, and different drivers have different opinions regarding the relationship between speed and risk.

III-3) Driving habits

Questions 14 and 15 ask about drivers' awareness of their travel speeds, which are intended to lead to discussions about the role of habit in travel speed. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985), habitual behaviors are potentially important when interpreting driver responses as a whole because they can provide an explanation for a mismatch in beliefs/attitudes and actual behaviors. For example, although a driver may believe that driving 10 mph above the posted speed is dangerous and would not normally intend to do so, that driver may still drive that fast out of habit, or because he or she is accustomed to driving that way in a particular situation. Understanding under which conditions drivers habitually speed can provide information about factors that may impact the effectiveness of certain countermeasures.

III-4) Influence of social norms and riding with passengers

Questions 16 and 17 ask about the influence that passengers have on driver speed choice. The social acceptability of “speeding” is viewed differently by different segments of the population. Drivers of different ages and demographic groups can be influenced in different ways based on how they perceive the views of their peers, and other groups that are in authoritative positions (e.g., law enforcement, parents) or subordinate positions (e.g., children). For example, one study found that drivers in the presence of passengers take precautions to drive slower than if they are driving alone (Baxter et al., 1990). These are dynamic relationships, and understanding the nuances behind them can lead to a better understanding of drivers’ motivations to speed. Also, information about the presence of passengers was collected during the on-road phase of this study. Obtaining driver opinions regarding social norms may provide insight into situational differences in the speeding behavior of certain drivers.

III-5) Past experiences with critical events (e.g., crashes or speeding infractions)

Questions 18 - 21 ask about drivers’ past experiences with events that might influence their speed choices, in addition to probing how their attitudes and behaviors may have changed as a result. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior, past events can influence a person’s decisions regarding whether to engage in a behavior (Ajzen, 1985). In the context of speeding, this would likely involve speed-related citations, but could also include crashes or near-crashes caused by driving too fast for conditions.

Section IV: Speeding Countermeasures

The questions in this section are designed to elicit driver opinions regarding the potential effectiveness of various countermeasures for reducing speeding.

The speeding countermeasures covered in each of these question sets represent different types of countermeasures that can be part of a comprehensive strategy for addressing driver speeding (NCHRP 2009). The same questions are asked about each countermeasure to make it possible to compare driver opinions and acceptance across countermeasures that may be easier to comply with or more acceptable with regard to drivers’ personal values.

IV-1) Countermeasure 1: Higher Penalties and Increased Enforcement

Questions 22 - 24 ask about participants’ opinions about the effectiveness, advantages and disadvantages, and possible ways to improve countermeasures involving higher penalties and increased enforcement. These countermeasures involve increasing the likelihood that speeders are caught, coupled with raising the consequences of doing so. These countermeasures are relatively common and ones with which most drivers are already familiar. Driver responses to these questions form a comparison for responses about other countermeasures.

IV-2) Countermeasure 2: Speed Awareness Course

Questions 25 - 27 ask about participants’ opinions about the effectiveness, advantages and disadvantages, and possible ways to improve countermeasures involving driver awareness courses to modify drivers’ beliefs and attitudes. This countermeasure is has a greater time-burden and required

level of involvement than most other countermeasures (i.e., those listed below), but only applies to the most serious speeders. The opinions of frequent speeders are particularly informative in this question, since they are the target population.

IV-3) Countermeasure 3: Engineering Countermeasures

Questions 28 - 30 ask about participants' opinions about the effectiveness, advantages and disadvantages, and possible ways to improve countermeasures involving roadway treatments to slow down all passing drivers. This type of countermeasure is non-invasive, and many drivers may not even realize that their speeding behavior is affected by this type of measure. However, all drivers are impacted by these measures, regardless of their actual speeding behavior.

IV-4) Countermeasure 4: Vehicle-based Countermeasures

Questions 31 - 33 ask about participants' opinions about the effectiveness, advantages and disadvantages, and possible ways to improve countermeasures involving in-vehicle devices that 1) physically limit vehicles speeds, or 2) display information that discourages speeding. These types of countermeasures are relatively new, and little is known about driver opinions on the effectiveness of these countermeasures, and concerns that drivers may have regarding their implementation.

IV-5) Countermeasure 5: Automated Enforcement

Questions 34 - 36 ask about participants' opinions about the effectiveness, advantages and disadvantages, and possible ways to improve countermeasures involving automated speed enforcement. This is a particularly controversial measure, and there is a general lack of trust regarding the motivations for employing this approach (e.g., to generate revenue, rather than improve safety). It would be useful to determine if different types of speeders (in different focus group sessions or locations) have different opinions on this matter.

Section V: Close

The objective of this section is to thank everyone for their participation and give them an opportunity to provide any last comments on the topics covered in the focus group session.

References

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