

**Federal Highway Administration  
Office of Transportation Policy Studies  
Next Generation of Travel Research, Analysis, and Scenario Development  
2011**

## **Moderator's Guide**

**Participants:** *Main groups will include ten to twelve people between the ages of 16 and 23 years. Control groups will also be held with other age groups.*

**Duration:** *One hour per session.*

**Description:** *This moderator's guide has been prepared to provide a framework to discussions being led as a part of the Next Generation of Travel Research, Analysis and Scenario Development project, which is being undertaken by the Office of Transportation Policy Analysis of the Federal Highways Administration. The moderator will remain as close as possible to the original format, but may rephrase or clarify questions in response to the participants needs. Additional instructions are provided in the italic bracketed sections throughout the guide as needed.*

### **I. INTRODUCTION AND ICEBREAKER (10 minutes)**

#### **A. Introduction and purpose**

Thank you for coming to participate in this discussion. Your presence and participation today are very important. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I work for an independent private research company. I will be moderating today's discussion.

The goal of this focus group is to discuss and better understand the ways in which emerging technologies and changing attitudes of the younger generation may affect travel choices. We would like to talk to you about your thoughts, feelings, and reactions concerning this important topic. Your contributions and comments will represent those of other young people living throughout the United States. This information will also help the Federal Highways Administration in the Department of Transportation to better plan for future travel needs.

Your feedback on this topic is information we could not get anywhere else. Thank you for your willingness to come and share your opinions with us. We hope you'll enjoy talking about these important issues.

#### **B. Procedure**

Before we begin, I would like to start with some ground rules for our discussion today:

*[Moderator will both read the following ground rules aloud and refer to poster displaying written rules.]*

- Everyone's participation is important. There are no wrong answers. Please be completely honest.
- Our discussion today is being tape recorded. These recordings allow us to write a more complete report, and to make sure we accurately reflect your opinions.
- We want this to be a group discussion, so you don't need to wait for me to call on you to speak. However, please only speak one at a time, so that the tape recorder can pick up all your comments.
- Our discussion is totally confidential. We will not use your names in any report. I also want to remind you that I work for an independent private research company, and not for any federal agency or law enforcement organization. Everything you say here will be used for research purposes only.
- [*When applicable*] I would also like you to know that I am working with some other professional researchers on this project, and they will be observing our conversation from the other side of this mirror.
- As moderator, my function is to keep the discussion focused on the subject. If I see that we are deviating from the subject, I will bring us back to the topic so we can finish on time.
- Please, turn all cell phones off as well as any other device that might distract us from the discussion.

### **C. Introductions**

Before we begin, I would like each of you to take a few moments to introduce yourself. Please share with the group your name, age, and whether you grew up in this city. If you did not grow up in this city, please tell us where you grew up.

*[Moderator will double-check the list of names and ages against the registration sheet.]*

### **D. Overview of main topics**

Now that we have met each other, I will introduce the main topics of today's discussion. The structure of the conversation will be as follows:

- First, we will begin by talking about your general travel choices and attitudes towards travel.
- Second, we will talk about new technologies and how they might impact your travel choices.
- Third, we will talk about your commuting patterns, where you live and where you might plan to move in the near future.
- Fourth, we will talk about how environmental concerns may affect your travel choices.
- Finally, we will discuss other important topics which we may have missed.

## **II. GENERAL TRAVEL CHOICES AND ATTITUDES (5 minutes)**

Let's begin by talking a little bit about your daily life and travel activities.

1. Tell me briefly about the places you go to each day, including school, work, the bus stop, the grocery store, etc. How do you normally get there?
2. How long are your trips? What time of the day do you travel? Are there alternative ways for you to get to these locations?
3. Do you own a car? Why or why not? If you own a car, how often do you use it?

4. If you own a car, when did you get one, and for what reasons and purposes?
5. In many States, fewer young people are applying for driver's licenses. What do you think is behind this trend?
6. When oil prices were high a few years ago, many people reduced their traveling. If gas prices at the pump were to go above \$4 per gallon, would you change your travel habits substantially?

Thank you for sharing your thoughts -- this information is really helpful!

### **III. USAGE OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES (15 minutes)**

Now that we understand a bit about what sort of trips you take on a regular basis, I want to talk about the ways in which you and people of your generations use and interact with new technologies. Let's start by talking about the technologies you use on a regular basis.

1. Do you have a computer and internet connection in your home? How about mobile devices? Do you have a smart phone or tablet computer? Do you have a GPS?
2. In what ways do you use these technologies either to plan travel or during a trip?
3. Are there other technologies that you use either to plan your trips, or that you use while traveling? How are they useful? How often do you use them?
4. If you are a smart-phone or tablet computer user, would you consider traveling on public transportation or car-pooling in order to use your device during your commute to work or school?
5. If you are a smart phone or tablet computer user, do you have any travel related applications? How often and how do you use them?
6. If you drive a car, do you own a GPS enabled device? How often do you use it? How often do you change your regular route in order to avoid traffic by using your GPS?
7. How comfortable are you with shopping for items online? How many online purchases have you made in the past month? What types of items would you only consider buying in a physical store?
8. How much time do you spend on a weekly basis on social networking sites? How does the use of these sites figure into your social life? Has the use of these sites changed the timing or frequency of trips you make to visit friends and acquaintances?
9. Are you currently either telecommuting for work or taking an online class? If so, how many times per week do you engage in this activity?
10. If you are either telecommuting or taking an online class, where do you typically log-on? (at home, at a coffee shop, in a library, etc).
11. If you are not doing either of these activities would you do so if the option was available?
12. How concerned are you about internet security issues? About cell technologies with location enabled applications?

#### **IV. COMMUTING PATTERNS AND HOUSING CHOICE (15 minutes)**

Next, we are going to discuss a bit about where you live, how you have made the decision to live there, and where you see yourself living in the future?

1. Where do you currently live? Is your house in an urban, suburban or rural area? Why have you chosen to live in this area?
2. Where is your house with respect to your work or school? Do you have a long commute? How long does your commute take on average? Do you travel during peak commuting times? [*Moderator may need to specify what peak commuting hours are*].
3. Do you currently telecommute? If you do, has this affected your choice of where to live?
4. If you could telecommute one or more days of the week, would you live in a different part of the city?
5. Where do you see yourself living in 10 years? If you see yourself living in a different type of area (urban vs. suburban), what would be the reasons for this change?

Great! This has been really helpful.

#### **V. ATTITUDES TOWARDS TRAVEL AND THE ENVIRONMENT (10 minutes)**

Now, I would like to discuss your environmental beliefs with you and their impact upon your travel choices.

1. To what extent do your environmental beliefs affect your travel choices?
2. Could you provide some concrete examples of changes you have made to how you travel in response to your environmental concerns?
3. What is the most effective change a person can make in order to reduce the environmental impact of their traveling?

Thanks for your feedback! We just have a few final questions.

#### **VI. FINAL COMMENTS AND THANK YOU (5 minutes)**

Now that we have finished the defined set of topics, I would like to open the floor to discuss other ideas on this topic that we have not yet covered.

1. Is there anything else about young people's travel choices that we have not discussed today that you think is important?
2. Finally, do you have any other questions or is there anything else you would like to say?

Thank you for coming! Your feedback and thoughts have been very important, and we really appreciate your assistance.