PROPOSAL

WORKING WITH MICROSOFT TO UNCOVER INSIGHTS FOR TOMORROW'S TRANSIT EXPERIENCE IN SEATTLE

LOST IN TRANSIT
As one of Washington state’s largest employers, Microsoft works to enhance economic growth and create opportunities that protect and improve the quality of life for Washington state residents. Microsoft recognizes the importance of addressing transportation challenges and identifying smart solutions.

Microsoft, in partnership with local public transit agencies, is embarking on an initiative to modernize and create a more cohesive mass-transit experience in a way that addresses the needs of commuters and inspires them to adopt or continue use of mass transit.

**CORE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

- Understand the current commute including the underlying commuter needs, benefits, pain points, and associated emotions
- Identify current tools used in the commute process and their associated benefits
- Understand perceptions and identify barriers to mass transit adoption
- Identify opportunity areas that will strongly support conversion and sustainable ridership
We Know Seattle Transit

Today, the Seattle metropolitan area is home to almost half of Washington’s population and is expected to grow a further 50% by 2035.

Seattle is home to some of the country’s top Fortune 500 companies like Starbucks, Amazon, Microsoft, and Costco. These big businesses strengthen the local economy, but they also boost the population, making commuting by vehicle a challenge. Seattle regularly tops the list of cities with the worst traffic in the country.

Still, mass transit ridership is down with the average weekday transit ridership dropping 0.3% this year. At the same time the car population continues to rise, there are 637 cars for every 1,000 residents (a higher per-capita rate than Los Angeles). This makes the commuter woes a problem that will not just effect residents, but also local businesses - large and small.

Seattle is in the early stages of thoughtfully designing a potential program that is equitable, transparent, and responsive to the area’s needs.

With voter approval in 2016, Sound Transit is undertaking the most ambitious transit system expansion than anywhere else in the country with a new light rail, rapid bus transit and commuter rail stations to open starting 2021 through 2041.

However, there’s a need for quick, smart solutions - Microsoft believes it can help meet those needs.

Sources: city-data | Statista | INRIX

3.93 M
RESIDENTS*

500k
riders using public transportation on an average day

138 Hours Lost
Annually in congestion per capita

$1,932
Annual cost of congestion per driver

52% of Washington State’s population lives in Seattle

138 Hours Lost Annually in congestion per capita

*Does not include undocumented or homeless

This is 17.25 workdays
What We’ll Do...

We suggest a multi-phase approach of research among a mix of Millennial and Gen Z car, mass transit, and ride service commuters. The recommended approach will dig deep into current behaviors and perceptions while also identifying opportunity areas that technology can address. This will culminate in actionable strategies for Microsoft and its partners.

EXPLORE

1-2 week online journal giving a front row seat to commuters’ lives, commutes, perceptions, and for some, the experience of trying a new commute method.

IMMERSE

In co-experiences we will ‘commute’ alongside participants, from getting ready at home in the morning, through travel, and getting home.

ACTIVATE

Catalyst workshop to immerse stakeholders in the insights and provide an answer for ‘what next?’
Who We’ll Talk To...

COMMUTER TYPES:

- **10 Car Drivers**
  (mix of commute lengths)

- **8 Mass Transit**
  (mix of commute lengths and modes)

- **10 Ride Service Users**
  (mix of services used)

Total Participants: 28*

*We will over recruit to account for potential attrition

- Mix of men and women
- Mix of Millennials and Gen Z age cohorts
- Mix of family types (singles, kids, couples, etc.)
- Mix of household incomes
- Mix of ethnicity
- All employed at least part-time and commute 3+ days a week
- No sensitive industries
- No recent participation
How We’ll Do It...

**EXPLORE**

**Week 1: Online Journal – All Participants**
All participants will complete a one-week online journal telling us about their lives and sharing their commute highs and lows through journaling and via GoPro camera.

**Week 2: Online Journal – Switchers & Planners**
Half the Car Drivers and half the Ride Service Users will switch their current commuting method with mass transit for at least three consecutive journeys (and journal their experience). The other half will share will journal their plan to switch (with the possibility of executing in the next phase).

**Week 3: Co-Experiences: Planners**
We will select 3 Car Drivers and 3 Ride Service users, who planned out their mass transit commute in week 2, to participate in the co-experience phase, where we ride-along with them on their planned mass transit commute for the first time.

**WHAT WE’LL LEARN...**

Get to know the participants during their typical week of commuting, learning about their lifestyle, current commute, tools used, and the benefits and emotions involved in why they commute the way they do.

Understand conversion mindset, barriers, sticking points, and potential opportunity areas to address or improve.

See the mass transit experience firsthand and probe in real time around the behaviors and emotions in the moment. This will also allow us to professionally film the experience to share the commuter story with stakeholders.
Online Journal: Activities

This immersive discussion will capture real-time, first-person points of view. The questions and activities will include a combination of written prompts, confessional-style videos, and photos. This output will provide rich texture for deliverables.

- 5-10 days of activities
- About 30-45 minutes of activity per day
- Moderator monitoring and probing throughout the week
- Ability for Microsoft and partners to view activities

POTENTIAL EXERCISES

HOME TOUR: a glimpse into their home life, what objects are important to them and why? Favorite room and why?

24 HOURS IN THE LIFE: a play-by-play of what goes on in a typical day. What are the highlights and low-points of the day? Covering both weekdays and weekends.

TECH AND MY COMMUTE: What tech or apps are you using? What is the role of technology during your commute? What role should it play?

ELEVATOR PITCH: Record a 1-2 minute video convincing someone to ditch driving themselves to work and instead take a light rail or bus.

CREATIVE COLLAGE: Upload images that represent your commute. What’s the connection between these images and your commute? What are some images that represent how you feel before, during, and after your commute?
Co-Experiences

An opportunity to join participants in the mass transit commute experience. Be truly immersed in that world with them and explore the process of getting to and from work.

We’ll conduct a co-experience, following participants along on their commute to and from work, filming them where we are permitted.

As we observe, we will probe on their emotions at key moments throughout the commute to uncover highlights, and pain points. We’ll also conduct additional mini-interviews as able.

We will keep it flexible, depending on proximity to participant’s homes, and where we can capture video footage of the outing.

NOTE ABOUT FILMING PERMISSIONS
In places where we’re unable to shoot live (i.e. bus, train, etc.), we’ll supplement footage with phone recordings, B-roll, sound bites, and user-generated footage from the boards.

OBSERVATION AND POTENTIAL DISCUSSION TOPICS
COMMUTE PREP: How do you get ready for your commute? What are you bringing with you?


COMMUTE 360
We will capture 360-degree images of physical spaces in the commuter’s journey (e.g., car interior, bus stop). This imagery will be tagged with relevant insights, allowing those not attending to be immersed and connected to the commuter’s experience.
Catalyst Workshop

AN IMMERSIVE SESSION USING INSIGHTS

This half-day workshop will ground stakeholders in a shared foundation with the findings from research.

We have two objectives:

1. Ensure stakeholders feel they deeply understand the research and how it relates to the target audience.
2. Align the group around which strategies make sense/will be successful for the next steps.

HOW WE’LL DO IT

The workshop starts with immersing participants in the findings through a presentation of research “Truths”, with support from both video and 360 views. We’ll also take the team through a few exercises to help ground them in the consumer POV.

You’ll come away with a deep understanding of the insights and alignment around next steps.

Photos from recent workshops
Deliverables

**IMMERSE & EXPLORE**
- Highly visual presentation in PPTX format
- 4-5 minute documentary style video
- 360 visual of commute zones (car and transit wait areas)
- Library of video content from journaling and commuting

**ACTIVATE**
- Ideation workshop
- 10-15 slides summarizing workshop outputs

360 View

**HOW TO VIEW**
Click the image to view the 360 experience. Drag your mouse around the image to explore each yellow dot that provides an insight.