



Discourse Media

Collaborative solutions journalism



Finalist for *Best Data Journalism Website of the Year* in the Global Editors' Network International Data Journalism Awards.

Crowdfunded

In just two months, 92 private individuals who believed in the importance of independent, investigative journalism helped raise funding needed for the project.



Moving Forward

A DIGITAL DATA JOURNALISM PROJECT ABOUT THE FUTURE OF TRANSPORTATION IN METRO VANCOUVER

The challenge

In the midst of a highly politicized transportation funding referendum in Metro Vancouver, journalists had little access to usable data and information about the transportation system. The result was conflict and opinions-driven news coverage in the media, and a general public that was uninformed about the issues they were voting on.

The response

An independent journalism project, produced in collaboration with academic and professional researchers, dedicated to mining, analyzing and visualizing the wealth of information and data about Metro Vancouver's transportation system.

The product

An eight-part series of investigative content packages including written features, data interactives, infographics and raw data sets, all licensed under Creative Commons with embed codes for any media outlet to use.

What we did:

Investigative reporting // Website design and development // Content strategy
Data analysis, visualizations and infographics // Outreach and partnership management // Engagement strategy and execution

The challenge

In spring 2015, Metro Vancouver citizens were faced with a plebiscite on a transportation funding decision that would define the future of the region for decades to come. Early in the debate, news coverage focused on political conflict and opinion. The news cycle was stuck in reactive mode and there was a desperate need for issues-focused, evidence-based reporting. But journalists attempting to dig below the competing claims of the Yes and No camps found little data reasonably accessible.

The project

In answer to this challenge, Discourse Media created Moving Forward: a temporary reporting beat that contributed context to the debate.

We developed research partnerships with Simon Fraser University's Centre for Public Dialogue and academic experts at the University of British Columbia, and painstakingly compiled and analyzed publicly available data. Our team of journalists and data designers produced a series of multimedia content packages, published on a dedicated website. Inspired by organizations like ProPublica, we also licensed content as Creative Commons for use by other media outlets.

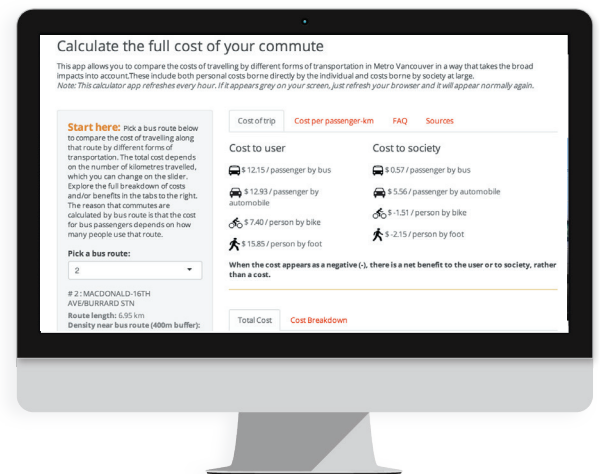
Content packages included:

- Engaging feature articles, interactives and infographics geared toward a general audience
- Embed codes for data interactives
- Raw datasets for other journalists to use in their own reporting
- Downloadable PDFs of content packages
- Static versions of data interactive content for use in print media



Our readers asked We reported

Discourse Media designed a strategy to proactively and meaningfully engage with citizens. Social media and in-person events were important. However, in order to help citizens fill gaps in their understanding, we needed our readers to shape our reporting. We partnered with PlaceSpeak, a public consultation platform where readers posed questions for our reporters to investigate. We responded to over 50 reporting requests and engaged with 73 participants throughout six weeks of reporting.

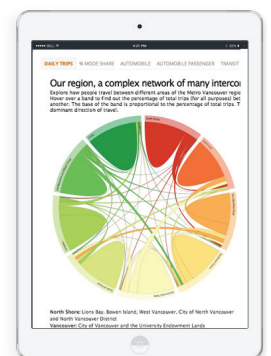


The Cost of Commute Calculator

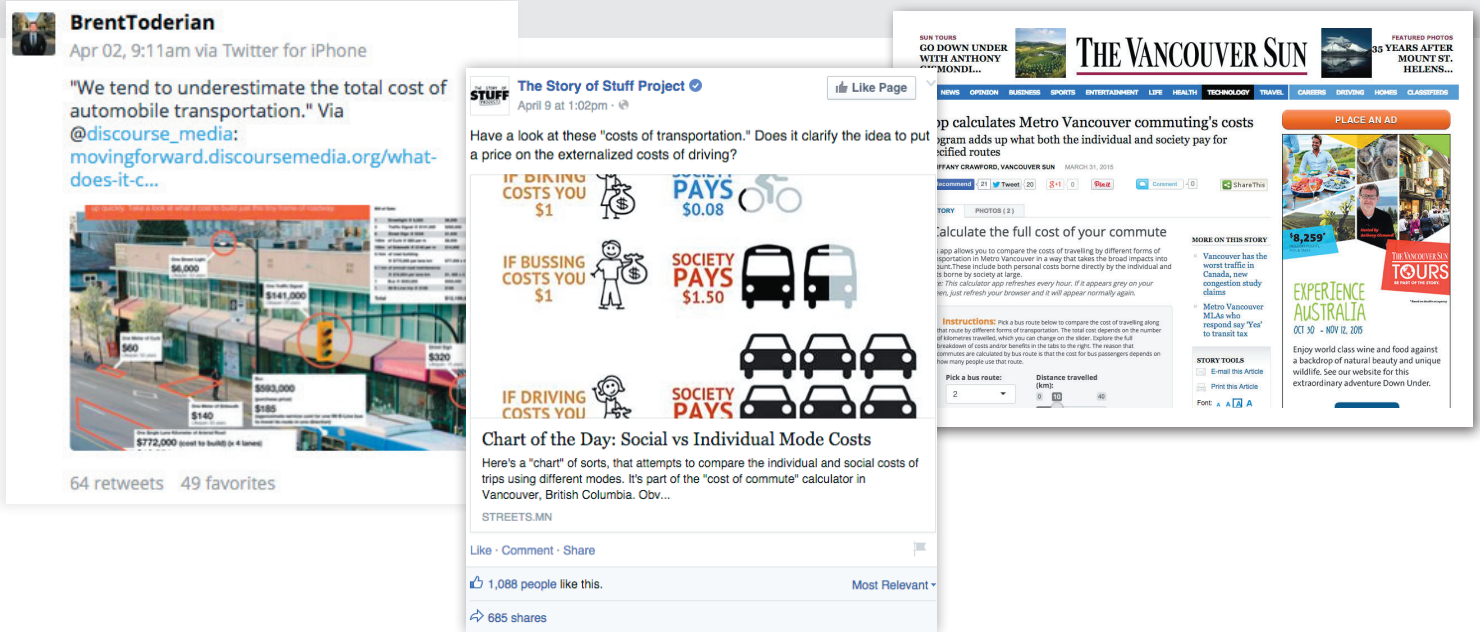
Moving Forward's most popular content package contained an interactive that allowed users to punch in the length of their commute in Metro Vancouver and see a breakdown of the full cost of their commute to themselves and to society – including externalities such as travel time, pollution and health care savings – by different forms of transportation.

The interactive had 35,000 users, and generated media stories and conversations on Twitter and Reddit around the world.

We produced 17 data interactives, including this one which allows users to explore how people travel between different parts of Metro Vancouver.



Over the course of the 10-week project, over 1.3 million people engaged with Moving Forward content on the project's website, social media and through media outlets.



The impact

More important than the size of our reach was the depth of our audience's engagement.

- The average time spent on Moving Forward's website was 30 minutes, more than twice the average time spent on top performing news sites.
- Moving Forward shifted media angles from conflict-driven to data-driven in media outlets across the region.
- Our content generated stories in:

Global TV	The Tye	News 1130
Atlantic's CityLab	Globe and Mail	Montreal Gazette
Streets Mn	Metro Halifax	Ottawa Citizen
Spacing Magazine	The National Post	
The Vancouver Sun	CTV News	

"In a debate characterized by at best noise and at worst outright lies about our transit system, Moving Forward shone out as an honest, data driven look at the real challenges of moving people in this region – and the people of Metro Vancouver are better off for it."

JON WOODWARD,
Reporter, CTV News Vancouver

MOVING FORWARD CONTRIBUTED TO PUBLIC DISCOURSE

Shifted coverage about public funding for transportation upgrades on **CTV News**



The Atlantic

Sparked global conversation about societal costs of transportation choices on **Atlantic Magazine's City Lab**

The **Tye** used Moving Forward data and infographics to clarify debate in its article "Top Five Myths about the Transit Vote"





About Discourse Media

Discourse Media produces in depth journalism projects focused on the complex challenges facing society today. We believe collaborative approaches to journalism can help us better understand both the issues we face and potential solutions.

Our expertise lies in leveraging new media to find innovative ways of telling stories and meaningfully engaging partners, media outlets and the general public. Our team of reporters, editors, designers and developers produces projects ranging from print editorial packages published in partnership with traditional media to more complex, strategic digital projects that involve stand-alone websites, deep engagement strategies, digital documentaries, infographics, data visualization interactives and applications.

Our goal is to produce journalism that is informed by our community and supports constructive public dialogue about social issues.

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