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Presentation Title: Accelerating Transportation Behavior Change Through the Power of Propensity Modeling

Abstract: While many transportation agencies seek to increase ridership through marketing and even behavioral approaches, the challenge is steep funding is limited and transportation is one of the hardest behaviors to change. Seattle's regional transit agency, King County Metro, sought to accelerate rider recruitment through Just One Trip, a cornerstone outreach effort using traditional marketing tactics. The agency set an ambitious goal: to get 15,000 sign-ups in year three of the program triple the enrollment achieved over the first two years. To re-tool the program in its third year, it would be critical to focus outreach on those residents most likely to try transit. The team started with propensity modeling, synthesizing vast data sets to ultimately reduce a universe of 400,000 potential participants to the 150,000 most likely to take transit. They also identified "hotbed" ZIP codes with regular service and an outsize percentage of high-propensity residents. The team then designed an outreach program that would leverage behavioral insights to motivate high-propensity residents. Using motivational interviews, click-to-convert ad campaigns, targeted direct mail, incentives, and partnerships with trusted community organizations, the team scaled the campaign in both English and Spanish. In just 13 months, the program motivated 21,162 people to try a new mode of travel - quadruple the signups from the program's first two years. These participants reduced 861,621 drive-alone trips, according to a Washington State Department of Transportation panel analysis of participants' pre- and post-campaign travel surveys. This represents 8,181,532 pounds of CO2 emissions reduced, and, is eight times the number of trips reduced in the program's first two years. This session will provide the audience with specific insights on utilizing a combination of propensity modeling, behavioral insights, and strategically deployed outreach to scale and accelerate transportation behavior change.