

Building Community Engagement into Evaluation Design and Dissemination

Lessons from a Randomized Pilot
in Washington, DC

Nellie Moore



THE **LAB** @ DC

Who we are



Our Toolkit

Social Science

Data Science

Civic Design

Resident
Engagement

The Lab @ DC is a team in the Office of the City Administrator that works to meet DC's most critical problems with scientific methods, civic design, and authentic partnership with District agencies and residents. We use scientific insights and methods to test and improve policies and provide timely, relevant and high-quality analysis to inform the District's most important decisions. The Lab @ DC collaborates with District agencies to:

- Design policy and program interventions that are tailored to the District, based on theory and evidence from academic and industrial research, as well as analyses of available administrative data.
- Conduct high-quality evaluations—including randomized evaluations and rapid, iterative experimentation—to learn how well things work and how to improve.
- Foster a scientific community of practice, engaging and collaborating with experts and stakeholders across agencies, universities, and community groups.



1

Background

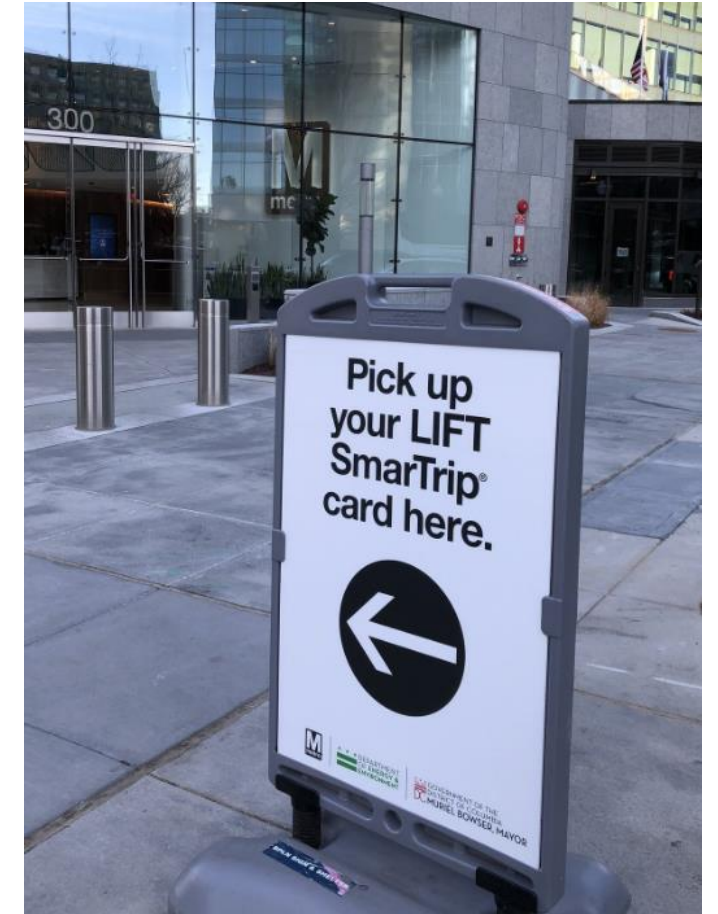
Low-Income Fare Trial (LIFT)

What we did

- Randomized evaluation of discounts on bus and rail for low-income DC residents
- Three groups: free, unlimited trips vs. half-price discount vs. no discount
- Measured impact on mobility and well-being
- Provided implementation insights for regional Metro Lift program

Key Findings


- Both half-price and free, unlimited trips:
 - Increased ridership
 - Reduced transportation insecurity
 - Improved overall well-being
- Discounts shifted participants into higher-use patterns of ridership
- Even with discounts, not everyone used their cards




Where did behavioral insights come in?

Recruitment and Survey

- Reminders
- Simplification
- Incentives
- Social norms


Enter a lottery for transit discounts
 DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT
 DC Government is offering a lottery for free unlimited trips or half-price discounts on Metro and bus for nine months. It's called the Low-Income Fare Trial (LIFT). You may be eligible if you get help paying utilities. **Applications due November 20, 2022.**


 Apply at lift.dc.gov
 in just 10 minutes!

1. Check if you're eligible for LIFT.

Respond to the statements below to check your eligibility. Only **one person from your household** may apply.

I live in DC..... True False

I'm 18-64 years old..... True False

My household gets help paying for utilities from DOEE or has in the past year..... True False I'm not sure

I'm **not** currently employed by DC Government..... True False I'm not sure

I'm **not** currently employed by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (Metro)..... True False I'm not sure

I don't personally receive a senior, disability, or student discount on Metro or bus..... True False I'm not sure

Did you answer...
 ..."True" to all six statements? You may be eligible. Complete the rest of the form to enter the lottery.
 ..."False" to any statements? You are not eligible to enter the lottery. Visit lift.dc.gov to learn more.
 ..."I'm not sure" to any statements? You may complete the rest of the form, and we'll check your eligibility.

2. Tell us about yourself.

Full Name:	Birthdate: / /	SSN or A-Number: (required)
Home Address:	Unit:	Washington, DC ZIP:
Mailing Address: (if different)	Unit:	Washington, DC ZIP:
Email:	Phone:	<input type="checkbox"/> Cell <input type="checkbox"/> Landline
Gender: <input type="checkbox"/> Man <input type="checkbox"/> Woman <input type="checkbox"/> Nonbinary <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say	Are you Hispanic/Latinx? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say	
Race: (choose all that apply) <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian/Alaska Native <input type="checkbox"/> Black/African American <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander <input type="checkbox"/> Asian <input type="checkbox"/> White <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say		
Which language would you like to receive information about LIFT in?	<input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Español <input type="checkbox"/> 普通话 <input type="checkbox"/> 한국어 <input type="checkbox"/> Français <input type="checkbox"/> Tiếng Việt	

3. Tell us about how you get around.

How many days did you ride the bus or Metro last week? 0 days 1 day 2 days 3 days 4 days 5+ days


How do you pay for Metro and bus? I don't ride either, skip to page 2 Cash, skip to page 2 SmarTrip, complete the rest of this page

What is your SmarTrip Card number? Choose the first 4 digits and write the rest.

0167
 0176
 0177

Instructions:

- Look on the back of your card, in your digital wallet app, or in the SmarTrip app.
- If you have more than one, choose the card you use most.
- Reread to make sure what you write matches your card.
- If you're eligible and you provide your valid SmarTrip card number, we'll enter you into a lottery to **get an additional \$25 Visa gift card!**



How often do you use this card when you ride the bus or Metro? Never Sometimes Most of the time Always

Sign on page 4. 



1

**Are we measuring
the right things?
Who decides?**

Are we measuring the right things? Who decides?



Tell us how more affordable public transit would impact your life.

We—DC Government—will be launching a lottery for discounts on metro and bus this spring. You may be eligible because you get help paying for your utilities, so we'll send you instructions to enter the lottery when it launches. In the meantime, we'd love to know what more affordable transit would help you do.

This survey has just one question. Answering the survey doesn't enter you into the lottery.

What do you think would change in your life if you were offered a half-price discount on metro and bus?

A half-price discount on metro and bus would help me...

Submit



Ability to take more rides

Healthcare

Socializing



Self-sufficiency

Tell us how more affordable public transit would impact your life.

We—DC Government—will be launching a lottery for discounts on metro and bus this spring. You may be eligible because you get help paying for your utilities, so we'll send you instructions to enter the lottery when it launches. In the meantime, we'd love to know what more affordable transit would help you do.

This survey has just one question. Answering the survey doesn't enter you into the lottery.

What do you think would change in your life if you were offered a half-price discount on metro and bus?

A half-price discount on metro and bus would help me...

Submit

Groceries

Anxiety

Cost savings

Are we measuring the right things? Who decides?



Going beyond administrative data



Transportation Insecurity (TSI)

How often someone had a negative experience due to a problem with transportation



Overall Well-Being (Cantril Ladder)

Where someone thinks they are in relation to their best possible and worst possible life



1

**How do we
understand our
results?**



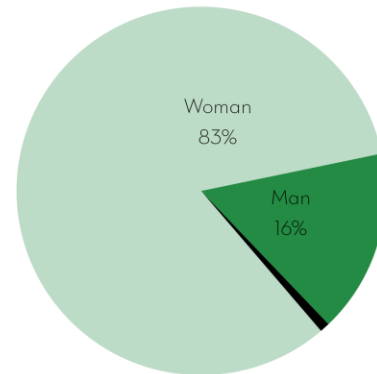
How do we understand our results?

Walking through the data with participants



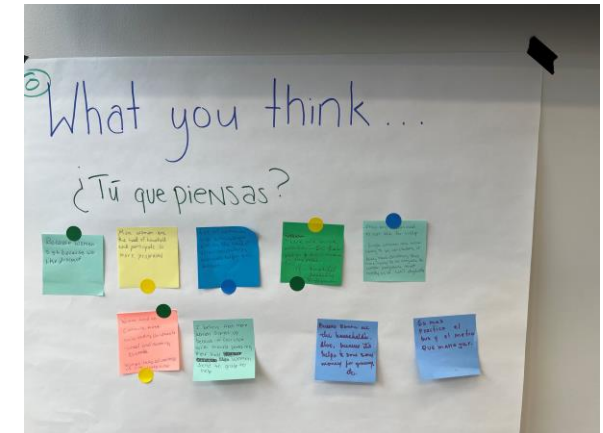
Participants meet and form small groups

Share of LIFT participants by gender



Data source: LIFT applications

Discuss a puzzle in the findings



What we learn shapes how we talk about LIFT

How do we understand our results?

Lessons on policymaking timelines

- Metro's Lift program provides 50% off Metrobus and Metrorail trips for SNAP-eligible customers in DC, MD, and VA
- It was developed while the DC LIFT pilot was in progress; launching in June 2023
- The pilot provided key insights about
 - Target population and their preferences
 - Program design
 - Budget and staffing needs
- Results on its impact can continue to inform Metro Lift's evolution





Thank you. Learn more:

- DC LIFT project page: <https://thelabprojects.dc.gov/fare-subsidy>
- Recording of presentation at the 2023 “Research to Practice” Transit Symposium on implementation lessons learned from DC LIFT: https://youtu.be/te98o82_Sws?t=3798
- Pre-analysis plan: <https://osf.io/fev6x>

Contact the LIFT team:

Roxanne Oroxom: roxanne.oroxom@dc.gov

Alyssa Huberts: alyssa.huberts@dc.gov