

CPN 2009 Initiative One:

CPN Urban Travel Ranking System

CPN Whitepaper: State of Urban Transport in China

After a year's preparation, China Planning Network is initiating the *CPN Urban Travel Ranking System*: the largest-scale, independent, public-participating social surveys on China's urban travel.

In collaboration with China's media and internet communities, we collect first hand data on China's urban travel directly from the public. And in collaboration with top transport scholars and professionals in the world, we develop a definitive evaluation framework and survey methodology.

The survey methodology and data collected will be published at the CPN website and freely available to the public and scholars interested in China's urban transport. The surveys will be done on annual basis. We will publish the *CPN Whitepaper: State of Urban Transport in China* based on the results of the annual surveys and the researches based on these survey data.

For scholars: provide food for research

Scholars have been hunger for data on China's urban transport, particularly data from the public's viewpoint. The CPN surveys provide food for research on China's urban transport. In doing so, not only we intrigue scholars from all over the world with the richness and complexity of China's urban transport, but also we enable their studies with first-hand survey data. This is the best way to attract world scholarship to study China.

For the public: engage participation in a realistic way

The CPN surveys play two roles for the public:

First, this is not only an information collection exercise, but also an educational one. By participating in the survey, the widest population can learn, from the world scholarship, what the key aspects are when we evaluate a city's transport; what the latest concerns are, such as CO2 footprint, energy consumption, social equity, affordability; what the newest policies innovations are; how we can get involved in this type of social surveys, etc.

Second and more importantly, the CPN survey is a realistic way of engaging public participation in China. This helps the public express their views about urban lives, in an acceptable, yet powerful way.

For government: get on to the agenda

For the government, given the fact that decision makers in the cities and states pay high attention to these types of ranking results, concerns expressed in CPN surveys can jump onto their agenda right away and can be fed into the decision making process effectively. Because the methodology is based on the best thinking the world transport scholarship has to offer and the data are directly from their own fellow citizens, the survey results are hard to ignore.

Features of the CPN surveys include:

1. Three tiers of seriousness of participation

We recognize the different levels of interest and knowledge of the public so we design three tiers of participation.

Tier I: “vote for fun”, where 3~5 simple voting questions are asked to obtain the instant impression from the participants

Tier II: “a bit more serious”, for those who go beyond the question of “I like Qingdao's transport the best”, and ask “why I think it is the best”, a one-page survey with questions on key aspects of urban transport is offered so that people can give reasons to their statements

Tier III: “a 20-page long questionnaire”, for those who are really into this, we provide an in-depth, 20-page questionnaire, covering the widest aspects of urban travel, as well as a detailed travel diary, socio-economic background and attitudinal and perceptual questions.

Can entertainment and serious research coexist? Why not! In this way, we can attract the widest participation while carefully distinguish the serious ones from the others.

2. Expectation oriented

In addition to questions on the current travel conditions, we ask people's expectation of the future. “How do you think Shanghai's subway system will look like in five years' time given your understanding of the public transport plan?” “How would you envision the situation of congestion when every family has a car in Beijing?”

These questions offer a unique perspective on people's sense of change in China, people's understanding of the planning and people's view of the ideal life in the future.

3. Longitudinally consistent and internationally compatible

The power of the surveys lies in the comparability. The CPN surveys will be held on an annual basis and the ranking framework will be longitudinally consistent to enable year on year comparison. In dynamic cities such as those in China, changes are the norm and we want to trace them. Internationally compatibility will be considered as much as possible even though we will start from within China. We will be glad to see cities from outside China to adopt our evaluation methods so that we can position Chinese cities within the world city system and vice versa.

4. Leading to a vision

As well as the classic transport questions, we are introducing topics such as transport equity and affordability, green travel and energy efficiency, transport and lifestyle, mobile media, social image concern and car ownership, land use and transport accessibility...Not only these questions inquire on the various aspects of urban travel, but together they add up to a vision of the future for China's urban transport to develop in.

China Planning Network 2009

How to get involved

If you and/or your organization are interested in the CPN initiative, please contact me directly at jinhua@mit.edu. All levels or forms of involvement are welcome: from minor method revision to full scale design of the questionnaires; from participating in testing surveys to cleaning the data and analyzing the results; from helping introduce the initiative to others to sponsoring the CPN initiative.

We have set up an Expert Advisory Committee consisting of 25 leading transport scholars and professionals. If you are interested in joining the Committee, please don't hesitate to contact me.

We distinguish the responsibilities for method design, data collection and result publication: the scholars and professionals from the West and China are responsible for the methodology of the survey, the data are collected from the public voting and surveys, and CPN is solely responsible for the results.

2009 and beyond

There will be in one session of the CPN Transport Congress 2009 to focus on the discussion on this initiative. The CPN Urban Travel Ranking System is the Part I of the CPN ranking series including urban housing, urban environment, urban energy, urban risk reduction, etc.

We envision that in five years the Urban Travel Ranking System and the CPN Whitepaper will become one of the most important data sources for academic research, a definitive evaluation framework for government policies, and the most accessible topic for debates and dialogues of the public.

<http://www.ChinaPlanningNetwork.org/>