

BRINK



REACH NOW

Move Forward Content Strategy

May 10, 2019

OVERVIEW

Now that the Daimler/BMW mobility joint venture has been finalized, there is an opportunity for REACH NOW to define a vision for the future of transportation that prioritizes people and recognizes public transit's role as the backbone of urban transportation networks, all advancing access to trip-planning and the full range of mobility options.

As multiple industry players scramble to define mobility-as-a-service (MaaS), and as themes like data privacy and equity continue to rise as hot topics in media coverage, REACH NOW can help focus the conversation by re-launching the Move Forward blog as a publishing platform that boosts the company's position as a thought leader and strengthens its reputation as an advocate for everyone who travels around cities.

Based on market research, our experience and strategy sessions with the REACH NOW marketing and communications team, Brink Communications has developed this strategy to guide the organization's efforts to re-launch the Move Forward blog as a trusted resource for cities and transit agencies to understand the real-world implications and possibilities of the new mobility. As they navigate the opportunities and challenges presented by new technologies and policy approaches, Move Forward can help them understand the ideas and benefits behind the transportation sector's transformative changes.

We start by articulating the blog's target audiences and themes, followed by a breakdown of the different types of posts that will be found on the blog. We then outline various blog processes, including how to create a Move Forward post, how to set up a Medium account, and how authors can submit an article to the Move Forward blog for publication.

OBJECTIVES

- Shape the conversation about the future of mobility among target audiences and the media
- Grow REACH NOW's reputation as a trusted source for information about trends and developments in the transportation industry
- Demonstrate that REACH NOW's commitment to sharing knowledge and fostering conversations about topics that are important to target audiences, but may not directly relate to REACH NOW products or services
- Show REACH NOW's alignment with the values and priorities of its partners and customers
- Help our industry partners understand the real-world risks, benefits and opportunities of new mobility

TARGET AUDIENCES & POTENTIAL AUTHORS

The following are the primary audiences that should be top-of-mind when creating content for Move Forward. Note that each post won't necessarily speak to all of these audiences at once, but at least one audience should be addressed in each post.

Because these audiences each have specific experience and expertise related to mobility, they may also serve as guest authors for blog content.

- Public transit agency decision-makers
 - Because they serve as REACH NOW's primary customers, this audience should be the first to know about industry innovations, policy analysis, and potential pitfalls. Their influence in the space is large, so getting their attention may result in them sharing a post or the overall publication with their own internal and external audiences. Board members of transit agencies are a top priority within this audience.
- Elected officials
 - Elected officials work closely with public transit agencies and REACH NOW itself, so communicating with these stakeholders and gatekeepers is crucial. Like decision-makers at agencies, elected officials have great influence in the world of transportation and can help draw attention to the blog and its contents.
- Transportation industry practitioners
 - People working on the ground within the transportation industry know it better than most, and are highly influential to people unfamiliar with its inner workings. Telling stories that transportation engineers, bus drivers, light rail operators and other industry staff can relate to will be key to growing the blog. Likewise, software engineers, data scientists and product managers (including REACH NOW employees) have a unique perspective about the possibilities and limits of technology and the potential for technology to improve transportation and mobility. Young professionals working in the transportation industry and academia may be able to offer unique viewpoints and Move Forward may be able to offer them a thought leadership platform.
- Transit riders or potential riders
 - Those using public transit and multiple modes of transportation are essentially REACH NOW's end users, and they care deeply about how they get around.

They are heavily invested in industry news and trends, making them an ideal audience for the blog. This audience would primarily serve as authors, rather than readers.

- Academics in transportation, mobility, and urban planning
 - Those working in academia are constantly seeking new information and perspectives about what makes an effective transportation system and the forces that shape urban transportation networks. As authors, they bring an independent perspective that adds credibility to the platform and a level of analysis of trends, data, and policy that is of interest to Move Forward's audiences.
- Others interested in mobility (advocates, consultants, policymakers, etc.)
 - There are many other people who don't work directly in transportation, technology, government or academia, yet are highly interested in the world of mobility. These people, such as civilian transit advocates, transportation consultants and people who use public transportation daily are looking for a reliable source of information to guide them as the new world of mobility-as-a-service takes shape. They also may have perspectives that can spark new conversations and may even be at odds with conventional wisdom regarding how transportation systems serve cities and who benefits from new mobility technology.
- REACH NOW employees, executive leadership, and leadership of affiliated companies
 - Internal stakeholders are actually the most likely audience to be consuming Move Forward content. Recognizing this, the blog should be delivering messages that inspire confidence in the REACH NOW team and align with the organization's strategic vision and business plan. Members of the REACH NOW team and the extended NOW family also have unique knowledge that they will be able to share through blog content. Brink will work closely with the REACH NOW team to determine whether staff will draft posts or whether Brink should ghostwrite. Ghostwriting will only be done if that is staff's preference.

BLOG THEMES

The three themes below will serve as both the themes of the blog and the main navigation sections. For example, all stories focused on people will be found by clicking on "People First," while stories about different types of mobility options will be found by clicking on "New Mobility." Posts may fall in to multiple categories.

Moving People (equity, opportunity, & design)

With MaaS still evolving as a concept, REACH NOW has the opportunity to avoid getting boxed in by industry jargon. Stories tagged within the theme of "Moving People" should approach MaaS in terms that are understandable and demonstrate its benefits for people. For example, one focus of "People First" posts can be how MaaS offers increased freedom and economic opportunity for city residents, in addition to providing information about cost, convenience and the ever-growing list of transportation options. Other ideas for posts include highlighting new approaches to integrating urban design into transportation infrastructure and services, as well as personal experiences with transportation systems such as the "transportation cost burden" faced by low-income people and how new mobility can be implemented to ensure this burden is reduced. These stories should emphasize equity, human experiences, and urban design.

Sample Post Headlines:

- When We Build cities for Kids, They're Better for Everyone
- Buses are for People: 3 Ways to Enhance the Rider Experience
- Changing Seats: My Journey from Car Owner to Transit Rider
- The Role of MaaS in Creating Economic Opportunity for City Residents

Expanding Access (systems, policy, & culture)

As cities continue to cement their role as centers of the global economy, it is becoming clear that the existing transportation system's reliance on personal car ownership is creating a host of problems. Traffic jams and hour-long travel times have become the norm for many urban commuters. The dissatisfaction with this new normal and its negative impacts, combined with the rise of alternative modes of transportation and new technology and a rising cadre of civic and corporate leaders who prioritize safety, health, and carbon reduction has laid the groundwork for a massive disruption of the transportation industry. This post category references both increasing access for people within cities and increasing access to political and cultural networks that have been roped off to all but the most wealthy and politically-connected. "Expanding Access" posts should highlight new concepts and examples of how people are working to create a revamped transportation system that ensures all modes – public transportation, micro-mobility, private vehicles and options that have yet to be created – help make cities more sustainable and livable. These posts can also challenge existing structures – both physical and political – , discussing the impacts of new policy and demonstrate the benefits of shifting away from a culture and physical environment built around the personal automobile.

Sample Post Headlines:

- If TNCs Are Here to Stay, They Need to Play Nice
- Outputs or Outcomes? What Gets Measured Gets Managed
- The Real Cost of Infrastructure: The Importance of Full Cost Accounting for Transportation Improvements
- Before the Concrete is Poured: The Birth of a Protected Bike Lane

Evaluating Technology (technology, data, & innovation)

The rise of new mobility options has brought with it a bevy of benefits, including the ability to enhance transportation reliability and safety, provide alternatives to single-occupancy vehicle trips, create better ways to deliver goods and expand the transportation system's capacity while minimizing costly roadway expansion. But to be of benefit to people and communities, those innovations must be tied closely to community values and needs, rather than just investor interests or market share. "Values-based Innovation" posts will evaluate the new world of transportation options and technologies by holding them up alongside community values. "Values-based Innovation" posts can both clue people in to the pros and cons of new transportation options and technologies, evaluate policy proposals regulating data collection, preview the opportunities and challenges created by new industry developments and help policymakers rethink how to finance transportation networks and services.

Sample Post Headlines:

- TriMet's New App Lets You Track Your Tram
- Real Housing Costs Need to Consider Transportation
- Are Scooters Here for the Long Haul?

POST TYPES

Outlining the types of posts we want to feature on the blog gives us a starting point and framework to operate in each time we plan new content and update the content calendar. The following post types support the themes listed above and aim to strengthen REACH NOW's position as an innovative thought leader that's actively shaping the future of mobility in cities.

Our goal will be to work on posts simultaneously to ensure that if there is a delay or hiccup in one post, we have several others to choose from. Evergreen posts will be stored for a future date when a new post is needed, but one is not ready from any of our chosen authors or in our chosen format.

Post Type One: Announcement Post

Priority Level: Low

Announcement posts create an opportunity to share important news that is relevant to the blog audience. They are to be used sparingly, as the main body of blog content should retain a tone and subject matter that conveys independence from REACH NOW as a company.

We recommend re-launching the blog on Medium with an announcement post from a REACH NOW team member that explains the move to Medium, clarifies the purpose of the blog, and previews the kinds of content readers can expect. These posts should frame the opportunity that the announcement provides. For example, a post about the re-launched Move Forward blog can focus on how it's an opportunity to discuss transportation themes that are more disruptive and challenge people to think outside of their existing frames.

Post Type Two: Guest Post

Priority Level: High

Guest posts feature commentary from a variety of professionals outside the REACH NOW organization, including transportation officials, transit agencies and other industry experts. They are an excellent way to grow the audience of the blog, and can help guest authors grow their own audiences as well.

Move Forward currently has great content, but its lack of traffic is holding it back from serving as the thought-leading publication it has the potential to be. Those established in the industry already have audiences willing to listen to what they have to say, so adding their voices to Move Forward will bring those existing audiences to the blog and help it grow its traffic.

These posts should source guest authors who have a significant amount of clout and push the envelope in interesting ways.

Post Type Three: Advocacy Opportunities/Policy Developments

Priority Level: High

As REACH NOW continues to promote themes like equity in transportation, the blog can serve as a place to list various advocacy opportunities for local residents and feature new policy developments they and elected officials should be aware of.

These posts should tie a planned or existing policy to specific actions readers can take to voice either their support or disapproval of said policy. For example, REACH NOW's TechfestNW landing page provided a number of opportunities for people to provide feedback on various regional developments, including ODOT's planned \$500 million I-5 expansion through the Rose Quarter and ride-hailing regulation across the state. These examples could be turned into some of the first advocacy posts on the new Move Forward blog.

Post Type Four: News Analysis and Commentary

Priority Level: Low

News analysis posts provide an opportunity to shake up the constant stream of in-house content by discussing a piece of external news from an internal viewpoint. These posts have a lot going for them: they're quick to produce, frame an important issue and highlight how REACH NOW is keeping a finger on the pulse of industry developments. These posts may also focus on highlighting various perspectives on a single topic that has gained a lot of attention in the transportation/mobility industry or weighing in with a new perspective on an industry-wide topic. These posts should focus on opinion pieces that take a given scenario and provide an analysis of the situation.

For example, we could write a post on the latest e-scooter test pilot that just launched in Portland, discussing some of the pros/cons from an equity standpoint and showcasing the mode's impact on the various demographics in the region.

Post Type Five: Research Analysis

Priority Level: Medium

Research analysis posts are similar to news analysis posts, in that they take a piece of external information and provide analysis of it from the perspective REACH NOW or other authors from the worlds of academia or consulting. If REACH NOW commissions research like a white paper, the research team could summarize that research in the blog.

Post Type Six: Listicle

Priority Level: Low

Listicles (articles that are presented entirely in the form of a list) have become one of the most popular forms of writing in recent years, in large part because they can result in more clicks and engagement. People are busier than ever, and are more likely to skim through a list than dive into a longform article. Readers also love numbers; when skimming through a wall of text, numbers stand out and help our brains organize information. This post format can be much more efficient to produce than a prose-heavy post. These posts should stay away from being seen as clickbait.

Post Type Seven: International Perspectives

Priority Level: Medium

International perspective posts aim to capture the thoughts and perspectives of NOW staff outside of the United States, and can also feature other industry voices outside the NOW organization. These posts have a huge subject pool to draw from, as any topic related to

transportation/mobility internationally could be discussed. They can be an effective way to offer examples of best practices from other countries to the North American audience.

Post Type Eight: Cross-post

Priority Level: Medium

This post type is optional, and depends on whether or not REACH NOW is comfortable with the concept of having Move Forward content reposted on other channels, sites, publications. Cross-posts are an easy way to both increase the reach of existing content and strengthen relationships with other blogs and media.

Cross-posts don't have to be new content; repurposing existing content that has performed well and placing it in a new channel is a great way to save time and extend the life of an existing asset. Plus, since in the beginning very few people will know to visit the Move Forward blog for information, placing our content in publications that already have readership will drive traffic to Move Forward and help it establish its own core audience.

Post Type Nine: Commissioned Article

Priority Level: Medium

These posts function similarly to guest posts, with the exception that writers are paid for commissioned content. For independent consultants and journalists, it is important to offer compensation for their time and expertise. Negotiations for each author will be different.

Post Type Ten: Internal Developments

Priority Level: High

Staff commentary posts feature thoughts, ideas and projects that the internal REACH NOW teams are working on. They can cover all departments and staff happenings, from the code powering REACH NOW's latest app to new mobility projects that REACH NOW is working on in various cities.

These posts may dive into the story of how a specific product was made. They may also highlight problems certain REACH NOW products solve and how they impact the future of transportation, including the ideal scenarios for people to use the product in. They should primarily focus on innovations within REACH NOW, but we will need to be careful about what we can and cannot reveal.

For example, a REACH NOW employee could provide their thoughts on the company's Mobility Budget app, discussing how it helps them get to work using the modes that work best for them and highlighting the importance of providing employees with alternative options for getting to work.

Post Type Eleven: Applied Knowledge

Priority Level: High

Applied knowledge posts serve as "lessons learned:" takeaways and things to know after using either another organization's product/service or one of REACH NOW's products/services. These posts should focus on broad themes that are helping to change commuting behavior.

For example, after the launch of the MetroMobile app for Metro St. Louis, a staff member that worked closely on the project could provide their insight into the process and some takeaways about working with transit agencies.

Post Type Twelve: Image Posts

Priority Level: Low

Posts that use several images as the core structure can be a useful break from a content stream of research and analysis. Because images are the focus, these posts can be efficient to produce. They can also drive more user engagement, especially via social media. Image posts can offer commentary about images that illustrate best (or worst) practices, explain a new concept or technology, or show how people interact with public spaces or transportation modes, with little text, driving the narrative forward with images. These posts should ideally be created alongside a professional photographer.

AMPLIFICATION

Content, no matter its quality, doesn't achieve much if nobody is reading it. REACH NOW should utilize the following strategies to amplify Move Forward content and share it with as wide an audience as possible.

Amplification Strategy One: Paid Social Media

Social media is a powerful marketing tool, but it's reach is limited without a budget for boosting content into the feeds of target audiences. If used strategically, boosted social media posts are a cost-effective way to increase the reach and impact of Move Forward posts.

One of the biggest benefits of paid social media posts is that they allow us to target our core audiences directly; with each paid post, we can change the targeting parameters to help the content reach the people most interested in it.

REACH NOW will assume ownership of this strategy.

Amplification Strategy Two: Move Forward Sponsorships

Sponsoring posts in external outlets and channels that align with Move Forward's audiences is a great way to increase the blog's readership, especially in the months following the re-launch.

REACH NOW may arrange paid sponsorships with blogs and publications such as [The Overhead Wire](#), [Mass Transit Magazine](#) and [The Transit Wire](#) to draw additional readership. Podcasts, such as [Streetsblog's Talking Headways](#) and [The War on Cars](#), are another avenue for paid sponsorship opportunities.

Brink will help identify sponsorship opportunities, while REACH NOW will coordinate once an opportunity has been identified.

Amplification Strategy Three: Author Sharing

The authors we will be sourcing for Move Forward content likely already have their own audience, whether they have fans/followers or just interested friends and colleagues. As such, whenever an author writes and publishes a piece on Move Forward, they should also share the

post with their own audience on social media to get as many eyes on it as possible. Brink and the REACH NOW team can share sample social media content with authors.

Amplification Strategy Four: Post Tagging

Tagging each Move Forward post with relevant words and phrases is crucial, as it greatly improves a post's search engine optimization (helping search engines pick up content and share it with people searching for similar topics). Some core tags to include are: "mobility," "transportation," "technology," "transit," and "cities."

Brink will provide an initial list of tags for each post.

Amplification Strategy Five: Reposted Content

As the Move Forward blog grows and builds out its content, a simple way to increase readership is to repost popular Move Forward posts and other REACH NOW content on social media. This reposted content doesn't have to be new; if a piece got a lot of hits in the past, chances are high that there's an audience interested in the subject that didn't see it the first time around.

POST CREATION PROCESS

The following breaks down the process that each post will go through, from conception to publication:

Native/Non-Sourced Content (written by Brink or REACH NOW)

1. Before writing a post, authors should draft a 2-4 sentence post pitch that outlines the proposed post topic and structure.
2. Authors should then submit their post pitch to the Move Forward review team for review, revision, and approval.
3. After the Move Forward review team has approved the pitch, the author should draft an outline of their article, including a title and a description of images they'd like included.
4. The author should then send their outline to the REACH NOW review team.
5. Once the Move Forward review team has approved the outline, the author can start drafting their post.
6. Once the author has drafted the post, they should submit it to the Move Forward review team.
7. Once the Move Forward review team has approved the post, the author should create an account on Medium and submit the article for publication, as outlined in the steps below. Brink will help authors understand this process and perform trouble-shooting as needed.
8. The Move Forward review team will handle final edits, draft photo captions and ultimately publish the post to the Move Forward blog.

External/Sourced Content

1. A REACH NOW team member should first select one of the post types previously identified in this strategy to determine the style of the article.
2. The REACH NOW team member should then draft a 2-4 sentence post pitch that describes the proposed post topic, structure and desired author, including contact information for the author.
9. The REACH NOW team member should then send their pitch to the Move Forward review team for review, revision, and approval.

10. Once the pitch has been approved, someone from the Move Forward review team will reach out to the desired author with a pitch to write the post and information about deadlines.
3. Once the author has agreed to write the post and to the deadline, they will draft it and submit it to the Move Forward review team.
4. Once the draft post has been approved, the author should create an account on Medium and submit the article for publication, as outlined in the steps below.
5. The Move Forward review team will handle final edits, draft photo captions and ultimately publish the post to the Move Forward blog.

MEDIUM AUTHOR SETUP & ARTICLE SUBMISSION

Setting up a Medium account

For guest posts and other sourced content, authors will need to create their own Medium account, which will be added to the Move Forward publication.

1. Go to medium.com and click “Get Started”
2. Create an account through Google or Facebook
3. Add an avatar image, bio and other details to your account
4. Once the account has been created, **send your username to taylor@brinkcomm.com**
You can find your username by clicking on your avatar in the upper right corner of the site, then clicking on “Profile.”)
5. Once Taylor has your username, he will add you as an author of the Move Forward publication. You will receive an email notification once this has been completed.

Submitting a draft article to the Move Forward publication

The following explains how Move Forward authors can submit their article for publication:

1. Log in to your Medium account
2. Click on your profile photo in the upper right corner
3. Click “New Story” and copy/paste your final copy into the draft screen
4. Submit the post to the Move Forward publication by clicking the three dots in the upper right corner and then clicking “add to publication” and selecting “Move Forward”
5. REACH NOW will take care of the final step of uploading photos and scheduling the post for publication