

INTRODUCTION

This appendix describes the revised incentive plan that was implemented in the main study phase of the Connecticut Statewide Transportation Study (CSTS). Revisions were made to incorporate direction from Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to provide a vendor-neutral incentive for the main data collection effort. The appendix reviews the following aspects of the revised incentive plan:

1. Factors considered when revising the incentive plan and identifying potential vendors
2. Overview of the incentive plan for the CSTS main data collection effort

FACTORS INFLUENCING SURVEY INCENTIVE PLAN REVISIONS

For the CSTS main data collection effort the incentive plan was re-designed after the pilot study, based on feedback received from FHWA. For the main study, FHWA required that the incentive plan follow below guidelines:

- Differential incentives (e.g. higher incentive values for hard-to-reach households) will not be offered i.e. all households are offered \$10, contingent upon completion of the entire study.
- All incentives offered will be in the form of Visa or MasterCard gift cards (incentives from a perceived neutral vendor) as opposed to gift cards from specific retail establishments (e.g. Walmart, Amazon).

In the re-design of the incentive plan, the study team reviewed a number of vendors offering Visa or MasterCard gift cards. The following factors were considered:

- Fees (fee per card, delivery fee, services/processing fees)
- Method of distribution (e.g. vendor offers both virtual and physical gift cards)
- Efficiency of distribution (purchasing, tracking, re-issuing)
- Ease of access/use for participants

Visa or MasterCard gift cards provide participants with flexibility in spending their incentive money, but many vendors have per card fees that add to the cost (or detract from the real value of the incentive given to the participant). The primary factor in vendor selection was identifying a vendor that had the lowest per card fees (i.e. processing fees and delivery fees).

Second, identifying a vendor offering both physical and virtual card options was important in order to lower costs (by purchasing in bulk) and maximize efficiency in the purchasing process. When offered a choice of distribution method (physical or virtual) for incentives, majority of households currently ask for virtual gift cards (much faster for the participant to receive the gift card AND lower cost). However, some households (usually lower income or older households) still request that their gift card be mailed to them. This is slower and may add a small additional cost, but it helps encourage participation from households with limited interest in or access to the internet.

Vendors specializing in bulk incentives often provide services that make it efficient to purchase, distribute, track, and re-issue (if requested) large orders of gift cards. The services offered by bulk incentive vendors will also improve the participant's overall experience by decreasing the distribution time (delivering within 1-2 weeks of survey completion) and providing a customer service hotline for participants should, they have any questions regarding use of their gift card.

REVISED INCENTIVE PLAN FOR MAIN STUDY

The study team recommended using the vendor, Virtual Incentives (<http://www.virtualincentives.com/>), for the main data collection effort. Virtual Incentives (VI) offered the lowest per card fees, delivered both virtual and physical Visa gift cards, and specialized in bulk orders providing a number of services to maximize efficiency in the distribution process.

- VI provided a delivery portal to manage the upload of individual mailing or email addresses, track shipment of gift cards, and re-issue cards as needed
- Customer service was included with each program at no additional cost
- Visa® cards were issued by Citibank, N.A. pursuant to a license from Visa U.S.A. Inc. and managed by Citi® Prepaid Services. Cards could be used at any location where Visa debit cards were accepted within the United States.

Table D.1 below summarizes the cost of the virtual and physical cards, including all fees. The cost for VI to deliver the physical gift cards is included in the “fee per card” row.

Table D.1: Breakdown of costs for each virtual and physical gift card

Cost Category	Virtual	Physical
Amount received by each respondent household	\$10.00	\$10.00
Fee per card	\$0.00	\$1.25
Total costs	\$10.00	\$11.25

Physical Visa Card Features

For the physical visa card program, once the study team had a list of physical gift card recipients, they were uploaded to the VI’s delivery portal and VI was able to ship the cards to each household. Additionally, VI was able to re-issue cards (e.g., due to delivery failure) for no additional charge. An example card is displayed below:

Figure D.1: Sample image of the physical visa card



Virtual Visa Card Features

For the virtual gift card program, once study team uploaded the list of virtual gift card recipients, VI sent a customized email with a secure link to the recipient (see vendor example below). The email message was customized with a short “thank you” message from the study team. The secure link allowed recipients to utilize the money online “now” or request a card in the mail. If a participant decided to utilize the money using “now” option, the recipient was directed to register their Visa virtual account and were able

to immediately use their reward online. On the other hand, if a participant choose to receive a card in the mail, they received a card in the mail similar to the “Physical Visa Card” described above. It must be noted that there was no added fee for delivery of the card.

Figure D.2: Sample email message that was received by those who chose the virtual visa card option

