

We are honoured to submit the ITE Canada **Strategic Communications & Implementation Plan** and **Brand Strategy** for the *2023 ITE District Innovation Award*. These efforts were a significant focus for the Canadian District in 2022 and have resulted in a professional and cohesive brand that elevates our communications, streamlines operations at the District, Section, and Student Chapter levels, and unites the Canadian transportation community.

## Background

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In 2020, our Board of Directors gathered to create a Strategic Plan and set priority areas for 2020–2024. One of the key actions identified was the development and implementation of a communications strategy that would contribute to achieving all of the goals set forth in the plan, including attracting and retaining members, providing value in products and services, and sustaining a thriving organization and strong sense of community.

In early 2022, a call for expressions of interest was released and Uplift Engagement Communications Inc., a professional communications firm, was retained to lead this strategic plan development in partnership with internal ITE Canada resources.

## Strategic Communications Plan

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### OBJECTIVE

The goal of the Strategic Communications Plan development was to receive guidance from experienced communications professionals informed by the views of our members and other non-member transportation professionals and to create an achievable implementation plan in alignment with the Canadian District and ITE's priorities.

### PROCESS | Research & Member Engagement

The cornerstone of the plan creation was robust research and engagement to ensure that the recommendations would effectively serve the needs of transportation professionals and included:

- An in-depth review of our District and aspects such as the current state of membership and existing communications channels, tools, messaging, and approaches.
- A thorough [Section and Student Chapter Communications Review](#) of existing Canadian Section and Student Chapter logos, branding, websites, social media, and other communications products.
- A [Similar Organization Comparative Analysis](#) comparing the Canadian District to other transportation organizations operating in Canada with a review of tagline and mission statements, membership make-up, magazines/publications, social impact, event calendars, councils and committees, and websites.

An extensive engagement process was developed to represent the diversity of the Canadian transportation community. The resulting consultations, summarized in this [What We Heard](#) interactive online report, included members and non-members and ensured balanced representation across geography, sector, career stage, and different levels of involvement with ITE:

- **15 one-on-one interviews:** In-depth conversations with transportation professionals from a diversity of backgrounds, career stage, membership status, and geographies
- **3 interactive virtual workshops** with the Board of Directors, Section Presidents, and Student Chapter Presidents covering both internal and external communications
- **172 responses to our Thought Consensus Survey** received from coast to coast, including members of every Section and membership type as well as non-members

## RESULTS | Strategy & Implementation Plan

The findings of the engagement process uncovered that a communications strategy for the Canadian District would be most effective by placing equal emphasis on external and internal communication actions. The resulting plan outlines strategies that include external initiatives accompanied by internal communication supports and processes. The full **Strategic Communications Plan** can be viewed [here](#) as an interactive online report with links to the supporting documents.

The plan was summarized into an **Implementation Plan** that outlines the key strategies and associated actions the District Executive Committee chose to prioritize for implementation in 2022 and 2023. This one-page document (available [here](#)) has proven to be a very effective tool and is regularly used by the District to guide work plans, identify new initiatives, and update the Board.

After approval by the Canadian District Board of Directors in September 2022, work began immediately on implementing the first strategy outlined in the Implementation Plan:

*Embrace the concept of OneITE through recognition and consistent use of the parent brand*

Prior to this, there had been minimal coordination between the District, Sections, and Student Chapters on logos, names, and branding, resulting in a myriad of approaches taken and significant inconsistency across the country.

In September 2022, the District changed our name from *CITE* to *ITE Canada* to be more consistent with our parent brand. We also undertook a review of Section and Student Chapter names and created a new naming convention for our Sections and Student Chapters.

## Brand Strategy

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### OBJECTIVE

Building on our name change, the next phase of implementation focused on the visual brand for not just ITE Canada but also our Sections and Student Chapters. In the fall of 2022, we launched the development of a new Brand Strategy supported by Uplift Engagement Communications and internal ITE Canada resources but ultimately led by leaders from across the District.

The goal of this project was to develop a new visual identity guided by the needs and desires of members from across the organization. We achieved deep levels of engagement at all levels through two open-invitation meetings for District leaders, direct one-on-one contact with each Section and Student Chapter, and a process led by a volunteer committee.

## PROCESS | Board, Section & Student Chapter-led

The Brand Strategy launched with a virtual information workshop on the new brand with **25 Board, Section, and Student Chapter Executive Members** participating and providing input. A volunteer Brand Strategy + Design Review Committee was formed consisting of **five Board, Section, and Student Chapter leaders**. This group met regularly to provide detailed input on preferred approaches, designs, and insight into the needs and priorities of our Sections and Student Chapters.

## RESULTS | A new cohesive brand implemented

The new ITE Canada brand maintains the integrity of a strong ITE parent brand with a framework for the District, Sections, and Student Chapters. This approach (shown in Figure 1) is scalable, cost effective, and efficient, allowing the District to provide more support to our volunteers at all levels.

[ITE Canada Brand Guidelines](#) were developed to provide clear guidance on logo use, colour, typography, and other brand elements. The new ITE Canada logo and brand were launched on January 25, 2023 with announcements on various social media channels receiving **167 reactions, clicks, engagements, shares, and comments**. It has been implemented across all of our communications, including email, website, and publications (see figures on page 4). Significant efforts to support our Sections and Student Chapters in adopting the new brand have led to more professional and cohesive communications across the District. These efforts have included:

- A virtual information, brainstorming, and Q&A session attended by **29 Section and Student Chapter Executive Members and Advisors**.
- Implementation of **new tools** such as pro accounts for all Sections and Student Chapters on Canva, a graphic design platform. To date, **14 Sections and Chapters** are using this resource that includes a brand kit with our official colours and fonts preloaded. In addition, they have access to templates for products created for other Sections or Student Chapters (such as branded presentations, posters, and social posts) that can be modified for their purposes, making it very easy for them to communicate with professional and on-brand graphics.
- The provision of logo files and resources on the cloud to facilitate access for volunteers and one-on-one follow-up support. As such, **13 Sections and Student Chapters** have already adopted the logos and rolled out their new look on social media platforms and email.

Our efforts have encouraged many Sections and Student Chapters to consider and take action on new ways they can engage with their members and build community, such as the creation of new social media accounts or revamping email notices. This process has reinforced the value the District can provide to Sections and Student Chapters and strengthened our relationships.

We were proud to have this work recognized by ITE as being of value to other Districts when ITE Canada was invited to share the strategies and results at a recent District, Section, Chapter Leadership Call. Our *Strategic Communications & Implementation Plan* and *Brand Strategy* have demonstrated that a cohesive and strategic approach to communications can result in many positive changes for a District. We have achieved more unity, higher quality, and equity across ITE Canada and are delivering a more consistent member experience throughout the District, supporting the goals of OneITE and establishing ourselves as a modern, relevant, and professional organization.

**Figure 1** ITE Canada Brand Architecture



**Figure 2** Excerpts from Brand Guidelines



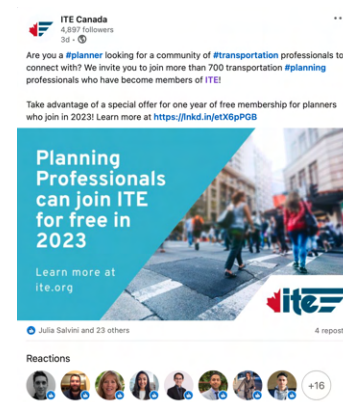
**Figure 3**  
New *Transportation Talk* cover  
The entire publication was revamped with new branding. See it [here](#).



**Figure 4**  
Header and graphics on [itecanada.org](http://itecanada.org) updated



**Figure 5**  
Sample LinkedIn post with new branding



**Figure 6**  
Sample Instagram posts from Student Chapters using the new logos and applying the Brand Guidelines

