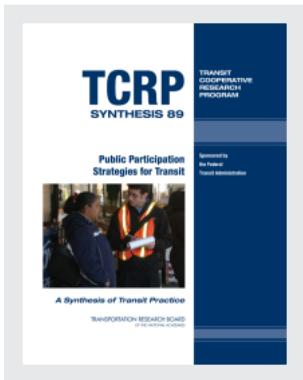


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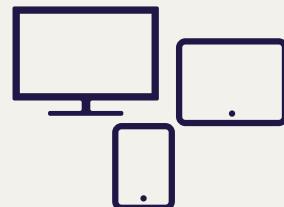
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**TRANSIT COOPERATIVE RESEARCH PROGRAM**

**TCRP SYNTHESIS 89**

**Public Participation  
Strategies for Transit**

***A Synthesis of Transit Practice***

**CONSULTANT**

SCOTT GIERING

Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates, Inc.

New York, N.Y.

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**TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH BOARD**

WASHINGTON, D.C.  
2011  
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**TRANSIT COOPERATIVE RESEARCH PROGRAM**

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## FOREWORD

Transit administrators, engineers, and researchers often face problems for which information already exists, either in documented form or as undocumented experience and practice. This information may be fragmented, scattered, and unevaluated. As a consequence, full knowledge of what has been learned about a problem may not be brought to bear on its solution. Costly research findings may go unused, valuable experience may be overlooked, and due consideration may not be given to recommended practices for solving or alleviating the problem.

There is information on nearly every subject of concern to the transit industry. Much of it derives from research or from the work of practitioners faced with problems in their day-to-day work. To provide a systematic means for assembling and evaluating such useful information and to make it available to the entire transit community, the Transit Cooperative Research Program Oversight and Project Selection (TOPS) Committee authorized the Transportation Research Board to undertake a continuing study. This study, TCRP Project J-7, "Synthesis of Information Related to Transit Problems," searches out and synthesizes useful knowledge from all available sources and prepares concise, documented reports on specific topics. Reports from this endeavor constitute a TCRP report series, *Synthesis of Transit Practice*.

This synthesis series reports on current knowledge and practice, in a compact format, without the detailed directions usually found in handbooks or design manuals. Each report in the series provides a compendium of the best knowledge available on those measures found to be the most successful in resolving specific problems.

## PREFACE

*By Donna L. Vlasak  
Senior Program Officer  
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Research Board*

The purpose of this synthesis was to document the state of the practice in terms of public participation strategies to inform and engage the public for transit-related activities to provide ideas and insights into practices and techniques that agencies have found to be most successful, as well as to explore challenges faced. Specific techniques and the methods by which transit agencies execute public involvement strategies are seen as constantly evolving and bounded only by the creativity of practitioners.

Results of a cross-section survey of transportation/transit agencies with an 82% response rate revealed diverse public participation strategies without a standard or prescribed method of implementation. Six transit agency case studies across a wide range of agency sizes, project types, and locations served are presented and offer examples of what the agencies' identified as successful public involvement. These are the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority's Westside Subway Extension; Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority's Route 79 Metro Extra Bus Service; Laketran, Ohio's stakeholder outreach activities to find new funding solutions; Port Authority of Allegheny County's Transit Development Planning; Sunset Empire Transportation District's growing ridership by means of strategic community partnerships and empowering employees; and Pierce Transit's PT Tomorrow Planning.

Scott Giering, Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates, New York, N.Y., collected and synthesized the information and wrote the report, under the guidance of a panel of experts in the subject area. The members of the topic panel are acknowledged on the preceding page. This synthesis is an immediately useful document that records the practices that were acceptable within the limitations of the knowledge available at the time of its preparation. As progress in research and practice continues, new knowledge will be added to that now at hand.

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# PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGIES FOR TRANSIT

## SUMMARY

Public participation in the transportation field is the process through which transportation agencies inform and engage people in the transportation decision-making process. The benefits of engaging the public are many and include “ownership” of policies; “better” decisions that are sustainable, supportable, and reflect community values; agency credibility; and faster implementation of plans and projects.

The transit industry regularly seeks public input on topics as varied as long-range, corridor, or local planning; facility design; and fare or service changes, to name a few. The strategies used often vary by agency, purpose, and target audience. However, engaging the public has proven difficult for many transit agencies. Across many public involvement efforts, low levels of participation can be traced to a lack of awareness about the importance of participation, as well as other interests and obligations that compete for people’s time. Additional challenges include time and mobility constraints, language barriers, social isolation, and distrust of and cynicism about government. Finding ways for transit providers to overcome these challenges and meaningfully engage the public (both current and potential riders) will be critical as the nation looks to transit to help meet future mobility needs.

Much of what is written about public involvement for transit focuses on large-scale “mega projects” and efforts to engage Environmental Justice populations. Little has been written about engaging the public for the more day-to-day activities of transit providers such as understanding community issues, soliciting service suggestions, and proposing fare or service changes. This synthesis is an effort to begin to fill that gap by documenting the experiences of transit providers in engaging the public for transit-related activities. In so doing, it looks at the strategies transit agencies employ to identify methods, tools, and techniques for:

- Defining the purpose and scope of public engagement;
- Determining the relevant information to be exchanged between agencies and the public;
- Identifying, reaching, and engaging target audiences;
- Eliciting relevant information from the public; and
- Assessing the effectiveness of public engagement relative to the agency’s purpose.

The goal of this synthesis is to provide transportation agencies and public involvement practitioners with ideas and insights into the practices and techniques that agencies around the country have found to be successful, as well as to explore some of the challenges they have faced.

The survey of transportation agencies, designed for this synthesis, provided the majority of this report’s information. Survey participation was solicited through requests posted on APTA web forums, direct e-mails sent to participants of the National Transit Institute’s Public Involvement for Transportation Decision-Making course, and suggestions from this TCRP study’s review panel members, as well as other industry professionals. A key limitation of the survey effort was the mindset of the respondent. Some participants responded with a particular project in mind or within their area of responsibility, whereas others provided responses covering the entire agency.

In total, 61 transportation agency representatives expressed interest in participating in the survey. Of those, 50 actually participated, a response rate of 82%. Thirty-three respondents, or 66%, provide public transit service; 4 (8%) are a state or local department of transportation (DOT); and 16 (32%) act as regional planning agencies such as metropolitan planning organizations and rural planning organizations. These divisions by agency function are not mutually exclusive. Some agencies, such as Metro Transit in Minneapolis, serve as both the regional public transit provider and the metropolitan planning organization.

This synthesis revealed that public participation strategies at transportation agencies are as diverse as the communities and locations the agencies serve and are without a standard or prescribed method of implementation. What works for one agency for a certain project in one community may not work for another agency or even for the same agency in a different community or for a different project. This lack of definition allows flexibility to agencies to tailor their outreach to match the unique set of circumstances surrounding the agencies, their projects, and the communities they serve. The specific public involvement techniques, and the methods by which transit providers execute public involvement strategies, are constantly evolving and bounded only by the creativity of their practitioners. To that end, this synthesis should not be seen as a “how to” manual for public involvement. Examples are provided throughout this report, but each can be seen as one practical application of a broader idea or concept meant to trigger additional thoughts about how a technique or idea could be applied to different situations.

There are, however, some overall generalizations about the elements of agency public participation strategies and the processes for creating them. For most transit agencies, the overarching goals of public involvement are to provide information to the public and obtain feedback on analysis, recommendations, or decisions. Although the goals and objectives are heavily dependent on the specific project, the desire for input, meeting legal requirements, and a project’s level of controversy are all key determinants of the purpose and scope of the engagement effort.

The two-way exchange of information between agencies and the public is directly linked with the goals and objectives. Clarification of what the agency wants the public to understand, information that is needed from the public, and what information the public wants all influence the type and amount of information and questions that are presented. Transit providers typically supply information to help better inform the public about decisions and issues surrounding projects. In turn, from the public, agencies are looking for community-specific information that the agency lacks, such as chronic service problems or issues that may have an impact on the agency’s service.

Standard, methodical approaches among transit providers for identifying the target audience for engagement did not emerge out of this synthesis. Most participants have used a variety of approaches that rely on institutional knowledge, committees, local officials, or community organizations. Once identified, transit agencies use a multitude of specific techniques to engage their audiences. Groups of techniques that agencies use are presented with specific examples of their application for particular projects or purposes.

Evaluation emerged as the weakest part of the public participation process as it is currently practiced by transit providers. Methods exist for quantitative and qualitative evaluation; however, standard processes are missing for measuring “successful” and “effective” participation. This gap is a potential area of future public involvement research.

The six case studies presented offer examples—across a wide range of agency sizes, project types, and locations served—of what the agency has identified as successful public involvement. The agencies were identified through survey responses, literature, and recommendations of industry professionals. Those who rated their overall public involvement efforts as “good” or “very good” in the survey were then reduced to those who were willing to be considered as

a case study. The resulting list of agencies was the basis for selecting the case studies. The following six agencies were then chosen to provide geographic diversity, represent a range of populations served, and encompass different agency sizes and project types.

- Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA), California, Westside Subway Extension. LACMTA's success at engaging the public for the Westside Subway Extension can, in part, be traced to its effective use of social media, adaptive outreach strategies, and structuring its public involvement to allow input through a variety of means.
- Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), D.C., Route 79 Metro Extra bus service. When WMATA wanted to introduce limited-stop bus service it engaged those with intimate knowledge of the community, took a "hands on" approach to engagement, took advantage of Internet technologies, and continuously involved the public in the planning for the new route.
- Laketran, Ohio. With declining revenues, Laketran faced the prospect of dramatic service cuts. What it found in its outreach efforts was that giving the public direct access to decision makers and building a reputation for being open and transparent allowed the agency to work with the public and its strategic partners to find new solutions to its funding problems.
- Port Authority of Allegheny County (PAAC), Pennsylvania, Transit Development Plan. The PAAC case study demonstrates how bringing the agency message directly to the community, using a broad spectrum of communication mechanisms and continually engaging the community, led to success in developing its Transit Development Plan.
- Sunset Empire Transportation District (SETD), Oregon. In a time when many agencies were raising fares and cutting service, SETD managed to grow its ridership by more than 50% and offer new payment options to its riders. It did this through strategic partnerships, staff volunteer work in the community, and empowering agency employees to act as an extension of the agency's outreach efforts.
- Pierce Transit (PT), Washington State, PT Tomorrow. PT shows that scale, breadth, and coordination of outreach matters, as does commitment at all levels of the agency and working within existing community structures.

The challenges transit providers face when engaging the public are many. They arise from specific issues within the agency, such as inadequate resources, or from the public, such as feelings of cynicism and distrust, lack of time, and lack of awareness. These challenges are magnified when trying to engage traditionally hard to reach populations such as people with limited English language proficiency and low-income and minority communities. The responses to these challenges have varied among agencies as has their success at rising above them. What has worked for some agencies has not always worked for others; however, many have been successful and there are common themes that have tended to lead transit agencies to greater success in public involvement.

- The more public involvement, the more likely an agency is to judge the outcomes of that involvement as successful.
- Determining the "right" questions to ask to public is important.
- Dedication of resources to public involvement is important, but these do not have to be strictly financial resources.
- The value that an agency places on public involvement is critical to its success.
- Openness and transparency matter, and in many cases are the most important as far as the public is concerned.
- Understanding, partnering with, and empowering communities can significantly benefit public involvement efforts and the agency.

When reviewing the specific application of various techniques, there are also certain commonalities that appear that can lead to greater success.

A public meeting is used here to describe any agency-organized event at a specific date, time, and location that provides a structured environment for the public to learn about a project, interact with the sponsoring agency, and supply input. This includes traditional public meetings, public hearings, open houses, workshops, charrettes, small group meetings, etc. What has worked for transit providers who participated in this synthesis includes:

- Identifying the audience to whom information needs to be provided and from whom information is needed. The Washington D.C. DOT successfully brought together both station users and station tenants in its Union Station Intermodal Transportation Center Feasibility Study in a charrette-type setting to share information and ideas about the function of and experience using the station.
- Ensuring that the event is interesting and engaging enough to make the effort worthwhile for participants. Pierce Transit's interactive quizzes and prioritization exercises engaged meeting participants and allowed them to witness how their input was being used by the agency.
- Engaging partner organization with contacts in the local community who can promote and encourage attendance by the local community as Laketran did with the local Rotary Club, Red Hat Society, chamber of commerce, and others.
- Making personal connections in the target community to build trust and credibility for the agency. The Sunset Empire Transportation District (SETD) showed this by being an active participant in its community through staff volunteer work and driver contact with customers.

Advisory committees can go by any number of names including citizen, community, stakeholder, passenger, technical, or steering. However they are labeled, they are generally an agency-created or sanctioned group meant to represent diverse community opinions and assist the agency in decision making. Their success stems from carefully matching the needs of the agency and the community, explicitly stating the expectations of the committee, clarifying committee roles and responsibilities, and balancing the desire for broad representation with the need for managing the committee. By providing a clearly defined area of responsibility, LACMTA's Service Governance Councils have created an effective mechanism to receive public input and respond quickly and appropriately to address important community concerns.

Surveys and focus groups are two of the most common types of data collection techniques. Their success stems from an agency's ability to frame questions appropriately to get the specific type of feedback that is needed and determine the most appropriate means to reach the public. SETD found that distributing survey cards with postage-paid reply cards yielded a disappointingly low response rate. The agency responded by designating staff to ride the buses with customers who could assist them in completing the survey forms. In addition to a higher response rate, this also provided a more nuanced understanding of customer issues than could be gained through just the survey responses.

Proactive engagement can include attending community events, speaking at community meetings, holding open events at public gathering places, or partnering with local organizations. The common theme among these efforts is to take the agency's message directly to the public and use local communication and support networks to broaden the number and diversity of people reached. Each of the case studies in this synthesis used some form of proactive engagement. LACMTA took its public meetings to centers of employment and held events at lunch time to gather critical input from commuters. PAAC's Tell Us Where to Go Bus took the message of the agency deep into the heart of communities to hear directly from the affected public. WMATA partnered with local organizations to reach bus riders along its Route 79 bus route. Laketran worked with its local Jobs and Family Services Department to broaden its outreach about transit service cuts and educate potential riders about transit. SETD developed strong relationships with its local schools and colleges to promote transit use, and Pierce Transit used the neighborhood councils in Tacoma and Lakewood, Washington, to disseminate information and encourage attendance at its local meetings.

Internet and mobile technologies have opened new channels of communication and interactivity that agencies are using to expand the scope of their outreach, engage new audiences (particularly younger generations), and push the boundaries of traditional public meetings and visualization. By keeping its content updated and relevant, LACMTA has kept its followers on Facebook interested in the planning for the Westside Subway extension and has managed to translate this interest into greater participation from younger residents in the Los Angeles area.

Finally, the work for this synthesis uncovered gaps in information, knowledge, or practice for public involvement, as well as areas of interest that need further investigation. These include:

- Defining and measuring successful public involvement.
- Determining the continued relevance of traditional public involvement techniques.
- Understanding the use of social media as a tool for enhancing public participation.
- Using frontline employees as an extension of public involvement.
- The role of the media in building trust for an agency.

## CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

The transit industry regularly solicits public input on issues as varied as long-range, corridor, or local planning; facility design; and fare or service changes. The strategies used often vary by agency, purpose, and target audience. However, engaging the public has proven difficult for many transit agencies. As documented by many public involvement efforts, low levels of participation can be traced to insufficient awareness concerning the importance of participation, and other interests and obligations that compete for people's time. Other challenges include time and mobility constraints, language barriers, social isolation, and a distrust of and cynicism about government. Discovering the means for transit providers to overcome such challenges and meaningfully engage the public, both current and potential riders, will be critical as the nation looks to transit to help meet future mobility needs.

Literature on public involvement contains numerous case studies about transit projects around the country. However, these tend to be high-profile, high-cost projects or examinations of specific issues such as environmental justice or community impact assessment. What is missing from this literature is information on the more routine, day-to-day public involvement strategies of transit agencies. This synthesis begins to fill that gap.

### PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THIS SYNTHESIS

This synthesis documents the experiences of transit providers, departments of transportation (DOTs), and planning organizations in engaging the public for transit-related activities by reviewing the public participation strategies transit agencies are employing to identify, where possible, methods, tools, and techniques for:

- Defining the purpose and scope of public engagement;
- Determining the relevant information to be exchanged between agencies and the public;
- Identifying, reaching, and engaging target audiences;
- Eliciting relevant information from the public; and
- Assessing the effectiveness of public engagement relative to the agency's purpose.

The goal of this synthesis is to supply transit providers and public involvement practitioners with ideas and insights into practices and techniques that agencies around the coun-

try have found to be successful, as well as to explore some of the challenges they have faced. Specific public involvement strategies vary greatly among agencies and are without a single standard or prescribed method of implementation. This lack of definition can deliver flexibility to agencies to tailor their outreach to match the unique set of circumstances surrounding the agencies, their projects, and the communities they serve. Therefore, this synthesis should not be viewed as a "how to" manual for public involvement. Examples are provided throughout this report, but each can be taken as one practical application of a broader idea or concept designed to trigger additional thought about how it could be applied to different situations.

### METHODOLOGY

The development of this synthesis report involved three primary tools—a literature review, agency survey, and case study interviews. The literature review of professional and trade publications provided a theoretical foundation of public involvement and best practices in the industry. It also revealed, through written case studies, how agencies currently engage the public, the challenges they face, and the innovative techniques employed. A full reference list of sources is supplied at the end of the report.

The survey of public involvement practitioners at transportation agencies provided the majority of this report's information. Overall, 61 agency representatives expressed interest in participating in the survey, with 50 submitting completed surveys, a response rate of 82%. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix A, the participating agencies in Appendix B, and the survey responses in Appendix C (transit agencies) and Appendix D (all agencies).

Thirty-three respondents' agencies supply public transit service; 4 are a state or local DOT and 16 act as regional planning agencies such as metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) and rural planning organizations (see Table 1). These divisions by agency function are not mutually exclusive. Some agencies, such as Metro Transit in Minneapolis, serve as both the regional public transit provider and the MPO.

Most agencies that participated in the survey do not exclusively provide service in urban, suburban, or rural

**TABLE 1**  
AGENCY FUNCTIONS AS INDICATED BY SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Agency	No.
Public Transit Provider	33
State or Local Department of Transportation	4
Metropolitan or Rural Planning Organization	16

*Note:* Five agencies serve more than one function.

areas, but serve multiple types of areas. Statewide agencies, such as NJ TRANSIT and the Maryland Transit Authority, supply service in all three location types. Nearly all transit agencies in the survey (45) provide service in urban areas. Less than half (22) provide service in rural areas, of which only one—Sunset Empire Transportation District (SETD)—delivers service exclusively in rural areas (see Table 2).

Interviews with public involvement professionals at six transit providers were used to develop the case studies in chapter four. These case studies were identified through survey responses, the literature review, and recommendations from industry professionals. Respondents who rated their overall public involvement efforts in the survey as “good” or “very good” were then screened by those respondents who were willing to be considered for inclusion in this report as a case study. This list of agencies was the basis for selecting the case studies. Specific agencies were then chosen to provide geographic diversity, represent a range of populations served, and encompass different agency sizes and project types. Additional material such as studies, outreach materials, and public participation plans were used to supplement the case studies as much as possible. The six case study subjects are:

- Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA), Los Angeles, CA—Westside Subway Extension.
- Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), Washington, DC—Route 79 Metro Extra bus service.
- Port Authority of Allegheny County (Port Authority), Pittsburgh, PA—Transit Development Plan.
- Pierce Transit (PT), Pierce County, WA—PT Tomorrow.
- Laketran, Lake County, OH—Fare and service changes.
- Sunset Empire Transportation District (SETD), Clatsop County, OR—Fare and service changes.

**TABLE 2**  
TRANSIT PROVIDERS THAT PROVIDE SERVICE IN URBAN, SUBURBAN, AND/OR RURAL AREAS

Area	No.
Urban	45
Suburban	37
Rural	22

*Note:* 36 agencies serve multiple location types (urban, suburban, rural).

## STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT

Chapter one is an introduction to the purpose and structure of the synthesis and the methodology used in completing it.

Chapter two presents an introduction to public involvement, including a history of the federal regulations that mandate it.

Chapter three provides an overview of the state of practice among transit agencies for developing, implementing, and evaluating public participation strategies, and explores the following: the range of public involvement goals and objectives among transit providers, the type of information agencies supply the public, the type of input agencies desire from the public, processes agencies use to identify and define their target audiences for engagement, techniques employed to engage the public, and methods agencies use to evaluate their public involvement processes.

Chapter four contains an in-depth investigation into specific activities at six transit providers. These case studies range from some of the largest transit systems in the country to small and rural providers. Each covers a broad range of issues and planning areas that offer insight on how agencies conduct public involvement and includes a specific section on the factors that led each agency to determine that its public involvement efforts were successful.

Chapter five examines the challenges transit agencies face, both internally and externally, when trying to engage the public. Examples are derived from the literature, the survey, and case studies to illustrate how agencies have attempted to overcome barriers to participation.

Chapter six concludes the report, and synthesizes the key issues and themes that emerged from this study and provides suggestions for future research.

## CHAPTER TWO

## EVOLUTION OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The requirements for public involvement are often traced back to the devolution of power from federal to state and local government that began in the 1970s and accelerated in the 1980s (O'Connor et al. 2000). One of the consequences of this power shift was the empowerment of groups and individuals who demanded a voice in the government decisions that affected their communities. However, requirements for public involvement can be found as far back as the Administrative Procedures Act of 1946, which required federal agencies to keep the public informed of an organization's procedures and rules (Childress 2008). In 1962, the Federal-Aid Highway Act set "community concerns" as one of the ten basic elements of the continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative (3C) planning process. These efforts were often part of technical analysis with agencies identifying community concerns, but they only provided minimal information to the public (Childress 2008).

Public involvement became a more significant part of transportation planning in the late 1960s (Barnes and Langworthy 2004a). The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1968 required, for the first time, public hearings to address the economic, social, and environmental effects of proposed highway projects in order to protect the environment and reduce the negative impacts associated with highway construction (Barnes and Langworthy 2004a). One year later, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) mandated that agencies examine the potential environmental impacts for federally funded projects. For significant projects, an Environmental Impact Statement was required, compelling agencies to seek input from local jurisdictions, make documents available for public review and comment, and hold public hearings (Barnes and Langworthy 2004a; Hull 2010).

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) was one of the first pieces of federal legislation to call for on-going public involvement and marked a turning point for public involvement in transit. The act mandated involving the community, particularly those with disabilities, in the development and improvement of transportation services. Specifically, transit agencies were now required to do the following: develop outreach mechanisms (contact and mailing lists, as well as other means to notify the public to participate), consult with individuals with disabilities, supply opportunities for public comment, hold public meetings in accessible locations, provide materials in accessible formats, summarize significant issues raised during public comment periods, and engage in ongoing efforts to involve the disability community in planning (FHWA 2010).

Starting with the ADA in 1990 and continuing with the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) in 1991, and subsequent reauthorizations of the federal transportation law, federal requirements for public involvement have shifted away from NEPA's reactive mandates toward a more proactive approach. ISTEA required early and continuous involvement in the development of MPO and state DOT plans and Transportation Improvement Programs, and stipulated that the public receive complete information, timely notice, and full access to key decisions. It also instructed agencies to specifically seek out and consider the needs of traditionally underrepresented groups (FHWA/FTA 1993; O'Connor et al. 2000; Jackson 2002; Stich and Eagle 2005).

The 1998 Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) strengthened and added to the requirements under ISTEA and included minimum comment periods, consistency with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, periodic evaluation of public involvement, and coordination of state and metropolitan public involvement processes. TEA-21 also encouraged public transportation agencies to coordinate with the state and regional processes and to use the federal requirements as guidelines for developing their own locally appropriate public involvement programs (Hull 2010). In 2005, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) added public involvement requirements including formal Public Involvement Plans for MPOs, consultation with "interested parties," and the use of alternative format materials and visualization techniques (FHWA/FTA 2007).

Two other federal mandates also influence public involvement practices at transit agencies. Any agency receiving federal funds is required to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race, color, or national origin. Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice requires agencies to explicitly consider the impacts of federal actions on minority and low-income communities (Hull 2010). These federal mandates, along with NEPA and the federal transportation laws, have created the framework for public involvement practiced throughout the United States by DOTs, MPOs, and transit agencies. NEPA brought public involvement into the project development process, ADA and the three "TEAs" incorporated public input into the planning and programming processes, and Title VI and the Executive Order on Environmental Justice ensured that traditionally underserved populations are actively included in the transportation decision-making process (Stich and Eagle 2005).

## CHAPTER THREE

**STATE OF PRACTICE IN THE INDUSTRY**

Public participation (or public involvement) in the transportation field is the process through which transportation agencies inform people about and engage people in the transportation decision-making process. It has been described by some as the logical extension of our democratic principles that serve to strengthen our civil society (Bradham et al. 2007). Although the specifics of public involvement vary greatly by location, the organization leading the effort, and the project or study for which public input is sought, an overriding principle remains—to deliver communication mechanisms between governments and communities they serve (Innes and Booher 2000; Bickerstaff and Walker 2001).

The benefits of public involvement have been written about extensively (see Hanna 2000; Corburn 2003; Van Herzele 2004; Von Hippel 2005; Bradham 2009). These benefits include public “ownership” of policies; “better” decisions that are sustainable, supportable, and reflect community values; agency credibility; less opposition; and faster implementation of plans and projects (Porter 2005; Bradham 2009). Public involvement also leads to the creation of *new knowledge* based on community understanding of issues and problems (Bradham 2009).

Public involvement literature contains numerous case studies about transit projects around the country. However, these tend to be high-profile, high-cost projects such as new transit facilities in San Diego (Bates and Wahl 1997), Minneapolis/St. Paul (Clements 2008; U.S.DOT 2010), Denver (Springer 2007), and Silicon Valley (Childress 2008); multi-modal infrastructure projects (Keever et al. 1999); transit-oriented development (Porter 2005; Bailey et al. 2007); and examinations of environmental justice, community impact assessment, and context-sensitive solutions (Florida DOT and National Center for Transit Research 2002; Cairns et al. 2003; Ward 2005; Robinson 2007).

What is missing from this literature is information on the more routine, day-to-day public involvement activities of transit providers. This chapter attempts to fill that gap by providing an overview of how agencies develop, execute, and evaluate public involvement strategies. Based on the literature, survey results, and case study interviews, this chapter presents the following: an examination of how public involvement goals and objectives are developed; the type of information that is exchanged between the agency and the public; the public involvement techniques that are used to engage communi-

ties; and how agencies evaluate their efforts. Given the diversity of project types, locations, agencies, and communities involved, public involvement strategies are highly dependent on specific project needs. To that end, what is presented here are examples and general observations that are meant to provide ideas and stimulate thought rather than definitive prescriptions on how to develop public involvement strategies.

**PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN TRANSIT**

Transit agencies engage the public for almost all of their major activities. The agency survey for this synthesis report specifically identified eight activities in which transit providers involve the public: long-range/corridor planning, capital projects, facility design, services changes (including schedules and route changes, additions, or cuts), fare changes, daily operations (including travel information and trip planning services), marketing (including advertising, public service announcements, and safety campaigns), and human services transportation planning (transit planning for persons with disabilities, seniors, and low-income populations). More than half of the agencies that participated in the survey engaged the public for all of these activities. Approximately three-fourths of the agencies that do long-range/corridor and human services planning do so with the help of the public. In addition, almost all reported engaging the public for fare and service changes (see Table 3).

“Other” activities where transit agencies engage the public were identified as air quality, transportation demand management strategies, transit-oriented development planning, communications, and website design/redesign.

**DETERMINING AND DEFINING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

Goals and objectives play a key role in public involvement strategies. They guide the entire process, influencing who will be engaged, the level of participation desired, the type of information that will be needed, and the techniques to be used. Goals and objectives also set expectations about what the public involvement effort will achieve and provide a basis for evaluating results and measuring effectiveness. The goals themselves are most often defined based on the specific needs of the project—what are the questions that need to be answered, what are the missing pieces of information/data, what type of valida-

TABLE 3  
SURVEY RESPONDENTS REPORTING  
USE OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT FOR  
VARIOUS ACTIVITIES

Activity	No.
Long-range/Corridor Planning	23
Capital Projects	21
Facility Design	18
Service Changes	30
Fare Changes	30
Daily Operations	25
Marketing	24
Human Services Planning	24
Other	6

tion or public buy-in is desired, what requirements need to be met, who is the agency trying to reach, etc.

Most of these project-specific goals tend to fall under one of a few overarching goals as identified and defined in the International Association of Public Participation's (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation. The spectrum helps agencies to identify, broadly, the desired level of public participation based on project needs, schedules, available resources, and level of concern about the issue at hand. It has five distinct phases of increasing levels of public involvement:

- *Inform*: to provide the public with balanced objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives, opportunities, and/or solutions.
- *Consult*: to obtain feedback on analysis of alternatives and/or decisions.
- *Involve*: to work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.
- *Collaborate*: to partner with the public in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.
- *Empower*: to place final decision making in the hands of the public (IAP2 2010)

The IAP2 spectrum serves as a useful starting point for understanding how transit agencies define the purpose and scope of their public involvement efforts. In the survey of agencies, participants were asked to identify the primary goals of their public involvement efforts for eight transit provider activities. The choices for goals were derived from the IAP2 spectrum. Goal types included: (1) provide information (*inform*), (2) get feedback on specific issues (*consult*), (3) understand general customer issues and concerns (*involve*), (4) collaborate to identify solutions (*collaborate*), and (5) encourage/build ridership or support for transit.

Across all activities, providing information and getting feedback on specific issues were considered important goals. This was particularly true for fare and service changes. Understanding customer issues and collaboration were most important for long-range/corridor planning and human services

planning. Encouraging ridership and building support for transit ranked near the bottom of the five goals for most activities, with the exception of marketing and long-range planning. However, several of the case studies presented later in this report, as well as those from the literature, note the importance of public involvement for building transit support and ridership.

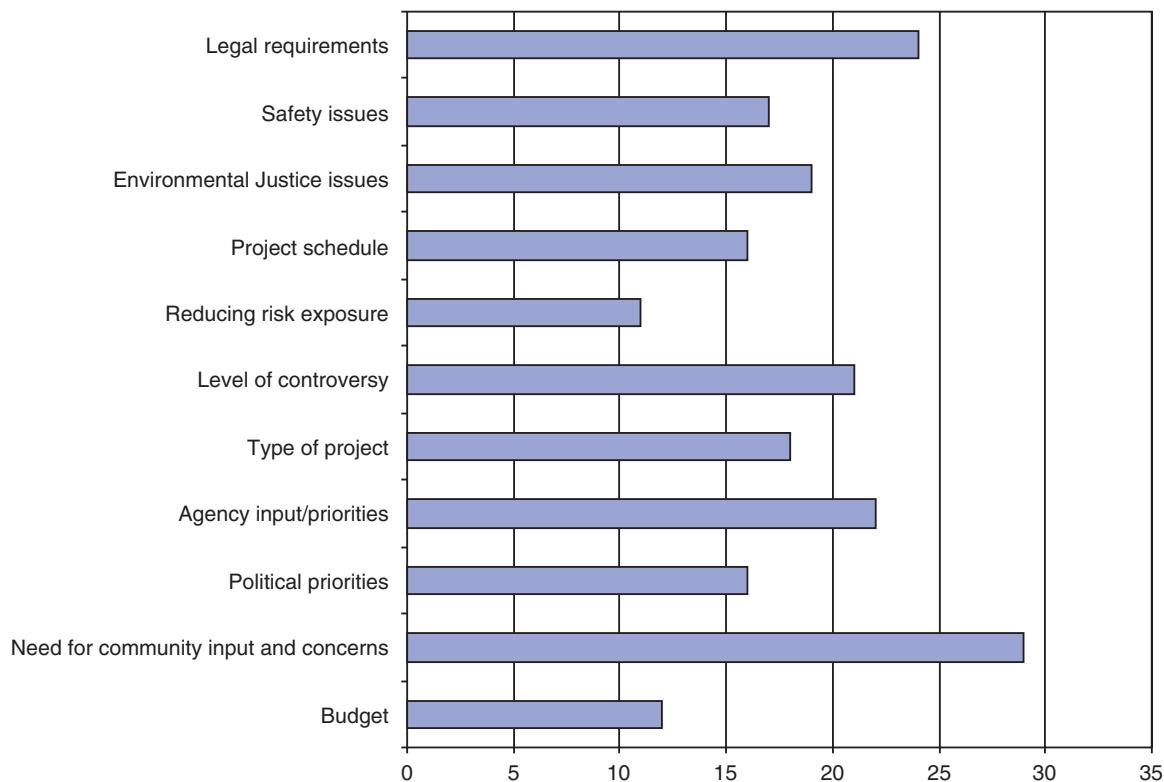
This synthesis did not identify a standard process or method by which goals and objectives are defined. Some agencies direct staff to develop them, whereas others are guided by advisory committees. Similarly, the public's role in developing goals and objectives is not clearly defined in the literature. In some cases the public is given the opportunity to review and comment on the goals at public meetings, advisory committee meetings, or through written comments. In others, agencies approach the public with a problem or issue and collaborate to develop the specific outreach goals. The feasibility of any of these approaches to develop and validate the purpose and scope of public engagement is dependent on the specific project, agency, and community issue surrounding the effort.

Numerous factors can influence the development of goals and objectives including:

- Budget—the amount of funding available for public involvement.
- Need for community input—the degree to which an agency values community input.
- Political priorities—the value elected officials put on a project.
- Agency priorities—the value agencies put on a project.
- Type of project—the scale, purpose, and impact of the project.
- Level of controversy—the degree of expected public opposition to the project.
- Reducing risk exposure—the desire to proactively address opposition and minimize the potential for lawsuits.
- Project schedule—the amount of time available to conduct public involvement.
- Environmental justice issues—whether a project impacts environmental justice communities.
- Safety issues—whether the project significantly impacts safety conditions.
- Legal requirements—the specific federal, state, and local legal requirement for public involvement that need to be met.

Figure 1 shows the number of respondents who indicated that these 11 factors have at least a "very significant" influence on the selection of public goals and objectives.

The respondents indicated that the need for community input and concerns is the most critical factor in developing public involvement goals and objectives. Legal requirements were cited by a large share of agencies, as was a project's



**FIGURE 1** Survey respondents indicating which factors have at least a “Very Significant” influence on public involvement goals and objectives.

level of controversy—although a desire to reduce risk exposure was not rated highly.

#### EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION

After the identification of goals and objectives, the exchange of information between agencies and the public is the second key element of a public involvement strategy. Informed public input requires access to information, although agencies need access to that input if it is to have an effect on decision making. The amount and type of information exchanged affects the outreach process and vice versa. Despite the importance of this exchange, the public involvement literature does not provide any information on how this happens at transit providers.

#### Providing Information to the Public

Transit providers must often make complex decisions about the type and amount of information to provide to the public, balancing the risks of providing too little information and too much. This can be further complicated by the often technical nature of the data and the risks of it being confusing or misinterpreted. However, information sharing is important not just for meaningful public involvement, but also for building trust within the community, creating transparency at the agency, enhancing advocacy efforts, and proactively guiding the public conversation instead of allowing others

(including the media or other interested parties) to dominate the debate.

Agencies that participated in this synthesis differed in the amount of information they provide to the public, and are often guided by what they want the public to understand. Some agencies attempt to supply as much information as possible. The Port Authority of Allegheny County (PAAC), for example, posts the results of its financial audits, the chief executive officer’s (CEO’s) contract, and employee wages and salaries to generate a sense of openness about the agency. Others provide minimal information. Table 4 shows the type of information that agencies in this study’s survey provide.

Other types of information agencies distribute include news articles, previous study results, and special analysis and

**TABLE 4**  
SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY TYPE OF  
INFORMATION TYPICALLY MADE  
AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC

Information Type	No.
Schedule/Route Changes	32
Current Service Information	32
Design, Construction, Route Alternatives	28
Ridership Statistics/Projections	27
Construction Updates/Impacts	23
Financial Information/Projections	19
Cost Estimates	14
Modeling Results	10

research. It is worth noting that other questions in this survey, case study interviews, and the public involvement literature all point to a desire among agencies for the public to understand the financial position of transit providers, their funding mechanisms, and the difference between agency operating and capital costs. Given this information, it is surprising that less than 60% of the survey respondents from transit providers supply financial or cost information to the public.

Based on the survey, the decision about what information to share with the public is influenced by several factors. Foremost among these are direct requests from the public; anticipated reactions from the media, public, or elected officials; and direction from agency boards or senior management. As agencies have become more open and transparent, Freedom of Information Act requests and legislative mandates for sharing information have become less critical factors. The decisions about what information to share are also influenced by what the agency wants the public to understand. Based on the survey results, public understanding of service changes, funding needs and constraints, and fare structures are the most important issues for transit providers.

#### **Receiving Information from the Public**

Equally important for shaping the public involvement process is the agency's determination of what information it wants from the public. The survey results support the idea that for transit providers, public involvement provides the agency with critical missing information. When asked about the type of input agencies typically want from the public, respondents noted that they want to know about community issues that

might impact transit service, as well as chronic customer service problems (Figure 2).

This information exchange between agencies and the public is central to the public involvement process. What agencies need the public to understand and the public input they need in return provides the framework for the ensuing engagement effort. This framework influences how the agency identifies the target audiences for engagement as well as the specific tools and techniques that will be used to facilitate the exchange of information.

#### **IDENTIFYING THE “PUBLIC”**

Knowing and understanding target audiences and communities is the third key element in a public participation strategy. This knowledge informs and shapes the outreach approach and allows an agency to tailor techniques to the specific cultural, linguistic, historic, or socioeconomic contexts of the community. This process is also important for identifying project supporters and opponents, as well as for understanding differing views and opinions. As Barnes and Langworthy (2004b) noted in their discussion of managing conflict in public involvement, identification and representation of major points of view are critical to the success of public involvement. Failure to do so can lead to feelings of exclusion among stakeholders and attempts to disrupt the planning process.

The survey results showed that agencies typically try to engage a broad spectrum of the population, including traditional transit users as well as non-transit users and choice riders (see Table 5).

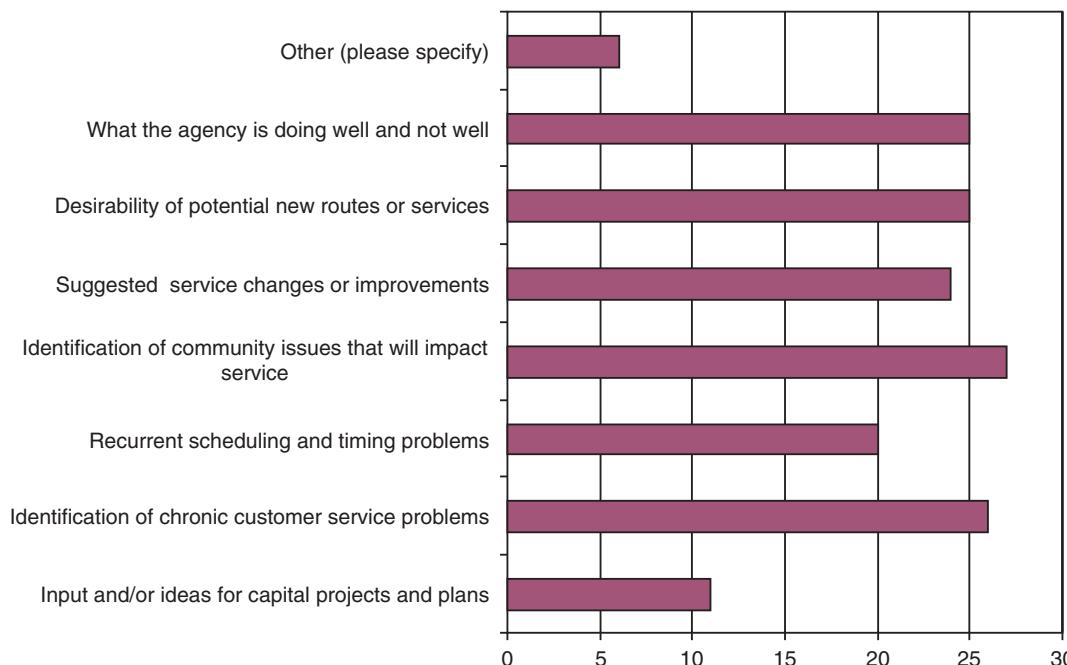


FIGURE 2 Survey respondents that seek different types of input.

**TABLE 5**  
SURVEY RESPONDENTS WHOSE  
AGENCIES ATTEMPT TO ENGAGE THE  
FOLLOWING POPULATION SUB-GROUPS

Population Sub-Group	No.
Seniors	31
Persons with Disabilities	30
Transit Dependent	29
Low-income	28
Minorities	27
Students	27
Choice Riders	27
Urban Transit Users	26
Suburban Transit Users	23
Non-English Speakers	20
Rural Transit Users	12

*Note:* Individuals may be part of multiple sub-groups.

Other important target audiences not included in the survey, but listed by respondents as key stakeholders, were advocacy groups, elected officials, local jurisdictions, agency partners, and the business community. A “stakeholder” typically refers to anyone with a “stake,” or interest, in the project. Broadly defined, this can be synonymous with the public at-large. However, in most cases it is meant to refer to a subset of the public who have an elevated interest in the project or represent key constituents from whom ideas and opinions are desired.

Agencies identify their target audiences for engagement through data collection and consultation with key stakeholders. Consultation often entails working with elected officials, advisory committees, partner agencies, and other

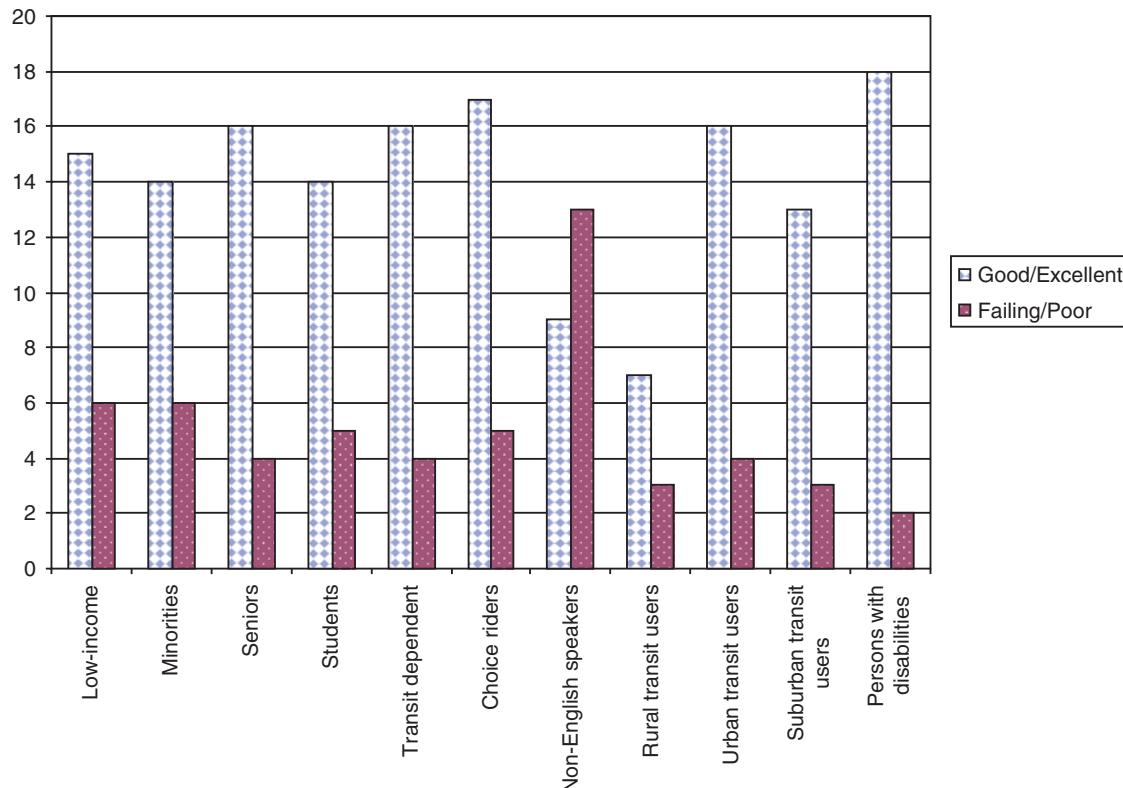
**TABLE 6**  
INFORMATION SOURCES TRANSIT  
PROVIDERS USE TO IDENTIFY  
TARGET AUDIENCES

Information Sources	No.
Customer Surveys	27
Ridership Statistics	25
Planning Studies	22
Human Service Agencies	19
Historical Data	16
Census Data	15
Focus Groups	9
Fare Box Data	8

stakeholders to identify important groups and issues. Internal data from customer survey results and ridership statistics also provide significant help in defining the target audience. Finally, institutional knowledge and information from previous studies give agencies further clarification on whom to engage. Table 6 shows the specific data sources transit providers cited in the survey to assist in identifying target audiences for engagement.

Irrespective of how audiences are identified, the identification process continues throughout the duration of the engagement effort. As new information is gained from stakeholders, it opens up new opportunities for engagement with different groups.

Transit provider success at reaching specific subgroups is highly variable. Figure 3 shows the number of transit providers



**FIGURE 3** Survey respondents rating their engagement of population sub-groups.

that rate their engagement of specific population sub-groups as “good/excellent” or “failing/poor.” Owing in part to the requirements of the ADA, transit providers have had the most success engaging the disabled community. Choice riders, seniors, those who are transit-dependent, and urban transit users were also noted as groups that agencies have had good success in engaging. By far, transit providers have had the most difficulty reaching populations with limited English proficiency (see chapter five for discussion on hard to reach populations).

## ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

Techniques and methods for engaging the public are the practical realization of any public participation strategy. The techniques and applications described here are meant to provide an overview of some of the ways that agencies have tried to engage the public. Where possible, examples are supplied to illustrate possible uses of a technique; however, these should be seen as only one concrete possibility of how a larger concept could be put into action. They are most useful as a stimulus for additional thought on the issues and target populations identified rather than as a definitive answer to a public participation question or problem. None of these techniques should be seen as “the solution” for public participation. Each must be viewed as part of a larger overall strategy that relies on multiple outreach approaches and techniques. Questions of organization, costs, and leadership will vary dramatically depending on the scope of implementation. Public participation practitioners constantly strive to find new methods to reach their audiences and raise general public interest in the participation process. As technology evolves, altering the ways our society communicates and interacts, so too will the application of these techniques.

### Public Meetings

The category of “public meetings” encompasses a wide range of techniques where an agency organizes an event at a specific date, time, and location. Included here are formal hearings, public meetings, open houses, workshops, charrettes, and small group meetings. What they have in common is that they provide a structured environment for the public to learn about a project, interact with the sponsoring agency, and provide input.

The traditional public meeting—including hearings, open houses, and town hall meetings—is the outreach technique most widely used by transit providers. Responses to the agency survey showed significant use of public meetings across the spectrum of their outreach activities. Not surprisingly, given legal requirements, most of the surveyed transit providers use public meetings to discuss fare and service changes (see Table 7).

Although public meetings are still the norm, a significant level of doubt has been raised by transit providers about their usefulness. Survey respondents noted numerous problems

**TABLE 7**  
NUMBER OF TRANSIT PROVIDER RESPONDENTS THAT USE DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES FOR DIFFERENT AGENCY ACTIVITIES

Activity	Data Collection Technique		
	Rider intercept surveys	Focus groups	Other surveys
Capital Projects	5	8	10
Daily Operations	14	7	16
Facility Design	5	8	9
Fare Changes	13	6	11
Human Services Planning	10	7	11
Long-range/Corridor Planning	15	11	21
Marketing	16	13	15
Service Changes	16	10	18

with the public meeting format. The meetings were criticized as ineffective at engaging and interacting with the public, failing to attract sufficient numbers of participants, encouraging only the most vocal opponents of a project or plan to attend, ignoring the time and financial constraints that limit the public’s ability to participate, and serving as an agency formality to meet legal requirements rather than an honest and open forum to gather meaningful input.

These agency sentiments are supported in public involvement literature that points to the failures of public meetings and hearings at achieving genuine public participation. This failure is viewed as leading to a series of consequences for the planning process. Limited participation, often only by those negatively impacted, and short question and answer sessions, leave officials without enough valuable public input to meaningfully influence their decisions or actions (Innes 2000; Stich and Eagle 2005). The public often leaves these meetings feeling unsatisfied with the process and that their opinions will not have any influence over final decisions (Leighter et al. 2009). Worse still, the public meeting format has the potential to antagonize the public, where avid supporters and opponents are vehemently pitted against each other. All of this serves to further discourage public participation (Innes 2000).

This raises the question of why transit providers still conduct public meetings. For many the answer comes down to legal requirements, public expectations, and inadequate resources to engage in more proactive public involvement. However, there are agencies that see the benefit of public meetings, especially when adapted to various settings and realities. Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), for example, has improved the traditional open house format by conducting meetings at key public transit stops over a period of hours. By meeting the customers directly on the system, the agency is able to reach transit-dependent and minority riders who are less likely to attend the agency’s formal public meetings.

Workshops (including intense and often lengthy “charrette” sessions) and small group meetings provide a more interactive format that allows for greater public discussion and interaction

with agency staff and decision makers. Washington D.C.'s DDOT used charrettes and workshops during their Union Station Intermodal Transportation Center Feasibility Study to allow stakeholders and station tenants to share information and ideas about the function of the station and ways to improve the overall experience for station users. Metro Transit in Minneapolis found that splitting attendees of large workshops into small groups to work through specific problems (in this case landscape design using puzzle pieces and a large site diagram) was an effective way of capturing creative ideas from the public. The results of both of these efforts had a direct impact on the final designs of their respective projects.

### Committees

Although not explicitly called out in the agency survey, committees were still mentioned by numerous survey respondents as a valuable public engagement technique. Committees as defined here include any agency-created or sanctioned group meant to represent diverse opinions and aid in planning or operations decision making. These committees go by various names, such as working groups or citizen, community, technical, or steering advisory committees. As Hull notes in her Synthesis Report on community advisory committees (CAC), management, membership, structure, and function of committees vary among agencies. Where successful, they are able to act as a conduit to provide information to the public and representative feedback to the agency. Their success stems from carefully matching the needs of the agency and the community, explicitly stating the expectations of the committee, clarifying committee roles and responsibilities, and balancing the desire for broad representation with the need for managing the committee (Hull 2010).

In planning for the Hiawatha Light Rail Line in Minneapolis, the Metropolitan Council (the region's MPO) created a 40-member CAC. The CAC played a critical role in public participation by providing information to residents, transit riders, and the general public, and keeping them involved in the planning process. It facilitated multi-directional commu-

nication between and among the MPO and neighborhood groups and advised on issues such as station area land use, station design, feeder bus routes, and impacts on local residents and businesses (U.S.DOT 2010).

The San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) formed a Project Review Committee (PRC) during a Major Investment Study for a new light rail line after a small, but vocal and powerful group began to monopolize the public dialogue. From previous environmental studies the MTS knew there was significant public support for the line. It created the PRC to provide balanced representation and ensure that all sides were expressed in the public conversation. Critical to the success of this effort was the hiring of a neutral facilitator to run the PRC meetings. The process generated preferences about modes and alignments that were used to modify agency decision making. By responding to community issues and concerns raised through the PRC, the MTS built trust with the community and support for the eventual construction of the light rail line (Bates and Wahl 1997).

### Data Collection

Data collection strategies for transit providers rely primarily on surveys and focus groups. As shown in Table 8, these efforts are used most often in long-range/corridor planning, service changes, and marketing.

Surveys can take many forms and use various methods of delivery including rider intercept surveys, printed surveys, web-based surveys, phone surveys, and short message service or text message surveys (for cell phones). Much has been written about successful techniques for developing and administering surveys [see TCRP Synthesis Reports by Schaller (2005) and Spitz et al. (2006)]. For transit providers, what has made surveys, and particularly rider intercept surveys, successful is determining the most useful questions to ask to capitalize on the captive audience waiting for or riding transit services.

TABLE 8  
NUMBER OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS THAT USE INFORMATION DISSEMINATION  
TECHNIQUES FOR DIFFERENT AGENCY ACTIVITIES

Activity	Information Dissemination Techniques						
	Seat drops	Ads on transit vehicles	Public service announcements	Handouts	Flyers/ newsletters	Hotline/ call-in centers	Information booths/kiosks
Capital Projects	1	2	3	7	15	5	6
Daily Operations	6	14	10	12	16	11	10
Facility Design	1	3	2	5	9	2	3
Fare Changes	11	23	18	19	24	13	9
Human Services Planning	3	8	5	8	11	5	0
Long-Range/ Corridor Planning	2	4	4	9	15	4	6
Marketing	8	19	8	15	17	5	12
Service Changes	11	21	15	22	21	13	10

The Broward County Transit Division (BCTD) uses rider intercept surveys, coupled with web-based surveys, to engage riders in long-range/corridor planning. Questions are framed to explain the direct impact plans will have on riders' daily experiences with transit. Since 2007, WMATA has been conducting rider surveys to evaluate the effectiveness of limited stop bus service on high-ridership corridors. From these surveys the agency has learned that customers value one-seat rides, bus cleanliness, frequency of service, appearance of vehicles, and driver courtesy among other issues. When changes are implemented, WMATA follows up with another survey to understand if and how riders perceive that service has improved. In both cases, each agency brought the survey directly to transit users either while waiting for or riding buses.

Focus groups are most often used when agencies desire information about specific issues. Critical to their success is striving for balanced representation and keeping the group at a manageable number so that each person is able to contribute to a substantive discussion. The Denton County Transportation Authority held a focus group for its ADA community when the agency updated its policies and procedures. One of the changes the agency proposed was adding penalties for no-shows on its paratransit service. The Authority wanted the system users to set the parameters for enforcement and appeals. The focus group approach allowed a small, representative group of users to participate in a frank discussion about the impact of no-shows. The result was a user-influenced enforcement strategy rather than an agency-imposed one.

### **Disseminating Information**

Techniques for disseminating information include marketing and advertising materials, flyers and newsletters, direct mail, public service announcements, seat drops on transit vehicles, handouts, posters, call-in centers, hotlines, and information booths/kiosks. (For websites, see Internet and Mobile Technologies.) Their primary function is to provide agency, service, or project information to the public. Although transit providers use these techniques in almost all of their activities, their use is concentrated in two particular areas—fare changes and service changes. The techniques are much less likely to be used for capital projects, facility design, and human services transportation planning (see Table 9).

**TABLE 9**  
NUMBER OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS THAT USE  
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS FOR DIFFERENT  
AGENCY ACTIVITIES

Activity	Partnership with Community Organizations
Capital Projects	16
Daily Operations	11
Facility Design	12
Fare Changes	13
Human Services Planning	16
Long-range/Corridor Planning	14
Marketing	18
Service Changes	15

Agencies in this survey have successfully used many of these techniques. Both Laketran and DART have used information booths and kiosks in local shopping malls to promote transit use among current non-riders and to solicit information about services from current users. DART has also found that hotlines offer people a chance to "vent" when they choose not to participate in other outreach opportunities. The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority has found flyers to be an effective mechanism to explain specific projects to communities.

For these techniques to be successful, agencies need to ensure the messages are both engaging and of interest or concern to the public and reach the appropriate populations. BCTD, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA), and Mid Mon Valley Transit Authority (MMVTA; Charleroi, Pennsylvania) have used direct mail to capture the public's attention and boost attendance at public meetings. The successful strategy for BCTD and LACMTA involved direct mail to reach riders in specific geographic areas. In Broward County this meant mailing to residents along specific bus routes. In Los Angeles, as part of the proposed subway extension, all residents within a predefined radius of new stations received post cards encouraging attendance at meetings to discuss station location and details. MMVTA took a broader strategy when soliciting input for its Transit Development Plan. By including an insert in the local PennySaver it was able to reach most of the residents in its service area. The insert provided information about how and why MMVTA was developing the plan, how the public could provide input, and where and when the agency would be out in the community to present information.

### **Proactive and Collaborative Engagement**

Proactive or collaborative engagement can take many forms: attending festivals, farmers markets, local fairs, flea markets, or other special events; speaking at community organizations, resident or business associations, or clubs; engaging the public at transit centers, malls, and other gathering places; canvassing neighborhoods; engaging elected officials; or partnering with other agencies, organizations, institutions, or places of worship. The concept is to take the message of the agency directly to the public and broaden the number and diversity of people reached by using established local communication and support networks. The survey results showed that roughly half of the participating transit providers used some form of partnership with community organizations to enhance their outreach for many of their activities (see Table 10)

This type of engagement offers agencies the chance to interact directly with their customers, learn about neighborhoods, and build relationships for future outreach. Examples of the success of this type of outreach are plentiful, both in the literature (see Springer 2007; Clements 2008; U.S.DOT

**TABLE 10**  
PERCENTAGE OF TRANSIT AGENCY RESPONDENTS  
THAT USE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS FOR  
DIFFERENT AGENCY ACTIVITIES

Activity	Partnership with Community Organizations (%)
Capital Projects	52
Daily Operations	35
Facility Design	39
Fare Changes	42
Human Services Planning	52
Long-range/Corridor Planning	45
Marketing	58
Service Changes	48

2010) and from comments provided in the survey. In developing its human services transportation plan, Valley Metro in Phoenix, Arizona, partnered with senior centers, independent living councils, and retirement communities to identify meeting locations and distribute invitations. DART (Dallas, Texas) works with community groups, churches, and neighborhood organizations to generate participation at meetings and has been particularly effective at targeting the disabled community, minorities, and those with limited English proficiency. Laketran engaged the local Red Hat Society (a social organization for women) to promote a bus familiarization event and works with the local health and human services department to train staff about using transit.

Proactive public engagement played a significant role in the development of the Hiawatha Light Rail Line. The Metropolitan Council staff gave nearly 200 presentations to civic groups during the planning process. Foreign language speakers (mostly Somali and Spanish) from the University of Minnesota canvassed local neighborhoods, going door-to-door to provide project information in residents' native languages. The agency also provided up to \$2,000 in funding to various neighborhood groups to cover reproduction and distribution costs of approved project material including meeting notices and surveys. Finally, the Metropolitan Council built a wooden mock-up of a light-rail transit (LRT) vehicle and brought it to the Minnesota State Fair, where more than 100,000 people toured the mock-up and received information about the project (U.S.DOT 2010).

### Internet and Mobile Technologies

Beginning in the mid-1990s, public agencies began to embrace the Internet as a means of communication with the public. The technology and mechanisms for initiating Internet-based communication can be broken down into two phases. The initial phase was dominated by one-way communication, where agency websites were geared primarily toward marketing their services online. These websites allowed customers to retrieve information (services, maps, schedules, guides, fare information, etc.), but provided little opportunity for interactivity (Morris et al. 2010). Beginning

around the turn of the twenty-first century, the Web 2.0 era began, characterized by a range of technologies and applications that have transformed the Internet into a viable platform for multi-directional communication and interaction. Most prominent among these new communication channels is social media—an umbrella term describing a vast array of user-friendly publishing and broadcasting tools that promote user interaction and dialogue through content creation and responses to that content. It includes a diverse set of technologies such as social networking, blogging, and video and photo sharing.

Table 11 shows the use of websites and social media technologies in public involvement among transit providers participating in the survey. Although websites are more commonly used, social media is used by more than half for at least some of their activities.

Websites became a primary source of information for the public when the Internet joined traditional print and broadcast as a key medium for content delivery. As technology improved, along with cell phone and Internet access, user sophistication, and understanding of the web's capabilities, customers increased their expectations. Provision of trip planning services and real-time transit information has grown and has significant implications for promoting both understanding and use of transit. By sharing schedule data online, the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) has allowed local transit advocates to create ride-sharing forums that allow people to carpool efficiently to and from transit stations. Software developers unaffiliated with BART have also used these data to create transit applications for "smart" phones. These are services that BART does not have the time or resources to provide on its own, yet help increase public understanding and use of transit (McGray 2009). Large transit systems are not the only ones who have been successful with websites. The SETD, with only 8,000 weekly riders, has seen its website usage grow four-fold since including trip planning.

In addition to providing new information, websites are now more interactive. Project websites routinely offer the ability for customers to submit comments. In some cases these comments are shared on a discussion board or blog. For its 2035 long-

**TABLE 11**  
NUMBER OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS USING WEBSITES  
AND SOCIAL MEDIA TO ENGAGE THE PUBLIC FOR  
VARIOUS ACTIVITIES

Activity	Internet Techniques	
	Websites	Social Media
Capital Projects	18	7
Daily Operations	22	14
Facility Design	15	6
Fare Changes	21	13
Human Services Planning	12	7
Long-range/Corridor Planning	20	9
Marketing	24	17
Service Changes	22	14

range plan update, the Virginia DOT developed a web-based workshop to mirror the information and interactive opportunities available at its in-person meetings held throughout the state. The convenience afforded by the Internet in allowing users to participate from the location and time of their choosing helped push online participation above the total combined participation at all of the in-person meetings (VTrans2035).

Many transit providers have discovered the benefits that social media offers. From a marketing perspective, it offers a less-expensive alternative to traditional advertising and can reach more people faster, build brand awareness, and drive traffic to agency websites through links to additional information (see Eirikis and Eirikis 2010; Morris et al. 2010). Social media can help to personalize the agency by projecting a “human” face. It also allows direct communication, in real-time and unfiltered by the media, which can help foster an interactive dialogue with the public (Eirikis and Eirikis 2010).

Use of social media among transit providers shows tremendous variety. LACMTA in Los Angeles has used Facebook, Twitter, YouTube videos, and blogs to build support for, and foster participation in, its Westside Subway extension project. The Houston Metro looks for the appropriate tool for different occasions. Typically, it uses Twitter to broadcast immediate service issues, Facebook for corporate communications, and blogs for providing detailed information about new services or routes. The Orange County Transportation Authority (California) uses multiple Internet techniques to enhance its outreach and communication processes. By directly participating in online conversations, by means of any of the social media channels, it allows the agency to share information and insights and shows the public that it is listening and is responsive to their needs (Eirikis and Eirikis 2010). The Denver Regional Transportation District (RTD) has been a pioneer in using YouTube as an educational tool for the public. Its FasTracks videos provide information about both planning and construction. Posting these videos on its Facebook page also allows RTD to directly receive public comments.

An emerging Internet technology that has significant potential for public involvement in transit, but has not as of yet been widely used, is crowdsourcing. The term is a merger of “crowd” and “outsourcing.” It harnesses the collective intelligence and creativity of online users to generate concepts and ideas that are then reviewed and critiqued by other members of the online community (Bradham 2009). The business world has been using this concept for several years—for example, a problem is broadcast online to vast numbers of users and potential solutions are solicited. Users “vote” on the concept that best addresses the problem and the winner is awarded some form of recognition (financial or otherwise) by the sponsoring agency. The Utah Transit Authority is currently experimenting with crowdsourcing to improve a major public transit hub in Salt Lake City. The challenge it has posed to the public is to develop the best

ideas (physical improvements, route changes, or schedule changes) to improve the transit hub (see [www.nextstopdesign.com](http://www.nextstopdesign.com)).

A second emerging technology that may offer benefits for public involvement is the use of virtual worlds. These are digital representations of the real or fantasy world where users interact through virtual persona (avatars). Users interact with one another, socialize, and participate in social and economic activities (Morris et al. 2010). Second Life is perhaps the best known of these. Although no examples of transit providers using this technology were uncovered during this research, it has been used in planning to receive public input. When the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey announced plans to invest more than \$100 million to renovate LaGuardia Airport and the surrounding area, a local planning board in Queens, New York, took the opportunity to develop ideas for redesigning a park next to the airport (Landing Lights Park). The planning board hired a developer to build a replica of the park within Second Life so users could suggest designs (Steins 2007).

The Internet is also changing how and where visualization occurs. Mapping is no longer dependent on expensive and proprietary geographic information systems and “mashup” technologies allow integration of data from disparate sources. Three-dimensional modeling tools are also now freely available and accessible, as are simulation and animation programs. Each of these will push the bounds of how agencies visually depict information and concepts to the public and what the public expects in terms of visualization.

## EVALUATION

Evaluation serves multiple purposes as a part of an overall public participation strategy. First, it provides evidence of what public involvement activities are achieving and their tangible results. Second, evaluation helps agencies know if they are attaining their stated goals. Third, it demonstrates whether or not resources have been effectively and efficiently allocated. Fourth, it gives an understanding of why outcomes occurred and the value gained through public involvement. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it identifies which elements of the program are working and which are not.

When done throughout the process, evaluation also allows adjustments to be made to the engagement strategy to achieve the desired outcome. However, evaluation of public involvement is difficult. It is a multi-dimensional process for which there are no consensus definitions, methods, goals, or outcomes (Szyliowicz 2002). For some, public involvement is holding a required public hearing; for others, it is a multi-faceted broad-based effort to engage as many people as possible. Success of public involvement is also relative. Twenty attendees at a meeting might be a success when the goal is 15, but perhaps not when the goal is 50. A quantitative measure,

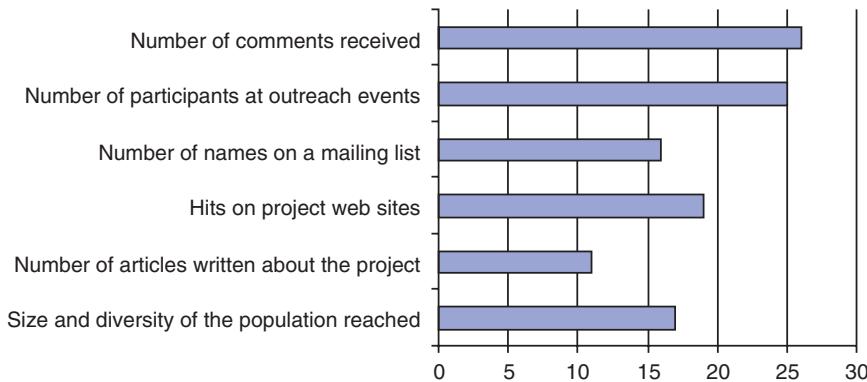


FIGURE 4 Survey respondents using the following quantitative evaluation measures.

such as the number of attendees, may not be indicative of success or failure. Fifty attendees from an advocacy group representing one or very few points of view may be less useful than 15 diverse opinions.

The literature on public involvement identifies multiple forms of evaluation. Aparicio (2007) identified three measures of evaluation: (1) the consensus of the output, measuring the degree to which public involvement promotes a democratic process; (2) the quality of the participation process itself, looking at whether or not it yielded decisions of technical merit; and (3) improvement in the quality of transportation policies, if legitimacy is accorded to the final outcome. Radow and Winters (2010) identified four ways to measure performance—effectiveness (participation rates compared with opportunities); efficiency (participation compared with cost); quality (usefulness of the input); and impact (the result of participation on final outcomes).

### Methods and Process of Evaluation

In the survey, 26 of the responding transit providers evaluated their public involvement effort. Typical methods include pre- and post-engagement surveys of customers and non-riders, on-board transit surveys, focus groups, and third-party research including telephone surveys. The benefits to doing so can be seen in the Hiawatha Light Rail Transit (LRT) example. The Metropolitan Council in Minneapolis evaluated its public participation efforts twice a year through surveys and focus groups. It was from this evaluation that the Council learned that the public did not feel that its input was influencing decisions. The staff began a conscious effort of documenting public input and reporting back to the community on how their input was incorporated into the overall plans and where and why some of it was not used (U.S.DOT 2010).

For those that do evaluate their public involvement, the number of comments received and number of participants at outreach events were the two most common quantitative measures (26 and 25 respondents, respectively). Others measures used, but less important, are hits on websites (19), size and diversity of the population reached (17), number of names on

mailing lists (16), and number of articles written about the project (11) (see Figure 4).

Although quantitative measures may allow for relatively easy analysis of public involvement, they do not provide a complete picture of the success or failure of an outreach effort. Additionally, this *output-based* approach to evaluation does not provide any inherent indication of what threshold might be crossed to determine “successful” *outcomes* of public involvement. An inadequate response to a request for comments, for example, could be indicative of a failure to supply enough information or it could be a sign of public acceptance and agreement. Qualitative evaluation measures offer agencies the opportunities to look beyond specific outputs and gauge public involvement outcomes, such as degree of satisfaction, intensity of opposition/support, and level of public understanding, which cannot be easily measured numerically. The survey revealed that virtually all of the transit providers that participated also used qualitative measures to evaluate their efforts: (1) 24 review the nature of comments they receive, (2) 18 evaluate whether enough and appropriate information was provided to the public and if the input was used in decision making, (3) 17 look at whether information was provided proactively, and (4) 15 review the nature of media reporting (see Figure 5).

### Assessing the Effectiveness of Public Participation

A major gap in academic literature and practical application of public involvement emerged in trying to identify methods and processes for determining the “effectiveness” of public participation efforts. Although the quantitative measures outlined earlier can help differentiate between effective and ineffective public participation *processes*, they offer little help in determining good or beneficial public involvement *outcomes*. Quantitative measures offer some help but fall short of providing a baseline for standardizing evaluation. For example, a shift in public opinion over the course of a project may be considered a “good” outcome, but the magnitude of the shift needed to claim public involvement was effective or successful is unclear.

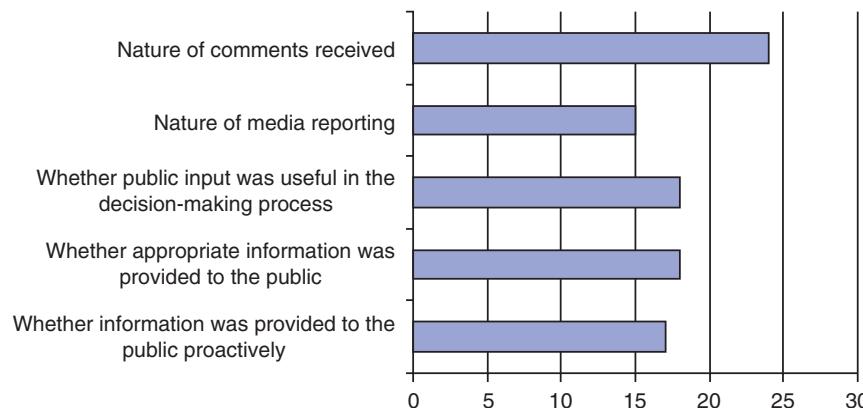


FIGURE 5 Number of survey respondents using the following qualitative evaluation measures.

As Szyliowicz (2002) points out, without ways to measure the effectiveness of public involvement, agencies may waste time and resources on efforts that fail to provide the public with meaningful chances to influence decision making. Rowe and Frewer (2000) attempted to address the gap in standard measures of effectiveness by proposing an evaluation framework based on a set of process and acceptance criteria. Process criteria include whether or not (1) the public had access to appropriate resources and information to allow them to meaningfully participate, (2) the purpose of the participation tasks were clearly defined, (3) the decision-making process was structured appropriately to allow for and incorporate public input, and (4) efforts were cost-effective. Acceptance criteria include whether or not the public that participates is broadly representative of the affected public, the process was conducted independently and without bias, opportunities for involvement were provided early in the process, public input had a genuine impact on policy decision, and the process was open and transparent where the public could see and understand how decisions were being made (Rowe and Frewer 2000).

#### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGIES FOR TRANSIT**

Research for this synthesis did not reveal significant standardization in the development or execution of public participation strategies. The specific needs of projects and communities tend to be the primary determinants of why, when, where, and how the public is engaged for transit activities. There are, however, some overall generalizations about the elements of transit provider public participation strategies and the processes for creating them.

The purpose and scope of public participation is typically detailed as goals and objectives. For most transit providers, the overarching goals of public involvement are to provide information to the public and obtain feedback on analysis, recommendations, or decisions. Although the specifics of the goals and objectives are heavily dependent on the project, the desire for input, meeting legal requirements, and a project's

level of controversy are all key determinants of the purpose and scope of the engagement effort.

The two-way exchange of information between agencies and the public is directly linked with the goals and objectives. Clarification of what the agency wants the public to understand, information that is needed from the public, and what information the public wants all influence the type and amount of information and questions that are presented. Transit agencies typically provide information to help better inform the public about decisions and issues surrounding projects. From the public, agencies are looking for community-specific information that the agency lacks such as chronic service problems or community issues that may have an impact on the agency current or future service.

With the understanding of what information is needed from the public and the level of public education that is needed, agencies can identify their target audiences for engagement. Standard, methodical approaches among transit providers for identifying the audience did not emerge out of this synthesis. Most have used a variety of approaches that rely on institutional knowledge, committees, local officials, or community organizations.

By building off of the defined goals and objectives, amount and type of information to be exchanged, and clarification of target audiences, transit providers identify and use a multitude of specific techniques to engage the public. Groups of techniques that transit providers use were presented with specific examples of how techniques were used for particular projects. These were meant to trigger additional thoughts about how the techniques could be adapted to different circumstances and projects.

Finally, evaluation emerged as the weakest part of the public participation process as it is practiced today by transit providers. Methods exist for quantitative and qualitative evaluation; however, standard processes are missing for measuring “successful” and “effective” participation. The gap is called out in chapter six as a potential area of future public involvement research.

## CHAPTER FOUR

**CASE STUDIES**

This chapter provides a more detailed look at six transit agencies and their public involvement processes used for specific projects or planning activities. The agencies were selected based on the literature review, their own evaluation of their public involvement efforts (as expressed in the survey), and a willingness to be included as a case study. Although their strategies differ, each offers an example across a wide range of agency sizes, project types, and place types of successful public involvement. The agencies and projects are:

- Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA), Los Angeles, California—Westside Subway Extension.
- Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), Washington, DC—Route 79 Metro Extra bus service.
- Port Authority of Allegheny County (Port Authority), Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania—Transit Development Plan.
- Pierce Transit (PT), Pierce County, Washington—PT Tomorrow.
- Laketran, Lake County, Ohio—Fare and service changes.
- Sunset Empire Transportation District (SETD), Clatsop County, Oregon—Fare and service changes.

Each case study starts with an overview of the agency—the region in which it provides services and the type of services provided. A brief introduction to the specific project or planning effort follows, along with a description of the outreach strategy the agency employed and public involvement techniques it used. Each case study concludes with an examination of the outcomes of its efforts and identification of the factors that led to success.

#### **LOS ANGELES COUNTY METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY, CALIFORNIA**

LACMTA operates the third largest public transit system in the United States. Its service area covers 1,433 square miles and is home to more than 9.6 million people. LACMTA's operations include bus, bus rapid transit, light rail, and heavy rail subway. LACMTA is the major funding source for local paratransit service and partially funds 16 municipal bus operators, with which it has operating agreements to avoid duplication of service. LACMTA also develops and oversees plans, policies, and funding programs for a wide array of transportation projects including bike and pedestrian facilities, highway improvements, freight, Metrolink (commuter rail),

and the Freeway Service Patrol within the greater Los Angeles metropolitan region.

In 2006, APTA named LACMTA as an Outstanding Transportation System.

#### **LACMTA's Outreach Strategy**

Public involvement is an integral part of all of LACMTA's planning activities from long-range and corridor planning, to facility design and service changes. NEPA and the California Environmental Quality Act provide the base legal requirements for public involvement. From there, public involvement strategies are devised based on the needs of the project and the type of message that LACMTA hopes to relay to the public.

To help facilitate public access to the agency, LACMTA created five Service Governance Councils overseeing bus service within specific geographic areas. Council members are appointed by local officials, but must include a minimum of two "transit consumers." These councils meet monthly to recommend service changes, review budgets, and address public concerns regarding bus service. For LACMTA, this has proven to be an effective forum to receive public input and has allowed it to respond quickly to public needs to add, change, or remove bus service.

The scope of outreach for a specific project is based on specific needs, what is deemed appropriate for the project, and budget constraints. LACMTA uses its vast institutional knowledge of the region, supplemented with community profiles, to identify key stakeholders and target communities for engagement. Information sharing about outreach techniques through informal discussion or through formal documentation allows project managers to understand which techniques have and have not worked and how they can be adapted to meet the specific needs of different communities. The agency's philosophy is to be as open and transparent as possible. As such, there is no formal process for determining what information to share with the public—the bigger challenges are planning when and how to present information.

#### **Westside Subway Extension**

Tremendous population and employment growth, coupled with changing land uses and traffic patterns over the past several

decades, have led to worsening traffic congestion throughout the west side of the Los Angeles area. In fall 2007, LACMTA began an Alternatives Analysis (AA) for the Westside Extension Transit Corridor Study, extending from the current terminus of the Metro Purple line to Santa Monica, to identify the need for possible transit investments to improve mobility in the corridor (Figure 6). The AA was completed in the winter of 2008/2009 and recommended further study of two subway alignments in an Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report.

### Public Involvement Techniques

The Westside Subway Extension is a multi-decade, multi-billion dollar project that has been accompanied by a comprehensive public involvement effort from LACMTA. Beginning with the AA study and continuing to the present, LACMTA's ever-evolving outreach strategy has been built around the twin goals of (1) meeting the needs of the corridor's residents, businesses, commuters, and visitors; and (2) fostering support among these same constituents for funding and building the subway. Some of the key outreach techniques that have proven effective for engaging both current and potential transit users are discussed here.

One of the most important techniques in LACMTA's outreach strategy has been local community meetings. Although these have typically been held in the evening to attract local residents, this approach has not worked well for the entire corridor. The Westside is home to a substantial number of employment centers, with more people commuting into the area each weekday than residents who commute within or commute out of the area. Most commuters did not choose to remain in the area to attend evening meetings, although this

represented a critical audience for the project. To address this issue, LACMTA held a lunchtime open house in Century City, one of the area's major employment locations. This resulted in significant attendance by commuters. The same approach to adapting meeting schedules has worked well for increasing participation among students and workers at the University of California at Los Angeles. LACMTA is looking to hold more of these kinds of meetings. Despite these successes, LACMTA still faces some challenges, particularly its ability to engage the region's Korean-American community. The reasons for its difficulties remain unclear to the agency, but LACMTA continues to try both traditional and new approaches to engage this community.

To promote public meetings, particularly when specific information was needed from the local population about station locations and design, LACMTA used direct mail postcards to encourage attendance participation. All residents within at least 0.25 mile of a proposed station received a postcard. In a series of public meetings held in the fall of 2009, these postcards helped boost attendance, drawing nearly 500 people—more than half of whom were first time participants in the project. To help these new participants learn about the project and how it developed over the previous two years, LACMTA drafted a continually evolving set of frequently asked questions. The goal of the frequently asked questions was to provide all the information a first-time participant would need to get caught up on the project quickly and be able to provide meaningful input.

One of the most significant challenges LACMTA faced was reaching the many service workers who are employed in restaurants, hotels, retail shops, and offices in such places as Beverly Hills, Century City, and Westwood. These were people who generally lived elsewhere in Los Angeles and would

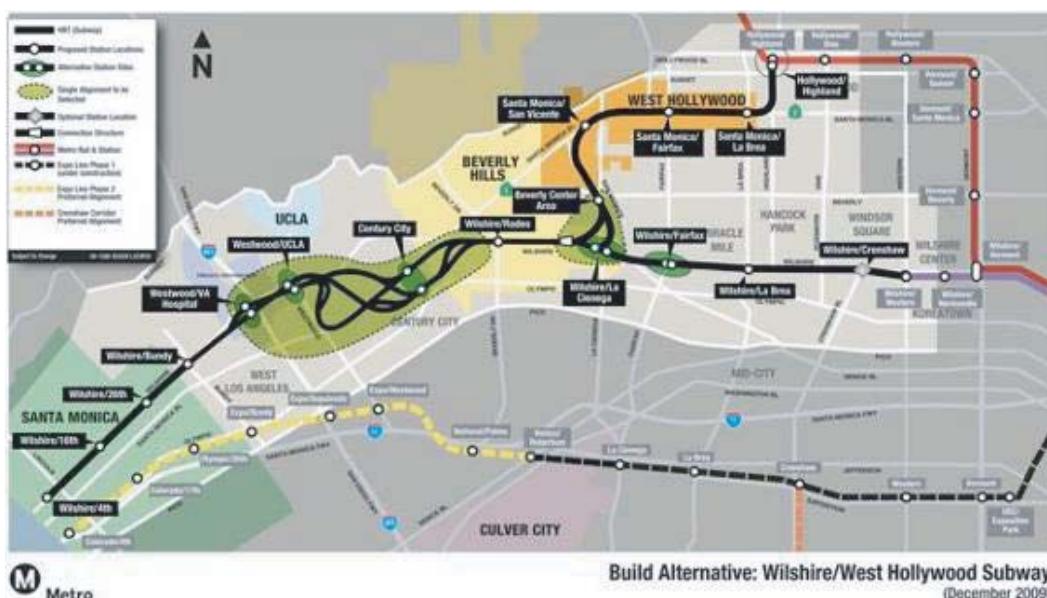


FIGURE 6 Westside Subway extension build alternatives. (Source: LACMTA.)

likely not attend evening meetings. However, service workers were also unlikely to take time off during the day to attend meetings. LACMTA's solution was to look for proxies who could represent and speak for the needs of this population. By working through large employers and Chambers of Commerce in the area, LACMTA encouraged the participation of businesses that employ service workers. This helped the agency learn about the commuting needs of these workers and helped employers understand the benefits of a subway for their businesses and employees.

Finally, LACMTA has been one of the pioneers in the use of social media, creating a broad online presence for the project including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, and actively promoting the Westside project through traditional and new media including its own blog and other, topically related ones such as [streetsblog.com](http://streetsblog.com) (Figure 7).

In spring 2008, LACMTA launched a Facebook group for the Westside Subway Extension and two years later launched an actual Facebook page. The group now boasts more than 2,300 "members" and the new page exceeded 1,100 "fans" in its first month, allowing the agency an interactive and flexible channel for quickly disseminating news and updates to project followers rather than having to wait for pages to be updated on the project's website. The project's Facebook group and page are updated almost daily to announce project events, pose discussion questions, or post new articles or other information about the project. In the realm of social media, keeping content "fresh" is critical to maintaining the interest of followers.

### LACMTA's Success Factors

Although what is provided here is a snapshot of the overall outreach process for the Westside Subway Extension, there are several notable factors that have helped make this effort a success from the agency's perspective.

- *Effective use of social media*—LACMTA took a broad approach to using social media for the Westside Subway

Extension. Its narrated videos on YouTube and its Facebook presence have engaged thousands. What helped to make LACMTA's use of social media successful was the well-conceived plan that guided its use. The plan included specifics about how the agency would use social media, what it hoped to achieve, protocols for dealing with inappropriate or sensitive postings, responsibilities for regularly updating the sites, and for capturing and memorializing the comments. Tangible benefits the agency has seen from the use of social media are (1) that it has attracted a younger demographic that is much more interactive in the ways they communicate with the agency, and (2) that it has provided a way to push out information to people that the agency knows are both interested and want to stay involved.

- *Adaptive outreach*—LACMTA has adapted its outreach approach to meet the needs of its specific target communities. Day meetings helped attract participation from commuters and students, whereas meetings with local employers provided critical information about the needs of workers. The result has been the active participation by more than 2,000 people at public meetings and more than 800 comments received.
- *Asking the right questions*—For high-profile, high-impact projects, such as the Westside Subway Extension, agencies often both desire and need a significant amount of input. However, this input needs to be structured in such a way as to be useful and actionable for the agency. By guiding the public dialogue and framing questions to get specific types of input (such as priorities for phasing the project, locations for stations, and concerns about construction impacts), LACMTA was able to open up multiple channels of communication where it no longer mattered how or where the public responded. Comments on Facebook or blogs, in e-mail, or at public meetings could all be used to help refine important details.

In a region synonymous with driving, LACMTA has noticed a tremendous shift in the tone of the comments. In



FIGURE 7 LACMTA's use of Facebook and Twitter. (Source: [facebook.com/WestsideSubwayExtension](http://facebook.com/WestsideSubwayExtension) and [twitter.com/metrolosangeles](http://twitter.com/metrolosangeles).)

the 1980s, LACMTA faced harsh critiques and a public resistant to transit and skepticism about its viability and benefits in the Los Angeles region. This has given way to greater support for transit development, which the agency sees through comments that now focus on project details rather than the very existence of the subway itself. Although LACMTA does look quantitatively at the number of participants and comments it has received to gauge the success of its public outreach effort, it also looks at the nature of the comments to get a sense of the level of public support or opposition to its project as well as an understanding as to whether or not its messages were getting through as intended to the public. For the Westside Subway Extension, however, the most valuable evaluation has come from having the staff out in the community talking with people and getting an overall sense of whether or not the agency is achieving its objectives.

#### **WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY, DC**

WMATA was created by an interstate compact between the District of Columbia, the state of Maryland, and the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1967. Its mission is to plan, develop, build, finance, and operate a balanced regional transportation system for the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. Its Metrorail (fixed-route), Metrorail (heavy rail subway), and MetroAccess (paratransit) services operate over a 1,500 square mile area and are accessible to more than 3.4 million people. WMATA is the fourth largest public transit system in the United States.

WMATA currently has no dedicated source of funding. Operational funding is split between fares and other revenue (58%) and state and local subsidies (42%), whereas federal grants have provided about 65% of its capital costs.

#### **Georgia Avenue/7th Street Metro EXTRA—Route 79**

In 2003, WMATA conducted a comprehensive regional bus study to look at the operational characteristics of its bus routes and determine which lines needed improvements. The study identified as a high priority Routes 70 and 71, which provide local bus service in a seven-mile corridor along Georgia Avenue and 7th Street from Silver Spring, Maryland, to the National Archives in downtown Washington. These routes were two of the most heavily traveled in the WMATA system and suffered from overcrowding, long travel times, slow average travel speeds, and limited passenger amenities. The introduction of the Metro EXTRA Route 79 limited-stop service in 2007 was intended to address many of these problems (see Figure 8). The number of stops was reduced from 54 to 15 on local routes, resulting in travel time savings of up to 15% from end-to-end and in some portions of the corridor up to a 20% time savings.

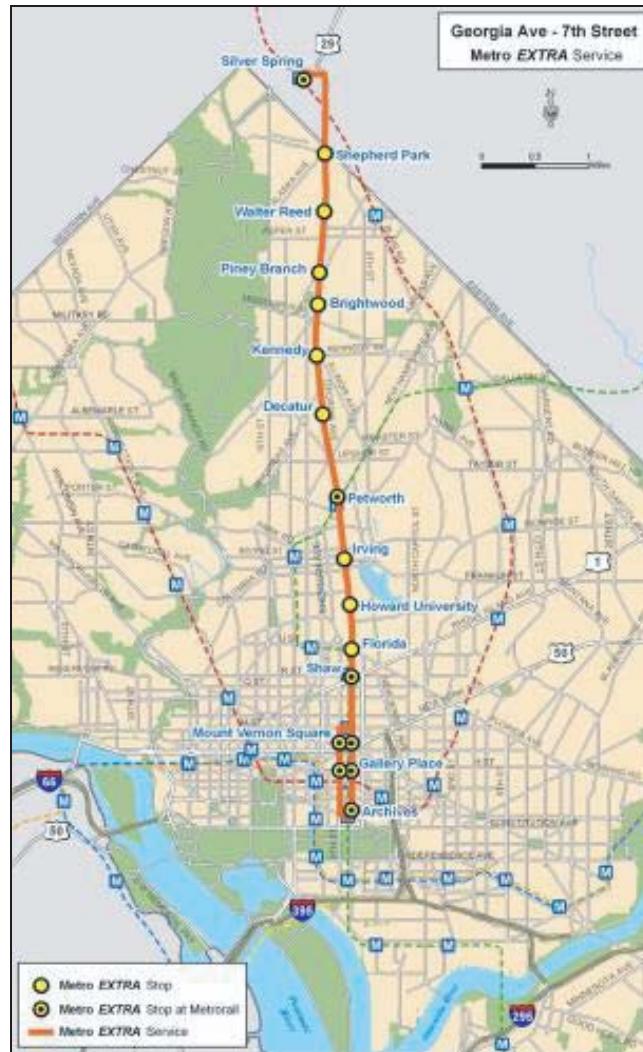


FIGURE 8 WMATA Route 79.

#### **WMATA’s Outreach Strategy**

WMATA’s planning for Route 79 began amidst numerous small local planning efforts underway along the same corridor, as well as the District of Columbia’s Great Streets Initiative (an effort to improve the streetscape on several underinvested commercial corridors). This provided both opportunities and challenges for engaging the public. As the first visible improvement the public would likely see as part of various improvements planned in the corridor, WMATA had the option of discussing the new bus service in the context of other planning efforts. However, the agency wanted to avoid a sense of “meeting fatigue” on the part of the public, so it coordinated its outreach with other planning efforts and used those meetings to present ideas and concepts for Route 79 and receive public feedback. WMATA also worked with the Ward Planners in the District of Columbia Office of Planning and DDOT, who were most knowledgeable about the local communities along the Georgia Avenue/7th Street corridor, to identify key stakeholders and the official and unofficial neighborhood groups who could help craft an appropriate outreach approach.

The overriding goal for this public outreach effort was to learn and understand the public's needs and desires for service improvements along the Georgia Avenue/7th Street corridor. Although the agency knew some of them, such as improving reliability and increasing travel speed, others, such as one-seat rides, dedicated bus lanes, and improved signal timing emerged as key points from both technical analysis and public outreach.

### Public Involvement Techniques

WMATA's largest outreach effort for the Route 79 service was an on-board survey effort designed to identify travel patterns and the five most important changes that would improve bus service in the corridor. Project staff blanketed buses with copies of the survey and handed out copies in person at key bus stops along the route. Riders could place completed surveys in drop boxes on the buses or use the self-mailer printed on the back of the survey to return it to the study team. In total, WMATA received more than 1,000 completed surveys in support of the service implementation back in 2006, and more than 400 surveys in response to the recent Route 79 Service Evaluation in 2009.

The bus operators themselves also became a critical component of the public outreach. A year before the Route 79 survey effort, the project team met weekly with the Bus Operations group in order to understand issues and problems from the operators' perspective and to learn what they were hearing from their riders. The engagement allowed the drivers to act as a front line of customer service—providing information about the new service plans and reporting back on riders' experiences once the changes were implemented.

Other techniques WMATA employed included traditional public meetings and focus groups as part of a larger District-wide effort to improve and enhance transit service. However, these techniques did not provide the diverse community representation the agency was trying to achieve. WMATA supplemented these approaches with other techniques designed to broaden its outreach. These included disseminating information by WMATA officials attending neighborhood potlucks, open houses, and street festivals that helped introduce the project to the public in an informal environment. WMATA also made project staff available to give briefings to any group or organization that requested one. In the past few years, WMATA's use of social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, and neighborhood blogs has increased tremendously (see Figure 9). During the initial planning and launch of Route 79 MetroExtra, WMATA utilized the vast network of neighborhood blogs to encourage riders to attend project meetings. During the recent Route 79 evaluation, WMATA used Facebook, Twitter, and other transportation-related blogs to inform the public of project meetings and the proposed service improvements.

## Goodspeed Update

Rob Goodspeed's blog

### Rapid Bus Service Starts on Georgia Avenue

Posted: March 30th, 2007 | Author: Rob Goodspeed | Filed under: DC Show Neighborhood, District of Columbia, Public Policy, Transportation, Urban Development, WMATA | 1 Comment »

Today marks the end of the second week of service of WMATA's new Metro Extra line on Georgia Avenue. To my knowledge the project is the second bus rapid transit line developed in the region, and the first express bus to operate almost exclusively inside the District.



The service, officially Metro Extra Route 79, currently operates every ten minutes from 6:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. along 7th Street and Georgia Avenue, with stops at the Navy Memorial, Chinatown, Shaw, Petworth, Walter Reed, and Silver Spring, among others. When Dr. Gridlock took a ride on the bus recently he found it running smoothly, with the exception of a few confused riders. Over the next year new bus shelters,

FIGURE 9 Local (non-WMATA) blog about Route 79. (Source: www.goodspeedupdate.com, March 30, 2007.)

### WMATA's Success Factors

Working through contacts with intimate knowledge of the corridor, its communities, and its bus riders; by dedicating sufficient staff and resources to outreach; by using new outreach technologies; and by continually engaging the public over the course of the planning effort, WMATA believes that its outreach effort was a success.

- *Engagement with those who know the community*—Since its inception more than 40 years ago, the agency has built up substantial institutional knowledge about the communities it serves. However, given the size and diversity of its service area, this knowledge and understanding is often cursory. By working through local jurisdictions, such as Ward Planners at DDOT and the Office of Planning, and its own drivers who interact with riders every day, WMATA was able to successfully engage the communities along Georgia Avenue/7th Street NW to a greater degree than through traditional, agency-planned outreach.
- *"Hands-on" approach*—Responses to WMATA's on-board bus rider survey provided the critical pieces of information the agency needed to start intensive planning of the Route 79 service. Active engagement of riders both on and off the buses, where project staff distributed surveys directly to riders and provided information about the study, helped achieve a greater than 60% response rate for the survey.
- *Use of new outreach technologies*—As an increasing number of public agencies are turning to emerging web technologies such as social media to enhance their outreach, many others are still struggling with questions of whether and how to use these tools. What separates WMATA's use of social media (blogs, Facebook, and

Twitter) is that it tapped directly into its “social” nature. By proactively linking to other local blogs, WMATA was able to expand its reach far beyond what it would have been able to do on its own.

- *Continuous public engagement*—WMATA’s effort with the planning for the Route 79 service exemplifies what is often stated in public involvement literature as continuous engagement. Before any analysis or draft concepts, WMATA sought public input, which was used for developing preliminary alternatives. Working through the techniques outlined previously, the agency went back to the public after each of three subsequent rounds of analysis to get public validation and input on necessary refinements. The result was a service plan that addressed the needs of the riders and received overwhelming support.

The success of WMATA’s outreach effort can be seen in the overall success of the project. A little more than a year after its introduction, additional peak service was added, and eventually all-day service was implemented. The Route 79 Metro EXTRA service has become the model for limited-stop bus service throughout WMATA’s service area.

Following the apparent success of the new service, WMATA performed an evaluation in 2009. This demonstrated WMATA’s continued commitment to engage the community by asking what additional improvements were still needed to make the service better for riders.

## LAKETRAN, OHIO

Laketran is the regional transit authority for Lake County, Ohio, in the suburbs of Cleveland. The system carries just over one million passengers annually on three types of bus service—local fixed-routes, commuter express routes, and demand-response Dial-a-Ride. Laketran is best known for its Dial-a-Ride service, which is available to the public without restriction (fares are \$10 each way with a discounted fare of \$2.50 for seniors and those with disabilities). The agency’s primary source of revenue is a 0.25% sales tax levy, which accounts for 70% of funding. Passenger fares account for 10% of revenue and the remaining 20% comes from federal and state grants.

Laketran was recognized by APTA for Outstanding Achievement by a small system in 2000 and 2005.

### Fare, Route, and Service Changes

Over the past seven years, state financial support for Laketran has declined dramatically. The 65% drop since 2003 has meant that the agency is operating with less state support now than it did in 2000. Coupled with declining sales tax revenue because of the recent recession, the agency has been forced to raise fares and cut some services. Major changes have included:

- Fare increases—2006 saw the first fare change for Laketran in 20 years. A second fare increase went into effect in 2009.
- Route reductions—Until 2009, Laketran’s commuter express routes had experienced continual growth in ridership for several years. Based in large part on the recession’s impact on the Cleveland economy, last year was the first year of ridership declines, which forced the agency to eliminate two of its 20 trips to downtown Cleveland.
- Service reductions—Laketran suspended fixed-route and Dial-a-Ride service after 7 p.m. on weekdays and all service on Saturdays.

Of these changes, the suspension of service after 7 p.m. and elimination of Saturday service had the largest impact on the public.

### Laketran’s Outreach Strategy

Laketran faced the challenging prospect of effectively engaging the public with only limited resources. Although most people generally understood that the economy was the biggest driver of the service cuts, there was critical information Laketran wanted to ensure that the public understood. First, the agency had undertaken internal cost-cutting measures including salary freezes and departmental budget reductions. The marketing and outreach department alone lost 50% of its budget. Second, Laketran wanted the public to understand the difference between the cost of providing service and the fare box revenue the agency receives. One example was the popular Dial-A-Ride service that costs the agency on average \$30 per one-way trip.

Laketran’s outreach strategy also focused on two key issues where the agency wanted the public’s input—service priorities and alternative sources of revenue. The agency’s approach was to explain that the required service cuts cannot be avoided in the immediate future but that the public could help prioritize the services to be added back when the agency’s financial situation improved. The second part of this approach involved discussions about alternative sources of revenue for the agency.

### Public Involvement Techniques

Laketran engaged in a range of outreach techniques to announce and solicit public input on its proposed fare and service changes. It developed a partnership with the county’s Jobs & Family Services Department, whose clients were many of same people using Laketran’s Dial-a-Ride service. Because cuts in transit service would impact the Department’s ability to serve its clients, it became a strong ally in getting information out to its clients. Laketran provided training for the Jobs & Family Services Department staff about teaching their clients how to use and support transit (see Figure 10).



FIGURE 10 Laketran booth on Senior Day at the Great Lakes Mall. (Source: Laketran.)

Through the use of its e-mail list of more than 500 subscribers, flyers, Passenger Advisory Committee (PAC) members, and the media, Laketran was able to connect with the vast majority of its riders. Agency staff distributed flyers throughout the county's five park-and-ride lots, directly reaching about 90% of commuter express route riders. The PAC membership was broadened from only paratransit users to include commuter and fixed-route users. As regular riders, PAC members were able to take information directly onto the bus and have informal conversations with riders to obtain feedback. This information was then passed back to Laketran at regular PAC meetings. Finally, the media became a powerful tool for getting information to the public. A beat reporter for the local Lake County newspaper (*the Lake County News-Herald*) attended every board meeting and accurately reported on Laketran's finances and proposed service cuts in articles that helped the public better understand the agency's situation.

Direct public interaction took place through a series of public hearings held at libraries and senior centers, as well as presentations at local organizations such as the Rotary Club, Chamber of Commerce, and community events. Public hearings took place in informal settings and at different times of the day to provide a greater level of comfort and convenience for the public, which helped boost attendance.

#### **Laketran's Success Factors**

Despite its lack of financial resources, and cuts to its marketing and outreach department budget, two critical factors helped make Laketran's effort a success. Neither are dependent on specific techniques, but instead point to important aspects of the agency's internal culture.

- *Direct access to decision makers*—During the public hearings for the fare and service changes, Laketran board members attended and sat in the front row, listening to the public explain the impacts these changes would have

and how necessary transit is in their lives. This served two critical purposes: (1) it helped the board understand the impact of its decisions, and (2) it helped the public know that their concerns and issues were being heard by the decision makers, unfiltered by agency staff or others.

- *Transparency*—With a history of being honest and forthright, Laketran has built and fostered a solid level of trust with the public. For 13 years the agency has received clean audits of its financial accounting, which has been a tremendous help for the agency when it needs to announce fare or service changes (Baker, June 24, 2009). The agency is seen as being a trusted steward of public funds and it has received media attention and praise for its swift action, when faced with declining revenues, to soften the impact on the riding public ("Laketran Avoids More Pain," March 2, 2009).

In evaluating its success, Laketran looked at the outcomes of its outreach effort. The first of these was the identification of new sources of revenue. Although the agency had been providing nonemergency trips for Medicaid recipients, the agency had never applied for Health and Human Services funding to subsidize their cost. The billing process alone for claims would have cost the agency about \$20,000. Through its outreach effort, the agency developed a partnership with the Jobs & Family Services Department to handle the billing. This opened up \$500,000 in new revenue for the agency. Second, as the financial situation of the agency has improved, the board began reviewing at the service priorities identified by the public to see if some services could be restored. Laketran's final measure of success is the public perception of the agency. Despite painful service cuts, it was recently rated as one of the top three community services in Lake County (source: Lake Metroparks—a political subdivision of the state of Ohio that seeks to conserve and preserve the natural resources of Lake County, Ohio).

#### **PORT AUTHORITY OF ALLEGHENY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA**

PAAC provides bus, light rail, incline (funicular), and paratransit services for more than 220,000 riders per day in a 775 square-mile service area in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area. In addition to its transit services, PAAC also operates more than 60 park-and-ride lots in Allegheny County, 80 bridges, and 3 tunnels. Fare revenue, along with money from county, state, and federal sources, fund both operations and capital expenditures.

#### **Transit Development Plan**

In 2005, Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell created the Pennsylvania Transportation Funding and Reform Commission, which was charged with looking at the chronic funding crisis facing Pennsylvania's transportation system. The Commission's final report, issued in November 2006, made a series of recommendations regarding the funding for transit

and opportunities to implement service improvements, cost-efficiencies, and revenue enhancements. Key among those recommendations was that:

Operating efficiencies may be derived from technology investments, route optimization, and labor, fleet, facility, inventory, and purchasing cost reductions. Of the expense oriented opportunities, route optimization and labor cost reductions are the most financially significant (Transportation Funding and Reform Commission 2006).

Based in part on the Commission's findings, PAAC initiated a series of changes designed to make it and its services more efficient, transparent, accountable, and reliable. One of these changes was a Transit Development Plan (TDP), the Port Authority's first top-to-bottom restructuring of its routes. The TDP was the culmination of a two-and-a-half year study of the current system with significant public input. It consolidated outdated and underused routes to offer riders better and more reliable options and offered a new route naming system to make the system simpler and easier to decipher. To reach the overall TDP goals of "Faster, Better, Smarter," the Port Authority needed to hear directly from its customers.

### **PAAC's Outreach Strategy**

The outreach strategy was developed around the question of how the agency could reach as many people as possible. An initial goal of reaching 3,000 people was set. Decisions about what information would be provided to the public and the type of feedback the agency needed centered on what PAAC wanted the public to understand and what was needed from the public to effectively craft the TDP. PAAC established an inter-departmental team tasked with implementing all phases of the TDP. The team included staff from every PAAC division and virtually every department. The team met weekly to provide updates on specific tasks, resolve issues, and discuss upcoming tasks and deadlines.

The agency also held regular communications strategy meetings about how to communicate the projects key messages to the public. The meetings focused on augmenting strategies that worked and altering those that did not, identifying events or issues that would impact the project, and keeping up to date on the public position of local elected officials. To determine the specific type of input needed from the public, agency staff worked with both the schedule planners and project consultants to identify exactly what was needed from the public to develop the plan. What emerged from those discussions was the need to have riders identify how they currently use the system, their transit needs, and how to prioritize those needs.

### **Public Involvement Techniques**

PAAC used numerous techniques to engage the public during the development of the TDP. Traditional outreach methods included an advisory committee of 30 to 35 key stakeholders, stakeholder interviews, meetings with an association of local

municipalities and community organizations, and public meetings throughout the service area. Although these techniques were useful and an important part of the overall outreach strategy, PAAC sought additional methods to greatly expand the reach and impact of its public engagement.

A primary component of PAAC's strategy to proactively engage local communities to provide information and get feedback on the TDP was the "Tell us Where to Go Bus." This dedicated project bus gave PAAC the flexibility to travel to community events such as arts festivals, fairs, and farmers' markets. Wrapped with project branding and messaging, the bus quickly became an easily identifiable symbol of the project. The agency personnel who staffed the bus provided project information and asked for input about people's needs from the transit system, current usage, and any problems experienced with the system. To help focus public input and better understand the public's priorities, agency staff walked people through trade-off exercises (e.g., more frequent stops vs. stops further apart). The bus was on the street for 18 months, during which time staff met directly with hundreds of people in dozens of locations throughout the Pittsburgh area (see Figure 11).

PAAC also had significant success engaging the public through web-based technologies. In support of Pittsburgh's hosting of the G-20 summit in September 2009, PAAC had already identified and developed a contact list for the 50 largest employers in the region. This list became the basis for direct communication with thousands of employees. The agency's e-mail list now contains more than 10,000 addresses. Social media also evolved into an important outreach technique. The agency's Twitter account, with 2,500 followers, and blog on blogspot.com provided event announcements and opportunities for public feedback (see Figure 12).

In addition to reaching the largest number of people possible, PAAC also hoped to build support for transit and the TDP through its outreach efforts. To achieve this goal, PAAC hosted a major, invitation-only stakeholder event, where TDP advocates, detractors, and elected officials were invited to share



FIGURE 11 "Tell Us Where to Go" bus. (Courtesy: Port Authority of Allegheny County.)

FIGURE 12 Port Authority Transit blog. (*Source:* transitphg.blogspot.com.)

their thoughts. Participants were divided into small groups and asked to design a transit system within a given budget, service area, and cost per hour of service. The exercise compelled all parties to make difficult choices and develop a better understanding of the decisions that need to be made at the agency level.

#### **PAAC's Success Factors**

PAAC credits three key factors for the success of its outreach effort:

- *Bring the message to the community*—From driving the Tell Us Where to Go Bus to dozens of public events and speaking at regularly scheduled community meetings, PAAC proactively engaged the public by taking the message and the opportunity to participate directly into the community.
- *Use a broad spectrum of communication*—E-mail and social media afforded PAAC the chance to communicate directly and cost-effectively with thousands of residents, commuters, and other stakeholders. However, printed materials such as seat drops, notices on buses, and street flyers were also important for attracting the participation of a broad range of the public.
- *Keep going back to the community*—PAAC kept the public engaged throughout the entire study. The agency went back to the public after each round of analysis and asked for feedback. The question for the public was simple: “Will this make the system easier to use?” Being kept in touch throughout the process allowed the public to see how its input was being used and to know their issues and concerns were being heard.

Although a success overall, PAAC did face significant challenges with its trying to engage Pittsburgh’s minority communities. Historically, the agency has been unsuccessful in its attempts to engage and foster participation among these communities. In response, PAAC took a vacant staff position and created a new Community Outreach Coordinator position, responsible for maintaining contact with local community organizations, disseminating information to them, and ensuring that those organizations are aware of PAAC activities. Since filling this position, PAAC has seen a significant increase in invitations to speak at community meetings and public feedback from these communities.

The implementation of Phase 1 of the TDP occurred in early April, 2010. A new website was launched in January 2010 to explain the rollout and the changes customers could expect. Compared with past efforts at route restructuring, negative comments have been limited, which the agency cites as a major success of its public involvement efforts.

#### **SUNSET EMPIRE TRANSPORTATION DISTRICT, OREGON**

SETD provides rural intercity bus services in Clatsop County, Oregon. SETD offers eight fixed-route services, curb-to-curb paratransit service, the Lewis and Clark Explorer Shuttle for the National Park Service in the Lewis and Clark National Historic Park, and acts as a Medicaid transportation broker for a three-county area. Through these services, SETD is within reach of all 36,000 county residents and provides connections with neighboring counties and the state of Washington.

#### **Fare and Service Changes**

In 2009, as an outgrowth of its first Coordinated Human Services Plan, SETD conducted a six-month study of its bus routes and ridership patterns. The objective of the study was to look at major population centers and destinations, and to evaluate the productivity of SETD’s services. A mobility management approach was central to the agency’s development strategy. This approach differs from traditional transit planning in numerous ways. As explained by the United Way, mobility management:

- Disaggregates service planning and markets in order to better serve individuals and the community. Traditional transit service planning aggregates demand on centralized, highly traveled routes of a transit system.
- Focuses on service diversity and a “family of transportation services” to reach a wide range of customers versus traditional transit systems that are built on the principle of unified regional service coverage.
- Underscores the importance of service advocacy as a way to improve public transportation management and delivery. A mobility manager acts as a travel agent/service coordinator to seek the most effective means for meeting an individual’s transportation needs. Transit agencies generally focus on the direct provision of services (*Source:* United We Ride n.d.).

Changes to both the route and fare structure of the transit system emerged from this study. Evaluation of travel patterns showed that Clatsop Community College was a primary destination for many travelers; therefore, new routes were developed to better serve the campus. SETD also found that its current fare structure was confusing and difficult for its customers to understand. As a result, SETD adjusted the flat fare for all riders to \$0.75, eliminated all special fares, and lowered the cost of monthly passes from \$60 to \$45—with an additional \$15 discount for seniors and persons with disabilities.

### **Outreach Strategy**

As ideas were being developed for the new service plan, SETD began to engage the public. There were two primary goals of this effort: (1) to get public input on new bus routing and fare structure, and (2) to promote the use of transit. The agency created a new Mobility Management Coordinator position, responsible for taking programs into the schools and providing promotional information to customers and potential customers. Although the agency operates with only a \$25,000 marketing budget, SETD was able to engage the public and develop a new service plan that better meets the diverse needs of the community.

### **Public Involvement Techniques**

To provide information about new routes and fares and gather public feedback, SETD pursued a variety of public involvement techniques. The selection of these techniques began with internal discussions about the best ways to achieve its goal of increasing ridership, along with a timeline of when actions needed to be taken to engage the public. From past experience the agency knew that techniques that involved personal contact would yield the most beneficial results. Its Seniors and Disabled Advisory Council was expanded to include employees and students of Clatsop Community College. Working through this group it became clear that most transit trips were to shopping centers, the community college, and the Tongue Point Job Corps center (which offers job training for at-risk youth). Reconfiguring service to facilitate these trips became a primary focus of route restructuring.

SETD identified key transit locations throughout the county and ensured that each had a schedule and information about SETD. Staff members were also deployed to these areas to talk to riders and listen to their thoughts about service. Other mechanisms for public input included an on-bus survey (where SETD employees sat with riders on the bus helping them fill out the survey), community presentations at senior clubs and other community organizations, and going door-to-door to meet people in rural areas to discuss how transit could meet their travel needs. Finally, when the new service plan was launched in September 2009, agency staff rode the buses for two weeks—

identified by their SETD vests—and asked riders for feedback on the new service. From this feedback, the agency made minor adjustments to the new service and ridership expanded significantly.

SETD achieved its second goal of promoting transit use through strategic partnerships, as well as by community service performed by SETD staff. Because the community college and local job corps sites were primary destinations for riders, SETD approached each about developing a strategic partnership where the agency would charge the institution a flat fee and allow students and faculty to ride for free simply by showing their ID cards. The institutions also agreed to help promote transit to their students and faculty. Middle schools and high schools were offered reduced rate passes, which allowed more students to ride the buses after school.

In addition to working with educational facilities, SETD also developed a partnership with the National Park Service to provide bus service to and from the Lewis and Clark National Historic Park parking lots, park trails, regional tourist centers, and campgrounds. SETD has also been successful in engaging its neighboring transit systems through a “Coastal Consortium.” Together they have submitted grant funding requests for federal and state funds and are currently working on a state-funded planning effort to link their systems and increase the awareness and reach of public transit services.

A subtle, yet powerful way that SETD was further able to raise the visibility of transit and promote its use was through staff volunteerism within the community. All agency employees volunteer four hours for community service per month. Outfitted in their agency uniforms (or sometimes as Santa Claus—see Figure 13), this allows employees to interact directly with members of the community and informally talk about transit issues. This feedback is then brought back to the agency at routine employee committee meetings.

### **SETD’s Success Factors**

SETD attributes its success in engaging the public and promoting the use of transit to three critical factors:

- *Strategic partnerships*—SETD was successful in working with local partners to demonstrate the mutual benefit of transit for both organizations. Thousands of students now have free access to the bus system as do visitors to the Lewis and Clark National Historic Park, and joint funding proposals with neighboring systems will allow the agency to further extend its reach. SETD is now looking to expand these partnerships to include social service agencies.
- *Involvement in the community*—SETD views itself not just as a public agency, but as an integral part of the Clatsop County community. By being visible and



FIGURE 13 SETD staff providing community service.

involved through its staff's volunteer work and outreach it has built a positive reputation with the public.

- *Employees as an extension of outreach*—SETD has empowered all of its employees to be part of the community outreach process. This has provided the agency with two distinct benefits. First, it has helped foster a strong sense of ownership in the system among its employees—SETD's average employee tenure exceeds seven years. Second, the drivers who interact with the public on a daily basis are able to bring information about what they hear from riders directly to the agency. At the monthly meetings a standing agenda item allows drivers to share passenger issues, new service opportunities (such as a new businesses coming in to the area), and ideas for outreach. This has led to the addition of specific neighborhoods to bus routes, seasonal adjustments to schedules, and modifications of the way the agency notifies passengers about route and fare changes.

The route and fare changes went into effect in September 2009 and the success of SETD's outreach efforts can be seen in the system's usage statistics. Weekly trips have increased more than 50% from 5,000 in 2008 to more than 8,000 in 2010. Similarly, use of monthly passes increased from 28% of users to 67%. SETD's outreach also led to other changes as well. During the study, riders had requested route mapping and scheduling information to be available from the agency's

website. Once that was provided, website hits rose from 500 to 2,000 per day.

The SETD is a small transit system with limited resources to engage the public. However, through its partnerships, visibility in the community, and driver contact with riders, the agency has managed to identify opportunities to expand its service in a time when many transit systems are looking to cut or consolidate routes.

#### **PIERCE TRANSIT, WASHINGTON**

The Pierce County Public Transportation Benefit Area Corporation, known locally as Pierce Transit (PT), provides bus, paratransit, vanpool, Bus Plus (deviated fixed-route), ride matching, and intercounty express services in a 414-square mile service area throughout Pierce County, Washington, which includes the city of Tacoma. Under agreement with the neighboring Sound Transit (Seattle), it also operates several Sound Transit bus routes within Pierce County. The agency was created in 1979 after voters authorized a 0.3% sales tax to fund public transportation. An additional 0.3% sales tax was approved in 2002 after voter's repealed funding by the state's Motor Vehicle Excise Tax. It is the second largest transit system in Washington State, carrying nearly 19 million passengers annually.

#### **PT Tomorrow**

As with many transit systems around the country, PT ended the last decade trying to grapple with unprecedented growth in ridership coupled with declining revenues. Beginning in 2009, after two years of declining sales tax collections (which accounted for 70% of agency revenue), PT began a major effort, dubbed "PT Tomorrow," to review its service delivery. Although finances were not the sole factor, the instability of the agency's financial system provided an excellent opportunity for PT to evaluate itself and determine if it was providing the best and most efficient service for its customers.

#### **PT's Outreach Strategy**

PT premised its public involvement effort on three primary objectives—inform, ask, and listen. These three goals helped the agency determine what information it needed to share with the public, the type of feedback needed, and how to restructure its routes based on community values and priorities. Innovative outreach, reaching a large number of constituents, and developing opportunities for future partnerships were secondary objectives.

Looking at each of the agency's three primary public involvement goals individually provides a better understanding of how the overall process evolved. To achieve the "Inform" goal, PT set out to provide the public with a basic understanding of the agency's services, riders, and finances.

Critical among these was a clear explanation of the current financial situation and why the agency needed to undertake the route structure evaluation. This educational component was included in all community presentations and design workshops through an interactive “PT 101 Quiz” (Figure 14).

The “Ask” goal required input from members of the public on what they value about transit in the community. This was accomplished through another interactive exercise where the public prioritized its values to begin a discussion about transit’s role in social services, economic development, safety, the environment, livable communities, and geographic coverage. At workshops, open houses, transit center events, and other public meetings, citizens engaged in this activity and helped PT narrow down the list of values to the two most important ones—social service and economic development—which became the basis for developing its new service delivery plan.

Finally, “Listen” meant understanding the public input and incorporating it into the final plan to ensure that the updated system was driven by the community’s values. Building the plan from the community’s values was seen as a key mechanism for fostering public ownership of the system and building support for both the system and the process.

### Public Involvement Techniques

PT used many outreach and communication techniques over the course of the PT Tomorrow study. Each of these was tailored to a specific set of stakeholders with specific messaging. The selection of individual techniques for PT Tomorrow began with an internal stakeholder analysis process where the specific groups whose input was important for the study were identified. The audiences PT targeted for outreach were divided into five distinct groups—community members, riders, partners, leaders, and agency employees. For each group, PT determined the appropriate outreach techniques based on staff knowledge of what had worked in the past, what the public expected (websites, meeting, etc.), and by determin-

ing what it wanted the public to say at the end of the outreach effort. The specific tools and messages for each group are included in Table 12.

### PT’s Success Factors

To evaluate its public involvement efforts, PT looked at a broad range of quantitative statistics including numbers of events, participants, website visitors, comments, and brochures and direct mail pieces distributed. However, PT sought to gauge success on qualitative factors as well. This included assessing how engaged participants were in the process and their reactions to the outreach effort.

Several critical factors helped lead to the success of PT’s public involvement effort:

- *Scale, breadth, and coordination of the outreach effort*—The numbers from PT’s study speak to the large scale of the outreach effort—2 summits, 9 design workshops, 53 community presentations, 15 transit center events, 12 city council presentations, 822 survey participants, 16,500 brochures distributed, 38,900 postcards mailed, 1,700 website visitors, and 1,200 comments received. The techniques used (see Table 12) covered the spectrum of typical outreach methods to help ensure inclusion of all segments of the population. Each was also designed to reinforce messaging and promote further participation. City council presentations were timed a week before a design workshop to help raise awareness and participation at the workshops. Brochures were distributed at community events, community meetings, transit stops, and transit centers to encourage participation at workshops. Social media, TV, and radio all directed people to places to get more information. What resulted were high participation rates at meetings and workshops and large numbers of valuable comments received by the agency.
- *Commitment and dedication at all levels of the agency*—In total, 59 agency employees participated in public involvement. Commitment to the effort came from the

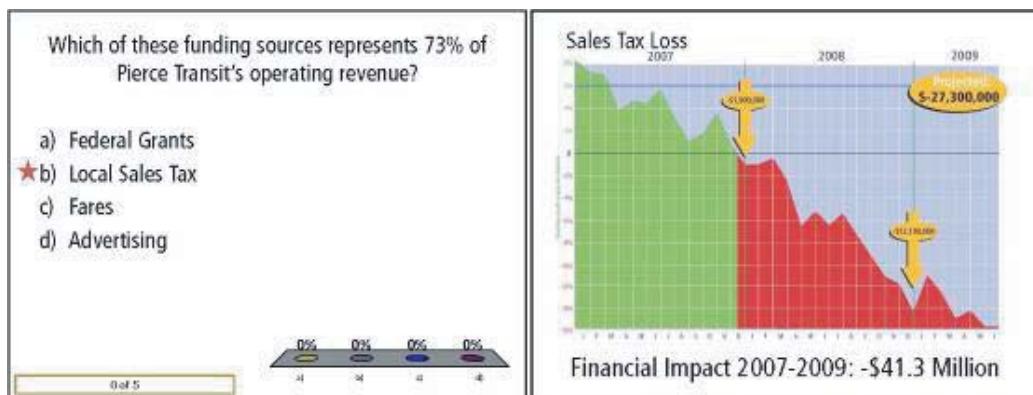


FIGURE 14 PT 101 quiz example question. (Source: PT Tomorrow Public Involvement Phase 1 Report, 2010.)

**TABLE 12**  
**PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT TOOLS AND MESSAGES**

Audiences	Involvement Tools	Messages
Community Members and Riders	Community workshops Report to the community Facebook/Twitter Website Postcard E-mail Open houses Surveys Radio/TV Newspaper Public events Public presentations Citizen advisory committee	Educate on PT impact Funding Envisioning PT's Future
Riders	Transit center events Onboard surveys Bus ads/poster	
Partners	Presentations Leadership summit E-mail Face-to-face meetings	Envisioning PT's future What are today's challenges for PT Coordination
Leaders	Individual meetings Leadership summit	Educate on current PT impact Funding Envisioning PT's future What are today's challenges for PT
PT employees	Department meetings Town halls Focus groups Employee events E-mail Intranet—Inside PT The BUZZ Posters	Funding Envisioning PT's future Get involved

*Source:* PT Tomorrow Public Involvement Plan (2009).

highest levels of management. PT's CEO conducted 39 interviews with CEOs and executives from the county's major employers, city managers, public agency directors, non-profit leaders, presidents of local colleges and universities, labor leaders, state legislators, and the state Secretary of Transportation. This high-level contact, reinforced through a Leadership Summit, allowed a dialogue to develop between PT and important stakeholders about the value of transit and its future serving the community. It also opened channels of communication to these stakeholders' constituents.

- *Working within existing community structures*—As with many agencies that conduct successful public involvement efforts, PT proactively took opportunities to go out and meet the public in the community. Staff distributed information and talked directly to customers at transit centers and park-and-ride lots, spoke at scheduled community meetings, placed posters in bus shelters and on buses, sent direct mail to all residents along bus routes, and distributed brochures anywhere people were likely to gather. A key distinguisher of this effort was PT's use of the strong neighborhood councils in Tacoma and

Lakewood that have communication channels to disseminate messages deep inside communities. By engaging these groups, PT was able to reach large numbers of people both at the meetings and through e-mails.

The final statistics speak to PT's success at engaging both its customers and the community at large. By the end of the process, PT had reached, both directly and indirectly, almost 60,000 people (representing more than 7% of the entire county's population) through a variety of outreach and communication techniques. In addition, PT had face-to-face interaction with more than 8,500 people. PT's evaluation of its public involvement related back to its original goals of educating the public, getting actionable feedback, and fostering a sense of community ownership of the plan. Common among the responses from participants in the process were comments such as "best public meeting ever" and "really enjoyed participating in this process." For PT, this showed that the agency had generated interest in the planning process where participants believed they had been heard. This success, in turn, allowed the agency to develop a plan based on community values and with "the community's fingerprints all over it."

## SUMMARY

These six case studies offer examples—across a wide range of agency sizes, project types, and locations served—of what each agency has identified as successful public involvement. LACMTA’s success at engaging the public for the Westside Subway Extension can, in part, be traced to its effective use of social media, adaptive outreach strategies, and structuring its public involvement to allow input through a variety of means. WMATA’s success at introducing limited bus service is, in part, the result of its public involvement that included engaging those with intimate knowledge of the community, taking a “hands on” approach to engagement, utilizing Internet technologies, and continuously involving the public in the planning for the new route. Laketran faced the prospect of dramatic service cuts owing to declining revenue. What it found in its

outreach efforts was that giving the public direct access to decision makers and building a reputation for being open and transparent allowed the agency to work with the public and its strategic partners to find new solutions to its funding problems. The PAAC case study showed how bringing its message directly to the community, using a broad spectrum of communication mechanisms and continually engaging the community, led to success in developing its Transit Development Plan. SETD has managed to grow its transit service by clearly understanding the needs of the rural communities it serves. It did this through strategic partnerships, staff volunteer work in the community, and empowering agency employees to act as an extension of the agency’s outreach efforts. Finally, PT showed that scale, breadth, and coordination of outreach matters, as does commitment at all levels of the agency and working within existing community structures.

## OBSTACLES TO PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Despite a growing understanding and acceptance of public participation as an integral part of the transportation planning process, agencies still face numerous barriers that have the potential to undermine the effectiveness of public participation. These obstacles can exist within the agency or externally as efforts are made to link directly with a community, but all can pose a significant threat to an agency's public involvement efforts. Failure of public involvement can lead communities to feelings of alienation from the political and planning system, animosity, lawsuits, battles at the ballot box, and increased fragmentation of an already highly divided government and society (Innes and Booher 2000).

Following is a discussion of the challenges agencies face in engaging the public and the problems many have encountered involving harder to reach populations. Woven into this is an explanation, derived from the case studies, survey responses, and literature review, of how some agencies have been able to overcome these obstacles.

### INTERNAL CHALLENGES

The survey for this effort indicated that the most significant internal challenges to public involvement are inadequate financial and staff resources, difficulties obtaining interest from elected officials, and lack of time/compressed schedules. Support from upper management, public involvement training, and coordination among agencies were less important challenges (see Figure 15). Other challenges noted by agency participants included a lack of will within the agency and difficulty coordinating staff availability to coincide with convenient meeting times for the public.

Transit providers have responded to these challenges in various ways and some have had greater success than others. Many of the strategies used to overcome certain obstacles have benefits in other areas as well. For example, building and maintaining partnerships with community organizations can alleviate internal challenges associated with a lack of resources, as well as such external challenges as community distrust and difficulty in engaging hard to reach populations.

#### Lack of Resources

A lack of resources, both financial and staff, was identified in the survey as a critical barrier to public involvement. Research showed that there are several ways for agencies to respond to

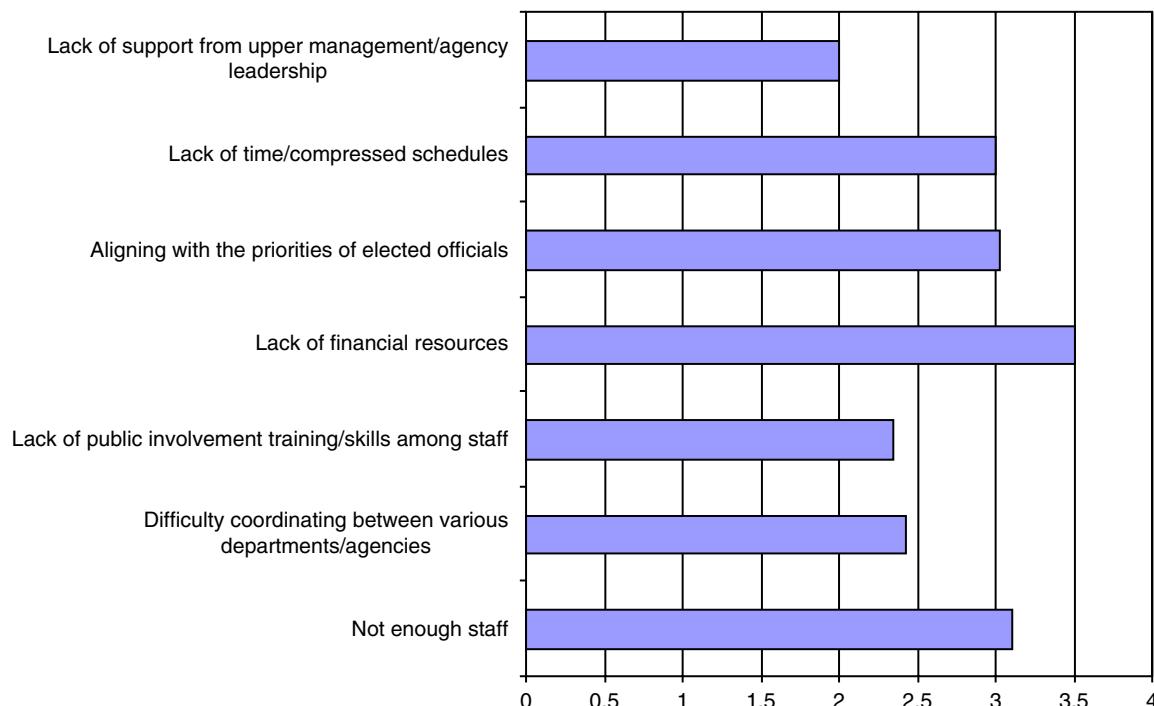
the problem of limited resources and that successful public involvement can be achieved on a modest budget. SETD offered the clearest example of this. In a time of financial crisis across the public transit industry, this small transit agency was able to expand its transit service by integrating public involvement into all of its activities and employee job functions, as well as by developing strategic partnerships. Public involvement is not seen as a discrete task at SETD, but instead takes place on a continual basis led by many staff members. Informal conversations between bus drivers, riders, SETD staff, and members of the community all provide bits of information that is channeled back to the agency to help it better understand customer needs and attitudes about transit.

As evidenced by Metro (in Los Angeles), even large-scale projects with significant public involvement can incorporate low-cost elements. For the Westside Subway Extension, agency staff maintains and updates the project's presence on social media sites. This requires minimal financial resources from the agency. The Orange County Transportation Authority has created low-cost videos using a hand-held video recorder for distribution on YouTube. The agency has found it to be a quick, easy, and cost-effective mechanism for getting information to the public. The amateur appearance of the videos has given them an air of authenticity and has played well with the public during the economic recession of 2008–2009.

Building partnerships with community organizations can also address the resource problem. It is an effort that takes time and commitment, but can reap rewards for an agency in both the short and long term. Pierce Transit's engagement with neighborhood councils in Tacoma and Lakewood allowed it to take advantage of council resources to disseminate project information far more widely than it would have been able to do on its own. For the Hiawatha LRT project, the Metropolitan Council reimbursed community organizations for costs associated with distributing information about the project, an action that saved the agency money (e.g., labor costs) and allowed it to tap into local distribution channels. Maintaining these relationships rather than having to rebuild them for each project will also provide efficiencies for future efforts.

#### EXTERNAL CHALLENGES

External problems often pose a more significant challenge than internal ones. Public cynicism or distrust of the planning process; work, household, or other personal obligations; and



**FIGURE 15** Average transit provider rating of internal challenges for public involvement. Note: Average rating of responses where “Not Significant” = 1, “Somewhat Significant” = 2, “Moderately Significant” = 3, “Very Significant” = 4, and “Highest Significance” = 5.

a lack of interest or lack of awareness and understanding of the planning process were the most common external challenges noted in the survey results. Confirmation of these findings is given by a survey conducted for TRB (NuStats 2009). Its results showed that low levels of interest and difficulties securing broad-based involvement ranked high as external challenges. Figure 16 shows the survey results conducted for this synthesis.

Other external challenges identified by this study’s survey respondents included the point in the process when most people typically get involved. Many planning agencies have found a tendency for the public to become more involved as a project moves nearer to implementation or construction and that generating interest during the planning stage is often difficult.

### Cynicism and Distrust

Public cynicism and distrust of the process can arise from a feeling that participation is not worth the effort—that decisions have already been made and the opportunity for public input is merely a formality. Overcoming these feelings among the public requires building trust within the community. Laketran and the PAAC believe they have done this by being open and transparent. Both agencies make all of their financial information and audits available for public review to demonstrate that they are good stewards of public funds. Pierce Transit has built trust by structuring public meetings to allow participants to work through and identify solutions

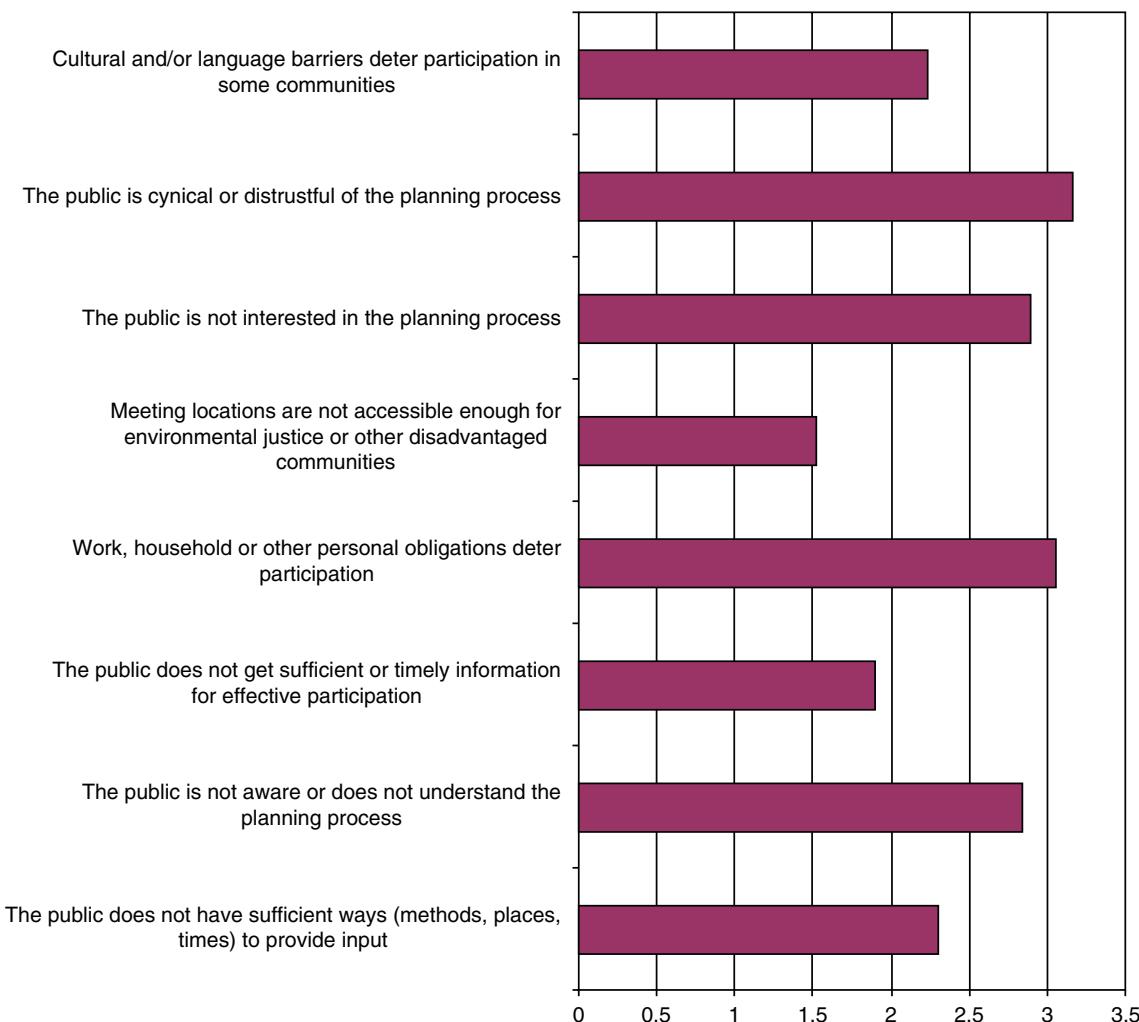
to specific problems. This has helped the public feel that it has a meaningful impact on the planning process. SETD has built trust by being an active participant in its community through volunteer work. The trust that these agencies have built with their communities has translated directly into trust of the public involvement process.

Cynicism can also be countered by demonstrating how public involvement is used to inform the planning process. WMATA and the PAAC offer two examples of this. Continuous engagement throughout their planning processes for Route 79 and the Transit Development Plan, respectively, allowed these agencies to show how and where public input was used. After each round of technical analysis, both agencies took the results to the public and asked for validation that the alternatives accurately reflected the community’s input.

The Laketran example offers a different approach to diffusing cynicism. Board members sit in the front row of public meetings listening directly to the input from citizens, unfiltered by staff or the media. This provides assurance to the public that their issues are being heard and understood at the highest level of the agency.

### Competing Interests and Obligations

Public involvement opportunities must compete for the public’s attention with the various other interests and obligations that occupy people’s lives. Finding time to participate in a



**FIGURE 16** Average transit provider rating of external challenges for public involvement. Note: Average rating of responses where “Not Significant” = 1, “Somewhat Significant” = 2, “Moderately Significant” = 3, “Very Significant” = 4, and “Highest Significance” = 5.

meeting may not be high on the list of priorities of working individuals who have limited relaxation or family time. Agencies have addressed this problem by providing multiple participation opportunities, bringing opportunities into the community, and offering opportunities that are not dependent on time or place.

Each of the case studies presented in this report provides examples of using multiple engagement techniques to increase participation, and there are others as well. In the Hiawatha LRT example, workshops and meetings were supplemented with fact sheets, newsletters, cable TV programs, and door-to-door canvassing. This variety of techniques helped ensure the broadest reach of opportunities to educate the public and receive feedback about the light rail line. To develop its regional paratransit plan, Valley Metro implemented a range of options including stakeholder groups, focus groups, workshops, web-based media, social media, and partnerships with community organizations that serve persons with disabilities. The result was significant support for the plan, as well as sup-

port for a planned regional ADA in-person assessment center—an outcome of the plan’s development.

PAAC’s Tell Us Where to Go Bus demonstrates one technique for bringing outreach directly to the community. By driving the bus to community activities such as festivals, fairs, and farmers’ markets, the agency allowed members of the public to learn about the Transit Development Plan and offer their input on their own terms and in their own time. LACMTA provides a different, but still effective, strategy for taking participation opportunities to the public. Its use of social media, particularly Facebook, affords the public the opportunity to participate at the time and place of its choosing without being dependent on the physical presence of agency staff or representatives.

#### Lack of Interest or Understanding

Lack of interest in the planning process may stem from insufficient public understanding of the following: the planning

process, project specifics, the importance of public input, and how or where to participate. A vast majority of the agencies in the survey are taking active steps to mitigate this problem—30 provided information about how and where transit users can participate through a range of outreach mechanisms, including flyers, e-mail, direct mail, websites, and advertisements. In addition, 23 provided information on why the agency is seeking input. Techniques that transit providers have used to improve the impact of outreach include emphasizing a project's impacts on transit riders' daily lives to make messages personal and compelling, clarifying why public input is important and how it will be used, using customer-friendly language, identifying multiple means for the public to get information and provide input, and summarizing the proposal and alternatives under consideration.

Transit providers also take more proactive approaches to educating the public and raising interest in planning efforts. The Denver RTD's Ride to Dream School Program was established to involve local students in RTD's I-225 light rail corridor planning. RTD sought to educate students about the corridor, help them identify career opportunities in transportation, and provide mentoring. An additional benefit of stimulating student interest in the project was the ability to engage their parents. Transit providers have also been able raise awareness and interest through partnerships with local organizations and institutions. SETD worked closely with local schools to raise awareness and use of transit, whereas Laketran worked with staff from county human services departments to help them teach their clients about transit and raise awareness of its importance for the community.

### **HARD TO REACH POPULATIONS**

Federal regulations mandate that transportation agencies take into consideration the needs of traditionally underserved populations. This has typically meant low-income populations, minorities, persons with disabilities, seniors, those with limited English proficiency, and others. Agencies have had some success reaching senior and disabled populations through special advisory committees and active advocacy/support organizations. Social media has opened up opportunities to engage younger generations. However, many transit providers still find it challenging to engage Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations, as well as low-income and minority populations.

#### **Communities with Limited English Proficiency**

The survey results revealed that 23 of the transit providers serve a significant population of persons with LEP. Of those, 22 provide information and encourage participation in multiple languages. Despite this, agencies, on average, rated their own success at reaching LEP populations as poor. Many of these communities are immigrant communities; therefore, in addition to language barriers there may be cultural barriers to

participation. Adaptation of public involvement techniques is critical to overcoming these barriers. As one survey respondent commented:

All engagement strategies are useful but the key is choosing the best one for the audience . . . For example, Spanish-speaking communities tend to like smaller group settings or one-on-one interactions versus large public meetings where you are asked to comment for the record (survey participant).

To address cultural and linguistic barriers in the Minneapolis area the Metropolitan Council employed students at the University of Minnesota who were fluent in the region's widely spoken foreign languages, (primarily Spanish and Somali) to canvass neighborhoods and go door-to-door to discuss and provide information about the project in residents' native languages (U.S.DOT 2010). This helped build trust and understanding within the community and provided the input that the Metropolitan Council needed. However, foreign language speakers do not guarantee success. LACMTA is one example of a transit agency that is still struggling to engage an immigrant community. The proposed Westside Subway Extension traverses through the heart of Los Angeles' Koreatown. Despite the agency's efforts to engage this community, in part by providing Korean translators at meetings, participation rates among Korean-American residents have been disappointingly low.

### **Minority and Low-income Communities**

Engaging low-income and minority communities has increased in importance for transit providers over the past several decades. In many instances these communities are disproportionately high users of transit. However, transit providers often find it challenging to reach these populations.

Best practices for engaging low-income and minority communities have been documented extensively in literature discussions of environmental justice, community impact assessment, and context-sensitive solutions (see Florida DOT and National Center for Transit Research 2002; Weeks 2002; Cairns et al. 2003; Ward 2005; Robinson 2007). Many of these best practices are similar to those for increasing participation rates in general—making the outreach personally relevant, working with community leaders and institutions, providing day care and food, and offering reimbursement for travel expenses.

From the case studies in this report, proactive engagement in minority communities offered the most significant benefit. For its Route 79 limited-stop bus service, WMATA went directly to the impacted communities for input. The agency worked through local structures and people more familiar with the community to identify key stakeholders. Staff also worked in the corridor directly with bus riders on the buses and at transit stops to gather their input. PAAC took a broader approach and created a dedicated community outreach position (from a vacant staff position) responsible for working

with neighborhood organizations in minority communities. By ensuring that these groups have direct access to information about the agency, PAAC has seen a significant increase in the participation from low-income and minority community members.

#### **DIFFICULTIES ENGAGING THE PUBLIC**

The challenges transit providers face when engaging the public are many. They arise from specific issues within the agency, such as inadequate resources, or from the public, such as feelings of cynicism and distrust, lack of time, and

lack of awareness. These challenges are magnified when trying to engage traditionally hard to reach populations such as people with limited English language proficiency and low-income and minority communities. The responses to these challenges have varied among agencies, as has their success at rising above them. What has worked for some agencies has not worked for others. However, many have been able to succeed, especially when agencies (1) have taken the time and effort to understand the challenges and their causes; (2) have a firm understanding of community issues, needs, and local support networks; and (3) approach projects and planning efforts in a collaborative fashion with communities.

## CHAPTER SIX

## CONCLUSIONS

This synthesis has attempted to document the specific experiences of transit providers in engaging the public for transit-related activities. The 50 survey respondents (82% response rate) provided valuable insight into the public participation strategies their agencies are employing. Supplementary study and case study interviews provided additional information to assist in identifying the methods, tools, and techniques transit providers are using for:

- Defining the purpose and scope of public engagement;
- Determining the relevant information to be exchanged between agencies and the public;
- Identifying, reaching, and engaging target audiences;
- Eliciting relevant information from the public; and
- Assessing the effectiveness relative to the purpose.

Public participation strategies at transit providers are as diverse as the communities and place types they serve and there are few, if any, standard methods for developing or executing them. What works for one agency for a certain project in one community may not work for another agency or even for the same agency in a different community or for a different project. The specific nature of public involvement creates a formidable challenge to identifying standard methods or strategies that are universally applicable. What emerged from this synthesis are more general observations about how agencies develop and execute their strategies. The overriding purpose of transit providers' outreach efforts tends to be to provide information to the public and receive specific input on issues or needs. Specific goals and objectives are often determined on a project-specific basis and who participates in their development is at the discretion of the agencies. Similarly, determining the type of information to exchange with the public and the type of feedback needed for projects cannot be neatly compartmentalized—it is intimately linked to project-specific goals. Generally, this information exchange is influenced by what the agency wants the public to understand, information that it needs from the public, and information requests from the public. The identification of target audiences for engagement happens through active involvement of those knowledgeable about the impacted area, through institutional knowledge, and through data collection efforts, and each agency has its particular method for this.

Specific public involvement techniques and the methods by which they are implemented by transit providers are constantly evolving and bounded only by the creativity of their

practitioners. Many have found ways to take fundamental concepts (such as a public meeting) and transform them into phenomenally successful events. Others stay within the confines of what is tried and true. Given the variability in development and execution of participation strategies, evaluation is likewise difficult to standardize among agencies. Although many may measure similar outcomes and outputs, such as the number of attendees at meetings or the number of comments received, the threshold of success is one that is defined by those directly involved with the engagement effort. For some, 15 people at a public meeting might indicate success, whereas for others it might mean failure. This lack of easily identifiable standards and procedures actually may offer advantages; it may indicate that agencies are customizing and adapting their strategies to what works in their jurisdictions.

Despite the varying specifics of public participation strategies, there are common challenges that transit providers face when attempting to engage the public. These are not dissimilar to the challenges that other planning entities encounter, including resource constraints, difficulties getting the public's attention, and convincing the public to participate in project or service planning efforts.

### WHAT IS "SUCCESS"?

One of the most difficult aspects of synthesizing public involvement across the agencies that participated in this effort is defining "success." There is a need and a desire among agencies to quantify public involvement outputs and outcomes in a way that can be used in a benefit-cost analysis. However, no consistent methods emerged for defining success through the literature review, survey effort, or case studies. Both quantitative and qualitative methods are readily available and used for evaluating public involvement, but the threshold that defines "success" is unclear and dependent on the complex interplay of numerous variables including the size, type, and level of controversy surrounding a project; the size and resources of the organization; the community involved; and the overall intent of the public involvement effort.

The case studies presented in chapter four highlight agencies that have involved from a few hundred to a several thousand people. Each is deemed "successful" primarily because those evaluating the effort believed it had a positive impact. These positive impacts take several forms: successful implementation of the project; clear public influence on the design,

scale, or scope of the project; enhancing public understanding of the project or agency; and engaging the public to the point where they felt involved and that their opinions mattered. However, there is no easily transferrable method for measuring success among the various agencies.

### **SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES: PUTTING STRATEGIES INTO ACTION**

There are certain common threads that can be extracted from this synthesis. The following discussion describes general observations and is not meant to be prescriptive guidance for public participation. It represents many of the common themes noted throughout this report derived from the literature review, agency survey, and case studies.

When specifically looking at the application of various techniques, there are certain commonalities that appear to lead to greater success. A public meeting is used here to describe any agency-organized event at a specific date, time, and location that provides a structured environment for the public to learn about a project, interact with the sponsoring agency, and provide input. This includes traditional public meetings, public hearings, open houses, workshops, charrettes, small group meetings, etc. What has worked for transit providers who participated in this synthesis is to:

- Identify the audience to whom information needs to be provided and from whom information is needed. The Washington D.C. Department of Transportation (DOT) brought together both station users and station tenants in its Union Station Intermodal Transportation Center Feasibility Study in a charrette-type setting to share information and ideas about the function of and experience using the station.
- Ensure the event is interesting and engaging to make the effort worthwhile for participants. Pierce Transit's interactive quizzes and prioritization exercises engaged meeting participants and allowed them to see how their input was being used by the agency.
- Engage partner organization with contacts in the local community who can promote and encourage attendance by the local community as Laketran (Lake County, Ohio) did with the local Rotary Club, Red Hat Society, chamber of commerce, and others.
- Make personal connections in the target community to build trust and credibility for the agency. The Sunset Empire Transportation District (SETD) showed this by being an active participant in its community through staff volunteer work and driver contact with customers.

Advisory committees can go by any number of names including citizen, community, stakeholder, passenger, technical, or steering. However they are termed, they are generally an agency-created or sanctioned group meant to represent diverse community opinions and assist the agency in decision making.

Their success stems from carefully matching the needs of the agency and the community, explicitly stating the expectations of the committee, clarifying committee roles and responsibilities, and balancing the desire for broad representation with the need for managing the committee. By giving a clearly defined area of responsibility, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority's (LACMTA's) Service Governance Councils have created an effective mechanism to receive public input and respond quickly and appropriately to address important community concerns.

Surveys and focus groups are two of the most common types of data collection techniques. Their success stems from an agency's ability to frame questions appropriately to get the specific type of feedback that is needed and determine the most appropriate means to engage the public. SETD found that sending out survey cards with postage-paid reply cards yielded a disappointingly low response rate. The agency responded by sending staff to ride the buses with customers and assist them in completing the survey forms. Not only did this boost response rates but it also provided a more nuanced understanding of customer issues than could be gained through just the survey responses.

Proactive engagement can include attending community events, speaking at community meetings, holding open events at public gathering places, or partnering with local organizations, to name a few. The common theme among these efforts is to take the agency's message directly to the public and use local communication and support networks to broaden the number and diversity of people reached. Each of the case studies in this synthesis used some form of proactive engagement. LACMTA took their public meetings to centers of employment and held events at lunch time to gather critical input from commuters. The Port Authority of Allegheny County's (PAAC's) Tell Us Where to Go Bus took the message of the agency deep into the heart of communities to hear directly from the affected public. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) partnered with local organizations to reach bus riders along its Route 79 bus route. Laketran worked with its local Jobs and Family Services Department to broaden its outreach about transit service cuts. SETD developed strong relationships with its local schools and colleges to promote transit use and Pierce Transit used the neighborhood councils in Tacoma and Lakewood, Washington, to disseminate information and encourage attendance at its local meetings.

Internet and mobile technologies have opened new channels of communication and interactivity that agencies are using to expand the scope of their outreach, engage new audiences (particularly younger generations), and push the boundaries of traditional public meetings and visualization. By keeping its content updated and relevant, LACMTA has kept its followers on Facebook interested in the planning for the Westside Subway extension and managed to translate this

interest into greater participation from younger residents in the Los Angeles area.

Beyond the specific public involvement techniques, there are also certain overriding factors that tend to lead toward greater success across all public involvement techniques.

- **Those who “do more” tend to have greater success**

Successful public involvement strategies tend to include broad-based approaches to engaging communities through multiple mechanisms and by providing continuous opportunities for the public to learn about and engage in the process. There is no single technique that works in every situation. Success comes from a combination of an agency’s sustained public involvement efforts working together in a holistic, coherent strategy. Doing more allows an agency to learn what works and does not work for its communities and the institutional knowledge created over time helps enhance future public involvement efforts. Pierce Transit offered an example of a broad-based approach to outreach where multiple tools and techniques were used to deliver messages and solicit feedback from specific audience groups. As a result, the agency was able to directly and indirectly engage nearly 60,000 people throughout Pierce County, Washington.

- **Those who ask the right questions tend to have greater success**

Agencies that take time at the beginning of their public involvement process to identify where input is needed, how it will be used, and the specific questions that need to be answered by the public are able to create a structure for public input and ensure that the feedback received is the most useful for decision makers at all levels. Building this structure requires coordination with technical staff responsible for planning and design, as well as those responsible for making final decisions.

LACMTA’s philosophy for engaging the public in the Westside Subway Extension project was to receive as much input as possible through as many channels as possible. By crafting specific communication plans, LACMTA identified how the public would use feedback channels and structured the process around specific questions on issues such as project phasing, station design, and construction impacts. By guiding the public dialogue and framing questions, LACMTA has been able to receive useful and actionable input from the public.

- **Those who dedicate more “resources” tend to have greater success**

The allocation of resources to public involvement is a prerequisite for success. Significant public involvement can be expensive, such as the Colorado DOT’s substantial effort to engage the community (often door-to-door)

along its I-70 East corridor. However, resources do not have to be financial; the incorporation of public involvement into daily job functions and routine agency activities at SETD has opened new channels of communication with the public without significant additional costs. As e-mail has now become a common tool for communication and an expected part of work duties, other web-based technologies are offering agencies the chance to reach significant numbers of people quickly and at minimal cost. Over time, these too will be incorporated into daily work responsibilities.

- **Those who genuinely value public involvement tend to have greater success**

Genuine institutional support for, and belief in, public involvement is important. Recognizing the value of public involvement is important at all levels of an agency. Senior leadership, as seen with Pierce Transit, can open opportunities to engage with key stakeholders and decision makers. Senior leadership can allocate internal resources and set agency priorities to support public outreach. Commitment from other levels is also important. Agencies as varied as WMATA and SETD have used their bus operators and employees as frontline troops in public outreach, allowing them to better understand and adapt more quickly to customer issues and needs.

- **Those who are more open and transparent tend to have greater success**

Openness and transparency build trust among communities. Withholding information fosters antagonistic relationships between the public and an agency, as well as disenchantment with the participation process. Those who are proactive in providing information are better able to guide public dialogue about the agency and its activities.

Laketran and the PAAC are two examples of this openness and transparency. By making agency data (financial, ridership, etc.) easily accessible to the public, being open and honest about the agency’s fiscal health, and seeking community input for ways to deal with financial shortfalls, they have built trust with their communities and the local media. This has proven invaluable for the agencies as they worked with their communities when service cuts and route consolidation were needed to address budget shortfalls.

- **Those who understand, partner with, and empower the community tend to have more success**

In each case study presented in this report, proactive engagement and partnerships with communities and neighborhood organizations have been important factors in the agency’s success. This type of engagement

builds trust with communities; helps agencies identify key stakeholders and issues; shows respect for community values, customs, and traditions; and provides access to communication networks and support structures not typically available to public agencies.

## ITEMS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Several items for further study are presented in this final section. Each speaks to a gap in information, knowledge, or practice for public involvement. Exploration of these issues will give transit providers and public involvement practitioners valuable information to improve their processes for engaging the public.

- **Defining and measuring successful public involvement**

The most critical gap is identifying how to define and measure successful public involvement. This synthesis has already indicated some of the difficulties with defining success, but agencies are increasingly looking for a performance-based public involvement model. The challenges in developing this model are many, including measuring the qualitative data and intangible outcomes of outreach efforts, comparing formal with informal public involvement approaches, and incorporating the public's own perception and value of public involvement. Study is needed into how these can be quantified, the costs versus benefits of formalizing performance measures for public involvement, and any current models or best practices that exist.

- **The continued relevance of traditional public involvement techniques**

Survey respondents for this synthesis indicated that public meetings (including hearings) were a critical part of their outreach efforts. Given the current legal requirements for public involvement this is not surprising. However, in narrative comments, many respondents also believed that the traditional public meeting did not serve to significantly enhance public engagement. As new technologies emerge that change the way society communicates and interacts, an evaluation of the continued relevance of mandated traditional public outreach tools is warranted. This study could investigate expanding the notion of "public meeting" or "public hearing" to incorporate newer Internet technologies. Similarly, as printed newspaper circulation continues its decline (*New York Times*, April 26, 2010), investigation is needed of how and where public notices are placed. Finally, as new visualization technologies such as three-dimensional modeling and animation become more accessible, it will be important to determine what level of visualization is needed—and expected by the public.

- **Reaching across cultural barriers**

As evidenced by the LACMTA case study, even robust outreach strategies can encounter difficulties in reaching various communities. In the Los Angeles example it was the challenge of reaching the Korean-American community. Urban centers around the country are home to multitudes of ethnic communities, each with their own language, customs, and traditions. Significant research has already been done on reaching environmental justice communities, but this has not typically extended to reach diverse immigrant communities. The Metropolitan Council in Minneapolis found that sending native Spanish and Somali speakers into neighborhoods with large immigrant populations was an effective way to ensure that those groups were included in the planning process. Further study is needed to identify other successful approaches agencies have found to reach across cultural barriers and engage different types of immigrant communities.

- **Social media as a tool for enhancing public participation**

As social media increases in importance as a public participation tool, practitioners are seeking direction on what to use, when, and how. This is a rapidly evolving field that needs a thoughtful approach to study the benefits of social media, adaptable concepts for its use, the legal and privacy issues surrounding it, and whether or not it improves the overall outcome of public involvement efforts. In addition, there is conflicting information about the applicability of web-based tools for engaging various segments of the population. There is a widespread belief that the "digital divide" prevents the use of new technologies from engaging low-income and minority residents. However, research from the Pew Foundation and others has found that minorities are more likely to use advanced features of cell phones (Internet, texting, applications, etc.) than others. In addition the demographic profile of Facebook users now mirrors that of the United States as a whole.

- **Frontline employees as an extension of public involvement**

A consistent challenge for agencies is getting sufficient participation from those who actually use the transit system. Some of the obstacles already stated include competing obligations, cost, cynicism, and distrust. In two case studies (WMATA and SETD) the agencies used their employees (bus operators and staff) as an extension of their outreach process. This raises the question of how viable a technique this is for other agencies. A more rigorous study of the benefits of integrating public involvement into the job responsibilities of employees who interact daily with customers and other members of the public is needed. Issues such as potential liability, union issues, and labor-management relations all need to be investigated. A model for how to do this successfully

would help numerous agencies throughout the country who are struggling with understaffed and underfunded public involvement departments.

- **The role of the media in building trust for an agency**

The Laketran case study offered an example of how an agency can work with the media to promote openness and transparency on the part of the agency and build trust with the public. Further study into this potential role

for the media is needed and could provide a model for other agencies around the country. Issues to be investigated could include how the media can influence public opinion of the agency, how a relationship with the media can be developed and cultivated, what a successful agency–media relationship entails, how confidence is built between the two, and how this relationship can transition to the world of social media (including blogs) as the influence of traditional media wanes.

## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AA	Alternatives analysis
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
BART	Bay Area Rapid Transit (San Francisco, CA)
BCTD	Broward County Transit Division
CAC	Community/citizen advisory council/committee
CSS	Context-sensitive solutions
DART	Dallas Area Rapid Transit (Dallas, TX)
DCTA	Denton County Transportation Authority (Denton County, TX)
DOT	Department of Transportation
EJ	Environmental Justice
IAP2	International Association for Public Participation
ISTEA	Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act
LACMTA	Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Los Angeles, CA)
LRT	Light rail transit
MMVTA	Mid Mon Valley Transit Authority (Charleroi, PA)
MPO	Metropolitan planning organization
MTS	Metropolitan Transit System (San Diego, CA)
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NTI	National Transit Institute
PAAC	Port Authority of Allegheny County (Pittsburgh, PA)
PAC	Passenger advisory committee
PRC	Project review committee
PT	Pierce Transit (Pierce County, WA)
RTD	Regional Transportation District (Denver, CO)
SAFETEA – LU	Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act— A Legacy for Users
SETD	Sunset Empire Transportation District (Clatsop County, OR)
TDP	Transit Development Plan
TEA-21	Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century
TOD	Transit-oriented development
VTA	Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (San Jose, CA)
WMATA	Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (Washington, DC)

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## APPENDIX A

### Survey Questions

#### Part 1—Introduction

##### Public Participation Strategies for Transit

The American Public Transit Association (APTA), through its nonprofit educational and research organization, the Transit Development Corporation, Inc. (TDC), is cooperating in a research project to prepare a Synthesis of Current Practice on Public Participation Strategies for Transit. This is part of the Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP), which was authorized in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) to be managed by the Transportation Research Board (TRB) in cooperation with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the TDC.

The synthesis will document the experiences of states, MPOs, and transit agencies in engaging the public and provide practical information and guidance for transit agencies of all sizes.

Looking at short- and long-range transit issues, as well as other issues, this report will profile innovative and successful practices, lessons learned, and gaps in information for:

- Defining the purpose and scope of public engagement;
- Determining the relevant information to be exchanged with the public;
- Identifying, reaching, and engaging target audiences;
- Eliciting relevant information and input from the public; and
- Assessing the effectiveness of the public engagement effort relative to its purpose.

Scott Giering ([sgiering@hshassoc.com](mailto:sgiering@hshassoc.com)) with Howard/Stein-Hudson is conducting this synthesis effort under contract to TRB. In order for the Synthesis to reflect the best current information, it is important that responses be obtained from selected transit agencies of various sizes and geographic locations.

Your assistance in expediting the completion of this survey as accurately as possible will be greatly appreciated. Descriptions of any practices and techniques used to overcome problems are welcomed, as are reports or other documentation. Individual responses will remain anonymous; an aggregated summary of this survey will be published as an appendix to the final synthesis report in the fall of 2010.

#### Part 2—About You

##### 1. Please provide your contact information below

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

## Part 3—About Your Agency

**2. Is your agency a: (Check all that apply.)**

- Public transit provider
- State or local department of transportation
- Metropolitan or rural planning organization
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**3. In which state, country, region, or metropolitan area do you provide or plan for public transit?**

**4. For which place types do you provide or plan for public transit? (Check all that apply.)**

- Urban
- Suburban
- Rural

## Part 4—Purpose and Scope of Public Involvement

**5. For which of the following activities do you typically engage the public? (Check all that apply.)**

- Capital projects
- Daily operations (including travel information and trip planning)
- Facility design
- Fare changes
- Human services planning (including coordination with special needs populations)
- Long-range/corridor planning
- Marketing (including advertising, public service announcements and safety campaigns)
- Service changes (including route additions or cancellations, route changes, construction detours, and hours of operation)
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**6. What would you identify as the primary goal(s) of your public involvement efforts for the following types of activities?**

	Provide information	Get feedback on specific issues	Understand general customer issues, concerns, and needs	Collaborate to identify solutions	Encourage/build ridership or support
Long-range/corridor planning for transit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Daily operations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human services planning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Service changes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fare changes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transit facility design	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marketing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transit capital projects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify):					

**7. How important are the following factors in developing your public involvement goals and objectives, and programs?**

	Not a factor	Small factor	Moderate factor	Strong factor	One of the most important factors
Type of project	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Environmental justice issues	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Reducing risk exposure	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Level of controversy	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Agency input/priorities	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Need for community input and concerns	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Legal requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Safety issues	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Budget	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Political priorities	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Project schedule	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Type of project	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Other (please specify):					

**Part 5—Determining the relevant information to be exchanged with the public****8. What type of information does your agency typically share with the public? (Check all that apply.)**

- Construction updates/impacts
- Cost estimates
- Current service information
- Design, construction, route alternatives
- Financial information/projections
- Modeling results
- Ridership statistics/projections
- Schedule/route changes
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**9. Which of the following are major factors for your agency in determining what information to share with the public?**

- Direction from the Board or senior management
- Desire to preempt foreseeable opposition
- Desire to shape or change public opinion
- Legislative requests or mandates
- Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests
- Agency policy or historical precedence
- Anticipated reactions from public, media, or elected official
- Direct requests from the public
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**10. From your agency's perspective, what type of information is important for your current and potential customers to understand? (Check all that apply.)**

- Service changes
- Funding needs and constraints
- Ridership projections
- Capital vs. operating costs
- Capital investment strategies and priorities
- Fare box recovery vs. subsidies
- Safety concerns
- Legal mandates and responsibilities
- Fare structure
- Agency jurisdictions
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**11. What type of information does your agency typically want from your current and potential customers? (Check all that apply.)**

- Identification of chronic customer service problems
- What the agency is doing well and not well
- Desirability of potential new routes or services
- Reactions to fare changes
- Recurrent scheduling and timing problems
- Input and/or ideas for capital projects and plans
- Suggested service changes or improvements
- Identification of community issues that will impact service
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**Part 6—Identifying, reaching, and engaging target audiences****12. What are the audiences you typically try to reach during your public outreach efforts? (Check all that apply.)**

- Urban transit users
- Choice riders
- Seniors
- Suburban transit users
- Students
- Rural transit users
- Persons with disabilities
- Low-income
- Transit dependent
- Non-English speakers
- Minorities
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**13. Which of the following do you use to help you identify your target audience(s) for engagement? (Check all that apply.)**

- Census data
- Customer surveys
- Fare box data
- Focus groups
- Historical data
- Human service agencies
- Planning studies
- Ridership statistics
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**14. How significant are the following internal challenges for your agency when planning for engaging the public?**

	Not Significant	Somewhat Significant	Moderately Significant	Very Significant	Highest Significance	N/A
Aligning with the priorities of elected officials	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Not enough staff	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Lack of financial resources	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Difficulty coordinating between various departments/agencies	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Lack of support from upper management/agency leadership	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Lack of time/compressed schedules	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Lack of public involvement training/skills among staff	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Other (please specify):						

**15. How significant are the following problems when trying to engage current and potential transit users?**

	Not Significant	Somewhat Significant	Moderately Significant	Very Significant	Highest Significance	N/A
Meeting locations are not accessible enough for environmental justice or other disadvantaged communities	<input type="checkbox"/>					
The public is not aware or does not understand the planning process	<input type="checkbox"/>					
The public does not have sufficient ways (methods, places, times) to provide input	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Cultural and/or language barriers deter participation in some communities	<input type="checkbox"/>					
The public is not interested in the planning process	<input type="checkbox"/>					
The public is cynical or distrustful of the planning process	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Work, household, or other personal obligations deter participation	<input type="checkbox"/>					
The public does not get sufficient or timely information for effective participation	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Other (please specify):						

**16. Do you provide information about how, where, and when transit users can participate?** Yes No**17. If yes, do you provide this information in/on: (Check all that apply.)** Agency Web sites Elected official notices Legal ads Printed advertisements Flyers Related Web sites Broadcast advertisement Transit vehicles Posters E-mails/mailings Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_**18. If yes to question 16, does this information include explicit information about why the agency is seeking transit rider input and how that input will be used?** Yes No

If yes, how is this typically phrased? \_\_\_\_\_

**19. Which of the following techniques have been effective for your agency when trying to engage current and potential riders for the following activities? (Check all that apply.)**

	Capital projects	Daily operations	Facility design	Fare changes	Human services planning	Long-range/corridor planning	Marketing	Service changes
Ads on transit vehicles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Charrettes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Flyers/newsletters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Focus groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Handouts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Hotline/call-in centers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Information booths/kiosks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Partnership with community organizations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Public meetings/opens houses/hearings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Public service announcements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Rider intercept surveys	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Seat drops	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Small group meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Social media	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Surveys	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Web sites	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Workshops	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Other (please specify):								

**20. For the techniques indicated above, are there any specific examples of where and how you used them successfully? If so, please explain.**

**21. Are there particular techniques that you have found to be less useful for engaging the public? If so, please explain.**

**22. Is there a significant non-English speaking population in your service or planning area?**

- Yes  
 No

**23. If “yes” above, do you provide information or encourage feedback in multiple languages?**

- Yes  
 No

**24. Do you measure the effectiveness of your public engagement efforts?**

- Yes  
 No

**25. If you answered “yes” for question 24, do you use the following quantitative measures? (Check all that apply.)**

- Size and diversity of the population reached  
 Hits on project web sites  
 Number of names on a mailing list  
 Number of participants at outreach events  
 Number of comments received  
 Number of articles written about the project  
 Other (please specify or explain your choices above): \_\_\_\_\_

**26. If you answered “yes” for question 24, do you use the following qualitative measures? (Check all that apply.)**

- Nature of comments received  
 Nature of media reporting  
 Whether appropriate information was provided to the public  
 Whether information was provided to the public proactively  
 Whether public input was useful in the decision-making process  
 Other (please specify or explain your choices above): \_\_\_\_\_

**27. How would you rate the overall effectiveness of your outreach efforts for engaging transit riders?**

Failing	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>					

**28. How would you rate your success at reaching the following populations?**

	Failing	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	N/A
Urban transit users	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Non-English speakers	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Persons with disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Rural transit users	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Minorities	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Choice riders	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Seniors	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Suburban transit users	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Transit dependent	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Low-income	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Students	<input type="checkbox"/>					

**29. How significant an impact does public input have on your decision-making process?**

Not Significant	Somewhat Significant	Moderately Significant	Very Significant	Highest Significance
<input type="checkbox"/>				

**30. How is public input used by your agency?****Part 7—Follow-up****31. Are you aware of other agencies (transit agencies, MPOs, DOTs, etc.) that are particularly successful at engaging transit riders?**

- Yes (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- No

**32. Would you be willing to discuss your answers in greater detail (~30 minutes) with a member of the TCRP team?**

- Yes
- No

**33. Would you be willing to be interviewed for inclusion as a potential case study in this synthesis?**

- Yes
- No

**34. Do you have any additional comments or would you like to clarify any of your answers? If so, please use the space below.**

## **Part 8—Thank You**

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your answers will help us better understand the state of practice for public involvement in transit planning and provision.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Scott Giering ([sgiering@hshassoc.com](mailto:sgiering@hshassoc.com)) of Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates.

## APPENDIX B

### Participating Agencies

Agency	Areas Served
Access Services	Los Angeles County, CA
Alameda–Contra Costa Transit District (AC Transit)	Alameda County, CA
Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART)	San Francisco Bay Area, CA
Broward County Transit Division (BCTD)	Broward County, Florida
Chittenden County Transportation Authority (CCTA)	Burlington metropolitan area, VT
Corpus Christi Metropolitan Planning Organization	Corpus Christi metropolitan area, TX
Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART)	Dallas metropolitan area, TX
Denton County Transportation Authority (DCTA)	Dallas–Fort Worth Metropolitan Area
District of Columbia Department of Transportation (DDOT)	Washington, DC
Fort Worth Transit Authority (FWTA)	Fort Worth, TX
Golden Gate Bridge, Highway & Transportation District	San Francisco and North Bay region, CA
Greater Dayton Regional Transit Authority (GDRTA)	Greater Dayton, OH
Hall Area Transit	Hall County, GA
Hennepin County	Hennepin County, MN
Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO)	Hampton Roads metropolitan area, VA
Jacksonville Transportation Authority	Jacksonville metropolitan area, FL
Laketran	Lake County, OH
Lane Transit District	Lane County, OR
Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA)	Los Angeles County, CA
Maryland Transit Administration (MTA)	Maryland
Metro	Portland metropolitan area, OR
Metro Transit	Minneapolis–St. Paul metropolitan area, MN
Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA)	New York City metropolitan area, NY
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG)	Washington, DC metropolitan area, DC, MD, VA
Mid Mon Valley Transit Authority (MMVTA)	Southwestern PA
Mountainland Association of Governments (MAG)	Wasatch and Summit Counties, UT
New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)	New Jersey
New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC)	New York City metropolitan area, NY
NJ TRANSIT	New Jersey
North Florida Transportation Planning Organization	Duval, Clay, St. Johns, and Nassau Counties, FL
North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTTPA)	Northern New Jersey
Pierce Transit (PT)	Pierce County, WA
Port Authority of Allegheny County (PAAC)	Pittsburgh metropolitan area, PA
Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham	Birmingham metropolitan area, AL
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA)	Santa Clara County, CA
Sound Transit	Seattle metropolitan area, WA
Sunset Empire Transportation District (SETD)	Clatsop County, OR
Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT)	Utah

Valley Metro	Maricopa County, AZ
Regional Public Transportation Authority (RPTA)	Phoenix metropolitan area, AZ
VIA Metropolitan Transit	San Antonio, TX
Virginia Railway Express (VRE)	Northern Virginia
Wasatch Front Regional Council	Salt Lake City metropolitan area, UT
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)	Washington, DC metropolitan area, DC, MD, VA
Washington State DOT	Washington State
West Florida Regional Planning Council	Northwest Florida
Whatcom Transportation Authority	Washington State
Wilmington Area Planning Council (WILMAPCO)	New Castle County, DE and Cecil County, MD

## APPENDIX C

### Survey Responses from Transit Agencies

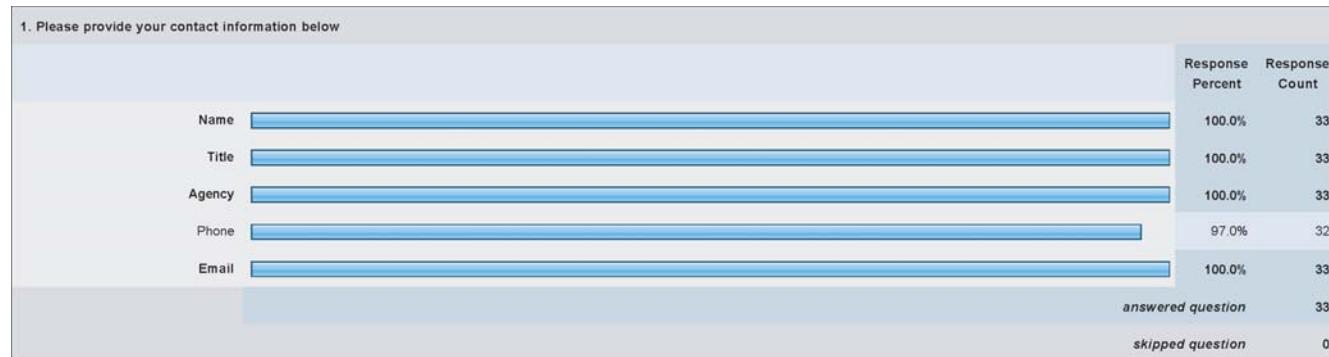


FIGURE C1

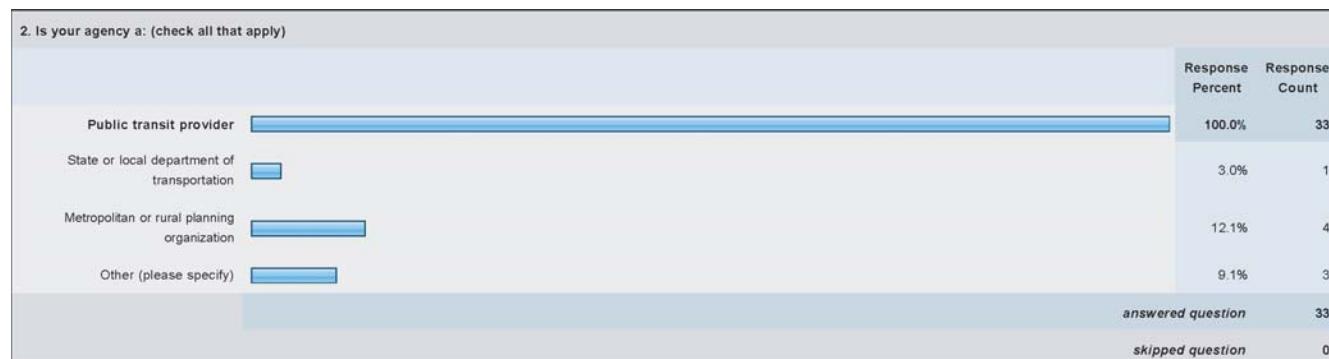


FIGURE C2

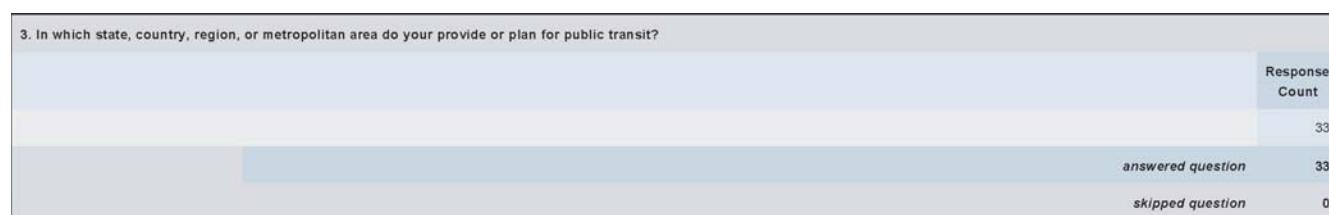


FIGURE C3

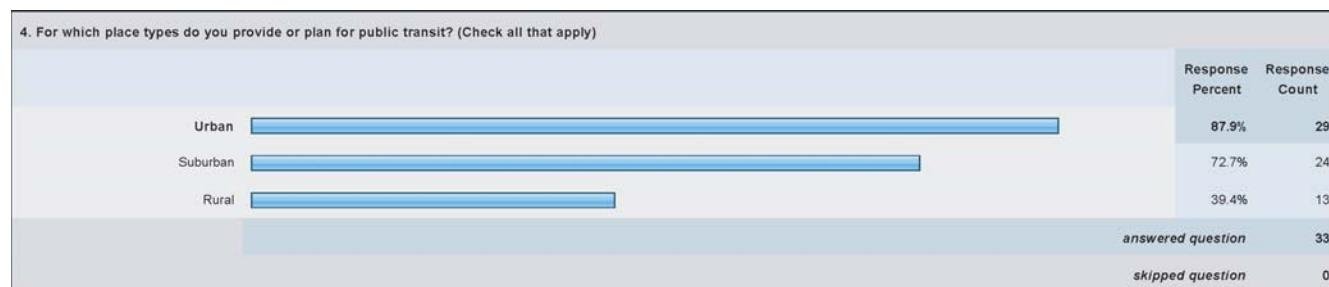


FIGURE C4

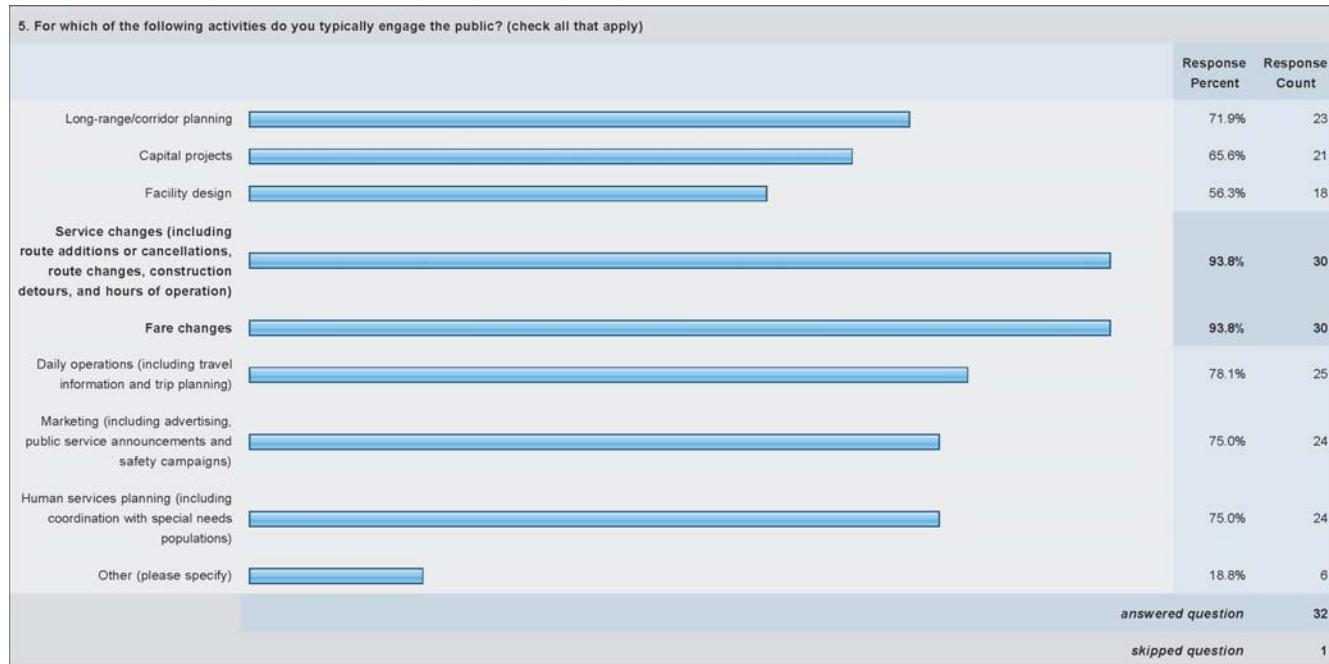


FIGURE C5

6. What would you identify as the primary goal(s) of your public involvement efforts for the following types of activities?

	Provide information	Get feedback on specific issues	Understand general customer issues, concerns, and needs	Collaborate to identify solutions	Encourage/build ridership or support	Response Count
Long-range/ corridor planning for transit	72.0% (18)	60.0% (15)	68.0% (17)	68.0% (17)	68.0% (17)	25
Transit capital projects	66.7% (18)	55.6% (15)	51.9% (14)	51.9% (14)	37.0% (10)	27
Transit facility design	66.7% (16)	62.5% (15)	54.2% (13)	37.5% (9)	41.7% (10)	24
Service changes	83.9% (26)	71.0% (22)	64.5% (20)	54.8% (17)	54.8% (17)	31
Fare changes	80.6% (25)	71.0% (22)	64.5% (20)	25.8% (8)	29.0% (9)	31
Daily operations	80.8% (21)	53.8% (14)	61.5% (16)	38.5% (10)	61.5% (16)	26
Marketing	65.4% (17)	34.6% (9)	42.3% (11)	23.1% (6)	88.5% (23)	26
Human services planning	61.5% (16)	65.4% (17)	69.2% (18)	65.4% (17)	26.9% (7)	26
					Other (please specify)	2
					<i>answered question</i>	32
					<i>skipped question</i>	1

FIGURE C6

7. How important are the following factors in developing your public involvement goals, and objectives, and programs?						
	Not a factor	Small factor	Moderate factor	Strong factor	One of the most important factors	Response Count
Budget	6.7% (2)	23.3% (7)	30.0% (9)	20.0% (6)	20.0% (6)	30
Need for community input and concerns	0.0% (0)	3.1% (1)	6.3% (2)	28.1% (9)	62.5% (20)	32
Political priorities	6.5% (2)	19.4% (6)	22.6% (7)	41.9% (13)	9.7% (3)	31
Agency input/priorities	0.0% (0)	9.4% (3)	21.9% (7)	34.4% (11)	34.4% (11)	32
Type of project	0.0% (0)	9.4% (3)	34.4% (11)	37.5% (12)	18.8% (6)	32
Level of controversy	3.3% (1)	6.7% (2)	20.0% (6)	56.7% (17)	13.3% (4)	30
Reducing risk exposure	3.3% (1)	26.7% (8)	33.3% (10)	30.0% (9)	6.7% (2)	30
Project schedule	0.0% (0)	25.0% (8)	25.0% (8)	31.3% (10)	18.8% (6)	32
Environmental Justice issues	6.3% (2)	12.5% (4)	21.9% (7)	46.9% (15)	12.5% (4)	32
Safety issues	9.7% (3)	9.7% (3)	25.8% (8)	25.8% (8)	29.0% (9)	31
Legal requirements	0.0% (0)	3.2% (1)	19.4% (6)	45.2% (14)	32.3% (10)	31
				Other (please specify)		0
					answered question	32
					skipped question	1

FIGURE C7

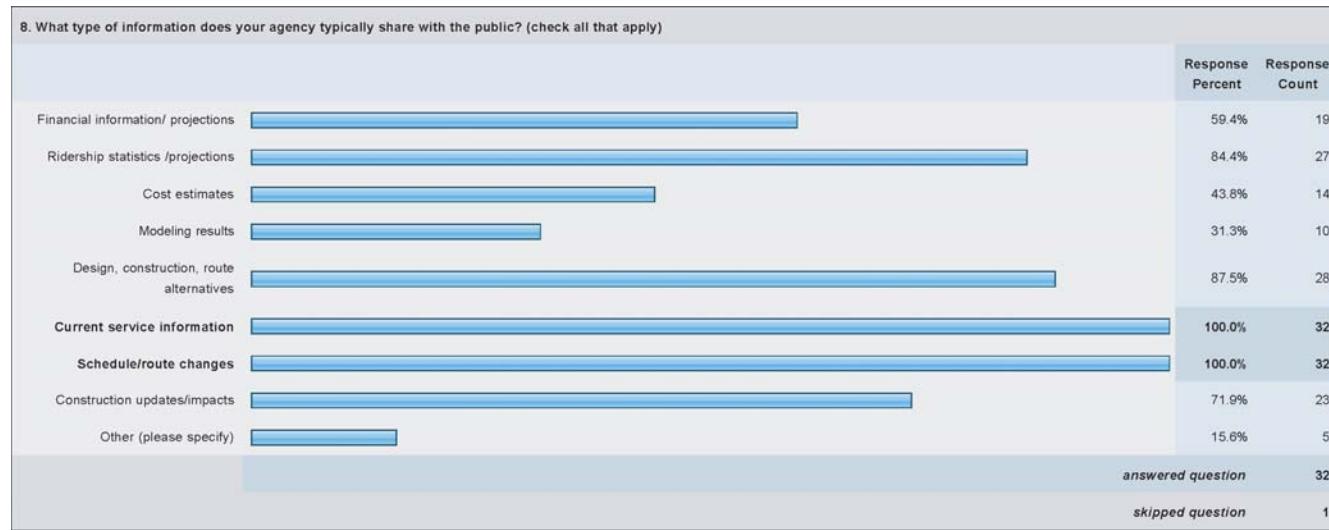


FIGURE C8

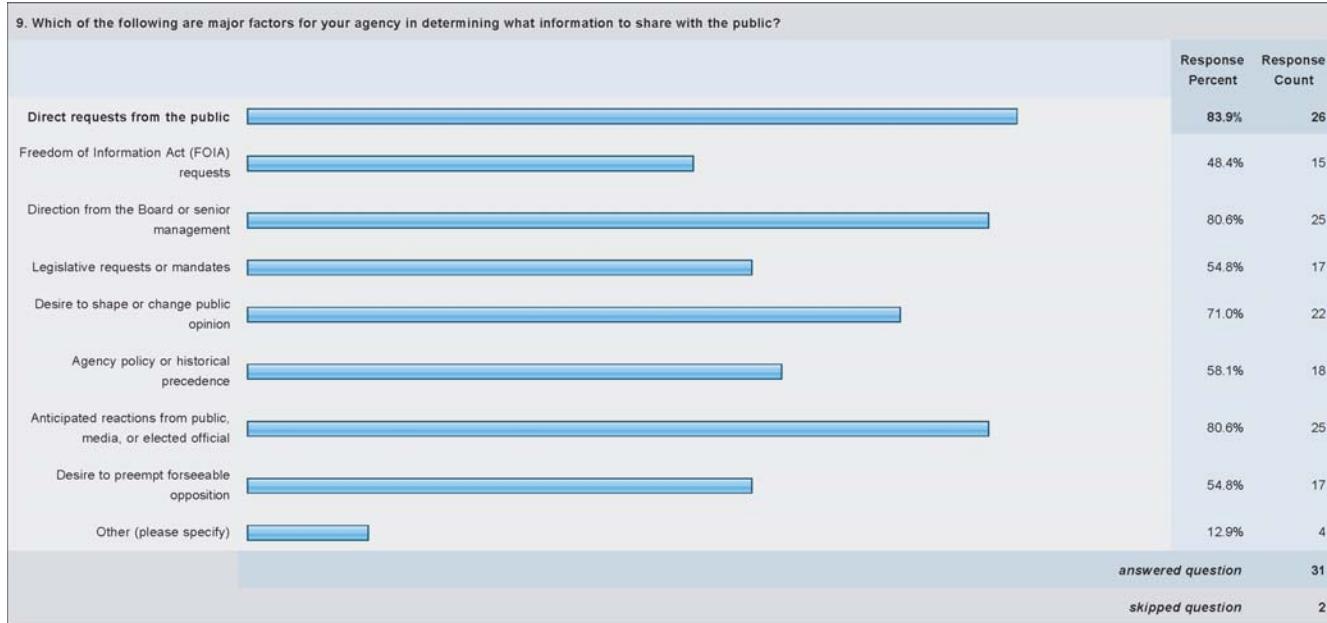


FIGURE C9



FIGURE C10

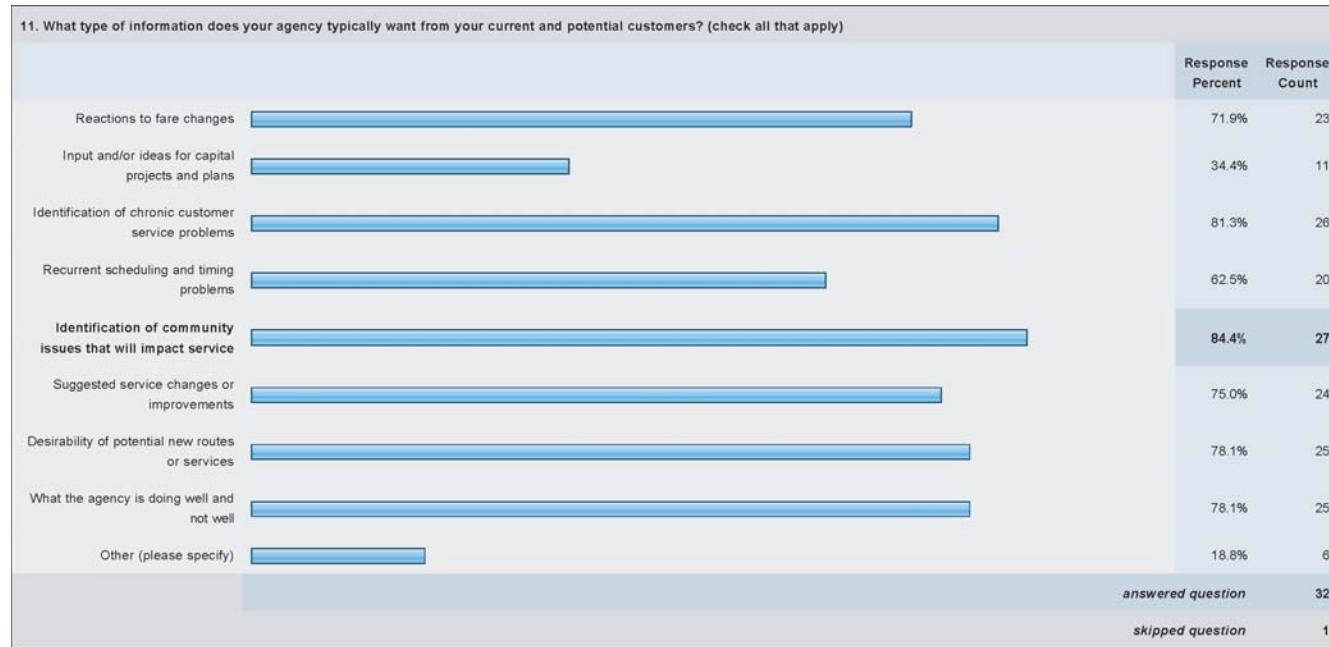


FIGURE C11

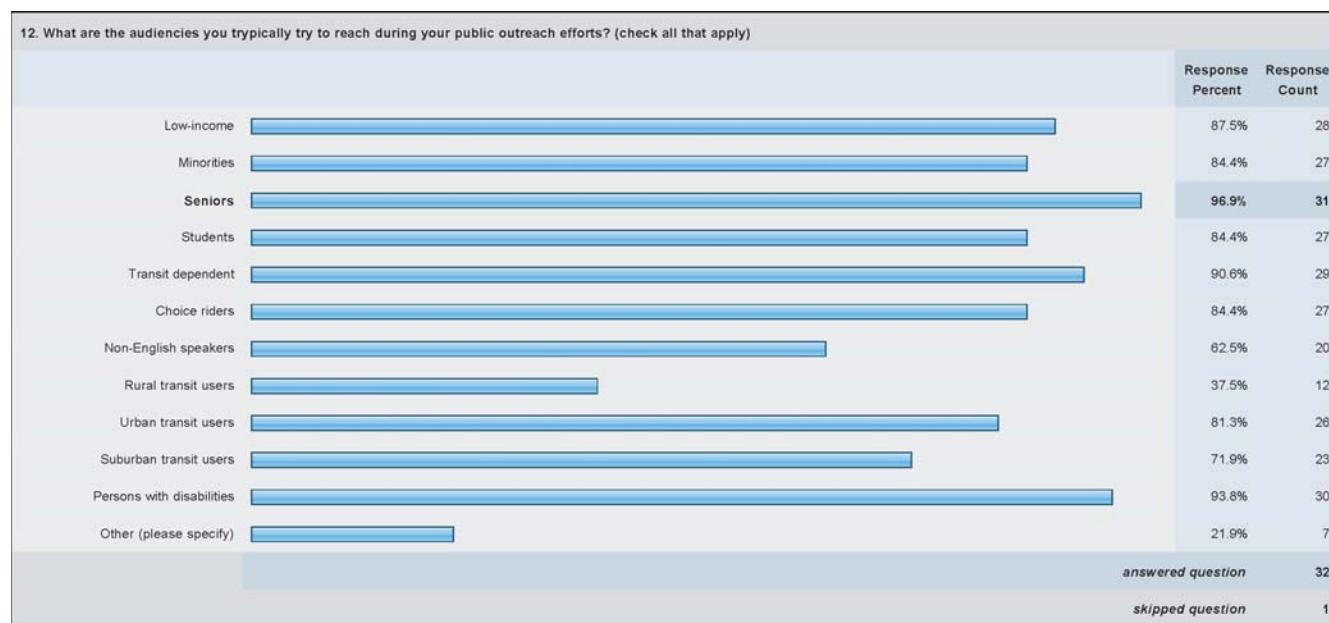


FIGURE C12

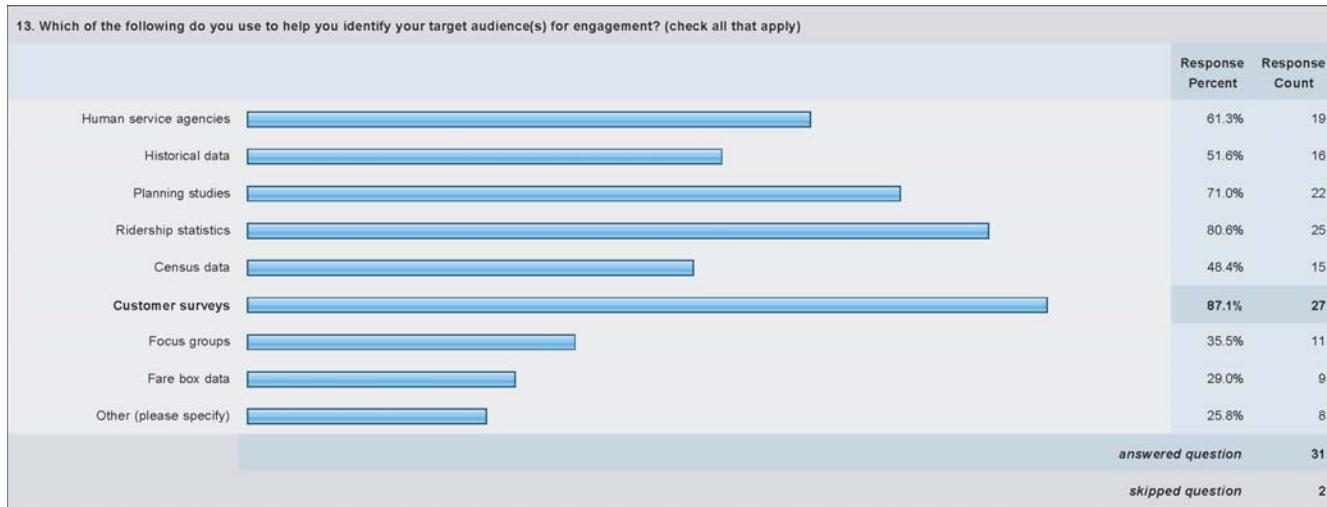


FIGURE C13

14. How significant are the following internal challenges for your agency when planning for engaging the public?

	Not Significant	Somewhat Significant	Moderately Significant	Very Significant	Highest Significance	N/A	Rating Average	Response Count
Not enough staff	12.9% (4)	16.1% (5)	<b>32.3% (10)</b>	25.8% (8)	12.9% (4)	0.0% (0)	3.10	31
Difficulty coordinating between various departments/agencies	22.6% (7)	<b>35.5% (11)</b>	22.6% (7)	16.1% (5)	3.2% (1)	0.0% (0)	2.42	31
Lack of public involvement training/skills among staff	<b>45.2% (14)</b>	12.9% (4)	12.9% (4)	19.4% (6)	9.7% (3)	0.0% (0)	2.35	31
Lack of financial resources	0.0% (0)	13.3% (4)	33.3% (10)	<b>43.3% (13)</b>	10.0% (3)	0.0% (0)	3.50	30
Aligning with the priorities of elected officials	12.9% (4)	12.9% (4)	<b>35.5% (11)</b>	<b>35.5% (11)</b>	3.2% (1)	0.0% (0)	3.03	31
Lack of time/compressed schedules	19.4% (6)	12.9% (4)	16.1% (5)	<b>45.2% (14)</b>	3.2% (1)	3.2% (1)	3.00	31
Lack of support from upper management/agency leadership	<b>45.2% (14)</b>	29.0% (9)	12.9% (4)	6.5% (2)	6.5% (2)	0.0% (0)	2.00	31
						Other (please specify)	3	
						<i>answered question</i>	31	
						<i>skipped question</i>	2	

FIGURE C14

15. How significant are the follow problems when trying to engage current and potential transit users?							Rating Average	Response Count
	Not Significant	Somewhat Significant	Moderately Significant	Very Significant	Highest Significance	N/A		
The public does not have sufficient ways (methods, places, times) to provide input	32.3% (10)	25.6% (8)	25.8% (8)	3.2% (1)	9.7% (3)	3.2% (1)	2.30	31
The public is not aware or does not understand the planning process	3.2% (1)	41.9% (13)	32.3% (10)	12.9% (4)	9.7% (3)	0.0% (0)	2.84	31
The public does not get sufficient or timely information for effective participation	38.7% (12)	41.9% (13)	12.9% (4)	3.2% (1)	3.2% (1)	0.0% (0)	1.90	31
Work, household or other personal obligations deter participation	6.5% (2)	29.0% (9)	25.8% (8)	29.0% (9)	9.7% (3)	0.0% (0)	3.06	31
Meeting locations are not accessible enough for environmental justice or other disadvantaged communities	67.7% (21)	19.4% (6)	6.5% (2)	6.5% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.52	31
The public is not interested in the planning process	12.9% (4)	25.8% (8)	35.5% (11)	9.7% (3)	16.1% (5)	0.0% (0)	2.90	31
The public is cynical or distrustful of the planning process	3.2% (1)	32.3% (10)	19.4% (6)	35.5% (11)	9.7% (3)	0.0% (0)	3.16	31
Cultural and/or language barriers deter participation in some communities	25.8% (8)	35.5% (11)	29.0% (9)	9.7% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.23	31
Other (please specify)								3
answered question								31
skipped question								2

FIGURE C15

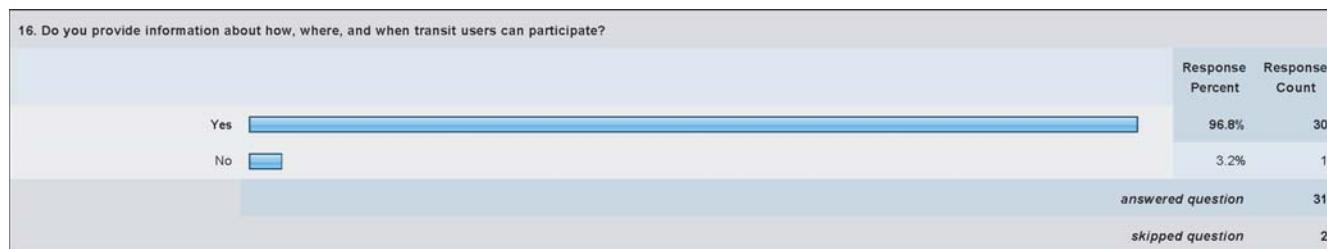


FIGURE C16

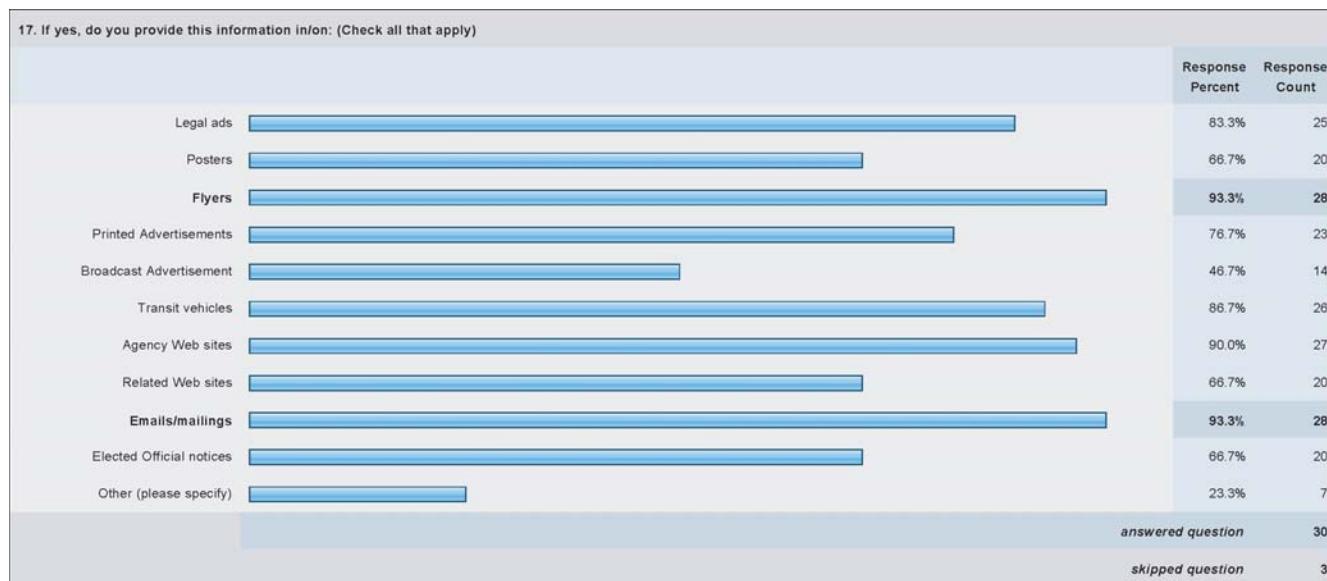


FIGURE C17

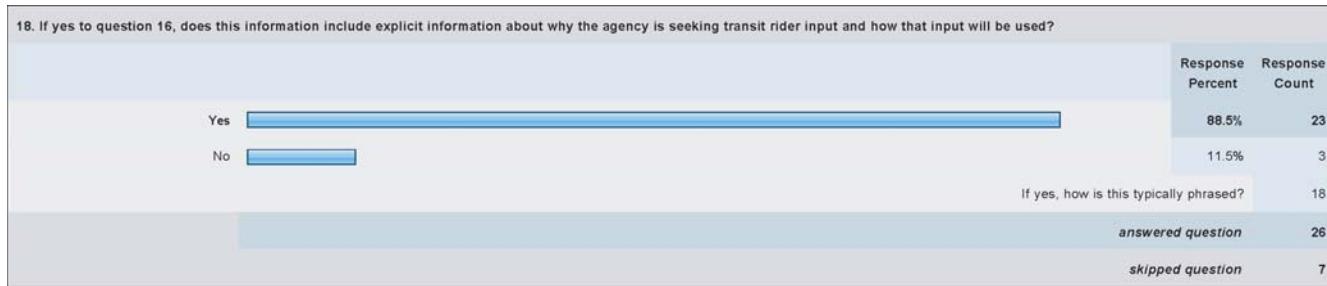


FIGURE C18

19. Which of the following techniques have been effective for your agency when trying to engage current and potential riders for the following activities? (check all that apply)

	Capital projects	Daily operations	Facility design	Fare changes	Human services planning	Long-range/corridor planning	Marketing	Service changes	Response Count
Seat drops	7.1% (1)	42.9% (6)	7.1% (1)	78.6% (11)	21.4% (3)	14.3% (2)	57.1% (8)	78.6% (11)	14
Rider intercept surveys	20.0% (5)	56.0% (14)	20.0% (5)	52.0% (13)	40.0% (10)	60.0% (15)	64.0% (16)	64.0% (16)	25
Ads on transit vehicles	7.4% (2)	51.9% (14)	11.1% (3)	85.2% (23)	29.6% (8)	14.8% (4)	70.4% (19)	77.8% (21)	27
Public service announcements	13.0% (3)	43.5% (10)	8.7% (2)	78.3% (18)	21.7% (5)	17.4% (4)	34.8% (8)	65.2% (15)	23
Partnership with community organizations	59.3% (16)	40.7% (11)	44.4% (12)	48.1% (13)	59.3% (16)	51.9% (14)	66.7% (18)	55.6% (15)	27
Public meetings /opens houses/hearings	67.7% (21)	38.7% (12)	54.8% (17)	87.1% (27)	41.9% (13)	71.0% (22)	25.8% (8)	83.9% (26)	31
Workshops	56.0% (14)	20.0% (5)	44.0% (11)	20.0% (5)	36.0% (9)	76.0% (19)	24.0% (6)	36.0% (9)	25
Charrettes	46.2% (6)	7.7% (1)	69.2% (9)	7.7% (1)	23.1% (3)	76.9% (10)	15.4% (2)	15.4% (2)	13
Web sites	66.7% (18)	81.5% (22)	55.6% (15)	77.8% (21)	44.4% (12)	74.1% (20)	88.9% (24)	81.5% (22)	27
Handouts	26.9% (7)	46.2% (12)	19.2% (5)	73.1% (19)	30.8% (8)	34.6% (9)	57.7% (15)	84.6% (22)	26
Flyers/Newsletters	51.7% (15)	55.2% (16)	31.0% (9)	82.8% (24)	37.9% (11)	51.7% (15)	58.6% (17)	72.4% (21)	29
Hotline/call-in centers	26.3% (5)	57.9% (11)	10.5% (2)	68.4% (13)	26.3% (5)	21.1% (4)	26.3% (5)	68.4% (13)	19
Information booths/kiosks	31.6% (6)	52.6% (10)	15.8% (3)	47.4% (9)	0.0% (0)	31.6% (6)	63.2% (12)	52.6% (10)	19
Small group meetings	65.2% (15)	26.1% (6)	43.5% (10)	30.4% (7)	43.5% (10)	56.5% (13)	34.8% (8)	47.8% (11)	23
Focus groups	30.8% (8)	26.9% (7)	30.8% (8)	23.1% (6)	26.9% (7)	42.3% (11)	50.0% (13)	38.5% (10)	26
Surveys	37.0% (10)	59.3% (16)	33.3% (9)	40.7% (11)	40.7% (11)	77.8% (21)	55.6% (15)	66.7% (18)	27
Social media	36.8% (7)	73.7% (14)	31.6% (6)	68.4% (13)	36.8% (7)	47.4% (9)	89.5% (17)	73.7% (14)	19
							Other (please specify)		9
							<i>answered question</i>		31
							<i>skipped question</i>		2

FIGURE C19

20. For the techniques indicated above, are there any specific examples of where and how you used them successfully? If so, please explain.

	Response Count
	21
<i>answered question</i>	21
<i>skipped question</i>	12

FIGURE C20

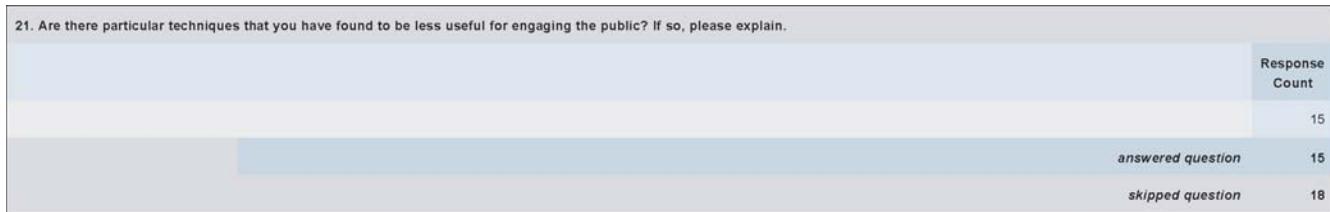


FIGURE C21

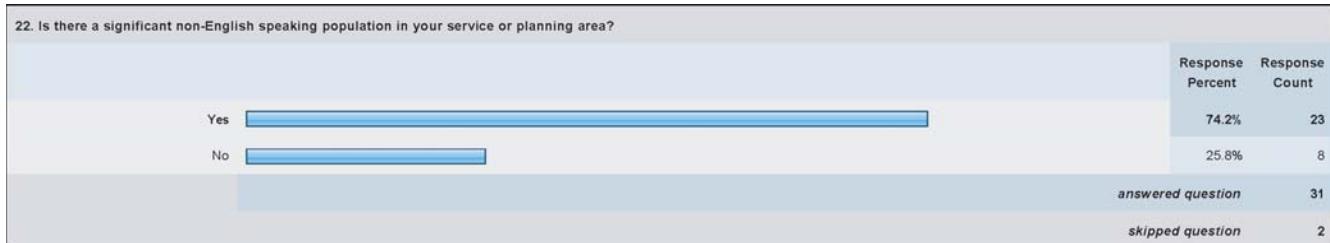


FIGURE C22

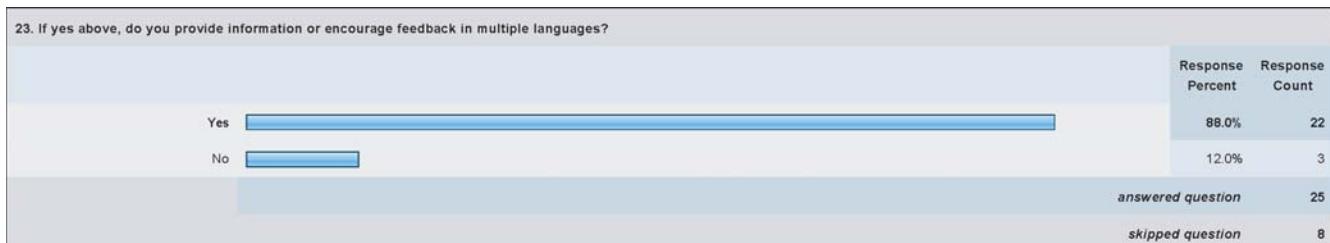


FIGURE C23

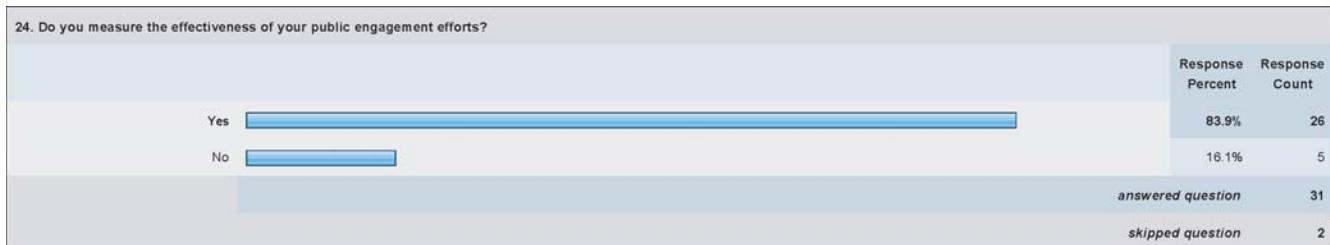


FIGURE C24

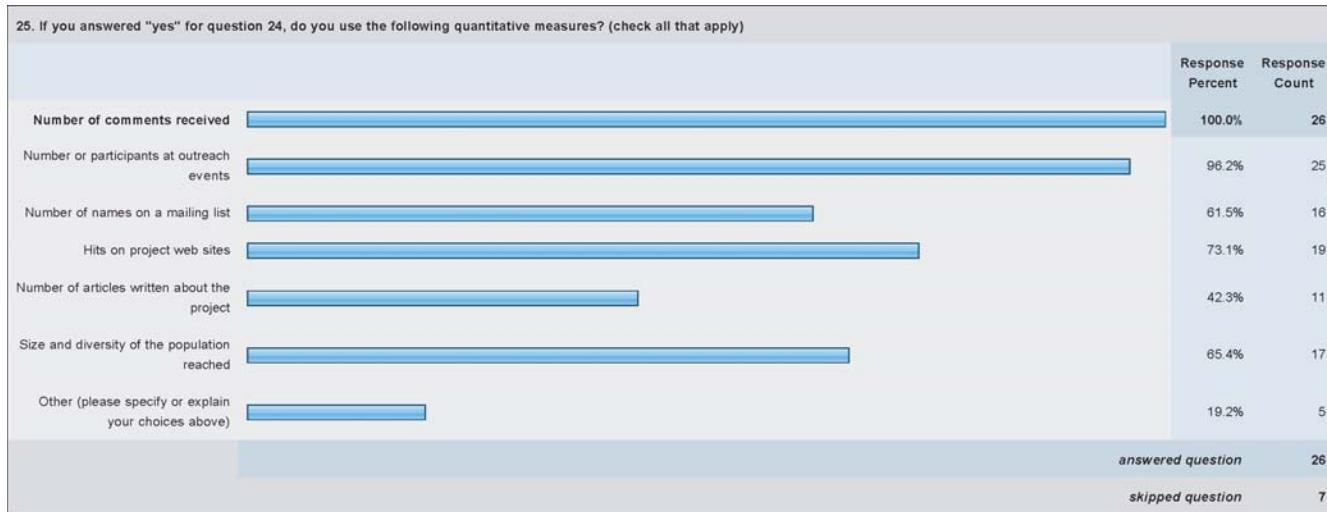


FIGURE C25

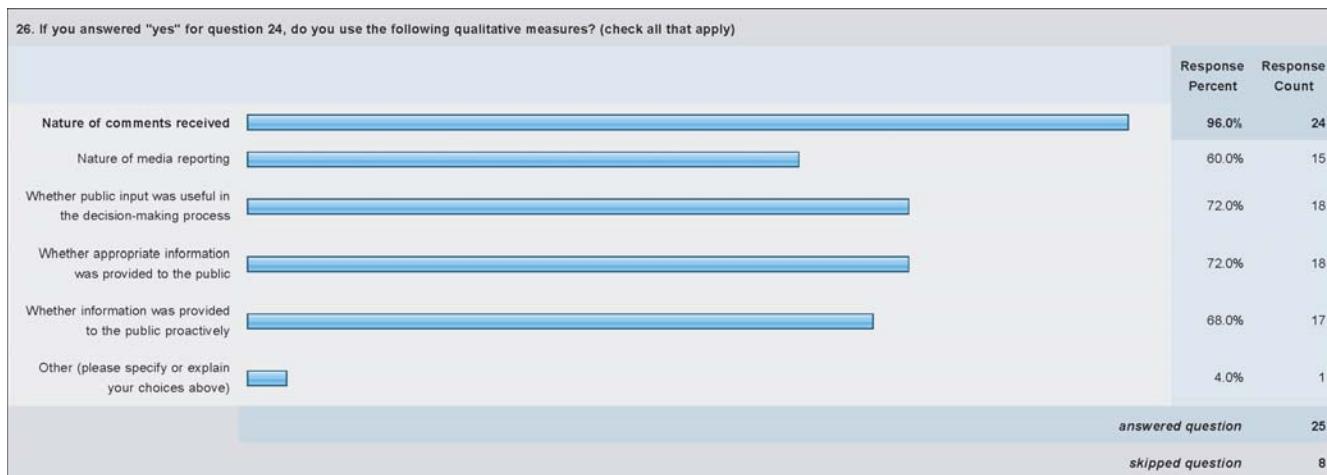


FIGURE C26



FIGURE C27

	Failing	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	N/A	Rating Average	Response Count
Low-income	0.0% (0)	19.4% (6)	32.3% (10)	45.2% (14)	3.2% (1)	0.0% (0)	3.32	31
Minorities	0.0% (0)	19.4% (6)	35.5% (11)	41.9% (13)	3.2% (1)	0.0% (0)	3.29	31
Seniors	0.0% (0)	12.9% (4)	35.5% (11)	35.5% (11)	16.1% (5)	0.0% (0)	3.55	31
Students	0.0% (0)	16.1% (5)	35.5% (11)	35.5% (11)	9.7% (3)	3.2% (1)	3.40	31
Transit dependent	0.0% (0)	12.9% (4)	32.3% (10)	35.5% (11)	16.1% (5)	3.2% (1)	3.57	31
Choice riders	6.5% (2)	9.7% (3)	25.8% (8)	54.8% (17)	0.0% (0)	3.2% (1)	3.33	31
Non-English speakers	3.2% (1)	38.7% (12)	25.8% (8)	25.8% (8)	3.2% (1)	3.2% (1)	2.87	31
Rural transit users	3.6% (1)	7.1% (2)	17.9% (5)	21.4% (6)	3.6% (1)	46.4% (13)	3.27	28
Urban transit users	0.0% (0)	12.9% (4)	25.8% (8)	29.0% (9)	22.6% (7)	9.7% (3)	3.68	31
Suburban transit users	3.3% (1)	6.7% (2)	26.7% (8)	33.3% (10)	10.0% (3)	20.0% (6)	3.50	30
Persons with disabilities	0.0% (0)	6.5% (2)	35.5% (11)	48.4% (15)	9.7% (3)	0.0% (0)	3.61	31
						answered question		31
						skipped question		2

FIGURE C28

29. How significant an impact does public input have on your decision-making process?						Rating Average	Response Count
	Not Significant	Somewhat Significant	Moderately Significant	Very Significant	Highest Significance		
Impact	6.5% (2)	6.5% (2)	32.3% (10)	51.6% (16)	3.2% (1)	3.39	31
						answered question	31
						skipped question	2

FIGURE C29

30. How is public input used by your agency?		Response Count
		25
		answered question
		skipped question

FIGURE C30



FIGURE C31

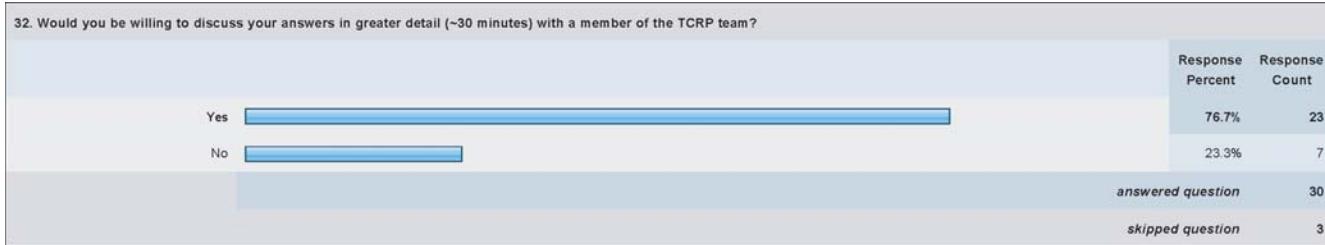


FIGURE C32

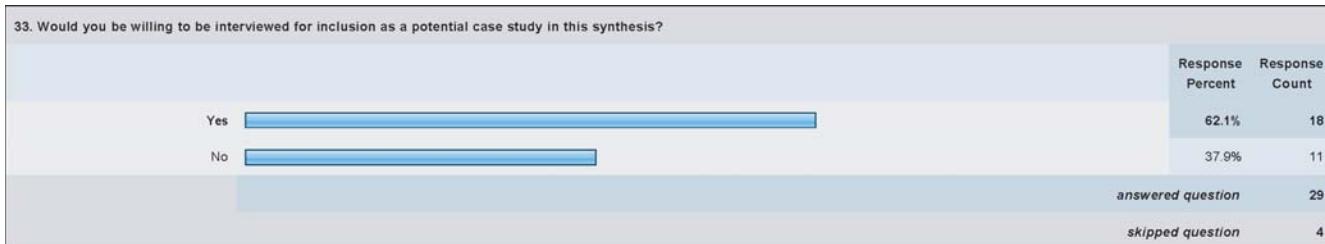


FIGURE C33

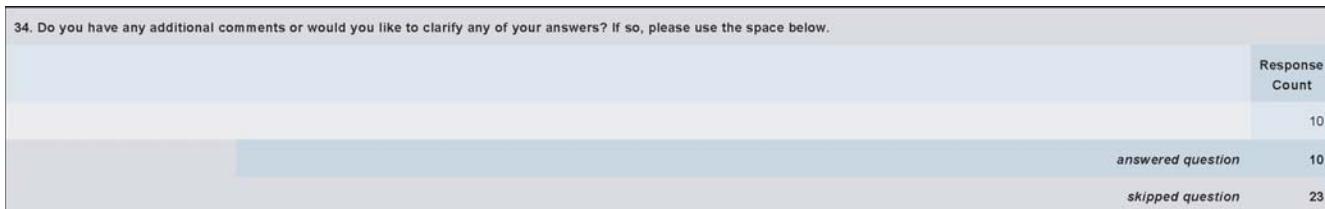


FIGURE C34

## APPENDIX D

### Survey Responses from All Agencies

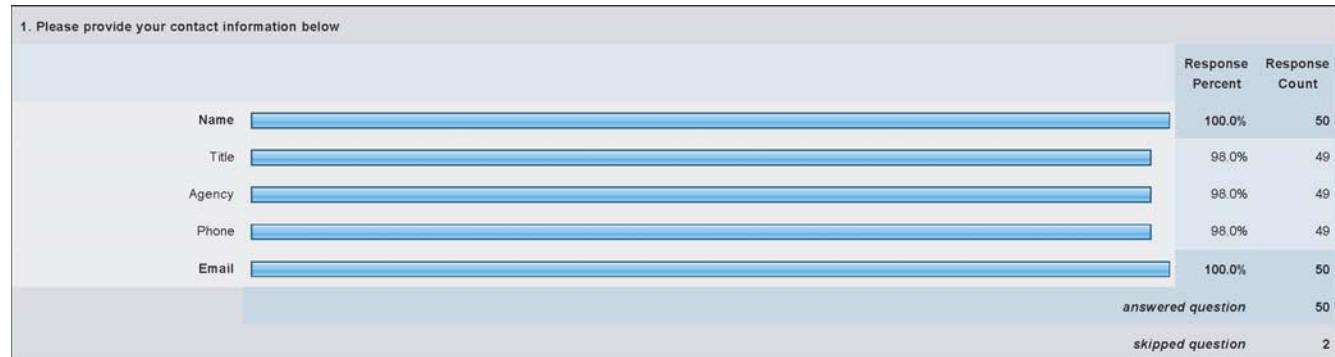


FIGURE D1

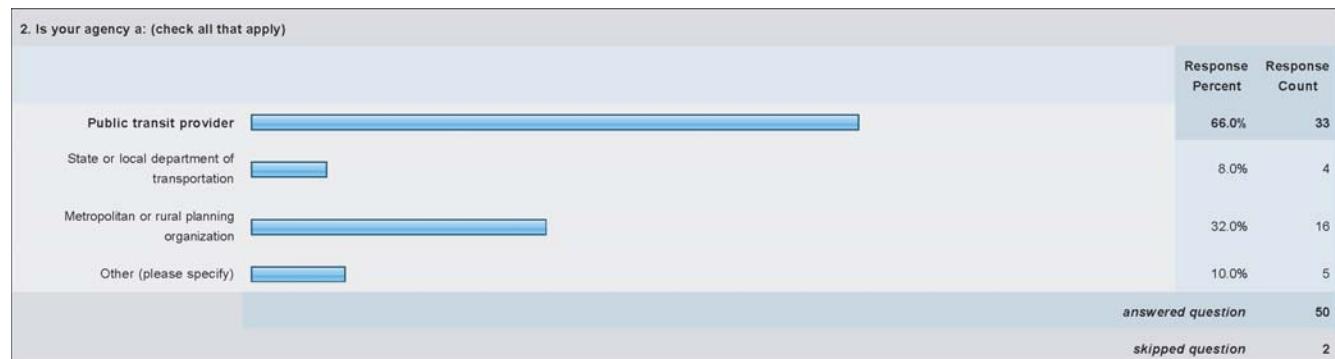


FIGURE D2

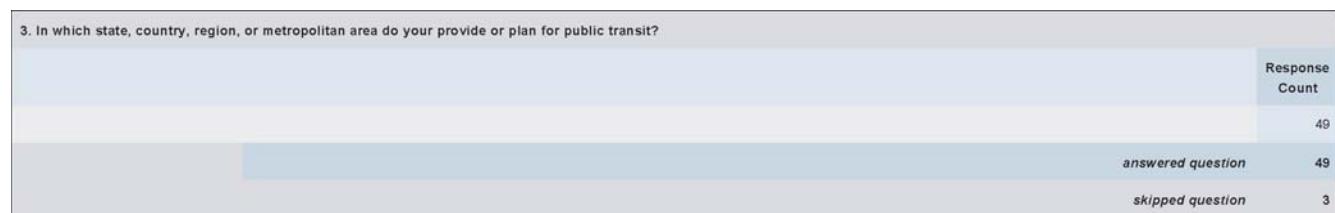


FIGURE D3

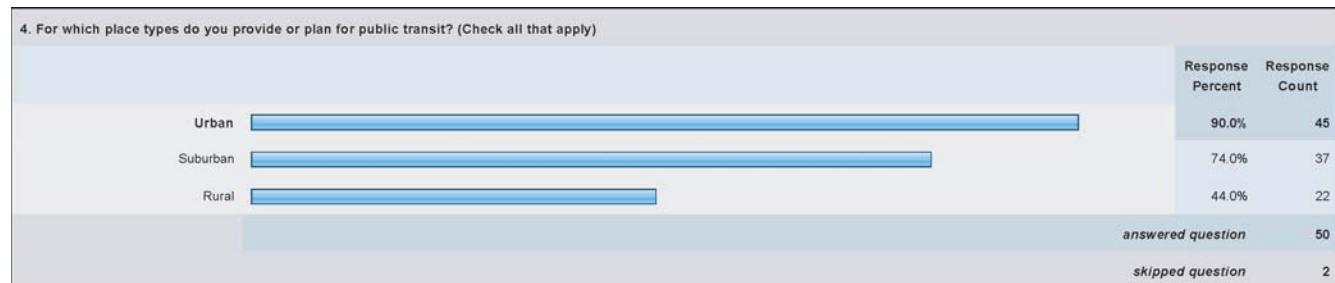


FIGURE D4

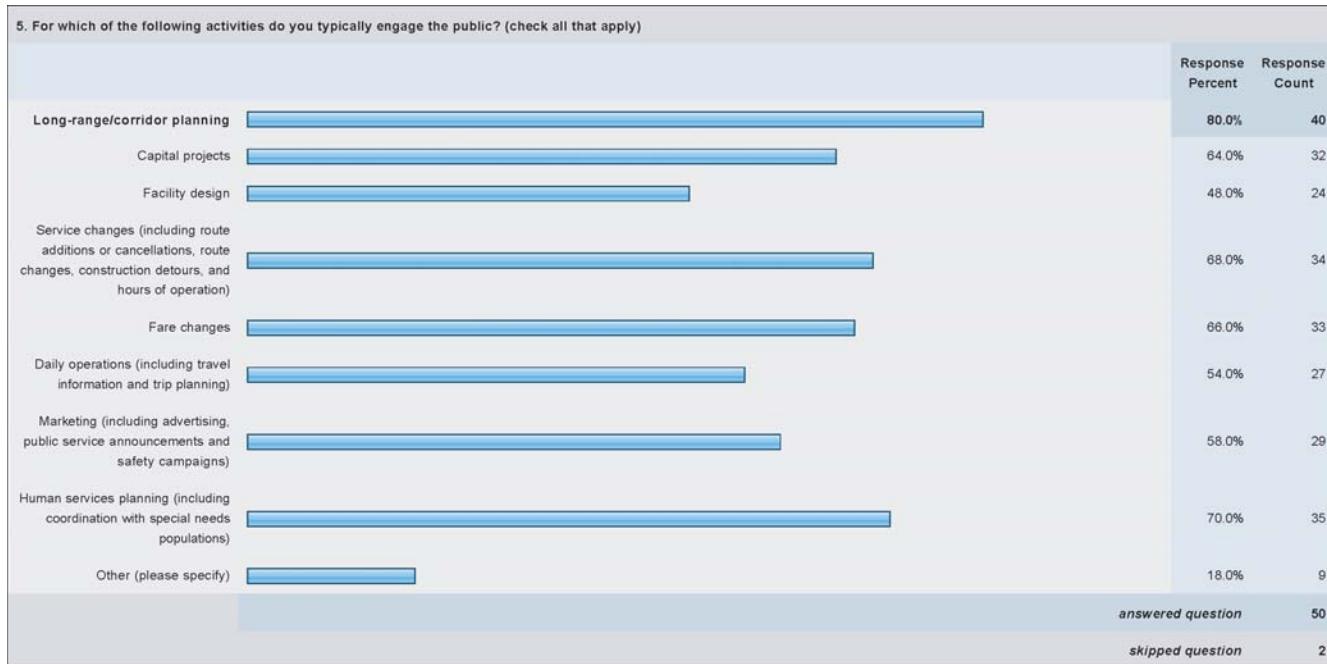


FIGURE D5

6. What would you identify as the primary goal(s) of your public involvement efforts for the following types of activities?

	Provide information	Get feedback on specific issues	Understand general customer issues, concerns, and needs	Collaborate to identify solutions	Encourage/build ridership or support	Response Count
Long-range/ corridor planning for transit	81.0% (34)	71.4% (30)	71.4% (30)	71.4% (30)	66.7% (28)	42
Transit capital projects	73.0% (27)	62.2% (23)	56.8% (21)	59.5% (22)	35.1% (13)	37
Transit facility design	63.3% (19)	63.3% (19)	53.3% (16)	43.3% (13)	40.0% (12)	30
Service changes	82.9% (29)	65.7% (23)	60.0% (21)	54.3% (19)	51.4% (18)	35
Fare changes	80.0% (28)	65.7% (23)	62.9% (22)	25.7% (9)	28.6% (10)	35
Daily operations	79.3% (23)	48.3% (14)	62.1% (18)	34.5% (10)	58.6% (17)	29
Marketing	72.7% (24)	36.4% (12)	42.4% (14)	21.2% (7)	81.8% (27)	33
Human services planning	69.4% (25)	66.7% (24)	75.0% (27)	72.2% (26)	36.1% (13)	36
					Other (please specify)	3
					<i>answered question</i>	50
					<i>skipped question</i>	2

FIGURE D6

7. How important are the following factors in developing your public involvement goals, and objectives, and programs?						
	Not a factor	Small factor	Moderate factor	Strong factor	One of the most important factors	Response Count
Budget	6.3% (3)	16.7% (8)	43.8% (21)	16.7% (8)	16.7% (8)	48
Need for community input and concerns	0.0% (0)	2.0% (1)	8.0% (4)	26.0% (13)	64.0% (32)	50
Political priorities	6.1% (3)	14.3% (7)	28.6% (14)	42.9% (21)	8.2% (4)	49
Agency input/priorities	0.0% (0)	8.0% (4)	20.0% (10)	38.0% (19)	34.0% (17)	50
Type of project	4.0% (2)	8.0% (4)	30.0% (15)	42.0% (21)	16.0% (8)	50
Level of controversy	4.2% (2)	10.4% (5)	25.0% (12)	47.9% (23)	12.5% (6)	48
Reducing risk exposure	8.3% (4)	22.9% (11)	31.3% (15)	27.1% (13)	10.4% (5)	48
Project schedule	2.0% (1)	20.4% (10)	24.5% (12)	34.7% (17)	18.4% (9)	49
Environmental Justice issues	4.0% (2)	8.0% (4)	18.0% (9)	50.0% (25)	20.0% (10)	50
Safety issues	8.2% (4)	8.2% (4)	20.4% (10)	34.7% (17)	28.6% (14)	49
Legal requirements	0.0% (0)	2.0% (1)	16.3% (8)	38.8% (19)	42.9% (21)	49
					Other (please specify)	0
					<i>answered question</i>	50
					<i>skipped question</i>	2

FIGURE D7

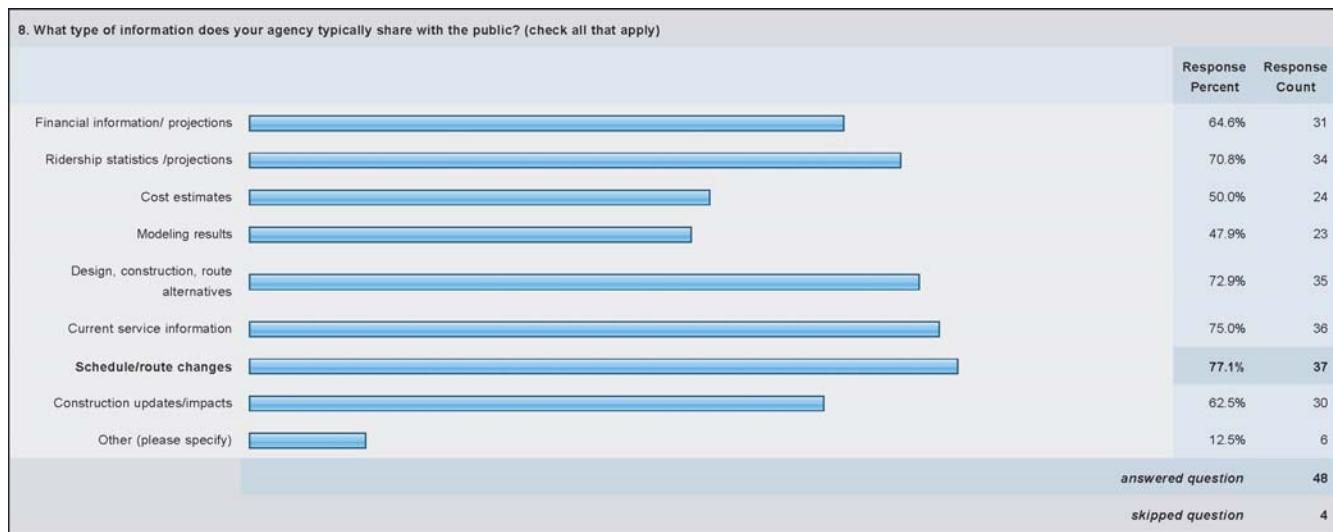


FIGURE D8

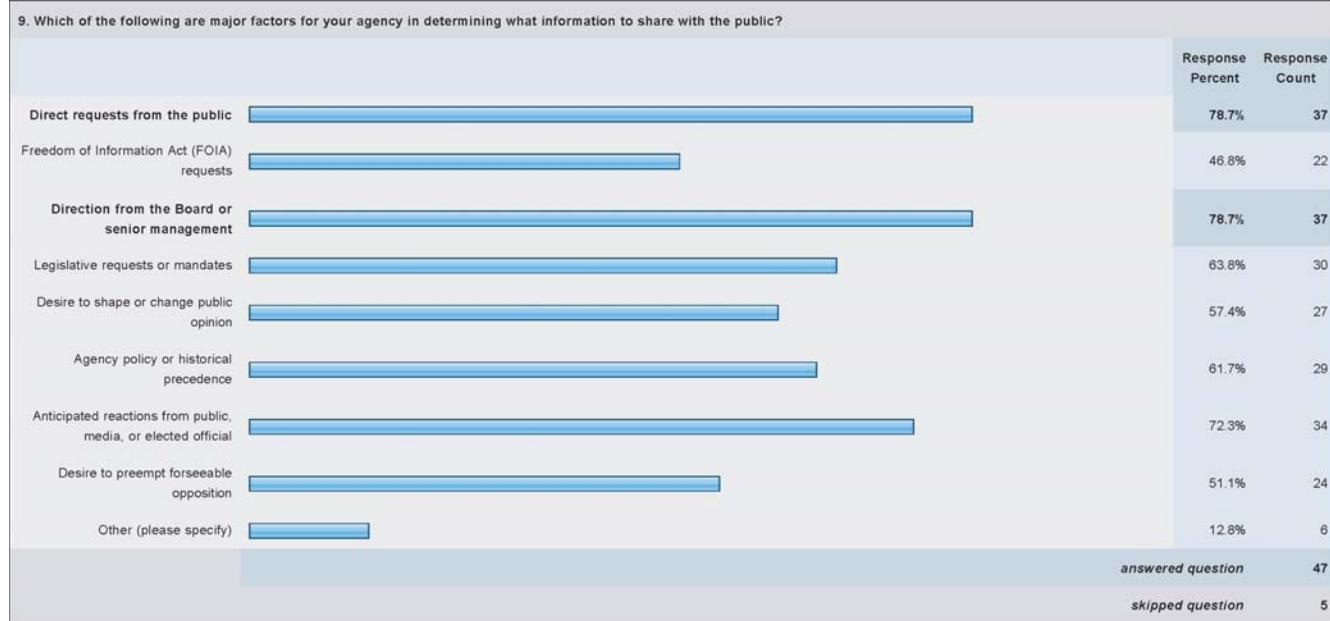


FIGURE D9



FIGURE D10

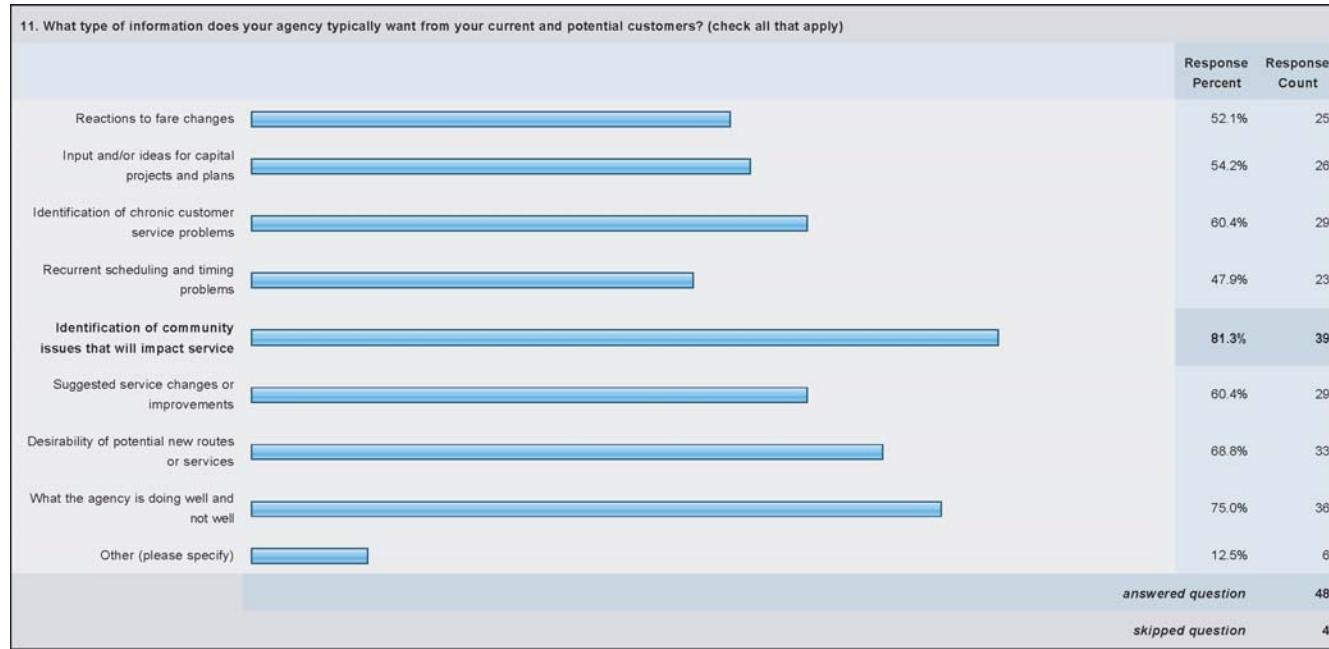


FIGURE D11

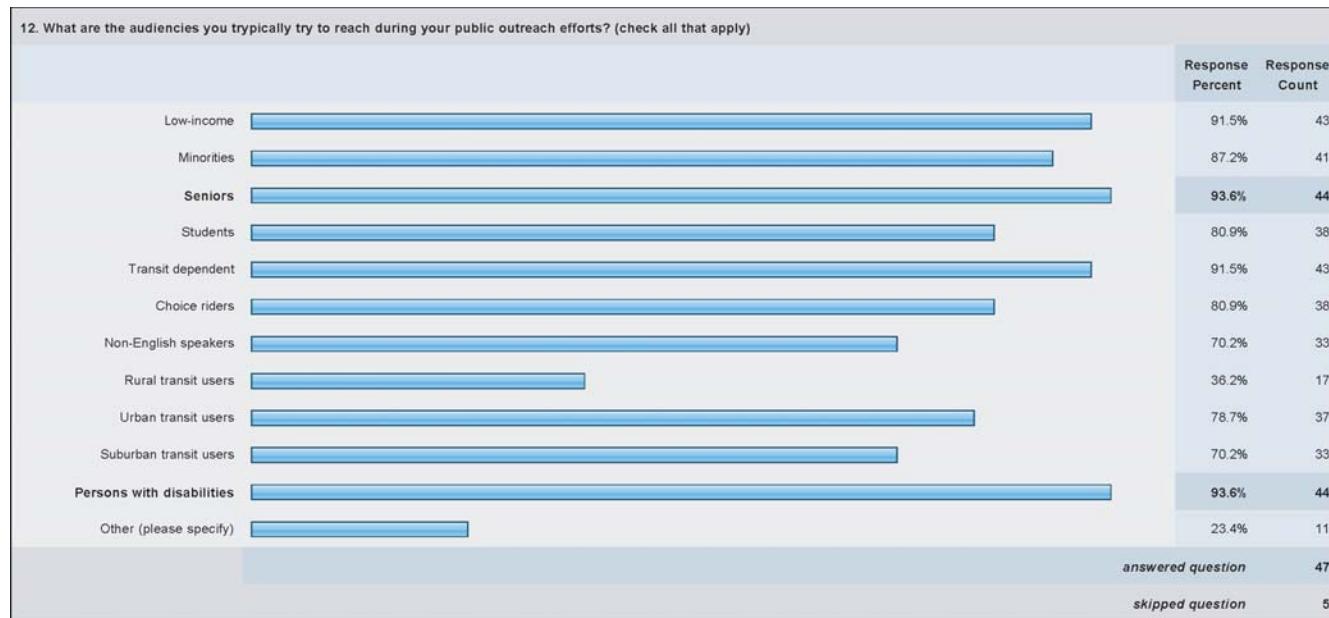


FIGURE D12

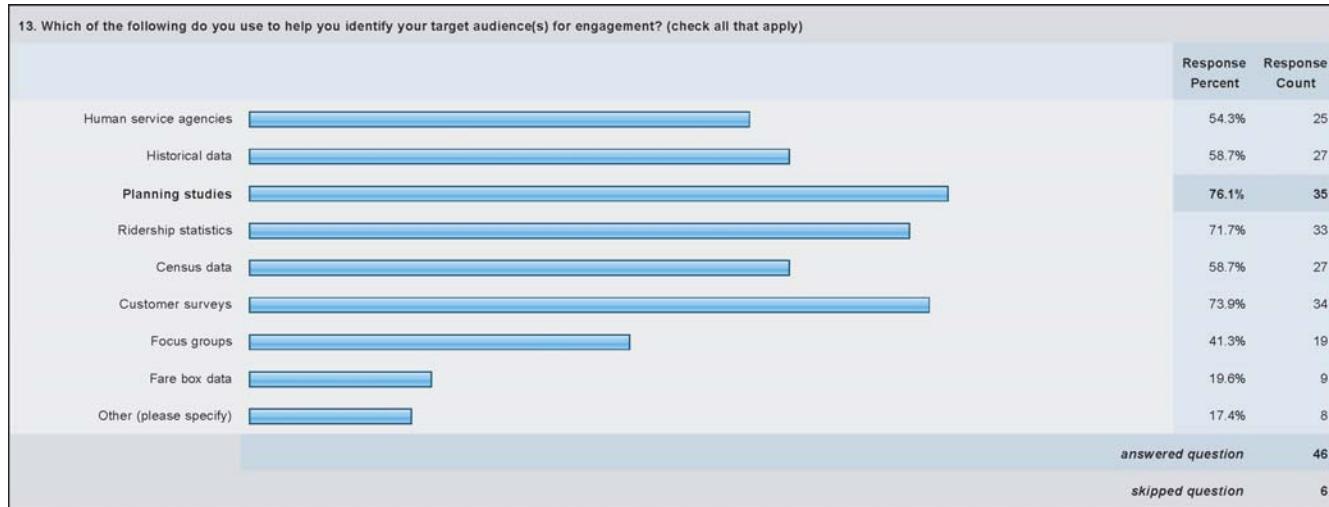


FIGURE D13

14. How significant are the following internal challenges for your agency when planning for engaging the public?

	Not Significant	Somewhat Significant	Moderately Significant	Very Significant	Highest Significance	N/A	Rating Average	Response Count
Not enough staff	15.2% (7)	21.7% (10)	30.4% (14)	21.7% (10)	10.9% (5)	0.0% (0)	2.91	46
Difficulty coordinating between various departments/agencies	28.3% (13)	32.6% (15)	21.7% (10)	13.0% (6)	4.3% (2)	0.0% (0)	2.33	46
Lack of public involvement training/skills among staff	50.0% (23)	15.2% (7)	13.0% (6)	15.2% (7)	6.5% (3)	0.0% (0)	2.13	46
Lack of financial resources	4.4% (2)	22.2% (10)	33.3% (15)	33.3% (15)	6.7% (3)	0.0% (0)	3.16	45
Aligning with the priorities of elected officials	19.6% (9)	21.7% (10)	26.1% (12)	30.4% (14)	2.2% (1)	0.0% (0)	2.74	46
Lack of time/compressed schedules	19.6% (9)	23.9% (11)	13.0% (6)	37.0% (17)	4.3% (2)	2.2% (1)	2.82	46
Lack of support from upper management/agency leadership	56.5% (26)	21.7% (10)	8.7% (4)	8.7% (4)	4.3% (2)	0.0% (0)	1.83	46
					Other (please specify)		3	
						<i>answered question</i>	46	
						<i>skipped question</i>	6	

FIGURE D14

15. How significant are the follow problems when trying to engage current and potential transit users?							Rating Average	Response Count
	Not Significant	Somewhat Significant	Moderately Significant	Very Significant	Highest Significance	N/A		
The public does not have sufficient ways (methods, places, times) to provide input	34.8% (16)	28.3% (13)	23.9% (11)	2.2% (1)	8.7% (4)	2.2% (1)	2.20	46
The public is not aware or does not understand the planning process	4.3% (2)	30.4% (14)	32.6% (15)	19.6% (9)	13.0% (6)	0.0% (0)	3.07	46
The public does not get sufficient or timely information for effective participation	41.3% (19)	43.5% (20)	8.7% (4)	4.3% (2)	2.2% (1)	0.0% (0)	1.83	46
Work, household or other personal obligations deter participation	8.7% (4)	19.6% (9)	26.1% (12)	30.4% (14)	15.2% (7)	0.0% (0)	3.24	46
Meeting locations are not accessible enough for environmental justice or other disadvantaged communities	65.2% (30)	19.6% (9)	8.7% (4)	6.5% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.57	46
The public is not interested in the planning process	10.9% (5)	21.7% (10)	32.6% (15)	21.7% (10)	13.0% (6)	0.0% (0)	3.04	46
The public is cynical or distrustful of the planning process	2.2% (1)	34.8% (16)	23.9% (11)	28.3% (13)	10.9% (5)	0.0% (0)	3.11	46
Cultural and/or language barriers deter participation in some communities	26.1% (12)	34.8% (16)	26.1% (12)	10.9% (5)	2.2% (1)	0.0% (0)	2.28	46
Other (please specify)								3
answered question								46
skipped question								6

FIGURE D15

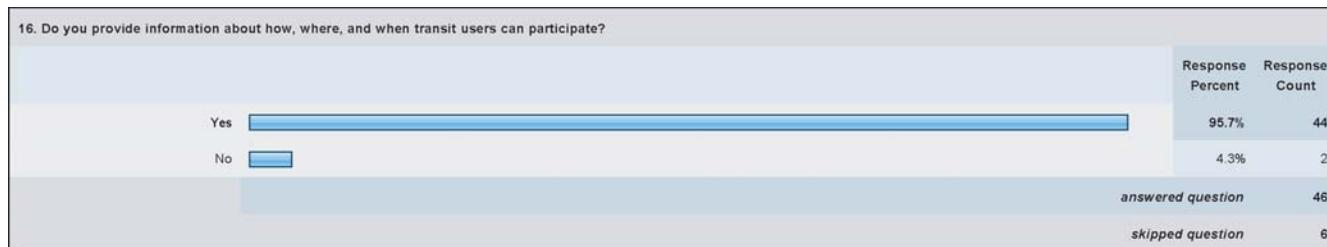


FIGURE D16

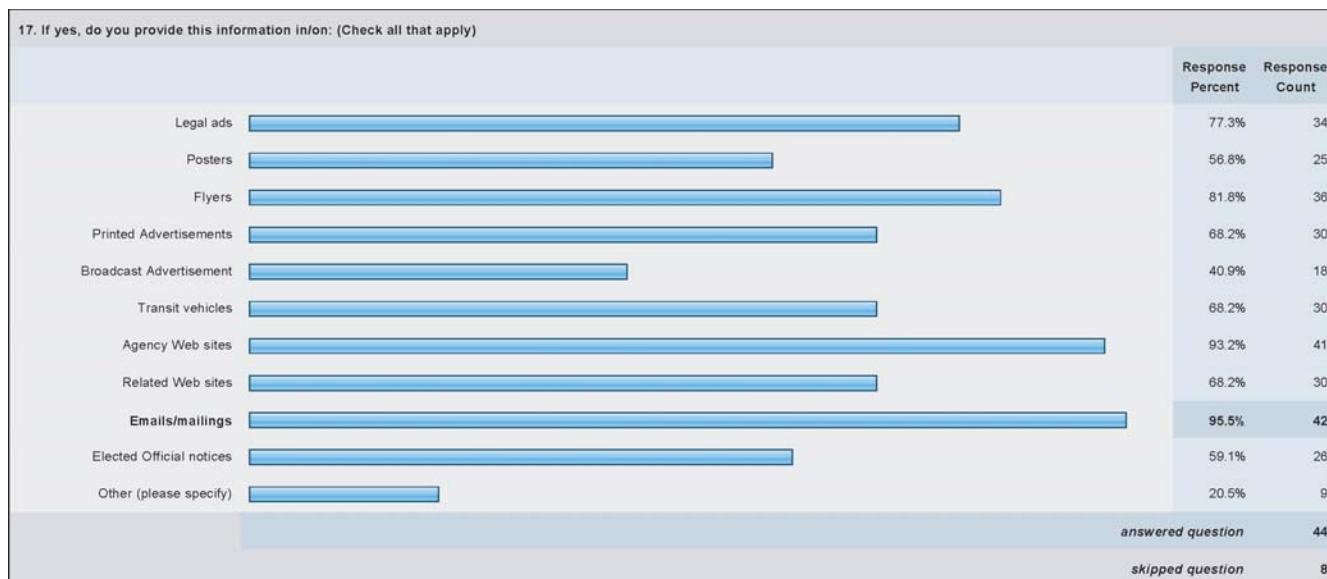


FIGURE D17

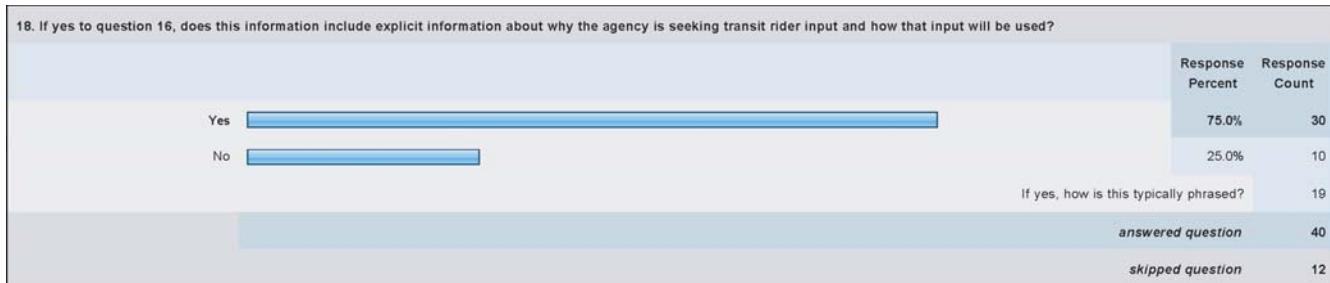


FIGURE D18

19. Which of the following techniques have been effective for your agency when trying to engage current and potential riders for the following activities? (check all that apply)

	Capital projects	Daily operations	Facility design	Fare changes	Human services planning	Long-range/corridor planning	Marketing	Service changes	Response Count
Seat drops	6.7% (1)	40.0% (6)	6.7% (1)	80.0% (12)	20.0% (3)	20.0% (3)	53.3% (8)	73.3% (11)	15
Rider intercept surveys	17.9% (5)	60.7% (17)	17.9% (5)	46.4% (13)	35.7% (10)	53.6% (15)	60.7% (17)	64.3% (18)	28
Ads on transit vehicles	6.1% (2)	42.4% (14)	9.1% (3)	78.8% (26)	24.2% (8)	21.2% (7)	69.7% (23)	72.7% (24)	33
Public service announcements	13.8% (4)	37.9% (11)	6.9% (2)	65.5% (19)	17.2% (5)	13.8% (4)	41.4% (12)	55.2% (16)	29
Partnership with community organizations	53.7% (22)	29.3% (12)	31.7% (13)	36.6% (15)	56.1% (23)	61.0% (25)	53.7% (22)	39.0% (16)	41
Public meetings /opens houses/hearings	68.2% (30)	29.5% (13)	50.0% (22)	68.2% (30)	43.2% (19)	75.0% (33)	18.2% (8)	63.6% (28)	44
Workshops	51.4% (18)	14.3% (5)	34.3% (12)	14.3% (5)	40.0% (14)	74.3% (26)	17.1% (6)	25.7% (9)	35
Charrettes	50.0% (10)	5.0% (1)	70.0% (14)	5.0% (1)	25.0% (5)	85.0% (17)	10.0% (2)	15.0% (3)	20
Web sites	65.9% (27)	53.7% (22)	39.0% (16)	53.7% (22)	43.9% (18)	75.6% (31)	68.3% (28)	53.7% (22)	41
Handouts	32.4% (12)	32.4% (12)	16.2% (6)	56.8% (21)	35.1% (13)	45.9% (17)	45.9% (17)	64.9% (24)	37
Flyers/Newsletters	56.1% (23)	41.5% (17)	24.4% (10)	65.9% (27)	43.9% (18)	56.1% (23)	48.8% (20)	58.5% (24)	41
Hotline/call-in centers	24.0% (6)	56.0% (14)	8.0% (2)	56.0% (14)	28.0% (7)	24.0% (6)	24.0% (6)	60.0% (15)	25
Information booths/kiosks	30.0% (9)	40.0% (12)	13.3% (4)	33.3% (10)	10.0% (3)	40.0% (12)	53.3% (16)	36.7% (11)	30
Small group meetings	54.8% (17)	19.4% (6)	35.5% (11)	22.6% (7)	54.8% (17)	61.3% (19)	25.8% (8)	35.5% (11)	31
Focus groups	27.0% (10)	18.9% (7)	27.0% (10)	18.9% (7)	37.8% (14)	40.5% (15)	43.2% (16)	27.0% (10)	37
Surveys	32.4% (12)	51.4% (19)	24.3% (9)	29.7% (11)	40.5% (15)	70.3% (26)	45.9% (17)	51.4% (19)	37
Social media	30.4% (7)	60.9% (14)	26.1% (6)	56.5% (13)	30.4% (7)	39.1% (9)	91.3% (21)	60.9% (14)	23
							Other (please specify)		10
							<i>answered question</i>		45
							<i>skipped question</i>		7

FIGURE D19

20. For the techniques indicated above, are there any specific examples of where and how you used them successfully? If so, please explain.

	Response Count	
	30	
	<i>answered question</i>	30
	<i>skipped question</i>	22

FIGURE D20

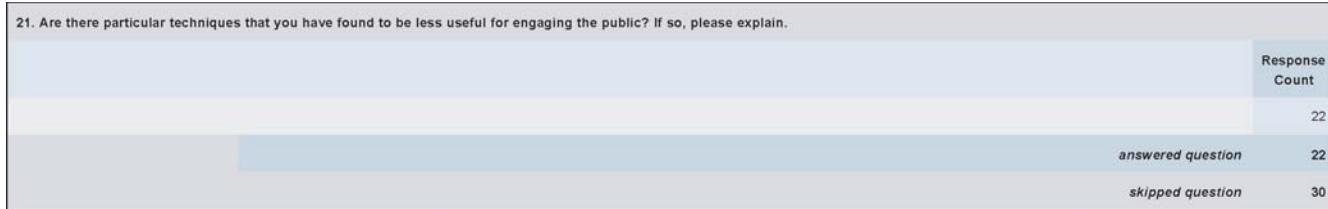


FIGURE D21

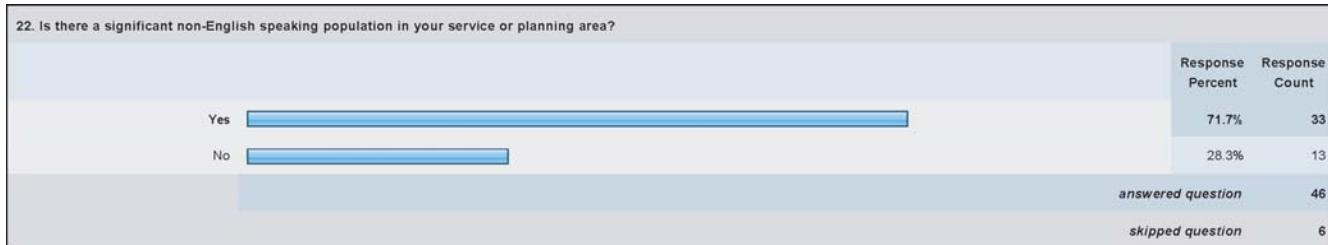


FIGURE D22

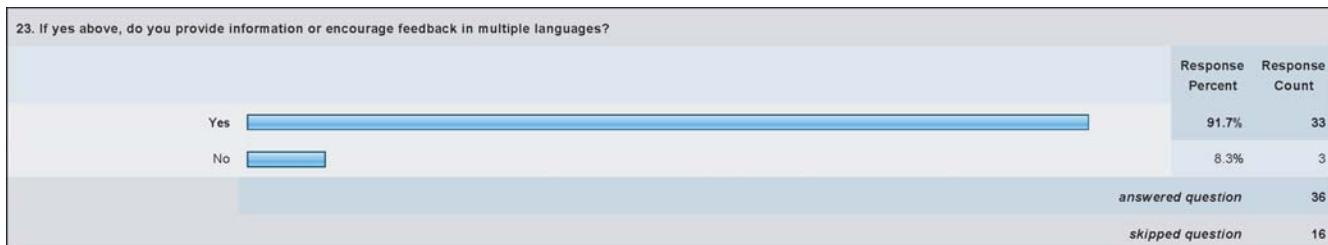


FIGURE D23

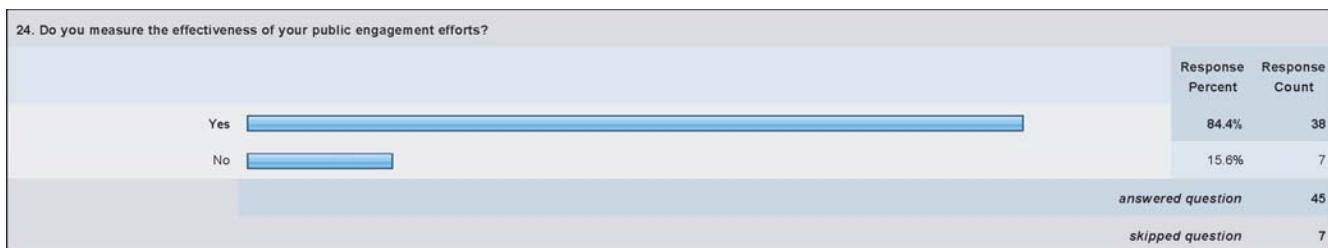


FIGURE D24

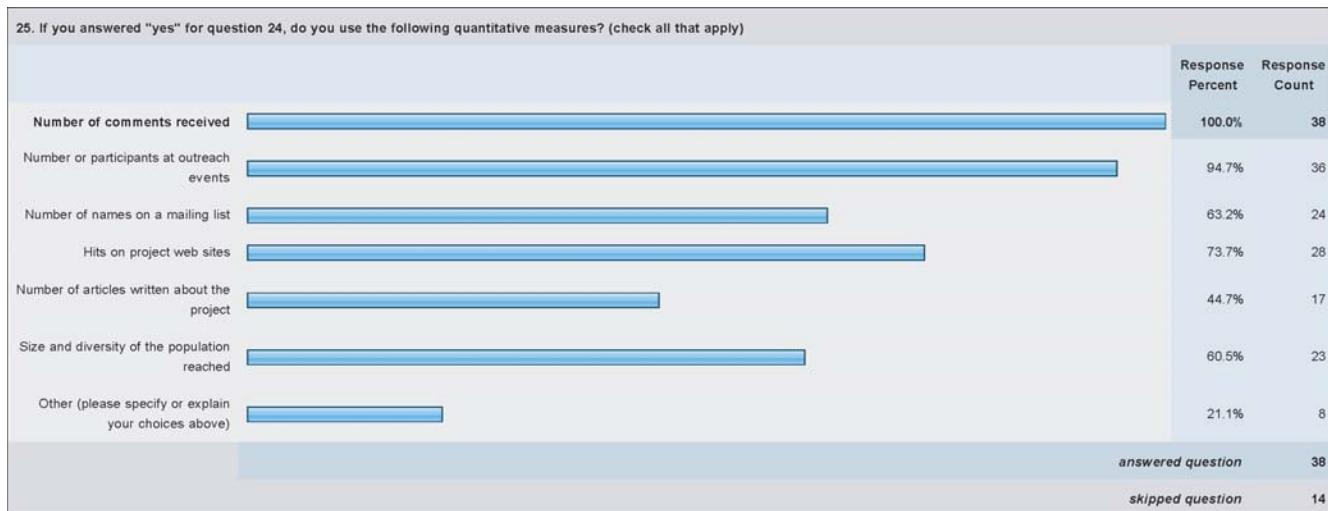


FIGURE D25

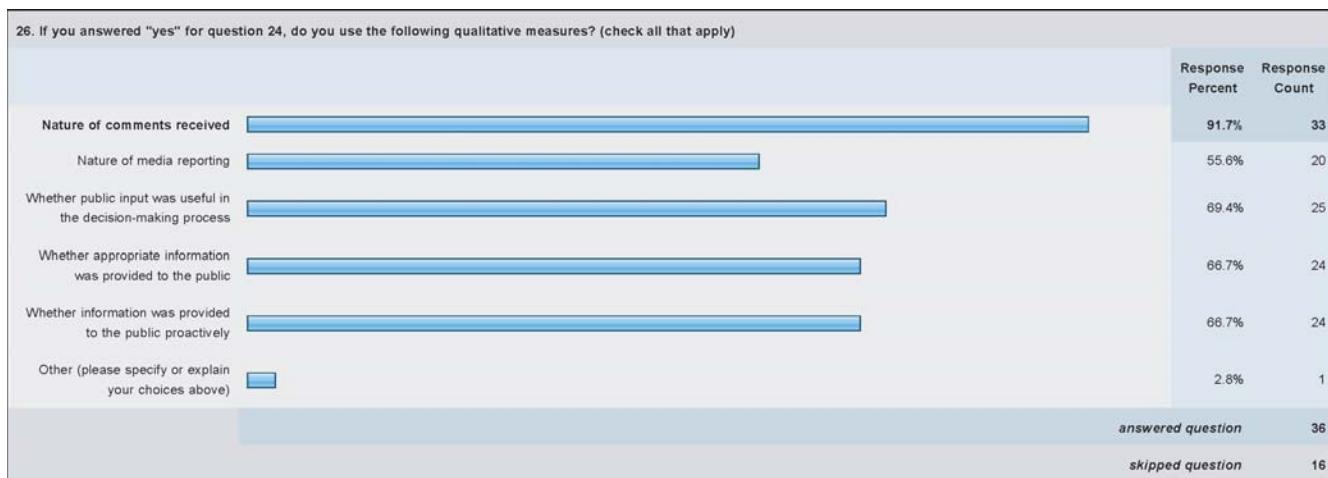


FIGURE D26



FIGURE D27

	Failing	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	N/A	Rating Average	Response Count
Low-income	0.0% (0)	15.6% (7)	40.0% (18)	40.0% (18)	2.2% (1)	2.2% (1)	3.30	45
Minorities	0.0% (0)	15.6% (7)	40.0% (18)	40.0% (18)	2.2% (1)	2.2% (1)	3.30	45
Seniors	0.0% (0)	11.1% (5)	37.8% (17)	35.6% (16)	13.3% (6)	2.2% (1)	3.52	45
Students	0.0% (0)	17.8% (8)	37.8% (17)	28.9% (13)	6.7% (3)	8.9% (4)	3.27	45
Transit dependent	0.0% (0)	13.3% (6)	33.3% (15)	37.8% (17)	11.1% (5)	4.4% (2)	3.49	45
Choice riders	4.4% (2)	11.1% (5)	28.9% (13)	42.2% (19)	2.2% (1)	11.1% (5)	3.30	45
Non-English speakers	2.2% (1)	37.8% (17)	28.9% (13)	24.4% (11)	2.2% (1)	4.4% (2)	2.86	45
Rural transit users	2.4% (1)	11.9% (5)	19.0% (8)	19.0% (8)	2.4% (1)	45.2% (19)	3.13	42
Urban transit users	0.0% (0)	11.4% (5)	29.5% (13)	31.8% (14)	18.2% (8)	9.1% (4)	3.63	44
Suburban transit users	2.3% (1)	9.1% (4)	29.5% (13)	34.1% (15)	6.8% (3)	18.2% (8)	3.42	44
Persons with disabilities	0.0% (0)	4.5% (2)	38.6% (17)	47.7% (21)	6.8% (3)	2.3% (1)	3.58	44
						answered question		45
						skipped question		7

FIGURE D28

29. How significant an impact does public input have on your decision-making process?						Rating Average	Response Count
	Not Significant	Somewhat Significant	Moderately Significant	Very Significant	Highest Significance		
Impact	4.4% (2)	8.9% (4)	37.8% (17)	46.7% (21)	2.2% (1)	3.33	45
						answered question	45
						skipped question	7

FIGURE D29

30. How is public input used by your agency?		Response Count
		34
		answered question
		skipped question

FIGURE D30



FIGURE D31

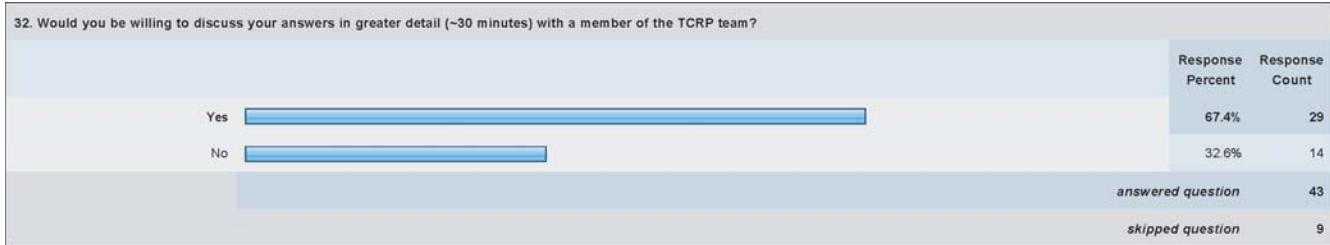


FIGURE D32

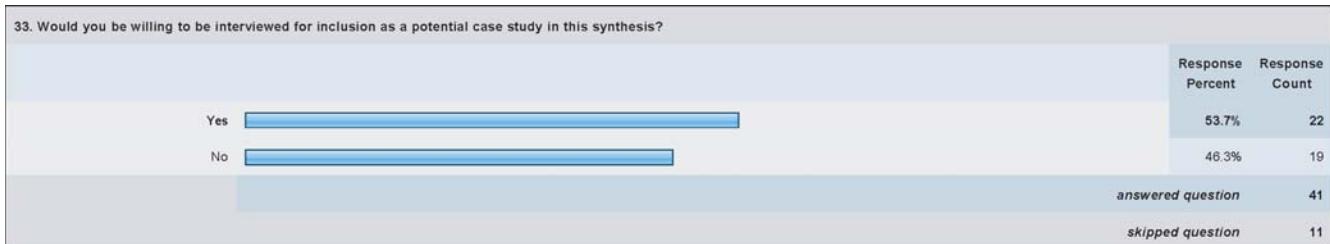


FIGURE D33

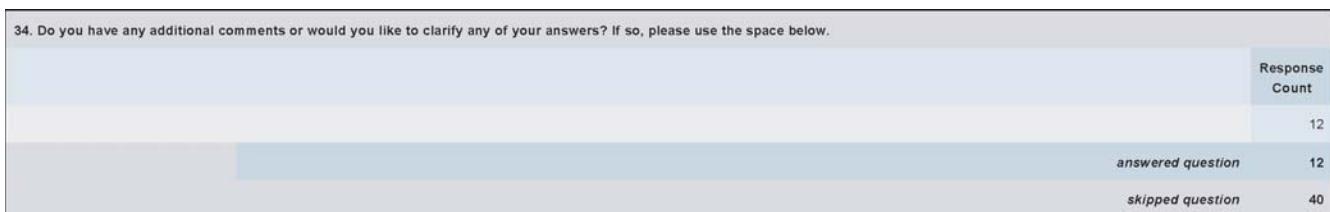


FIGURE D34

Abbreviations used without definitions in TRB publications:

AAAE	American Association of Airport Executives
AASHO	American Association of State Highway Officials
AASHTO	American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
ACI-NA	Airports Council International—North America
ACRP	Airport Cooperative Research Program
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
APTA	American Public Transportation Association
ASCE	American Society of Civil Engineers
ASME	American Society of Mechanical Engineers
ASTM	American Society for Testing and Materials
ATA	Air Transport Association
ATA	American Trucking Associations
CTAA	Community Transportation Association of America
CTBSSP	Commercial Truck and Bus Safety Synthesis Program
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DOE	Department of Energy
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FMCSA	Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration
FRA	Federal Railroad Administration
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
HMCRP	Hazardous Materials Cooperative Research Program
IEEE	Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers
ISTEA	Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991
ITE	Institute of Transportation Engineers
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NASAO	National Association of State Aviation Officials
NCFRP	National Cooperative Freight Research Program
NCHRP	National Cooperative Highway Research Program
NHTSA	National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
NTSB	National Transportation Safety Board
PHMSA	Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration
RITA	Research and Innovative Technology Administration
SAE	Society of Automotive Engineers
SAFETEA-LU	Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (2005)
TCRP	Transit Cooperative Research Program
TEA-21	Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (1998)
TRB	Transportation Research Board
TSA	Transportation Security Administration
U.S.DOT	United States Department of Transportation