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HOW DO YOU COLLECT AND USE PUBLIC INFORMATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSPORTATION PLANS AND PROGRAMS?

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The research and findings of this study stem from an attempt to answer the question of “how do you collect and use public information in the development of transportation plans and programs,” posed by the Arizona Department of Transportation.

This document attempts to answer this question using a variety of methodologies. The findings from a comprehensive literature review, telephone interviews, a mail survey, and two focus groups are presented.

The final recommendations can be found in Chapter seven. In sum, the research conclusively supports the following:

- Enhancing citizen participation in the transportation planning process, although difficult, is a worthwhile endeavor.
- Public participation should be done in a variety of case-specific and innovative ways other than the traditional form of public meetings and hearings.
- By increasing and better utilizing public input into the planning process, an agency increases the chances of program and planning success.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“Let a person have nothing to do for his country,
and he will not care for it.”

John Stuart Mill

“...the diner-- not the cook-- will be the best judge of the feast” (Book III, Ch. XI, 3, 14).
Aristotle, *The Politics*

“...when there are so many who contribute to the process of deliberation, each can bring his share
of goodness and moral prudence” (Book III, Ch. XI, 5.2)
Aristotle, *The Politics*

Collecting and effectively using public information in the development of transportation plans and programs is an important goal. Unfortunately, many agencies have been unsuccessful in achieving it. This research is dedicated to helping the Arizona Department of Transportation, and other interested agencies, to better their citizen participation efforts.

This report begins with an extensive literature review that examines the various themes, definitions, concepts, and controversies that are often discussed. Next, it outlines the objectives, conditions, and essentials of any citizen participation program. These recommendations have been culled from literature that examines transportation planning as well as other planning areas. The myths and realities of public participation are then discussed. Before citizen input can be successfully gathered, those persons responsible need to be aware of several obstacles and pitfalls that lay ahead of them. After this discussion, the study makes a very concrete turn by providing the results of a telephone and mail survey. It is within these two chapters that the specifics of citizen participation can be best understood. Following this, an analysis of two focus groups that were conducted is provided. And finally, the attached appendices provide the reader with additional and helpful information with regard to acquiring more effective citizen participation.

Taken together, the literature review, surveys, and focus groups provide a very in-depth understanding of public participation in the transportation planning process. More important are the similarities that run throughout each section. There are parallel themes, problems, and recommendations that are found in each section that should reassure the reader that the findings are not spurious nor anomalies.

CHAPTER TWO

THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Before the question of how to increase and effectively use public participation in the development of transportation plans and programs can be answered, it is necessary to understand the overall importance of this participation. Citizen involvement in the political process is an oft-studied and rich field of inquiry. Voting studies, political alienation, citizen efficacy, and political behavior are all staples of the social sciences. The question of bureaucratic participation-- that which will be examined here, is less well-known but does have an adequate literature base.

Participation in the political and decision-making processes is crucial for a healthy and stable democratic system. Although a representative democracy, the United States requires an active and caring citizenry if it is to remain a legitimate democracy. A participatory democracy has three important redemptive qualities. First, it strengthens the democratic spirit through its educative function. Second, it helps build and strengthen communities. And third, participation helps turn institutions into more effective instruments of society. [1] Participation is often erroneously thought of as the simple act of voting. Yet, it is and must be much more than this one single and solitary act. [2]

Public participation in the bureaucratic process has important democratic implications. It is within this type of decision-making process that communities can regain control while issues can be honestly and earnestly discussed. It is a chance to move away from the adversarial politics that currently dominates toward a more open, discursive and congenial process. [3] Moreover, it appears to be what Americans want. [4] The political right, left, and center have consistently put forth the merits of increased individual and community political participation. Despite being politically efficacious, it is realized that successful governing requires some type of popular consent and without some degree of approval, governing and the most basic of decision-making becomes impossible.

The importance of public involvement in the political decision-making process is well-known. There are a number of requirements that bureaucracies must abide by that allow for some degree of citizen involvement and input, i.e., the federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). These statutory requirements are significant for they are a recognition that governmental administration cannot be managed in a closed and private manner, but must actively seek out public input.

The following are some of the benefits of actively soliciting citizen input in the policy planning process from a theoretical and practical point of view:

- Democracy - cannot work or becomes hollow without citizen participation
- Bridge - between agency and constituency.
- Public relations - increased and more effective public participation will inevitably give the agency a more positive standing in the community.
- Public Trust and Support - is impossible to attain without citizen involvement in the decision-making process.
- Information - more pertinent and constituency-related information can be gathered and taken into account.
- Diversity - increasing the number and types of perspectives will result in a more interdisciplinary and multi-valued approach.
- Preparation - the agency will be better equipped to deal with various contingencies.
- Education - participants will gain knowledge of the agency, planning process, and project.
- Citizen Interest - in ADOT and other bureaucratic processes.
- Protection - against costly delays and lawsuits.
- Planning success - will be increased once the public is involved and their concerns heard.

CONCEPTUALIZING PARTICIPATION

Public participation has been a catchword in democratic governments for close to thirty years. The demands for increasing public involvement in government planning and policy making, have come from many places. [5] Like democracy, the concept of participation conjures up socially desirable meanings-- yet both are slippery ideas that are difficult to define and execute.

During their 1973 annual conference, the Highway Research Board, focused on the issue of public participation in transportation planning. They came to a consensus on the following definition of citizen participation as it relates to transportation planning:

an open process in which the rights of the community to be informed, to influence, and to get a response from government are reflected and in which a representative cross section of affected citizens interact with appointed and elected officials on issues of transportation supply at all stages of planning and development. [6]

For the purposes of this study, we will essentially use the same definition.

There are two key facets to any process whereby the public participates in the decision making process. First, the *procedural* element simply allows the public a formal opportunity to voice their concerns and opinions, usually at various stages of decision making. The procedural requirements for public participation are a prerequisite for *substantive* participation, or participation that entails a real impact and effect on public policy. Secondly, substantive participation implies two-way channels of communication the extent that government officials and the public become mutual partners in the decision making process.

Most participation takes place on procedural grounds while creating an illusion that the public can have a substantive impact. As a result, even though a citizen's advice is rejected, they may feel at least they had their day in court and will probably be more willing to go along with the final decision. Towards the end of this report, we will come back to this issue when we recommend techniques and strategies for Arizona's Department of Transportation.

TIMING AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

A recurring theme in the literature is the importance of when participation is sought in the decision-making process. That is, at what stage is citizen involvement elicited and how do various issues make it to the agenda-setting stage.[7][8] Although the focus of this study is primarily at the implementation level of public policy, it is not immune from the same type of concerns. If citizens are asked to participate in the decision-making process once the project is well underway and close to completed they may feel slighted and insignificant. Thus, it may be crucial to garner citizen participation from the very beginning.

The Cumulative Curve Of Involvement

In an ideal world, public participation would run throughout the project or policy in question from the outset. It is an ideal however that has proven difficult to achieve and maintain. The concept of a "cumulative curve of involvement" suggests that initial interest in a project or policy will be low because plans are general and agency credibility lacking. Once plans become more developed and citizens see how they will be affected, public participation will usually increase. [9] Also important in this study is the finding that protest is related to whether the public understands and accepts agency decisions.[10]

The implications of this "cumulative curve of involvement" are as follows:

- 1) It is common for only a few citizens to be present at the beginning or start of a project.

- 2) Active solicitation is therefore required.
- 3) Citizens will enter the process at staggered times. Thus, introductory orientation materials will be needed throughout the project.
- 4) Budgets will need to be balanced according to when most citizens enter the process.

Although difficult, it is important that citizen participation is elicited at the earliest possible time.

The Timing Of Opposition

Directly related to this curve of involvement is the stage of planning that public opposition usually takes place. It is common for a project to proceed unabated until the latter stages of the planning process whereby it then meets virulent public opposition and negativity. Recognizing this recurring pattern, the Montana Department of Transportation created a task force to examine this recurring problem. They then made the following recommendations:

- 1) More Personal Contact - despite the difficulties inherent in early planning, the task force contends that early informal meetings with landowners, interest groups, and citizens can help the agency attain important and early information and feedback.
- 2) Clear Communication - the task force recommends using informal, clear and concise language, i.e., no abbreviations or acronyms, write for a non-technical and general audience, etcetera.
- 3) Talk and Act - communication is critical among project team members and the public. When issues or problems are identified, team members are urged to act. The task force also recommends actively seeking out potential project opponents and adversaries.
- 4) Keeping People Informed - the agency must inform more than just those whom attend formal procedures. This can be done through a variety of mediums, i.e., newspapers, radio, and television. [11]

The task force contends that the aforementioned recommendations have resulted in a better use of resources, better projects, and a better ability to meet the public interest. Although public attendance at meetings is still low, the department is trying new ways to seek public awareness.

LEVELS OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Within the existing literature, there is a general agreement on the importance of citizen participation in the bureaucratic decision-making process. From an academic and theoretical point of view citizen participation is democratically and individually healthy, and from the point of view of the administrator, it is an excellent way to facilitate program-policy success and improve public standing within the community. There also appears to be a consensus regarding the different

levels of public participation ranging from complete citizen control to manipulation. These different levels of participation can be seen as a "Ladder of Citizen Participation." [12]

Ladder Of Citizen Participation

CITIZEN CONTROL
DELEGATED POWER
PARTNERSHIP
PLACATION
CONSULTATION
INFORMING
THERAPY
MANIPULATION

Citizen control, delegated power, and partnership are defined as degrees of citizen power. Placation, consultation, and informing are considered degrees of tokenism. And, therapy and manipulation are considered forms of non-participation.

This is not to say that forms of one-way communication, i.e., public reports, direct mail, advertising, press conferences, and public hearings, are not important, but that the motives of the agency must be considered and made known to the public. If an agency is seen by the public or relevant stakeholders as making a mere pro-forma attempt at acquiring citizen participation, they will get little and mostly negative feedback. Citizens are equally weary of public meetings and hearings that are held once a project has already begun, when input becomes a case of too little, too late. [13]

CHAPTER 3

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION: OBJECTIVES, CONDITIONS AND ESSENTIALS

OBJECTIVES

It is essential that the objectives of the agency and the citizen participation program are made clear at the planning outset. Within the transportation planning process, objectives should be to clarify issues of choice, to fully inform decision makers, and to achieve community agreement on a planning action that is feasible, equitable, and desirable. [14] Although not exhaustive, the following are seen as a good beginning to establishing some objective criteria:

- Establish and maintain agency and planning credibility
- Establish and maintain communications
- Foster citizen involvement
- Build interpersonal relations
- Project and process evaluation and reassessment [9]

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Before these objectives can be put forth however, it is necessary to carefully examine the decision-making situation. Because of the array of different policy contexts, there is no one definitive method of effectively achieving good public participation. An agency must independently assess each decision-making context. This assessment must include the following:

- Agency Conditions - what are the various citizen participation laws and requirements, scope of agency responsibilities, the priority the agency places on citizen participation, attitudes and past experiences with citizen participation, and the amount of resources (staff, time, money) available?
- Community Characteristics - will provide the agency with insight into community conditions, needs, climate, and expectations for constructive citizen participation. Establishing a community profile that includes its physical and social characteristics, transportation facilities, services, usage patterns, problems and needs, its organization and leadership, and its concerns and values will certainly facilitate the planning process.

- Transportation Issues - the diversity of transportation projects and plans requires planners to carefully consider the issue under study, i.e., type of planning issue, its location and scope, history, priority and timing, and its anticipated impacts. [9]

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION ESSENTIALS

Once objectives are put forth and the situational analysis is complete, an agency is ready to prepare and begin a citizen participation program. However original and innovative this program may be, it should possess the following essential components:

- Identifying Citizens - identifying citizen participants must begin immediately and continue throughout the planning process. Identifying a wide range of citizens will equip the agency with the information it needs to correctly interpret the full range of community interests. It is also essential if the agency is to begin an interactive and working relationship with its constituency.
- Two-Way Communication - there must be an open communication process from the public to planners and from planners to the public. By informing the public, having an open communication process, and providing a means for mutual education and exchange an agency will likely improve its public relations and standing within the community.
- Interaction - this is the process in which constructive negotiation and consensus making takes place. This is the means by which the community can help shape transportation plans. It also provides the agency the best opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to citizen participation to the public.
- Staff Attitudes - According to a federal study, staff attitudes are the only common factor among some highway agencies with successful public involvement programs. Successful agencies were those whose staffs held open, responsive attitudes and a commitment to community participation in transportation development. The study concluded that the attitude and commitment of those administering the programs were the most influential factors in their success.
- Program Evaluation - continuous monitoring and the flexibility for adjustment is needed throughout the life of the citizen participation program. Program successes and failures need to be documented throughout the life of the program, by the agency and the participating public. This is the only way to ensure that past mistakes are avoided and successes followed. [9]

In addition to these requirements, it is recommended that every MPO and state should have at least one person or staff entirely devoted to increasing public involvement in the planning process at both the state and regional levels. Effectively acquiring citizen input is a full-time job that requires a full-time staff. Expecting an engineer, planner, or other transportation specialist to successfully facilitate citizen involvement on a regular basis is unrealistic and unfair to the specialist and the public.

CHAPTER 4

MYTHS AND REALITIES OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There is little doubt that the broad notions of citizen participation and community involvement are concepts that stand at the heart of our democratic process in the United States. However, despite its perceived importance, citizen participation is often overlooked or so watered down that it becomes meaningless. There are several explanations for this occurrence. One important reason for this outcome is that public officials do not use appropriate techniques for garnering citizen involvement.[1] Others go so far as to argue that all central planning is doomed to failure.[15] While it is not universally agreed upon, many believe that the “one size fits all” approach to citizen participation is very problematic. Nowhere is this more evident than in transportation planning issues. As this study will discuss in more detail, bureaucrats should adhere to a multiplicity of options and avenues for involving the public in their decision making structures. Specific recommendations along with their respective benefits and costs will be discussed in further detail towards the end of this report. Before doing so, it is prudent to enumerate some of the countervailing arguments that call into question the very notion and utility of public participation.

While citizen involvement appears to garner a consensus that it is a “good thing,” there are several important arguments that challenge this fundamental notion. Furthermore, while most scholars, professionals, and citizens agree that public participation is a worthwhile ideal, there have been serious roadblocks facing the implementation of this ideal. One of the major reasons behind the difficulties with public participation is the fact that the objectives of public officials in encouraging citizen involvement are often contradictory. They may include promoting citizenship, building public support for a project through co-optation, shaping programs to meet community needs and priorities, or developing an awareness of the neighborhood. This next section will review some of the arguments against public participation as well as the obstacles public officials often face when they attempt to incorporate the public into the planning process.

THE CASE AGAINST CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Because citizen participation is viewed as an integral part of democratic pluralism, it drew widespread attention during the “behavioral revolution” in political science. Despite continued studies attempting to explain who participates in politics and why, there are still many different conclusions about pursuing public participation. [8] The following two sections discuss some of the most important criticisms and obstacles surrounding public participation programs.

Daniel Barber (1981) classifies the case against citizen participation in four main points. First, participation may mobilize negative sentiment. Participation is viewed as a self-defeating measure for transportation planners. Citizen participation is an open invitation for criticism. Due to the “sound-bite” nature of current political discourse, more participation is based on shallow emotion and short-sightedness. Furthermore, the idealistic image of participatory democracy propagated by its advocates suggests that evenings devoted to neighborhood politics at community meetings are broadly appealing events. In the real world, even the most open and democratic meetings can be perceived as intimidating. Also, people can be decidedly uninterested in local politics not because they are alienated or apathetic, but because they find other pursuits more compelling and worth their while.

Second, public participation interferes with professionals. Here, the role of “experts” is viewed as thwarted by citizens who usually lack the technical capabilities to understand the complexities involved with transportation issues. Daniel Barber claims that the central problem for public participation is balancing the desire to maximize participation and democratic control with the need for efficiency and stability in government (Barber 1981). Proponents of this sentiment maintain that it makes little sense to reduce the role of competent, nonpartisan experts so that a modest number of highly vocal people can participate in policy making. If citizens want to influence political outcomes it is believed that elections are appropriate arena for political activity. The idea of having the public influence policies such as budgetary priorities and research design is often considered to be unacceptable to public managers. To some extent, there is a built-in conflict between public participation and the traditional principles of hierarchy and professionalism found in the tradition of Progressive political theory. [16]

Third, it is argued that public participation is not representative. Citizen participation is perceived as merely lobbying for locally based vested interests or special privileges -- at the expense of other localities or the total community. Consequently, if lobbying efforts are successful, a disproportionate allocation of total community resources is given to the interests which have exerted the most influence.

Fourth, Barber contends that public participation has no authority. As most are presently organized, citizen groups have no power or legitimacy to make decisions; their responsibilities are limited to influencing those who make decisions for the community. Participation is viewed as a form of tokenism. [13]

Critics of public participation often contend that it is romanticized and over-rated. For purposes of efficiency some critics argue that well-trained elites should have power; when decision making is more egalitarian, the masses only participate at a moderate level anyway. From Plato onward, this type of logic is grounded in the belief that government is best served by “guardians” who are qualified to govern because of their superior knowledge and skills--otherwise known as the “trustee” model of representation. Barber also notes that several scholars have warned against the “excesses of democracy” claiming that it makes people more cynical and disrespectful of government because government is unable to satisfy conflicting claims made upon it which eventually leads to a crisis of authority. Participation is consequently seen as a response to a representative system not working. [13]

OBSTACLES FACING PARTICIPATION

Many arguments against participation do not state or imply that it should not exist. Rather they point out the limitations of participation as a comprehensive process and indicate the powerlessness and vulnerabilities of many participation structures. The next section will review some of the dominant obstacles facing public planners when they attempt to operationalize the goal of public participation. Specific attention will be paid to the efforts and difficulties other state transportation departments have encountered when implementing public participation.

James A. Riedel (1972) offers the following summary of the obstacles often facing public officials who attempt to implement citizen participation programs.

1. Even under the most accommodating conditions, most people tend to avoid participation and involvement-- especially at the early stages of transportation planning.
2. The political systems in most states favor group over individual action, coalitions of groups even more so, but most individuals are activated only by single issues and are turned off by coalitions.
3. Localizing control does not necessarily increase participation.
4. Resistance to action tends to increase with the seriousness of the problem.
5. Citizen groups working outside the "system" tend to handicap themselves.
6. Official and citizen views of participation tend to be inherently contradictory.
7. Officially sponsored citizen participation tends to be co-optation rather than representation.
8. Direct citizen action, forcing governmental response; though seemingly hostile to the system, has strong historic support.
9. In this pragmatic society, the appropriate form of citizen participation is one that works. [17]

While we will not specifically address each of Reidel's statements, they do illustrate the spectrum of arguments questioning the efficacy of traditional public participation programs.

Trust

In theory, political structures may act in two ways to increase participation. First, by expanding the methods of citizen participation, and second, by making public involvement more

meaningful. If you only increase the first, citizens may still not find it worth their while to participate. Furthermore, if citizens do not trust some part of government agencies, their projects may be subject to extra scrutiny by the public.

Citizen opposition to transportation projects is often explained as being fueled by a fundamental sense that public managers and bureaucrats are untrustful. Several scholars have suggested that political behavior is directly correlated to political trust and confidence. Joel Aberbach and Jack Walker (1970) state that “if distrustful groups are denied access to decision-making, or if institutions are too rigid to change, destructive conflict and a breakdown of the social order are possible.” [18] Richard Cole (1974) arrives at similar conclusions in his book *Citizen Participation and the Urban Policy Process*. [19]

One aspect of mistrust includes the belief that the bureaucracy will not deliver the promised goods and services at the specified time and cost--if at all. As John Semmens, an Arizona Department of Transportation Senior Planner, argues,

the standard approach to public finance has the taxpayers pay first and trust the bureaucracy to perform. We have seen the inferior results produced by this method. Whatever taxes are paid are never enough. The money is always spent. The benefit for which the tax was assessed typically falls short of what was promised. [20]

Consequently, if this is true, any efforts to improve public feedback will involve a significant change in the way public transportation projects get financed. If the public doesn't trust government agencies to do what they say, any efforts at public participation will need to address this issue first and foremost lest the complete process loses all meaning and dignity.

Another part of the public mistrust of planning agencies has been ascribed to the project opponents belief that the agencies are simply not listening. As a Highway Research Board conference concluded “Ironically, citizen mistrust is what stirs them to demand a closer look at what the planning agencies are doing. There is little desire by people to participate if they think that what is being done is really being done honestly and has beneficial effects for the community.” [6] However, despite the propaganda efforts by all government agencies claiming that their project benefits everyone, no project can benefit everyone equally. In fact, this type of hyperbolic claim has been made in support of two most recently rejected tax proposals for Maricopa County (AZ) freeways and transit. The falsity of this assertion undermines public trust in what governments say and do. The easily punctured illusion of universal benefits and minimal costs can significantly contribute to feelings of mistrust of government. A more candid approach that acknowledged the imbalances of benefits and costs to various persons and sought ways of mitigating the negative effects on those disadvantaged by the proposed project, would have a better chance of success.

Because many transportation projects throughout the United States have been stymied by active opponents, it is essential that citizens participate and share their concerns and ideas from the very beginning of the planning process. However, it is often difficult for transportation

officials to attract citizens to the agenda setting and scoping meetings. As discussed earlier there is a “cumulative curve of involvement” by citizens in transportation planning. This concept describes a model whereby citizen participation is initially low and then it grows as the project becomes more developed and its consequences become more apparent to the citizens.

Information

Related to the problem of mistrusting public officials is the issue of availability and the understanding of information. In this respect, it is often difficult and frustrating for citizens to effectively participate when they are faced with highly technical language and voluminous governmental data. If citizens can't interpret and use all the relevant information, they feel hapless in the technical world of transportation research and design. As Schatzow (1977) has concluded, a public which is poorly informed, “cannot sustain a high level of concern about such issues, is unlikely to ask for more information, to demand to be included in decision making, or to scrutinize government action closely. [21]

Costs

Information is costly to acquire and costly to provide. The more newsletters people read and the more meetings people go to the more time and money they spend. Likewise government agencies will have higher costs associated with any attempt to increase the generation and dissemination of information. Infrastructure costs in terms of space, paper, and office resources will tend to increase as a result of more sophisticated participation programs. Larger participation mechanisms will most likely increase staff time as well. Often, these costs demand the investment of resources from other activities. Reassigning resources will always involve opportunity costs for any activities sacrificed for the sake of public participation and information.

In conclusion, with any increase in information quality and quantity, there will usually be an increase in information costs on the part of both consumer and provider. When the combined costs of providing and accessing information exceed the perceived benefits of an informed public, fewer investments will be made in improving information channels and quality.

Attitudes

Another obstacle to effective public participation is the attitude of both citizens and public officials alike. The combination of highly charged and hot-tempered citizens and unresponsive public officials is a recipe for little progress in terms of transportation improvements. On one hand, if public officials are hostile toward participation from the onset, then the entire process is a procedural smoke-screen in the form of hearings, papers, reports, and forms that function as an inconsequential footnote to an agency's decision. [22] [23] Then, on the other hand, the agency unresponsiveness tends to trigger highly charged citizen-activists who may block plans and projects either within agency avenues or utilize outside institutions such as the courts and media to argue their case. Due to the correlated nature of these events, scholars have recommended that agencies set up mechanisms for addressing the concerns of project opponents from the time the project is conceived.

Defining The Public

As mentioned earlier, another problem is defining “the public” which affects how participation is structured. This is one of the principle issues that transportation agencies have to address. Should “the public” be a random sample from the general population or traditionally underrepresented populations or should participation efforts serve those most affected by transportation policies? Current transportation planning literature often uses the terms “customers,” “constituents,” “clients” and “stakeholders” to describe the people transportation agencies serve. [24] It may be worthwhile however to see the public not as any of these, but as the proprietor and employer of any given agency.

Administrative Personnel

A recurring problem with many citizen participation programs stems from the resources and personnel within government administrations. Citizen participation is not an easy job. Facilitating participation is a full-time job requiring a full-time staff. The personality of agency individuals was crucial to effective participation. Most importantly, the participation coordinator from public agencies, must be a dynamic and flexible leader. In many ways, the public participation coordinator is faced with a conundrum: if he or she organizes and activates local groups too much they may be helping to subvert the dominant structures of political authority. On the other hand, if the coordinator plays exclusively by the political rules, he may be charged with elitism by citizen groups. Indeed, the job of coordinator is one of the more difficult jobs to be trained for, yet it is possibly the most crucial element in the participatory process.

Implementation

A policy is only as successful as its implementation is successful. A great legal document that is improperly implemented does nothing for the original law’s purpose and mission. While this axiom is well known, many programs fall apart at the critical point of implementing principles into practice. Many programs succeed in preparation for participation, but fail to handle all the subsequent information. As a result, decision making authority remains strictly to the politicians, their advisors and the relevant influential few in the community.

Anthony Downs (1972) [26] and Marver Bernstein (1955) [27] have each presented well-known theories of policy cycles that suggest a gradual decline in public attention to political issues as legislation and policy ideas mature to the stage of implementation. Furthermore, both Downs and Bernstein agree that only the most vested interests will see it advantageous to continue to participate in the implementation stage.

CHAPTER 4

SURVEYING OTHER STATES, MPOs, AND LOCAL PLANNING OFFICES

Beginning with the passage of the 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), states and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) have been required to find ways to enhance public participation in the transportation planning process. The ISTEA states that prior to adopting plans or programs, state transportation departments shall “provide citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, private providers of transportation, other affected employee representatives and other interested parties with reasonable opportunity to comment.” [28] To meet this goal, the ISTEA requires a 45 day review of the public involvement procedures that each state conducts as a part of the transportation planning and project development activities.

The ISTEA explicitly directs states and MPOs to solicit more public involvement than ever before, both from a wider range of persons and at more points in the planning process. Public involvement is no longer a perfunctory step associated with ultimate completion of the individual project, but an essential, ongoing partnership between transportation officials and the citizenry.

However, while the act calls for creating "new partnerships" in state and metropolitan transportation planning, "many states and MPOs seem to be responding to the new requirements in a disappointingly perfunctory manner." [28] This study shows that 58 percent of the states surveyed were doing the minimum or less in meeting ISTEA public participation requirements.

Despite this overall poor record, a few states are excelling in improving public involvement in transportation planning. The following section documents what other states, MPOs and local planning offices around the country are doing to incorporate citizens into their planning processes. The primary area of concern is how they implement and organize their public involvement programs and plans. Except where noted, every office contacted worked primarily with transportation issues. While most of the offices surveyed here were contacted by telephone, other published information for a few offices is discussed below. For example, Julie Hoover cites Oregon and Alaska as two leading states. However, our more recent survey of the states, indicates that many others have improved their citizen involvement programs. Nonetheless it is instructive to note that Oregon has employed the public hearing method, a citizen commission, five policy advisory committees, newsletters, and surveys in its long-range development plan. Alaska has also utilized a multiple technique approach with a citizen participation handbook, extensive training for top-management and technical employees who deal with the public, and

other participation strategies. [28] While we will come back to other state initiatives in a bit, there is also a wealth of information at the county and local levels of government.

Seattle's Vision 2020

Seattle's Vision 2020 venture, combining management and transportation issues, deserves notice. The city held over 700 public meetings, several forums and hearings, a "citizen's summit" which attracted 500 people, a comprehensive media campaign, an electronic town meeting, and five different surveys of over 15,000 voters. A number of other states have also employed a multi-faceted approach to obtaining valuable public participation in transportation planning. [28]

Maricopa County Comprehensive Plan

Maricopa County's public involvement program for the "Comprehensive Plan" has also utilized various citizen participation techniques. Recognizing that a public participation program would "assist in getting the public involved in the decision-making process and instilling confidence and trust in the comprehensive planning process," an inter-agency effort was put forth that included among other things the following: Public meetings, media and public notification, phone surveys, newsletters, a slide show, handouts and exhibits, workshops, focus groups, a steering committee, and the hiring of a private consulting organization that helped organize, conduct, and document the public participation process. [29]

Pima Association of Government's Public Involvement Plan

In 1994, the Pima Association of Governments (PAG) published a Public Involvement Plan (PIP) for regional transportation planning issues. This plan is intended to "facilitate public participation in planning studies addressing all modes of travel including surface transportation, public transit, aviation, bicycling, and pedestrian travel." [30] Key parts to the plan are the following:

- 1) Proactive solicitation of public comment
- 2) Explicit consideration and response to public comments
- 3) A renewed emphasis on the needs of the transportation underserved
- 4) A written summary and disposition of significant public comments received during the development of transportation planning and investment studies. [30]

While the Pima Association of Governments Public Involvement Plan utilizes and advocates a wide range of traditional techniques for public involvement including mailing lists, publications, public meetings, and presentations to groups, media strategies, public and opinion polls, several strategies slated for future use are noteworthy. These include:

- 1) Electronic Bulletin Boards.

- 2) Community Forums. Neighborhood based presentations supported by video and questionnaires to identify issues of concern and help set community transportation goals and objectives.
- 3) Placing of transportation planning information on local buses and vans.
- 4) The use of interactive decision making, such as the University of Arizona's decision making laboratory to establish community consensus on transportation planning issues. [30]

New Orleans' Regional Planning Commission's Public Involvement Plan

Another MPO, the Regional Planning Commission (RPC) of Greater New Orleans, also has a very extensive public involvement plan. The official membership of the RPC consists of three top elected officials and two citizen members from each parish within the region. According to their PIP,

It is the intent of the RTC Transportation Policy Committee to pursue the active involvement of key individuals and groups with an interest in transportation planning projects in the review, design and the development of its plans and to develop transportation plans that reflect the needs of the region while meeting federal air quality standards. [31]

The PIP is intended to create a transportation planning process that is "accessible, inclusive, and proactive." The PIP goes on to state that the RPC will provide

education on transportation issues and provide opportunities for citizens to contribute their ideas and voice their opinions early and often. The plan further seeks to establish trust and credibility among the citizenry for the transportation planning process and agency by resolving conflicts and seeking consensus among citizen and professionals for policies and projects. [31]

Coconino County's Kachina Village Project

In Arizona's Coconino County, the planning and zoning department has recently been involved with a long-term visioning plan for Kachina Village just south of Flagstaff, AZ. In an interview with Bill Tower, Coconino County Director of Planning and Zoning, he maintained that public involvement has been of central importance in the Kachina Village project. [32] After soliciting citizen participation in the local newspaper, citizen "area planning committees" were established. These committees were comprised of Coconino County officials and residents of Kachina Village. The essential task of these committees was to formulate zoning plans that were eventually submitted to the Coconino County Board of Supervisors. Several innovative techniques were then employed to reach out to the larger Kachina Village community. First, there was a survey that was administered upon all property owners in Kachina Village. Through the use of this survey, the County was able to assess some of the major concerns of Kachina Village

residents and begin to prioritize the most important issues in the minds of the residents. Included in the cover sheet for the survey was a schedule for all the public meetings that were held as a part of the visioning process. The second technique that helped increase citizen participation was to notify residents of upcoming meetings by having announcements in the utility bills of Kachina Village residents. Mr. Tower stated that after they started these announcements there were often over fifty people that attended the public meetings. This is excellent for a community under 1,000 people. A third technique used to inform and involve the public was the generation of a mailing list of local citizens. At every meeting the County has an attendance sheet and every new name gets added to a larger mailing list for the distribution of minutes from each public meeting. This is very helpful for keeping the most interested citizens informed because within the minutes are also the schedule and topics of future meetings. Besides the effort in Kachina Village, Coconino County is also involved with Flagstaff's Vision 20/20 project which also uses a variety of techniques for including the public in a planning process.[32]

Flagstaff's Vision 2020

Similar to Seattle's visioning process, Flagstaff, AZ has also just begun a long-term visioning program that has extensive citizen involvement. Flagstaff's Vision 20/20 has incorporated several techniques for involving and informing the public. In an interview with Kathy Dunn Turner, President of Vision 20/20, she explained that they began the process by selecting thirty five community members who met a plethora of diversity requisites. After the task force was assembled, Flagstaff Vision 20/20 organized six regional "welcome" meetings that were strategically held in diverse neighborhoods to seek the community's input into determining the scope and agenda of Vision 20/20. According to Turner, the meetings were held in different neighborhoods so they could get a broad representation of the community's concerns for the future. However, to their surprise, Turner noted that people attended these meetings not because they were in their neighborhoods but rather because they were at a convenient time. She said the attendance patterns had no correlation with the location of an attendee's residence. Since the original welcome meetings, Vision 20/20 continues to hold public meetings. In addition to public meetings, Vision 20/20 also contracted with a local social research firm to conduct a telephone survey of the greater Flagstaff community. From the results of this telephone survey, Vision 20/20 could better assess the community's values and opinions. Another method used by Vision 20/20 is going to "rubber chicken" and "rubber pancake" meetings such as Rotary, Elks, and other civic groups. Turner suggested that these meetings have been a mixed success, but that they do allow for more public exposure. The final technique used by Vision 20/20 is the use of a local public access channel on cable television. Citizens can call in with their questions and listen to proposals and debates concerning the issues of greater Flagstaff. [33] It is important to note that Vision 20/20's process of public participation is much more aggressive in terms of soliciting public opinion versus simply passively allowing it as part of the process.

Arizona State Transportation Plan

The Arizona State Transportation Plan also employed a multi-faceted approach to acquiring citizen input. Its public involvement process included a public opinion survey, public meetings, mailings to all agencies, businesses, and individuals interested in the STP, newsletters, a

state transportation board, a speaker's bureau, distribution of materials in public libraries and ADOT offices, and various media and legislative briefings. [34]

Arizona Department of Environmental Quality

In a telephone interview with the Deputy Director's Office of the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ), they indicated that public participation was very important in their decision making procedures. Unlike other agencies who use a variety of participation techniques, the ADEQ primarily uses teams or task forces comprised of individuals internal and external to ADEQ. Most task forces sponsored by ADEQ include ADEQ staff, public interest groups (especially environmental groups), other agencies, the regulated community, lawyers, and federal government personnel. Typically the process of organizing and completing an ADEQ task force lasts around a year or more. After the recommendations are approved by the task force, they are sent to the ADEQ director's office. The director then reviews the recommendations and then may or may not send them to the governor. Under most circumstances, the task force's recommendations are implemented, unless they are economically infeasible due to limited resources or politically impossible. For example, any recommendation to raise taxes would be ignored because Governor Fife Symington is opposed to such a politically charged measure. In conclusion, the official from the Deputy Directors office stated that "for the most part we do implement task force recommendations." [35]

Ohio Department of Transportation

Other states including Idaho, Ohio, and Maine indicated the vital importance of public participation in the transportation planning process. A self-described "leftist urban planner" from the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) in Columbus said that while federal and state laws require participation especially from "traditionally underserved populations," the results are usually very limited and quite parochial. For example, when asked whether ODOT was successful in involving the public, he said that the public only participates when ODOT decides to "re-route a highway through a girl scout camp." Generally ODOT has found that the larger state-wide plans and programs draw very little response from the public even though ODOT employed state-wide advertising through television, newspaper and radio stations. Regarding the mixed levels of public involvement, the official at ODOT said mostly local and regional programs get the highest levels of public participation. The ODOT official maintained that local and regional media coupled with direct mail lists are the most effective techniques for advertising.[36]

In a letter from the ODOT spokesman, he stated that formal public involvement procedures have not been developed because of the diversity of topics which are addressed by ODOT. Instead, public involvement strategies are individually tailored to meet the specific needs of the planning topic at hand. For example, in developing "Access Ohio," the statewide transportation plan, 85 public meetings were conducted throughout the state over a two year period. The meetings provided public input on defining Ohio's transportation needs and reviewing draft documents. Eleven regional focus groups were also established to examine, review, prioritize, and rank the list of transportation needs throughout the state. The focus groups were comprised of individuals who were knowledgeable of regional needs, development

patterns and traffic conditions. The focus groups served as “panels of experts” to assure that the statewide plan addressed local needs and priorities.[36]

In another example, ODOT recently completed a ranking and prioritization process for the major new construction program. A multi-faceted approach to gathering public input for refining and ultimately approving the process was employed. A comprehensive survey was conducted of key constituents and interest groups to solicit written comment on the proposed process. Eight regional public meetings, using the open house format, held throughout the state provided a forum for review and refinement of the process. In addition, a Project Selection Advisory Committee consisting of members of various interest groups from around the state reviewed and formally adopted the final selection process.

Idaho Transportation Department

In a conversation with Julie Stutts, the Public Involvement Coordinator for the Idaho Transportation Department, she stated that the Idaho Transportation Department is taking a proactive, early and continuing approach to public participation involving a wide variety of techniques throughout the project planning, design, construction and operation. [37] According to a “Board Agenda Item” prepared by Stutts, the Idaho Transportation Department “is proposing a different approach to public involvement than was used the past two years. The new approach is to go where the people are, rather than the public to come to the department.” Below is a summary of Idaho’s public involvement strategies.

- 1) Public involvement is District-driven with support from headquarters staff.
- 2) District staff gather information from the public about the department’s plans and programs for each mode.
- 3) The Districts are able to choose from the following options: state/county fairs or festivals working with local governments, agencies and regional councils of government, working with other state and federal agencies, meeting with Native Americans, meeting with the public in local malls, meeting with the local civic groups or clubs, meeting with the Associations of Idaho Cities, Counties and Highway Districts at their annual meetings, direct mailings to reach shut-ins and others unable to attend meetings distributing newsletters, citizen surveys (via telephone, newspapers, mailings), making personal contacts, working with advisory boards, committees and task forces.
- 4) Some of the information and questions Districts and Divisions should be asking the public include: a) what does the public think about these priorities? b) does the public agree/disagree with these priorities? c) which unfunded projects should be funded first? how much would the public be willing to pay to fund unfunded projects

Maine

Like Idaho, Maine also has a very active public participation component in their planning process. In a conversation with Mike Danforth, a Regional Public Participation Coordinator for the Bureau of Planning at Maine’s Department of Transportation, he stated that Maine is broken

up into eight planning regions. Within each region there is a Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) that is comprised of fifteen to twenty-one citizens including alternative mode advocates, city and county officials, environmental and community groups, and business organizations. Mr. Danforth said that these RTACs were of great importance in MDOT's planning and budget processes, especially their bi-annual report. Maine DOT produces a bi-annual planning report which details the areas the DOT plans on investing their resources. In addition to the bi-annual reports, the RTACs helped in Maine DOT's twenty year plan written in 1991.

While Mr. Danforth stated that the ISTEA was the major regulatory requirement affecting MDOT, he mentioned that Maine went even further than the ISTEA when they passed the Sensible Transportation Policy Act in 1991. This act helped maintain the jurisdiction and authority of the RTACs to be a part of the initial planning process in MDOT's decision making. In fact, Mr. Danforth suggested that it is because the RTACs are "front-end loaded" in the planning process, that MDOT has been very successful in passing bonds and financing their proposals. Only one bond "out of dozens" was voted down in the last four years. A great advantage of the RTACs is that the members have extensive contacts in the communities in Maine and can keep citizens informed. [38]

San Francisco's Metropolitan Transportation Commission

In a brief conversation with Catalina Alverado, a Public Information Officer with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) in San Francisco, she said that the most effective techniques for citizen participation the MTC had used were focus groups and "roundtable outreach meetings." [39]

Colorado Department of Transportation

Leah Lane, a Public Involvement Coordinator at Colorado Department of Transportation indicated that Colorado DOT (CDOT) is having similar problems as some other states in their public involvement process. Like Maine, Ohio and others, Colorado has regional planning offices throughout the state. In Colorado, there are fifteen regional offices. Ms. Lane explained one example of CDOT's difficulties using a recent statewide planning document CDOT sponsored. She said that their advertising for public involvement was extensive. They sent a draft version and information about public meetings to all libraries, mayors, and county officials in the state. They also had a mailing list of 2,500 people and, as required by the ISTEA, did outreach to the traditionally underserved groups including Native Americans, the poor, rural residents, and others. In addition they had advertisements and public notices in most major newspapers. Even after doing all of this proactive recruiting, she said that their public meetings were either very sparsely attended or the same "loyal opposition" congregation showed up every time. [40]

Maryland Department of Transportation

The Maryland Department of Transportation's State Highway Administration indicated that they elicit public participation "early in the process." They advertise in local newspapers and

radio and send mass mailings to solicit names of residents and citizens interested in receiving project information through the mail. Groups and community associations are identified and outreach meetings are conducted. On larger projects, public workshops are conducted prior to adoption of “purpose and need”. On other projects, meetings are held prior to selection of alternatives which will be retained for intensive study. Ads are placed in newspapers to notify the public about major milestones and if appropriate, media coverage is solicited. Overall, the Maryland DOT seemed satisfied, but felt as though more innovative techniques could be employed.[41]

Virginia Department of Transportation

A bit unlike other state transportation departments, Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), has been “very successful” with the public hearing format. However, in 1991 VDOT changed the structure of their public hearings and this has been the key reason for their unprecedented success with the public meeting. Instead of the traditional style whereby citizens must stand up and talk at a microphone in front of a panel of DOT officials, VDOT’s public meetings are a modified version of the open-house technique. Depending on the needs of the local community area, these meetings typically last six to eight hours starting either at noon or later in the afternoon. A video explaining the details of the proposed project runs continually and citizens have the opportunity to talk one-on-one with DOT engineers and planners at any time throughout the open-house. Citizens may also write their comments at the meeting or mail them at a later date. In addition, the public can comment directly to a court reporter who immediately documents their comments. All public comments are a part of the final record.

Patsy Napier, a Senior Transportation Engineer in the Public Involvement Section of VDOT, commented that the public has responded to this open-house format in a very favorable light. For example, Ms. Napier said that after VDOT’s first attempt at the new public meeting format, they did citizen surveys to see if people liked this new process versus the old “town-hall” meetings. According to Napier, 591 respondents liked the new style of public meeting as opposed to 87 who preferred the old type of public meetings. The Virginia DOT also asked citizens whether or not the video provided the information they needed and 288 people responded “yes” while only “25” said “no.” [42]

Napier claimed that there are several unique advantages of this “modified open house” format. First, citizens do not have to speak in front of others. Public speaking is a well known fear among many. Second, in the traditional public meeting format, there is the issue of stating conflicting opinions amongst neighbors and fellow community members and the antagonism that often creates. At the very individual level of analysis, the personal costs associated with voicing an opposing opinion and getting in “trouble” with one’s neighbors, etc., may outweigh any benefits from standing alone at a microphone in front of one’s peers. A third benefit Napier mentioned is that proponents of transportation projects usually are quiet or don’t show up to the meetings because they trust VDOT will do the best job possible.

The biggest area of improvement for VDOT is in the area of education. According to Ms. Napier, VDOT has found that citizens often do not understand the deliberately meticulous process

of transportation planning and decision making. For example, some citizens think that the process is such an expedient one that final decisions will be made in the first few meetings. Quite to the contrary. There are many stages in the policy making process starting from the “pre-problem” agenda and “needs assessment” to beginning the construction phase. One particularly important reflection of Napier’s was that when VDOT uses Citizens Advisory Committees and Task Force Groups, they need to allot extra time for citizens to learn how the process of decision making and logistics works. When VDOT has done this, Ms. Napier concluded that CACs and Task Forces work very well for large projects and within MPOs.[42]

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

The proceeding survey resulted in several interesting themes. The following is a brief summary of specific participation techniques that seemed to be most effective and highly rated by survey respondents.

(1) *Citizen Advisory Committees*: Size varies depending on scale of project and mission of committee. Some committees are project specific and some run continuously. All efforts at organizing CACs strive to include diverse representatives from the impacted public.

(2) *Mailing Lists*: This varies from more of an activist list which receives a newsletter (1,000 people or less) to sending a post card out to a larger public (15,000 plus). Smaller lists generated from sign up sheets at meetings (Coconino County, AZ) and large lists generated from zip-codes. Lists include minutes, dates of future meetings, and project updates.

(3) *Growth of internet use*: This includes home pages, community bulletin boards, local free-nets. Used very successfully by Minnesota DOT as well as an MPO for four parishes in New Orleans. Virginia DOT and Pima County stated that they saw this in the near future.

(4) *Local implementation*: District driven, state supported, public involvement procedures. District run meetings, surveys, committees, etc.

(5) *Citizen surveys*: scope and method varies. The more common methods include: newspaper inserts, telephone, mail, DMV offices, at meetings, and through newsletters.

For the most part, the state, regional, and local government officers responding to our telephone inquiries, demonstrate that "planners should not be afraid to experiment on a trial-and-error basis" in regards to citizen participation techniques. [28] Because of the diversity of agencies, plans, goals, and projects, there is no one best participation strategy. An examination of these various state approaches reveals an important common thread: the use of multiple techniques in trying to elicit greater citizen participation. Another commonality among successful public participation programs is that fact that they are program or issue specific. If there is flexibility built into the participation process, techniques for citizen involvement can be structured around the community’s unique needs and characteristics. Despite the legal mandates to hold public meetings, there is no *one* type of participation format that works in all circumstances. Public involvement coordinators must structure their efforts according to (1) the

scope of the project, (2) the saliency or controversy of the project, and (3) past participation successes or failures within the coordinator's jurisdiction-- in other words, learn from your mistakes. In sum, there are a few characteristics that most successful programs have in common:

- Early citizen involvement
- Multiple participation strategies and techniques
- A meaningful role for citizens
- Objective, fair, and responsive agency attitudes [28]

The appendix includes a list of techniques that have been used by various transportation agencies (for a more complete analysis see, *Innovations in Public Involvement for Transportation Planning*). They range in size, scope and cost. Although not entirely comprehensive, it does provide a synopsis of the more popular participation strategies that are being used by transportation departments in the United States.

CHAPTER 5

MAIL SURVEY OF TRANSPORTATION PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICERS

The following are the results from a mail survey that was sent to 107 individuals with some sort of citizen participation responsibility within the transportation planning process. A total of 61 responses were returned, meaning fifty-seven percent responded. This is a very good return rate. This survey of other transportation agencies was used to ascertain what types of measures they employ in acquiring citizen input into the planning process and what level of satisfaction they have had with these methods. A total of seven questions were asked (the mail survey form is included in Appendix III). The first two questions are aimed at understanding what methods agencies most frequently use to obtain customer (driver/voter) input into their planning and investment decisions, and how satisfied they are with each. Questions three, four and five ask whether there have been any initiatives or referendums on transportation plans or taxes in their jurisdiction in the last five years and whether or not they have been approved or rejected, and what factor they believe was most decisive in the voters' decision. Question six asks how adequate the funding in their agency is for eliciting citizen participation. And the final question asks the respondent at what stage of transportation planning their agency usually tries to elicit public participation.

Taken together, these returned surveys are very helpful in understanding what other agencies across the nation are doing to elicit more and more effective citizen participation. Although the number of returned surveys prohibit one from making too broad generalizations, they do allow for interesting and helpful analysis and comparison. The following discussion is dedicated to breaking down this survey and drawing some conclusions.

The first question asked "what are the methods you most frequently use to obtain customer (driver/voter) input to your planning and investment decisions." The respondent was instructed to check up to four out of a total of 15 possible methods. The following table lists those that were most often cited and the percentage of this total.

Table 1

What are the methods you most frequently use to obtain customer (driver-voter) input to your planning and investment decisions.

Method	Number of Times Cited	Percentage of Total
Public meetings and hearings	60	98
Citizen's advisory committees	40	66
Media strategies	34	56
Citizen survey	23	38
Collaborative task force	16	26
Focus groups	15	25
Visioning	13	21
Facilitation	11	18
Transportation fair	9	15
Drop-in-center	9	15
Telephone techniques	7	11
Video techniques	6	10
Brainstorming	6	10
Charette	5	8
Other	5	8

Unsurprisingly, public meetings and hearings were cited most often for they are required in all states by law. Therefore, among the optional strategies available, citizen's advisory committees, media strategies and citizen surveys, rank highest among those surveyed. Those who cited "other" used newsletters, a public luncheon, an open-house, and a county fair exposition.

The next question asked "how satisfied are you with the four participation techniques you have been most frequently using?" Respondents were to rank with 1 being the lowest level of satisfaction and 10 being the highest level of satisfaction each of the four they checked. The following table lists those methods in order that received the highest level of mean (average) satisfaction out of a possible score of ten.

Table 2

How satisfied are you with the four participation techniques you have been most frequently using?

Method	Number of Times Cited	Mean Satisfaction
Video techniques	6	8.5
Drop-in-center	9	8.0
Focus groups	15	7.7
Citizen survey	23	7.6
Collaborative task force	16	7.6
Facilitation	11	7.5
Citizen's advisory committees	40	7.3
Visioning	13	7.3
Media strategies	34	6.8
Telephone techniques	7	6.8
Brainstorming	6	6.8
Charette	5	6.6
Public meetings and hearings	60	6.5
Transportation fair	9	6.3
Other		
Newsletters	3	9.3
Open-house	1	10.0
County fair exposition	1	8.0
Public luncheon	1	10.0

This table allows one to see what public participation strategies are being most often used and how successfully they are rated. It is important to note, however, both the number of times the method has been cited and the method's rated success. For instance, although video techniques had the highest mean satisfaction, only six respondents reported using this strategy. This can be taken in two different ways. Either the number is too small to take this ranking seriously or not enough agencies are utilizing a highly successful method of garnering public participation.

Despite some of these inherent problems, a number of interesting points can be gleaned from these findings. First, although public meetings and hearings are used most often in gathering citizen input, it is ranked next to last in its effectiveness. This finding is consistent with the literature that shows that while most often used, the federally mandated and most traditional strategy of gathering public information is not very effective. Second, focus groups and citizen surveys, although only moderately cited, rank quite high in their overall effectiveness. This is again consistent with the literature that shows a combination of large-scale survey research combined with a more in-depth and qualitative focus group methodology to be highly effective. Third, the use of media strategies and citizen's advisory committees, two of the most popular ways to elicit public involvement, are ranked only moderately successful. Finally, the use of video

techniques and drop-in-centers appear to be particularly effective. This success should be qualified however due to the small number of those who reported using these methods.

Questions three and four of the survey asked whether there "have been any initiatives or referendums on transportation plans or taxes in your jurisdiction in the last five years" and whether these initiatives or referenda have been approved or rejected. Twenty-three respondents (thirty-eight percent) reported that there had been initiatives or referenda, while thirty-seven (sixty-two percent) answered that there were no such initiatives or referenda.

Among those that answered positively, sixteen (sixty-four percent) reported that these plans were approved, while nine (thirty-six percent) reported that they were rejected. These findings are once again consistent with the literature that shows a high percentage of transportation plans or taxes being rejected by voters. This highlights the importance of ensuring that good and timely citizen input is incorporated into transportation planning to ensure that agency funds, time and other resources are not wasted.

Table three refers to answers given to the question of "how adequate is the funding for your agency for eliciting citizen participation?" A total of fifty-seven respondents answered. The frequency and total percentage are given.

Table 3
How adequate is the funding to your agency for eliciting citizen participation?

<u>Adequacy</u>	<u>Number of Times Cited</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
Excellent	6	11
Very good	9	16
Good	10	18
Satisfactory	19	33
Poor	13	23
Very poor	0	0

Answers to this question show that a majority of respondents believe funding for participation is satisfactory or better (seventy-seven percent).

This survey also allows a very limited correlational analysis to be made among questions. We attempt to show the relationship among question number three (have these plans or taxes been approved or rejected by voters) and question one (methods most frequently). Table four shows the relationship between those agencies that reported that any initiatives or referendums on transportation plans or taxes in their jurisdiction in the last five years had been approved or rejected and the methods they most frequently use to obtain customer input.

Table 4

Approved/disapproved plans or taxes and method of eliciting public input

Method	Approved(14)	Rejected(6)
Drop-in-centers	7%	0%
Focus groups	26%	33%
Citizen survey	36%	17%
Collaborative task force	36%	0%
Facilitation	21%	33%
Citizen advisory committee	79%	50%
Visioning	21%	17%
Media strategies	57%	33%
Telephone techniques	21%	0%
Brainstorming	14%	17%
Charette	7%	17%
Public meeting	100%	100%
Transportation fair	21%	0%

Although the correlations between these questions for such a small sample should not be considered definitive, it is interesting to note the public participation methods that are being used by those who have had success with the voters differs somewhat from the methods used by jurisdictions whose proposals were rejected by voters. The legally required “public meetings” were held in 100% of the cases. Beyond this, though, it would appear that more aggressive and “customer-friendly” outreach efforts (collaborative task force, citizen advisory committees, media strategies, telephone techniques, citizen surveys, and transportation fairs) seem to be more highly correlated with successful ballot propositions.

A comparison between the approval of plans or taxes and the level of funding adequacy is also interesting. Among those that answered that they have had any initiatives or referendums on transportation plans or taxes approved in the last five years, two said their funding for public participation was excellent, one said very good, two good, three satisfactory, and three poor. Thus, it appears that among those whom responded to this survey and have been successful in getting plans or taxes approved by voters, the level of funding for public participation appears to not be a factor. More than half of those with voter approved referenda claim that their level of funding for citizen participation is only satisfactory or poor.

The final question asked in the survey is "at what stage of transportation planning do you usually try to elicit public participation?" Although an open-ended question, answers tended to fall into one of three groups: (1)early in the planning process, (2)at multiple stages or all stages of the planning process, or (3)at the final stages. Only two respondents indicated that they usually elicit public participation only in the final stages of the planning process, while a clear majority answered that they seek this information early or at multi-stages or all stages of the transportation planning process.

CHAPTER 6

FOCUS GROUPS

FOCUS GROUP 1: FLAGSTAFF VOTING CITIZENS

On September 16, 1996 a focus group was held in Flagstaff, AZ concerning transportation issues and policy. This focus group consisted of six members of the greater Flagstaff community who voted in November 1995, but did not have a strong opinion on the “Peaks Parkway” Project referendum.

The focus group lasted two hours and consisted of two primary sections. During the first hour, the group discussed the general importance of transportation issues and participation in ADOT planning. The second half of the session was devoted directly to communication between the public and ADOT.

The following analysis will synthesize some of the most important themes coming out of this focus group. While focus groups help researchers probe more qualitative information, it must be noted that one should not try to make direct correlations with a larger population. The sample size is simply too small. This notwithstanding, there are several interesting conclusions from this focus group.

The Importance of Transportation Issues

The first area concerned transportation issues in general. To begin, the discussants in the focus group were asked about the importance of transportation issues. Nearly all respondents stated that transportation issues were not among the most important issues, however, almost half mentioned “growth” as an issue of concern, which, inevitably includes transportation problems. When probed more about transportation planning, the focus group concluded that “it seems as though transportation planning lags behind other social and community factors.” Some of the more important transportation issues identified by the focus group include mass transit, safer and wider roads, toll roads, a downtown parking or shuttle system, and a more affordable airport.

Motivation and Incentives

Second, the focus group addressed the question of why they would be motivated to participate in these issues. The answers varied considerably. Some members of the group were motivated by personal inconveniences and related NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) factors, others were more interested in the issues because of *a priori* beliefs about how government should have

a proactive role in civic society and so forth. Most members agreed that personal telephone calls and word of mouth have the strongest capability to “get them out of the house.”

Communication

The third major area of discussion revolved around ways of communicating between the public and ADOT. The most consistent theme that developed in this portion of the focus group was the idea that people respond to different modes of communication. Some people read the local paper, some watch television news, others read all their mail, so as far as ADOT communicating to the public, the focus group overwhelmingly suggested that ADOT follow a “shotgun” approach. Most agreed that if they see or hear something twice they will pay more attention.

A related theme is how the focus group would prefer to communicate to ADOT. Again, the group had a variety of preferences and said ADOT should solicit public opinion in a multitude of ways. The differences primarily hinged upon the size of group meeting. Several members said they endorse large public hearings as a means of voicing their opinions. Others feared speaking in public and favored a more intimate setting where they could talk one on one with “the decision makers.” All focus group members concurred that they liked to communicate through large citizen surveys.

Agency Attitudes

The fifth theme evolving from this group was the overall attitude of government officials. The members agreed that ADOT would get their continued participation and approval if they felt like they were being listened to and taken seriously. The importance of administrative attitudes was a common theme not only in this focus group, but also in the telephone and mail surveys we conducted. If planners leave out the public until the final stages of project implementation, the focus group members concluded that their voices would be effectively “silenced.” Again, the importance of public participation starting from the “needs assessment” stage on seems to be a critical factor in successful citizen involvement programs.

Elites and Performance

On related issues, four of the six members in the focus group stated that political and administrative “elites” control the issues and do not sufficiently recognize the public. Two members stated that they had little faith in ADOT getting something done within budget. On a scale of one to ten with one being the best, no focus group member rated ADOT above a five. This number is interesting especially since the majority of members also stated they did not know much about ADOT. If they knew more about ADOT’s programs and public participation efforts, their ratings would might be higher.

Lack of Vision

The sixth and final theme from this focus group is that some members felt that ADOT had a “band-aid” approach to planning. They felt as though transportation problems were being addressed in a very fragmented and cumbersome fashion. Several members suggested that ADOT conduct a long term visioning project for the state so growing communities like Flagstaff can better plan and manage their community’s transportation needs.

FOCUS GROUP 2: ACTIVE OPPONENTS OF THE SCENIC PEAKS PARKWAY, FLAGSTAFF, AZ

This focus group was also conducted on September 16, 1996. It consisted of seven persons that were recruited as “active opponents” of the “Scenic Peaks Parkway Initiative” that was presented to Flagstaff voters in the Spring of 1996. Members of the group were chosen because they took a pro-active role in stopping this initiative. Members actively protested, signed petitions, and attended a variety of public meetings, among other activities. Group members opposed the Parkway for varying reasons, but environmental and neighborhood concerns were most common.

The session was broken into three parts. The first part was dedicated to the specifics of the Peaks Parkway issue and how it relates to citizen participation in the transportation process, the second part was more generally concerned with ADOT, citizen participation and transportation planning, and the last section of the focus group was a more free-flowing discussion of ADOT, the public, and the communication process.

It is important to note that although the focus group centered its attention on ADOT, the conversation often drifted to the city level of government. Some members were unclear what role ADOT even played in the process, thus directed some of their criticism to the city of Flagstaff. Nevertheless, members had much to say about the role of citizen participation in the transportation planning process, whether it be spearheaded by the city or by ADOT.

Instead of a discussion of each question posed to the group, a number of themes that ran throughout the session are reviewed. They are the following: The importance of listening, early involvement, increased and better access to decision makers, the need to better explore alternatives, the perceived dominance of special interests, and a mistrust of the agency and the city.

The Importance of Listening

Members of the group were adamant and in unison in regard to the importance of listening to the public. Participants felt that the staging of multiple public meetings is not the equivalent of listening to the public. Every member agreed that the public’s feelings about the Parkway were known by the city of Flagstaff and ADOT (the same issue has been rejected by voters on numerous previous occasions), but were either ignored or slighted. “Listen to the public before

you act” was a common theme that was reiterated throughout the session. One member in particular desired the use of old and new citizen surveys to better gauge public opinion.

Some discussants believed that the use of public meetings is actually a deterrent to citizen participation and one called it a mistake to believe that 32 public meetings means public input has been taken. This “dog and pony show” overwhelms the public with the number of meetings it has to attend if its input is to be taken into account. One member felt the process was inherently unfair because whereas the agency has to win only once to build the road, the citizenry has to win every time it is presented to stop it.

Early Involvement

A common thread throughout the session was the dubious nature of citizen participation “after the fact.” Many members felt as though they were excluded from the decision making process until it was too late to make any serious changes in the plan. Thus, many members felt forced into opposition because they were not involved early enough in the process.

The Need for Specifics and an Explanation

Members of the focus group were also certain of the need for more detailed specifics of proposed plans and a reasonable explanation of each as well. All believed that the parkway was too conceptual in nature and not detailed enough. One member declared that because ADOT spends taxpayer money, the public has a right to see and understand a comprehensive “blueprint” of proposed plans. This must include the ultimate cost of the project and the reasoning behind it. Members of the group believed that there are much more pressing traffic and transportation issues in the city beside the parkway issue, and are confused why these issues fail to be addressed.

More Access to Decision Makers

Participants felt that they and especially those stakeholders most affected by a transportation plan should have increased and easier access to relevant decision makers. Members expressed the need to know who is involved in a plan and how they can be reached for question and comment. Moreover, once these decision makers are identified, the group believed they should be held accountable for their decisions.

Related to this concern was the group’s confusion with how ADOT was related to this transportation project. Members heard conflicting accounts of ADOT’s position and hoped for a clearer position in the future.

The Exploration of Alternatives

The focus group repeatedly told of how they wished the city and ADOT would have explored other options and alternatives to the parkway. They believed there are more important transportation issues that need to be addressed in Flagstaff and “Phoenix’s solutions aren’t our solutions.”

Special Interests

Participants expressed a common belief that the Scenic Peaks Parkway being reintroduced and relabeled as such was the result of “special interests” that dominate the planning process. Members saw ADOT as part of a larger problem of governmental “arrogance” that serves special and not the public interest. Some members believed the parkway would benefit a few wealthy landowners, and some believed it would benefit tourists, but none believed it would benefit the general Flagstaff citizenry.

Mistrust

The focus group communicated a deep mistrust of not only ADOT, but of their city government as well. In fact, many members voiced their belief that this focus group was being conducted by ADOT to strategically control further opposition to the Parkway so it can be passed the next time it is introduced. Moreover, many felt that proponents of the project actively sought out pro-parkway public opinion in order to show public support. The belief that citizen participation is often symbolic and used in a manipulative fashion in the transportation planning process was also a recurring theme. One member proclaimed that “they really don’t want to hear what the people think.”

CHAPTER 7

RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The importance of communication between the citizenry and government has long been a recognized premise. James Madison observed in the Federalist Papers, that a “popular government without popular information or a means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce or tragedy, or perhaps both.” As this report has indicated, citizen involvement in administrative planning is of utmost importance in our democratic system of government. Effective public participation is a “win-win” situation for both the public and government agencies. For members of the public, participation and communication with their government helps them stay informed and have an impact on government decision making. This, in turn, increases citizen confidence and trust in government agencies and officials. Voter confidence helps projects get financed either through the legislature or the ballot box. Citizen participation throughout the planning process also helps ensure a satisfactory policy outcome suitable for the agency and interested citizens and groups.

This final chapter is, in many ways, a succinct summary of the themes and conclusions discussed throughout the previous chapters. The recommendations stated herein are based on the cumulative evidence collected and analyzed in this research project including the focus groups, mail survey, telephone interviews, and literature review. The following recommendations are intended for all government agencies interested in improving public participation and acceptance of agency plans and proposals. The recommendations are grouped into five general areas:

- 1) *Purpose*. This includes the responsibility of the agency to answer some fundamental questions about why they are interested in public participation.
- 2) *Timing*. This section discusses the importance of early and continuing citizen involvement.
- 3) *Techniques*. This area recommends certain participation techniques and discusses the importance of varying agency communication strategies according to different local needs.
- 4) *Administrative Organization*. Two issues are critically important to administrative organization: structure and personnel. Specific recommendations are offered for each issue area.

- 5) *Public Involvement Plans*. This is a discussion of the necessity and worthiness of a formal document that acts as a guide not only for agencies soliciting and organizing public involvement, but also for citizens and groups interested in transportation issues.

PURPOSE

Before any government agency can realistically expect to have an active communication channel with citizens and community groups, they need to answer the fundamental question of why they seek public input in the first place. While there is not necessarily one correct answer to this question, it is important because it informs the attitude of agencies and government employees. Throughout our research, but especially in the focus groups, we observed a recurring cynicism and mistrust toward government officials by citizens. Certainly this phenomenon stems from a variety of factors, but several are paramount and worth noting. First, there is a concern among citizens that government officials simply put on “dog and pony shows” in which comments are formally solicited and then informally ignored. Instead, agencies wanting more public involvement and support should facilitate serious dialogue that fosters listening and cooperation by all parties involved in the process. For example, if an agency approaches a public meeting like it’s merely another federally mandated stage in a systematic process, it is quite apparent that public involvement is not important to the agency, and citizens will likely realize this. This is contrasted for example by the Idaho and Maine Departments of Transportation who have devolved much of the initial decision making (needs assessment, agenda setting) to regional advisory committees made up of a wide variety of individuals from the region. For Idaho and Maine, citizen involvement is more than procedure, it has a substantive impact on agency decision making that begins very early in the process.

A second reason for the mistrust of government officials is because citizens feel like “special interests” and government elites dominate the issues. Agencies could do several things to alleviate this concern including having improved access to decision makers and offering citizens the opportunity to evaluate a wide variety of alternatives-- not just a narrow set of unappealing choices. Techniques and strategies will be discussed below in more detail.

The third major contributing factor toward the growing mistrust of government agencies and their plans and projects is reflected in Julie Arnstein’s “Ladder of Citizen Involvement” (Discussed in Chapter 2). In effect, the rungs on this ladder represent a continuum of agency attitudes toward citizen involvement. Agencies simply striving to inform the public through one-way channels of communication are in effect fueling the fire of citizen pessimism toward government. This reflects back to the original question of why an agency seeks public involvement. If the purpose behind an agency’s participation programs is manipulating or jumping through required hoops, then that agency will fail to enjoy the benefits of wide-ranging citizen support.

TIMING

The issue to be discussed here is when and how often citizen participation should occur. Because each agency and project is different there is not one universal answer. However, we found an overwhelming consensus in the focus groups, mail surveys, telephone interviews, and participation literature to involve citizens from the very beginning of the decision making process. Depending on the project or decision, the exact format of participation will vary as will the duration of involvement. For example, early citizen involvement entailed community “scoping” meetings for Coconino County’s Kachina Project, but in Maine, citizens sit on regional advisory committees which are charged with broad decision making authority.

A second major recommendation for the timing of citizen participation is that it occur throughout the decision making process. This was especially confirmed in the focus groups and mail survey. As one mail survey respondent indicated, their agency incorporates public involvement “before the goals, objectives and strategies are formulated in draft by the agency” and then “during formulation of alternative plans, goals, objectives, *et al.*, and at the public review stage of plans, goals, objectives and strategies.” The degree to which the public will continue to be involved will also vary depending on the size of the agency and the breadth of its constituents. Devices such as mailing lists and internet sites will be discussed below as a means of sustaining continued public involvement.

TECHNIQUES

The number one recommendation with regard to techniques and strategies for public involvement is that they must be diverse. Different techniques serve different purposes in soliciting and gauging to public opinion. After an agency answers the question of why they seek public involvement, they need to articulate the needs of both the agency and the public. As previously discussed in Chapter Three, an agency ought to independently analyze each situation to determine what techniques would be most effective for that particular context. As we pointed out earlier, three factors are important: 1) agency conditions; 2) community characteristics; and 3) the transportation issue.

We outline a wide variety of techniques in Appendix II, but we want to highlight several here. First, while public meetings are the most common form of communication, they are also the least effective. After a lengthy conversation with a Virginia Public Involvement Official, we strongly endorse their “modified” public meeting format that allows citizens to talk one-on-one with planners and engineers instead of through a microphone in front of an audience. The citizens in this format have the opportunity to watch a continuous video and can come and go at their leisure.

Several states including Maine and Idaho and cities like Flagstaff, Arizona have been successful with long-term and short-term regional advisory committees consisting of diverging interests and community members. Citizens are much more likely to participate in transportation

issues at the local level and a regional citizens committee will be more successful at communicating with local citizens.

The use of large citizen surveys has also proven to be a successful technique although they must be truly representative of the public. In addition, we recommend that large scale citizen surveys be matched with citizen focus groups to follow up on the important trends found in the large scale surveys. Taken together, these large-scale quantitative surveys with the more qualitative oriented focus groups provide an excellent indicator of how the public feels about an issue and where it stands.

Another effective technique that works well for maintaining open lines of communication is the use of a newsletter and/or mailing list. The best situation is a quarterly newsletter that gets sent to business stakeholders and community groups. However, not all agencies have the means to publish and distribute a newsletter. For individual projects, it is recommended that the agency send the minutes of public meetings to individuals on a mailing list. Names should be generated and added to the list each time a new name appears in the register at community meetings.

ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION

This section is concerned with the organizational structure of government offices. Specifically, we will discuss recommendations for 1) staffing and 2) allocating appropriate resources for the difficult job of soliciting and organizing citizen involvement.

Another important area for an agency seeking the benefits of public participation concerns the agency's structure and personnel. Specifically, if an agency decides it wants or needs active and informed citizen participation, it needs sufficient staff and resources to pursue this laborious and time-consuming task. Organizing and recruiting citizen participation in the planning process is definitely not an easy task and usually demands a full-time staff actively monitoring and soliciting public involvement throughout the process using a variety of methods.

During this time of government cutbacks and budget deficits, agencies are going to have a difficult time convincing legislators and others that they need a full-time staff just for public involvement. If a complete staff is not feasible, then an agency should at least attempt to hire one full time public involvement officer. And if this is not politically or economically possible, we recommend that current staff members who already work with the public, undergo extensive training on some of the newer techniques and strategies outlined in this report. Like we mentioned earlier, it is unfair to expect a career engineer or transportation planner to double as a citizen involvement coordinator when they may not have the time, skills, and perhaps most important, an attitude that fosters a healthy and active citizen involvement process. Despite the budget and political constraints our mail survey results indicated that successful citizen participation programs were not directly correlated to excellent funding. If an agency values citizen feedback, it will allocate sufficient resources for the sometimes difficult process.

Related to the staffing recommendations, it is important that an agency allocate appropriate and sufficient resources for the job of coordinating citizen involvement. Of course, this includes the necessary space and office items for the staff, both at agency headquarters and out in the “field” -- where most of the work will actually be done. Probably the most important recommendation in terms of agency organization, staffing, and resources however, is that agencies must budget for the fact that public involvement takes lots of time, not only because the general planning process is lengthy, but also because most citizens will have to be educated on the very process itself. The latter is especially true when an agency uses more innovative techniques such as citizen advisory committees, internet home-pages, and alternative forms of public meetings. In fact, Patsy Napier, a Virginia Department of Transportation Senior Transportation Engineer in the Public Involvement Section, commented that educating the citizens on the process -- and budgeting the necessary time for this activity -- was one of the larger obstacles facing successful public participation in Virginia.

In conclusion, we will review three areas in which Daniel Barber claims government agencies are most likely to feel stress. These illustrate the immense organizational difficulties an agency will usually encounter on the way to enjoying the fruits of public participation. First, agencies will typically feel stressed by the time required for staff to develop and administer the numerous activities contained in a citizen involvement program. Second, an agency organization may feel stressed due to the staffing and administrative costs that are incurred in the participation process. And third, Barber concludes that there are “attitudinal constraints” on the part of the staff’s commitment to

- a) maintenance of a strong relationship between the technical planning activities and the public involvement program;
- b) accepting a more open process;
- c) understanding and coping with “middlemen” problems (the tendency to place the staff between the public and the policy maker, and between the local agencies and the policy body); and
- d) resolving the inherent uncertainties (schedules, products, and specific activities) associated with an active public involvement program.[13]

Barber’s three areas of “stress” should be taken very seriously by all involved in the agency planning process. It is hoped that if an agency is aware of the potential obstacles or difficulties associated with public participation, they will be able to compensate and plan ahead by (1) employing and training the necessary staff and (2) allocating a proportionate or sufficient amount of agency resources necessary to implement a proactive participation program.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLANS

Finally it is recommended that all agencies seeking to build a long-term relationship with the public through a proactive public involvement program, should develop and utilize a formal Public Involvement Plan (PIP). Several examples of useful PIPs have been discussed in this report including those designed by the Pima Association of Governments and the Greater New

Orleans Advisory Council.[30][31] While recommended by ISTEA, we found through our telephone survey that the use of PIPs is not as comprehensive as previously anticipated. Furthermore, we found that many government agencies have outdated and severely under-used PIPs. This is problematic for several reasons. First, it is testimony to fact that the agency is less than serious about public involvement. Second, without some type of published document available to agency officials, there is little guidance for agency staff attempting to inform and solicit citizens. As a result, public involvement is carried out in an inconsistent manner with results that are mediocre at best. Third, if an agency fails to have an accessible PIP or it is outdated, the public has a more difficult time learning about the participation and planning processes. On the other hand, if a government agency puts its PIP on the internet, in libraries and other public places, and makes it available at meetings, etc., the public will be more knowledgeable about what that agency does, and how citizens can get involved in the decision making process.

CONCLUSION

To achieve improved public participation and acceptance of plans and projects an agency must first want to improve public participation. It seems clear -- through the focus groups, telephone interviews, and mail surveys that acceptance of plans and projects is directly related to improved and effective public participation. Citizen support and approval is a common goal sought by agencies, but agencies rarely enjoy these benefits if they continually ignore, silence, or try to placate the public. By building a mutually cooperative relationship with the diverse array of citizens, an agency's plans and programs will be well known and more likely accepted because citizens and groups will have helped design them from the outset. Through an active and diverse communication process with the public, there will be less community polarization, more information and feedback for both the agency and public, and as a result, more policies that are not just passively accepted, but actively supported by the public.

Certainly these results do not come overnight. They entail a sometimes tedious and frustrating journey through our purposively fragmented and inefficient administrative system in the United States. Nevertheless, this report has illustrated both the potential difficulties and benefits of a proactive citizen participation program. Techniques and strategies will always need to be refined and, in some cases, terminated. However, if an agency employs a wide variety of techniques, they are most apt to cultivate a strong working relationship with the public. Going to the public can sometimes be a risky proposition for government agencies, but the results of this study indicate that it is a risk worth taking.

APPENDIX I: ELICITING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The following are some selected responses to question seven, "at what stage of transportation planning do you usually try to elicit public participation?"

- Early in the process ads are run and mass mailings are conducted to solicit names of residents and citizens interested in receiving project information via mail. Groups and community associations are identified and outreach meetings are conducted (if relevant). On larger projects public workshops are conducted prior to adoption of "purpose and need."
- Very early and throughout-continuous. We have formed a close alliance with the chamber of commerce transportation committee, meeting at least monthly to discuss plans, programs, air quality conformity, and specific projects.
- For major projects, consensus building begins prior to the onset of the EIS process. We have used the MIS/AA processes to narrow the range of viable alternatives and to "test the water" for citizen support or opposition. All RTP/TIP amendments go through a 60 day public review and comment period that includes a series of workshops and a formal public hearing.
- THROUGHOUT! Our goal is early and continuous public participation. Our community team provided policy oversight for our long range transportation plan process and six vision statements to guide development of the Plan. A two-year visioning process for the urbanized area was so successful that it will be the basis for a regional visioning process.
- Trying to get people to realize input is best at the local level, i.e., city council level. Regional MPO level is too late most of the time to be meaningful.
- At several stages...first to provide direction as to what programs or projects would be supported by the public, and second to provide comment and suggestions on the specifics of such projects or programs as they are being developed.
- Throughout. Especially initial brainstorm and draft report.
- As early as possible, when identifying the problem or concerns of the community used as a basis for developing the policies, goals, objectives and implementation priorities.

The method or technique used varies on the topic and timeline for plan development. For a recent transportation plan development, public participation was promoted through a citizen advisory committee, elected officials, local neighborhood councils, a community fair and presentations to local road, trail development and maintenance organizations, among others.

- At the very beginning, once the groups are on-board they will support the process, due to a sense of belonging.
- Early on through announcements in our newsletter.
- In the initial phase, we usually put a focus group or a citizen advisory committee together prior to any detailed analysis.
- Our public involvement process provides for early and continuous involvement. Generally, a series of regional meetings is held three times annually, as well as targeted involvement conducted on an as needed basis. Ongoing methods include conducting open meetings with the opportunity for public comment, producing newsletters and providing presentations.
- Prior to developing goals and objectives.
- Continuous effort; however, key activities are:
 - 1) Preplanning - to determine a need at system level
 - 2) Program review and TIP preparation
 - 3) Location study and selection of alternatives
 - 4) Design phase.
- As early as possible; however, the less detailed the issue or project, the more difficult it is to get a broad, diverse turnout. Also, many agencies do outreach because they have to, not because they want to shape or accomplish anything positive.
- Very early stages of the planning process, i.e., developing issues, developing alternatives to address issues, selection of alternatives, review of preferred alternatives, modal plans, prioritization process, project development, location, design.
- We try to elicit public participation early in the transportation planning process. We have used our Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) to help draft and review our public involvement procedures which identifies how we will seek public input in our planning process. As examples of early involvement, our CAC identified projects from our regional transportation plan that they felt were important enough to be placed into our Transportation Improvement Program. When developing our regional transportation plan, we sought public input-review of our goals and objectives and development of

draft listings of proposed projects. The CAC chair also participated in all discussion of the regional plan with agency technical staff.

- As early as possible - But we still get last minute negative participants.
- From start up to completion, we've attempted to elicit public participation at the various milestones of a project.
- As early as possible. We are completing a three-year visioning-policy-budget exercise on a new long-range regional transportation plan through extensive task force and outreach effort. Discussions of controversial issues are *much better* handled at this stage than at the project level.
- Through methods such as our quarterly newsletter and internet web site, we try to involve the public very early in the process.
- (1) Before the goals, objectives and strategies are formulated in draft by the agency
(2) During formulation of alternative plans, goals, objectives, *et al.*, and at the public review stage of plans, goals, objectives and strategies.
- The transportation fairs allow the public to provide input opinions on projects that do not currently exist (as well as projects which are in development.) That provides a very early opportunity. Public information meetings are also held for corridor studies-feasibility studies which allow for early public input and facilitates consensus building.

APPENDIX II: SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT TECHNIQUES

FOCUS GROUPS

A focus group is used to gauge in-depth opinions of community members through an informal, interactive, and conversational oriented meeting. A small number of people either randomly or purposefully selected are asked a few questions and allowed to elaborate as much as possible and steer the group in any number of ways. This method of citizen involvement allows an agency a better and more comprehensive understanding of various problems and issues. Successfully used in New York, Illinois, and Los Angeles.

PUBLIC MEETINGS AND HEARINGS

Public meetings and hearings are forums designed to elicit citizen comments and disseminate important information. Public hearings are generally more formal than is a public meeting and are usually federally required. Both should attempt to engage a representative segment of the population and be as open possible. These meetings and hearings facilitate participation and can provide for citizen input at various stages of the planning process. Public meetings and hearings are widely used throughout the states, with some areas (Atlanta, Georgia and Bridgeport, Connecticut) successfully linking the two.

CHARETTE

A charette is an agency conducted meeting to resolve a problem or issue. Under agency supervision, a time-limit is set, and a diverse range of participants define the problem and try to reach consensus on an appropriate solution. It is often used in the early stages of the planning process to address problems and issues that may arise, and can be used later to resolve them. It also allows citizens to ask questions and influence outcome before decisions are already made. Successfully used in Florida and Knoxville, Tennessee, the latter using it to formulate alternatives to a controversial highway project.

VISIONING

Visioning is a process whereby an agency actively solicits citizen help in setting generalized priorities and a goals statement. It focuses on long-range issues with a 20 to 30 year

time horizon. It seeks an array of citizen opinions through public meetings and surveys. With this input, the agency is able to better understand the goals and priorities of the larger citizenry. Successfully used in Ohio, New Jersey, Washington, Georgia, and Oklahoma.

BRAINSTORMING

Brainstorming involves a diverse range of participants used to generate new and fresh ideas to various problems and issues. Participants generate as many possible solutions as they can, without initial comment or evaluation. These ideas can then be prioritized and evaluated in order to reach some type of group consensus. It is valuable in that new and creative answers to new and old problems are often the result. Successfully used in Atlanta and Cape Cod, Massachusetts to develop and guide transportation planning.

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A citizens advisory committee is a representative group of stakeholders that are given a periodic opportunity to discuss and comment on various agency issues and concerns. Members should be diverse and given equal status once on the committee. The agency and the public will together determine what constitutes a "stakeholder." The committee must have an important role in the process if it is to be run and taken seriously. Successfully used in Louisiana, Florida, and Portland, Maine where a CAC, with agency help designed a long-range transportation plan.

DROP-IN-CENTERS

Drop-in-centers are accessible agency offices that may be stationary, mobile, temporary, or permanent that provides program or project information to the citizenry. These convenient centers are staffed with a knowledgeable representative who may educate and inform as well as record questions and comments.

COLLABORATIVE TASK FORCE

A collaborative task force is an assembly of diverse interests assigned to a specific task with a time limit to arrive at some type of consensus. Used at the project level or for resolving problems within a project, a task force is able to choose its own method of dealing with a problem or assigned issue. Its recommendations are subject to ratification by official decision-makers. Successfully used in Boston, Fort Worth, and Maine.

MEDIA STRATEGIES

Media strategies attempt to inform and educate the public by disseminating agency, program or project information through newspapers, radio, TV, videos, posters, mass mailings, brochures, newsletters, and flyers. Media strategies are particularly important when a program or project requires public focus, consensus, and understanding. The more these goals are met, the more people should participate. Successfully used in San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington, D.C.

FACILITATION

Facilitation is guidance by a neutral group leader toward a specific issue or project problem. The group must consist of a cross-section of representative stakeholders who together with the facilitator focus on a specific task or limited issue. Discussion is guided by the facilitator and participants are seen as equal contributors. The facilitator's primary goal is to find points of agreement among the group members and arrive at a conclusion through a process of give-and-take. Successfully used in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Washington, and Maine.

TRANSPORTATION FAIR

A transportation fair is used to present information to the public about the agency and various programs or projects as well as to elicit casual citizen input. Exhibits, videos, maps or models of projects are some of the exhibits that can be used. Its chief objective is to improve citizen awareness and interest. A fair keeps attendees (self-selected) informed and up-to-date on various transportation-related matters. Successfully used in New Jersey and Boston, Massachusetts.

CITIZEN SURVEYS

A citizen survey is used not to garner increased public participation, but to assess widespread public opinion. These surveys can be formally or informally done and may or may not be representative of the larger population. Through written questionnaires or telephone interviews, a randomly selected or targeted audience is asked carefully constructed questions regarding the agency, program, or project. Citizen surveys generally give broadly applicable results that enhance agency comprehension of a problem or issue. Successfully used in Seattle, Ohio, Oregon, California, and Pennsylvania among others.

TELEPHONE TECHNIQUES

There are several telephone techniques that can be used to elicit public participation, i.e., information bureau, e-mail queries, hotline or voice bulletin boards, telethons, electronic town

meeting, interactive cable TV information, etcetera. Telephone techniques are interactive and used to initiate a conversation or query. These techniques have the potential to engage a wide array of citizens in agency-related matters. Successfully used in Iowa, Georgia, and Washington, D.C.

VIDEO TECHNIQUES

Video techniques are recorded and oral messages that attempt to educate and inform the public on any range of issues. They are a one-way communication device that can stimulate interest and target an audience that is attracted to the medium. These videos can be made available in local TV stations, libraries, agency locations, video stores, or distributed by the agency directly to the citizen. They are also useful in helping stakeholders understand the impacts of various programs or projects. Successfully used in Connecticut, New York, Montana, and Boston.

APPENDIX III: SURVEY FORM

HOW DO YOU COLLECT AND USE PUBLIC INFORMATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSPORTATION PLANS AND PROGRAMS?

1. What are the methods you most frequently use to obtain customer (driver-voter) input to your planning and investment decisions. Check up to four .		2. How satisfied are you with the four participation techniques you have been most frequently using? Please rank, with 1 being the lowest level of satisfaction and 10 being the highest level of satisfaction .									
<i>check</i>	<i>method</i>	<i>dissatisfied</i>					<i>satisfied</i>				
	Focus groups	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Public meetings and hearings	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Charette	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Visioning	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Brainstorming	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Citizen's advisory committee	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Drop-in-center	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Collaborative task force	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Media strategies	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Facilitation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Transportation fair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Citizen survey	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Telephone techniques	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Video techniques	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Other:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

3. Have there been any initiatives or referendums on transportation plans or taxes in your jurisdiction in the last five years?

Yes _____ No _____

4. Have these plans or taxes been approved or rejected by voters?

Approved _____ Rejected _____

5. In your opinion, what factor was most decisive in the voters' decision? Please explain.

6. In your opinion, how adequate is the funding to your agency for eliciting citizen participation?

- Excellent
- Very Good
- Good
- Satisfactory
- Poor
- Very Poor

7. At what stage of transportation planning do you usually try to elicit public participation?

Please mail completed survey in the enclosed postage-prepaid envelope.

Thank you.

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