Agenda Item 3

METROPOLITAN
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

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Memorandum

TO: Legislation Committee

DATE: June 5, 2009

FR: Executive Director

RE: Transportation 2035 Plan Public Involvement Program Evaluation

Unprecedented Public Involvement

The Transportation 2035 (T2035) Plan public involvement program, which concluded with the adoption of the plan in April, spanned more than two years, and included unprecedented outreach and involvement with a diverse mix of residents from every county in the region (see Attachment A for a summary). The program included a set of performance measures, reviewed with the Commission in October 2007, to track progress in meeting goals for diversity, reach, access, impact and participant satisfaction (see Attachment B).

This evaluation is based upon surveys taken of participants at the end of public meetings, as well as from a telephone survey conducted by MTC's outreach consultants, PMC, of select members of MTC's three advisory committees.

Measuring Our Performance

Based on responses from participants' meeting evaluations, MTC fared well in the areas of diversity, reach, access and impact. Highlights include some 10,000 individuals actively participating in the T2035 Plan development, excluding repeat attendance at meetings (versus a goal of 2,500), robust participation via MTC's Web site (some 50,000 "hits" were logged along with more than 3,000 completed Web surveys). MTC also met goals for accessibility, with transit-accessible meetings in all nine Bay Area counties and the option of language translation upon request.

In the area of participant satisfaction, however, there is room for improvement. While we easily met our goal of 60 percent of participants strongly agreeing or agreeing that we did a good job with providing access to meetings, sufficient opportunities to comment, educational value, clearer understanding of other perspectives and quality discussions, we garnered only 57 percent agreement that our materials were presented clearly in an appropriate level of detail. So while our issues and challenges are complex, we nonetheless need to continue to strive to simplify our language and presentations.

Joint Advisors Workshops

MTC pulled together members of all three advisory committees for 12 separate joint advisor workshops over the course of the T2035 Plan development. To gauge the value of these meetings, 31 advisors who had participated in at least four of these sessions were asked for their views. Of these, 22 were able to complete a telephone survey conducted by PMC. Two key findings emerged:

- The vast majority of advisors surveyed felt that the joint forums were a useful tool to learn about and discuss long-range transportation issues. Most concurred that the forums allowed members to hear different perspectives about mobility and were interested in having MTC hold the joint forums more frequently.

- Many advisors felt a disconnect between the advice they give the Commission and its actions. They would like to see a stronger relationship between MTC's Commissioners and advisors.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the findings from the evaluations submitted by participants, the telephone survey of MTC advisors, and the expertise of MTC Legislation and Public Affairs staff, as well as that of their consultant team. Implementing these recommendations in the next update to the T2035 Plan will provide continuing quality improvements in public involvement and civic engagement.

Overall

1. Determine early how new requirements in SB 375 (Chapter 728, 2008 Statutes) will affect decisions to be made in the next regional transportation plan, and continue to educate participants on issues related to tradeoffs to be made with respect to policy and investment decisions;
2. Collaborate with partner agencies — especially the Association of Bay Area Governments — on outreach with respect to the next long-range plan and parallel efforts to develop a sustainable communities strategy;
3. Allow adequate time for a public dialogue on key issues and tradeoffs, and for distillation of key messages heard to those who will be making decisions; and
4. Seek assistance from MTC Commissioners as well as board members from partner agencies to pass along information to their constituents at key milestones.

Advisory Committees and Other Public Involvement

5. Based on findings from MTC's outreach consultants showing overwhelming support for the joint advisor sessions, conduct a comprehensive review of MTC's current advisory committee structure and return with a recommendation for the Commission no later than September 2009;
6. Build upon successful partnerships with community-based organizations to reach out to and involve new voices in key decisions;
7. Pursue a more proactive partnership with the media to inform and involve Bay Area residents;
8. Develop a core of speakers who can make presentations to a wider range of constituencies and organizations, including small business groups;
9. Seek out partnerships with local colleges and universities for new civic engagement projects; and
10. Experiment with new media and social marketing to involve those who would otherwise not participate, and develop a more interactive Web site dedicated to the long-range plan.

For your information, the Draft Transportation 2035 Public Outreach and Involvement Program Evaluation Report is attached (see Attachment C). We seek your input and ideas on the above recommendations.

Steve Heminger