

**Beyond the Requirements:**  
**Establishing Citizen Advisory Committees to**  
**Enhance the Public Hearing Process and Increase the Social Capital**  
**of Small Urban Public Transit Operators**

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## ACRONYMS

<b>ADA</b>	Americans with Disabilities Act
<b>APA</b>	Administrative Procedures Act of 1946
<b>CAC</b>	Citizen Advisory Committee
<b>COG</b>	Council of Governments
<b>DOT</b>	Department of Transportation
<b>EMC</b>	Executive Management Committee
<b>ISTEA</b>	Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991
<b>JARC</b>	Job Access Reverse Commute
<b>MAC</b>	Mobility Advisory Committee (MST)
<b>MAP-21</b>	Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century
<b>MST</b>	Monterey-Salinas Transit
<b>MPO</b>	Metropolitan Planning Agency
<b>NEPA</b>	National Environmental Policy Act of 1969
<b>PEPRA</b>	Public Employees' Pension Reform Act
<b>PTO</b>	Public Transit Operator
<b>PAC</b>	Public Advisory Committee
<b>RTAC</b>	Regional Technical Advisory Committee
<b>RTPA</b>	Regional Transportation Planning Agency
<b>SFMTA</b>	San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency
<b>SLO RTA</b>	San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority
<b>Soltrans</b>	Solano County Transit
<b>StaRT</b>	Stanislaus Regional Transit
<b>TAC</b>	Technical Advisory Committee
<b>USDOT</b>	United States Department of Transportation
<b>USEPA</b>	United States Environmental Protection Agency
<b>VTA</b>	Valley Transportation Authority



## **ABSTRACT**

Public transit operators are required to provide an opportunity for the public to be informed of capital projects, fare increases, and service reductions through a formal public hearing process. While the public hearing process is intended to meet federal and state requirements of transparency and foster collaboration between government entities and the public whom they serve, it is not always an effective mechanism for fostering authentic public participation. This research was inspired by a concern of the board and staff at Monterey-Salinas Transit, the primary public transit provider in Monterey County, regarding a perception of low public hearing attendance.

The purpose of this paper is to determine whether small urban Public Transit Operators (PTO, Operator), often administratively and fiscally challenged to implement large-scale and protracted public outreach efforts, can effectively utilize Citizen Advisory Committees (CAC) to enhance the public hearing process and increase their social capital within the communities they serve. Specifically, the benefit of utilizing CACs as a way to inform, be informed, and collaborate with a representative sample of the Operator's ridership is explored through an extensive literature review, surveys of small urban public transit operators in California and members of the MST Mobility Advisory Committee, and interviews with select individuals from these two groups.

Survey data and interview responses are analyzed to compare and contrast five assumptions derived from the literature review, namely that CACs offer a way for small urban PTOs to: 1) overcome administrative and fiscal constraints; 2) increase

administrative responsiveness; 3) address public values; 4) engender the public's trust; and 5) enhance the public transit operator's social capital, or good will and support, within their communities.

The research confirms that in any study of public participation theory, methodologies, and applications, one will find an array of practical options and best practices, but no one definitive "best way" to enhance the public participation process. Psychological, emotional, social, economic, cultural, and personal issues all play a role in determining the public's willingness or ability to have a voice in decisions made on their behalf by public institutions.

Certain best practices in establishing CACs, however, can help maximize the small urban PTOs efforts, taking them beyond the mere requirement of holding public hearings to effectively engaging in authentic public participation.

## INTRODUCTION

At the regulatory level, public transit operators (PTO, Operator) are required to provide an opportunity for the public to be informed of capital projects, infrastructure improvements, fare increases, and service reductions through a formal public hearing process. The intent of this requirement is to offer an opportunity for authentic public participation in the decision-making process of legislators and administrators and to foster positive collaboration between PTOs and the individual customers and stakeholders they serve. Due to the administrative and fiscal constraints of many small urban PTOs, this process may be perceived by the public as perfunctory and hierarchical, with minimal public outreach and true collaboration between the PTO and the public it serves.

At the administrative level, the scope of the public participation process may be determined by the administrative and fiscal capacity of the Operator. Additionally, the value both legislators and administrators place on the public participation process will affect not only the level of public outreach in which an Operator engages, but also its overall effectiveness in meeting the needs and concerns of its customers and, consequently, its image within the community it serves.

Over the last three years, Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST) has been forced to reduce services and raise fares because of reductions in, and delays of, federal funding and reductions in overall ridership. Further reductions in funding threaten even more service cuts in the near future, and MST operates in one of the few California counties without a dedicated sales tax to help buffer this lost or delayed funding. To avoid deeper cuts to

service, MST has reduced its administrative staffing levels, further stretching its capacity for extensive outreach efforts. There is a general perception among the board and staff at MST that their public hearings receive low attendance, and that most public comments received are repetitively from the “usual suspects” (Bryson, Slotterback, Quick, & Crosby, 2013, p. 29).

The MST board of directors has expressed concern over low public hearing attendance; worried that a significant portion of the MST ridership remains underrepresented and underserved, they have requested that MST staff examine ways to improve its process for noticing and holding public hearings and disseminating requests for public comments. MST complies with federal and state requirements for public hearings, but members of the public have complained of ineffective public outreach and unaccommodating public hearing times and locations. Many are concerned that there are segments of the population who cannot and/or do not feel comfortable attending public meetings, or who simply do not believe their input makes a difference in the decisions made.

This research paper was inspired by this problem, which seems to be a common concern among governmental entities in general. The intent of this study is to address the concerns and perceptions of small urban public transit operators regarding public outreach, and identify some of the best practices in public outreach transit operators may employ to alleviate this problem. Given the extensive amount of information on the effective use of Citizen Advisory Committees (CAC), this paper will address the following question: Can small urban public transit operators utilize CACs to enhance the public hearing process and increase their social capital within the communities they serve?

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Monterey-Salinas Transit**

MST serves a population of 426,762 and represents thirteen jurisdictions within Monterey County. Its service area covers 280 square miles and roughly one-fifth of the California coastline. In 2013 it carried 3,976,279 passengers on its 54-route fixed service with a fleet of 104 buses. Its fixed route operating and capital budget for 2013 was \$33,424,168, employing 210 administrative staff and coach operators. Its fixed route service includes a local and regional network within Monterey County, a seasonal trolley service, seasonal service to Big Sur along the Coast Highway, and the San Jose Express that provides a connection for Monterey County residents to the San Francisco Bay area via the Capital Corridor, Caltrain, and the Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) (MST Annual Report, 2013). Recently, MST added an express service to the Santa Cruz area, allowing travelers to connect with Santa Cruz Metro buses.

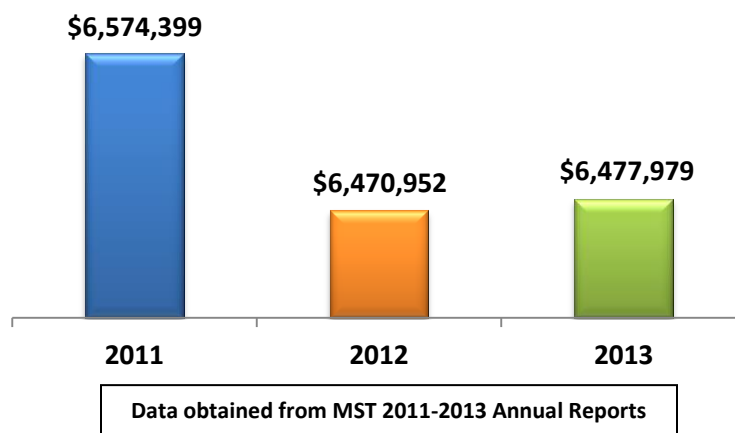
The MST RIDES service operates a fleet of 36 paratransit vehicles and carried 105, 241 passengers in 2013. The RIDES operating and capital budget for 2013 was \$3,516,646 with services contracted out to MV Transportation, Inc. MST RIDES ADA service provides accessible transportation and MST RIDES ST makes paratransit available for those who reside outside the fixed route service area and who are referred by medical or social services agencies. MST On Call is a minibuss service that provides a customized, on-demand link in areas where ridership levels are not great enough to warrant traditional bus services (MST Annual Report, 2013).

During the 2011-2013 fiscal years, MST increased fares twice and made reductions or cuts to service five times, largely as a result of reductions and delays in federal Urbanized Area Formula Program (5307) funding (Figure 1) and other grants.

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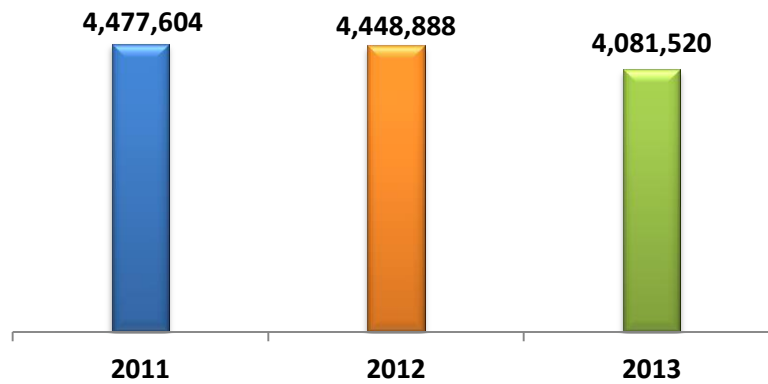
**Figure 1: Reduction of MST 5307 Revenue by Calendar Year**

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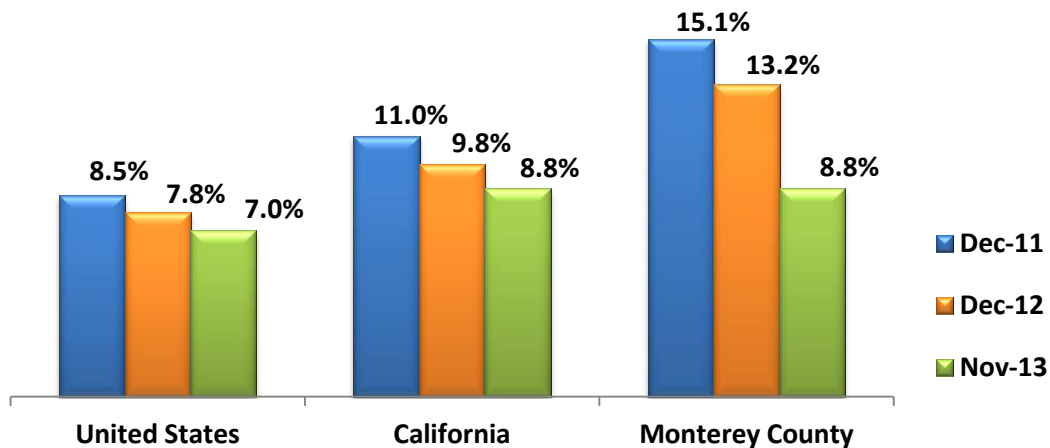
Additionally, the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) has discontinued the Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedom competitive grants which funded many of the ADA and paratransit services, moving them to formula programs. The census taken in 2010 assigned more Operators to this formula program, reducing the overall funding levels previously relied on by many small urban PTOs. MST's ridership also decreased over this same time period (Figure 2), particularly in the Salinas Valley, and largely as a result of higher than average state and national unemployment rates (Figure 3).

**Figure 2: Reduction in MST Ridership by Fiscal Year**



Data obtained from MST 2011-2013 Annual Reports

**Figure 3: Unemployment Rate Comparison**

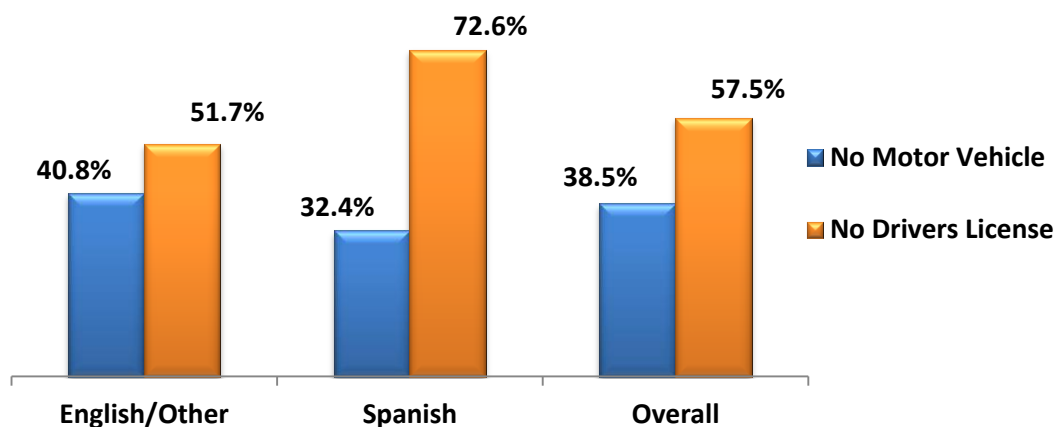


Data obtained from Homefacts: <http://www.homefacts.com/unemployment/California/Monterey-County.html>

Monterey County, and the Salinas Valley in particular, has a large population of migrant families who work primarily in the agriculture and service industries throughout Monterey County. They and their families represent a significant percentage of MST's ridership; many

are very low income, some are primarily Spanish speakers, and a portion may be undocumented residents. Carl Sedoryk, MST general manager and CEO, is concerned that when comparing ridership and demographic data in Monterey County, MST is still not attracting a satisfactory percentage of potential riders among those who could benefit most from public transit services. He states, “We know there are many residents of Monterey County who would benefit greatly from public transit, our problem is how to determine the barriers keeping them from choosing our services.” MST also serves a high percentage of captive riders as opposed to choice riders (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Vehicle Ownership/Driver’s License by Primary Language Spoken at Home**



Data obtained from MST 2011-2013 Annual Reports

Additionally, Mr. Sedoryk reported that data from calendar years 2012 and 2013 reveals that “a senior, a person with disabilities or mobility limitations’ or a veteran seeking assistance uses an accessible MST vehicle or a senior voucher once every 2.5 minutes that MST is in service. Trips for these individuals have grown from 129,000 in 2009 to 170,000

in 2013 – a thirty-two percent increase” and “nearly two-thirds of our riders are going to work, school or medical appointments. Most have no other transportation choices.” Given the need this significant portion of MST’s ridership has on reliable and affordable public transit, effective outreach and collaboration with these groups is vital.

Frequent reductions and changes to public transportation services can disrupt the lives of many individuals; however, PTOs work in a highly technical and regulated environment, and reductions in funding strain the PTO’s ability to deliver the level of service their communities need. While transit administrators work daily to plan routes and schedule coach operators, maintain buses, and analyze data to ensure the highest quality of safety and efficiency, a priority must also be placed on collaborating with the individuals and groups who rely on public transit.

This paper evaluates the use of CACs among small urban public transit operators in California, specifically those operators that are similar to MST in their demographics, size, administrative capacity, and funding levels to determine the administrative and fiscal constraints that make a comprehensive public outreach effort difficult to achieve, the external barriers to creating effective public participation and collaboration, and the effective use of CACs to overcome these challenges and enhance their social capital within the communities they serve.

### **The Public Participation Mandate**

The Administrative Procedures Act of 1946 (APA) was created in part to control government administrators’ power and to address administrative deficiencies (Grisinger,

2008). The first two purposes of the act are 1) to require agencies to keep the public currently informed of their organization, procedures, and rules (sec. 3); and 2) to provide for public participation in the rule making process (sec. 4) (FSU, 2001). The U. S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), through the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), requires transportation entities to involve the public in all aspects of transportation projects (USEPA, 2014).

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI, 2014) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA, 2014) established public transportation service and facility requirements to provide adequate accommodations to persons with disabilities and regulate against certain discriminatory practices in the provision of transit services. Some of the mandates within these laws necessarily have an impact on the ultimate decisions made when cuts to service are required.

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) (Public Law 102-240) is regarded as groundbreaking in its emphasis on increased collaboration between transportation entities and the public. ISTEA ushered in a new era in transportation policy and planning. In addition to empowering – and requiring – state and local governments to work collaboratively on regional and local planning and programming, it was also the first surface transportation act to explicitly set requirements for an integrated planning process with significant emphasis on public participation and collaboration (Schweppe, 2001).

Concerns over the environmental impact of transportation projects have resulted in very active citizen and interest group involvement within Departments of Transportation (DOT), Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO), and Regional Transportation Agencies (RTPA).

Much has been written about the practical implementation and relative effect of increased public outreach and participation at all levels of transportation planning: state, regional, and local (Simon, 1999), and although many argue whether this level of participation is effective or efficient, most literature attests to the fact that involving the public early and often during the process leads to better project outcomes (Creighton, 2005; Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Fung, 2006).

If not explicit in the laws listed above, their implicit intention would call for all levels of the public transportation industry to attempt extensive and cooperative outreach to the public, involve them early and often, and integrate their input into the final decisions made regarding capital projects, infrastructure improvements, and the development of transit systems and services. Unlike state DOTs, MPOs, or RTPAs, small urban PTOs may only rarely be involved in larger projects that offer the time, scope, and financing to adequately plan a comprehensive public participation effort. More frequently, these small operators are implementing service changes, reductions or cuts, and fare increases, often relying on meeting the minimum requirement of providing a formal public hearing and comment process to inform the public of these changes.

The most recent public participation requirements for small urban PTOs receiving federal funding is found in Section 53 of the Federal Transit Laws, 49 USC Chapter 53:

A grantee must have a locally developed process to solicit and consider public comment before raising a fare or carrying out a major reduction in service. The regulation does not require that fare decreases, service

increases, or “special fares” be preceded by public comment. The grantee is not required to hold a public meeting, but must offer an opportunity for one. The grantee must establish guidelines or thresholds for what it considers a “major” change to be.

Monterey-Salinas Transit has defined within its Public Hearing Policy (Appendix A) a major change to be one resulting “in a ten percent or greater decrease in vehicle service hours or passengers on any single line, changes in routing that result in MST vehicles utilizing new streets and/or corridors, or any increase in fares.” Changes not meeting this threshold do not require a public comment process. MST also requires that:

1) public hearings are held on the Monterey Peninsula, within the City of Salinas, and within a jurisdiction of the Central Salinas Valley; 2) special consideration be given on the timing, location and public notice of the event to ensure that the public has the ability to provide comment by attending the meeting or providing written comments; 3) at least two weeks’ notice be given prior to each hearing; 4) the public shall be invited to submit comments in writing if they cannot attend the hearing; 5) public notice be advertised in one newspaper with major circulation on both the Monterey Peninsula and in Salinas and at least one Spanish language medium during the minimum two-week notice period; 6) notification of hearings on car cards in all MST coaches; and 7) a press release is sent to local media.

While adherence to the above guidelines reflects an effort to comply with the basic requirements of Section 53, Title VI, and other administrative guidelines, it in no way ensures that a significant or representative portion of MST's ridership or demographic makeup is informed or engaged in the decision-making process. Low public hearing attendance may be the result of many complex factors, but for the spirit of ISTEA to be met and true representation and collaboration achieved, a more comprehensive and purposeful outreach effort should be explored.



## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Overcoming Administrative and Fiscal Constraints**

While Section 53 places a requirement on small urban PTOs to provide an opportunity to “solicit and consider” public comment, and while the public hearing guidelines of PTOs may affirm an effort to comply with this requirement, it remains in the hands of transit leadership to move from “communication, cooperation, and coordination” (Chrislip & Larson, 1994) to true collaboration. According to Chrislip and Larson, collaboration is a “mutually beneficial relationship between two or more parties who work toward common goals by sharing responsibility, authority, and accountability to achieve results” (1994, p. 5). Achieving true collaboration requires much more than informing the public of service changes and collecting responses. When one considers the diverse individuals and groups served by public transit, their unique values, and their often conflicting transit needs, (Nabatchi, 2012) it becomes incumbent upon the small urban PTO to find ways to effectively and authentically engage these groups in the decisions that affect their daily lives (Fung, 2006; Creighton, 2005, Chrislip & Larson, 1994).

The result of merely focusing on meeting communication requirements is that the impact individuals and advocacy groups have on the decisions made to services that are supposed to benefit them directly is limited. This can have the secondary effect of damaging the transit operators’ social capital, creating an atmosphere of apathy or antagonism between the small urban PTO and its customers, and circumventing the full intention of participatory governance (Fung, 2006; Stivers, 1994).

Since the early 1900s, when German sociologist Max Weber undertook the first systematic study of modern bureaucratic forms of administration (Tompkins, 2005, p. 41), the field of organization theory has attempted to address “how groups and individuals behave in differing organizational arrangements” (Shafritz, Russell, & Borick, 2009, p. 234). It is imperative that the small urban PTO understands the relationship between the internal organizational structure and culture of a public entity and how these factors aid or hinder its relationship with the public.

Small urban PTOs desiring to go beyond the minimum public hearing requirements and increase public participation may have to redirect staff and divert scarce financial resources to maximize their outreach efforts (Pickering & Minnery, 2012). When one considers the administrative changes that may need to be implemented prior to establishing a CAC, including identifying and training additional staff in the outreach process and allocating the financial resources to support the committee, small urban PTO administrators may wonder if the additional effort is cost-beneficial. Bryson, Quick, Slotterback and Crosby (2013) assert that the initial effort is well worth the investment. They state that in spite of budget pressures “a carefully managed participation process can contribute resources for public purposes as well” (p. 28). The resource produced, enhanced social capital, could greatly offset the small adjustment and investment made to establish a CAC.

Creating an environment of collaboration begins at the administrative level generally, and at the executive level specifically, and should involve all levels of the transit Operator’s staff. From the transit planners who have expertise in developing the most efficient transit

systems, to the finance director who advises on the operators' funding and financing capacity, to the public information officer who must effectively and transparently communicate to all segments of a population, to the customer service representatives and coach operators who are in direct, daily contact with public transit customers; all levels of administrative staff should be knowledgeable, involved, and committed to working collaboratively among each other and, ultimately, the public (Yang & Pandey, 2011).

There are several administrative benefits that can be achieved by involving more staff in the public outreach effort: minimizing hierarchies and information "silos;" providing a broader base of institutional knowledge among employees; and reducing the workload of higher level directors whose focus may be better directed at long-range planning and goal attainment. According to Kouzes and Posner, there are five practices of exemplary leadership: 1) model the way; 2) inspire a shared vision; 3) challenge the process; 4) enable others to act; and 5) encourage the heart (2012, p. 15-24). Kouzes and Posner refer to these five elements as "practices" and not theories or philosophies, suggesting that they require considerable effort if they are to become imbedded in the day-to-day operations of an agency. These same five practices can apply both to the leadership and organizational culture of the PTO and to its relationship to its customers, stakeholders, and community.

Some of the fiscal constraints that hinder a small urban PTO's ability to go beyond the minimum requirements of holding public hearings can also be addressed by this more inclusive administrative effort. By empowering a broader segment of administrative staff to participate in the public outreach effort, higher paid employees can delegate responsibilities and reduce their time spent on engaging numerous individuals or groups,

holding informational meetings prior to public hearings, and synthesizing and analyzing public comments. CAC members provide an additional opportunity to reduce staff workload by acting as representative agents of the Operator and disseminating information to the customers they represent, collecting public comments, informing transit staff of unmet transit needs, aiding in small group workshops, and encouraging or facilitating participation at public hearings. In summary, *CACs can help overcome administrative and fiscal constraints by acting as representative agents of the Operator, empowering a broader segment of administrative staff to engage in public outreach, and reducing the workload of higher level directors whose focus may be better directed at long range planning and goal attainment.*

The current negativity toward government and governance provides an opportunity for transit providers to rethink their customer service models with respect to the decision-making process (Chrislip & Larson, 1994). Transit agencies provide a direct and vital service to real individuals; yet their administrative structures are often, and necessarily, hierarchical in nature. Participatory design models offer flexible solutions that can upend this hierarchy and aid technically-oriented transit administrators in achieving a more client-focused model (Clarke & Brigham, 2013). Transit operators with the administrative and fiscal capacity may implement a wide array of public participation methods, while smaller operators may need to tailor their outreach efforts to maximize their capacities.

I have addressed some of the administrative and fiscal challenges faced by small urban PTOs and suggested ways in which these challenges can be addressed through changing administrative processes and utilizing CACs (Bryson & Quick, 2013). I will now review

literature that addresses how CACs can help overcome some of the common barriers to public participation (Yang & Pandey, 2011) and help PTO legislators and administrators make more collaborative decisions to increase their social capital among the populations they serve (Wang and Wart, 2007; Chrislip & Larson, 1994).

## **Participatory Decision Making**

The spirit of public participation is reflective of a representative democracy; author Robert Putnam (1995) observes that Alexis de Tocqueville, after visiting the United States in the 1830s, wrote that he was impressed with Americans' fondness for civic association and their unprecedented ability to make democracy work (de Tocqueville, 1969). While de Tocqueville wrote admiringly of American investment in representative democracy, political scientists have also long acknowledged that the system is inherently designed to minimize the impact of an overly involved citizenry (King, Felty & Susel, 1998). This balance between public participation (values, comments, petitioning) and technical expertise (research, data, best practices) in developing sound policy and delivering public service requires effective and continuous collaboration between governmental entities and the public.

In 1885, while still a teacher at Bryn Mawr College for women, Woodrow Wilson wrote *The Study of Administration*, in which he sought to present a clear dichotomy between politics and effective administration (Shafritz, Russell, & Borick, 2009). His early effort to create a “science of administration” (p. 23, 2009) laid the groundwork for what is considered the first American text on public administration published in 1926, Leonard White’s

*Introduction to the Study of Public Administration* (p. 24, 2009). The ideal of effective governance is imbedded in the American political system, and there has been no shortage of academic efforts to improve the administrative aspects of the public arena.

From Weber's "theory of bureaucracy" and the "scientific management theory" of Frederick Taylor in the late nineteenth century (Tompkins, 2005) to Mary Parker Follett's "pre-human relations theory" in the early twentieth century and "organizational culture and leadership theory" popularized in the late twentieth century by William Ouchi (2005, p. 5), organization theory has had an impact not only on how public administrator's effectively manage their agencies, but also how their administrative culture affects the public welfare – and an agency's public image. In fact, Yang and Pandey (2011) observe that "citizen involvement occurs primarily at the administrator–citizen interface" (pg. 880). Given this vital connection between administrators and the public, much of the current literature on effective public participation addresses issues of *administrative responsiveness* (Stivers, 1994), *attention to public values* (Nabatchi, 2012), *engendering the public's trust* (Wang and Wart, 2007).

### **Addressing Administrative Responsiveness**

Camilla Stivers addresses the issue of administrative responsiveness by comparing the "responsible bureaucrat" to the "responsive bureaucrat" (1994, p.365). While the responsible bureaucrat is a "proactive agent" (p. 365) who is in charge of a situation and who acts reliably and with moral judgment, the responsive bureaucrat is an active and responsive "listener" requiring more empathic qualities, "reducing the tension between

administrative effectiveness and democratic accountability” (p. 365). Stivers concedes that this paradigm shift is viewed skeptically by more traditional administrators, but asserts that through responsive listening public decision-makers become more accountable and “begin to see citizens as inhabitants of the same public square they themselves occupy...” (p. 366). It should be noted that this form of active listening is not a knee-jerk response to all public input but, rather, responsive bureaucrats must also “draw on their own expertise while seeking diverse viewpoints and remaining open to the unexpected and unpredictable” (p. 367).

For the small urban PTO, actively engaging a diverse group of customers and stakeholders, responsively listening to their input, and considering this input in when making final service decisions could conceivably go far beyond the administrative capacity of their agency if each group is engaged separately. CACs offer an opportunity to achieve this goal and help overcome the administrative barriers to a more collaborative public participation process. Ideally, participants should represent the transit operators’ ridership and stakeholder group demographics as closely as possible, and members of the committees should include representatives that each group trusts (Clarke & Brigham, 2013). In summary, *CACs can help increase administrative responsiveness by collectively engaging a diverse group of a transit operators’ ridership and including them in the decision-making process, minimizing hierarchies and information “silos” within an agency, and increasing employee morale and a sense of shared vision.*

## Addressing Public Values

According to Fung, “citizens can be the shock troops of democracy” (2006, p. 74). Intrinsic to a representative democracy is the concept of pluralism. Nearly every problem faced by decision-makers, whether they are legislators or public administrators, involves controversies over competing values (Nabatchi, 2012). Nabatchi posits that public administrators must be able to simultaneously identify, understand, and reconcile “values conflicts” (2012, p. 700). She suggests that the public participation process be “iterative and integrative” (p. 701) while focusing on interests rather than positions. Small urban PTOs typically serve a very diverse population: choice versus captive riders, commuters, seniors, individuals with disabilities, students, low income individuals, and veterans and active military are just a few. Additionally, special interest groups may be concerned about the decisions made by transit operators; environmentalists, business organizations and employers, members of the hospitality industry, service providers to the elderly or disabled, social welfare organizations, and anti-tax groups all have competing values that affect the level of support and social capital the community at large bestows upon the transit operator.

Mary Parker Follett advocated the concept of “integration” as opposed to domination or compromise when dealing with diverse groups (Tompkins, 2005). She saw integration as a way to unify differences based on common goals rather than differing opinions. According to Follett, compromise meant that everyone was giving up something while domination was a total victory of one side over the other. Follett was willing to place herself in the trenches of public discourse, and advised a deliberative group to “put your cards on the

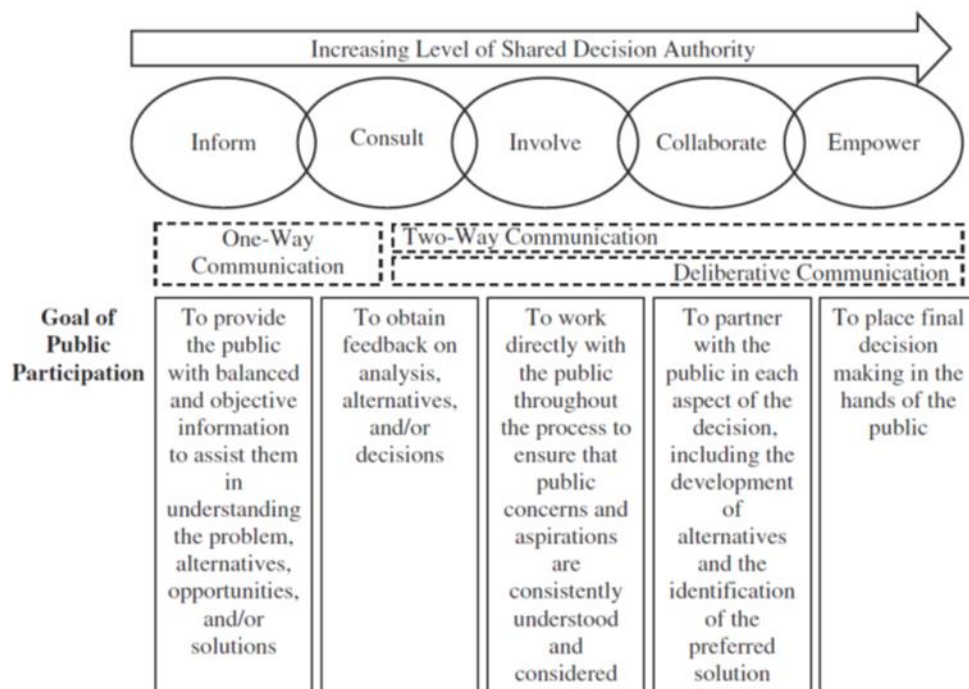
table, face the real issue, uncover the conflict, bring the whole thing into the open” (2005, p. 134). This is in stark contrast to the tendency of some public entities to “invite public participation only after policy determination has really occurred,” or to “influence the selection of those participating so as to skew the public outcome,” or to “provide minimum public notice and to schedule the hearings at inconvenient times or locations” (Wang & Wart, 2007, p. 266).

Clearly, authentic participation and collaboration takes a great deal of effort on the part of small urban PTOs who must answer to a public who often hold competing values. As stated earlier, public transit professionals are often highly and technically trained in their field; from the perspective of pure efficiency they could conceivably make service or policy decisions based on regulatory guidelines, ridership data, and planning efficiencies. But we are addressing small urban PTOs, responsible for both the efficient provision of services and including the public in the decision-making process.

Nabatchi refers to the IAP<sup>2</sup> Spectrum of Public Participation (Figure 5) as a continuum of the varying levels of communication between administrators and the public, and the authority the public may experience in any given collaborative effort. If this continuum is applied to the potential interaction between the PTO, the CAC, and the public, a positive and progressive process emerges. CACs, if allowed to be involved at every level of both policy and service output decisions, can create an advantage for the small urban PTO by educating a specific demographic, neighborhood, interest group, or community on everything from transit industry best practices to transit funding sources and service requirements (one way communication). This more educated group (Fung, 2006; Bryson,

Quick, Slotterback & Crosby, 2013) then becomes a conduit of information between the Operator and the public they represent, offering feedback and suggestions (consult, involve) that represent their interests or values. Further along the continuum, the PTO and the CAC may move toward a more deliberative form of communication (collaborate, empower) whereby the input received by the CAC plays a direct role in determining the final decisions made by legislators or administrators. In summary, *CACs help address public values by offering an opportunity for PTOs and representative groups with competing values to inform and be informed, advise and consult, and collaborate in the decision-making process through an iterative and integrative process.*

**Figure 5: Modified Spectrum of Participation with Communication Modes**



Source: Adapted from the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation (IAP<sup>2</sup> 2007).  
Taken from Putting the Public Back in Public Values Research, Nabatchi, 2012

## **Engendering Public Trust**

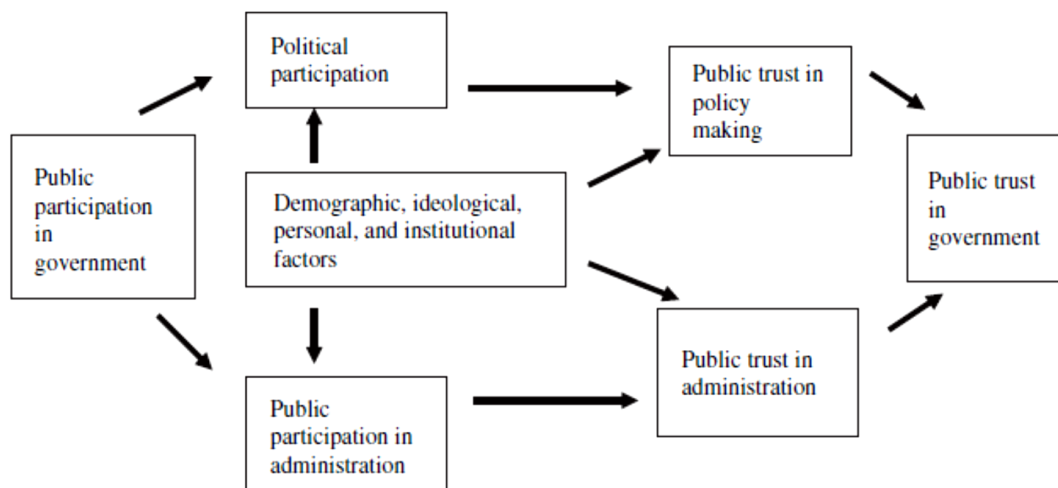
It follows that when a public entity engages all levels of its staff in public outreach and actively engages the public in its activities and decisions (responsiveness), when it is sensitive to the competing values its customers and stakeholders hold and establishes clear and increasingly collaborative levels of communication among the public it serves (attention to public values), a level of trust will eventually be established. Wang and Wart (2007) state that even among competing theories of participation there is an overwhelming consensus that “public participation tends to enhance public trust” (p. 265). The authors argue that a better informed citizenry can contribute to decision-making on many levels, including transit policy service decisions. Additionally, the public’s trust can often be measured by its view that a governmental entity is “doing the right thing” (Wang & Wart, 2007, p. 271) which establishes a legitimacy of process.

King, Feltey, and Susel (1998) refer to authentic participation as a deep and continuous involvement (p. 320), placing the citizen directly next to the issue with opportunities for their comments to shape the ultimate outcome. In this context, the administrator moves “away from a reliance on technical and expertise models...toward meaningful participatory processes” (p. 321).

Fung argues that public trust can be enhanced by participation that includes diverse perspectives and an informed and interested group of lay stakeholders who can make the necessary sacrifices of time required for participatory engagement (2006, pg. 73). The diversity of a CAC can also minimize “participation bias” (p. 72) because those individuals

or groups who may be underrepresented (low income, less educated, those with language barriers) will have a voice about issues that are more urgent to their daily lives (transportation to work, school, medical services). Wang and Wart recommend that in all deliberations, the level of empowerment or authority a group has in any given decision is clearly stated (2007). Fung supports this recommendation by asserting that the degree to which a participatory group is empowered through direct communication, collaboration, or decision-making depends on the situation, and that this level of authority should be clearly explained, and at all times participants should be confident that their input is received and considered (2006). Wang and Wart present a model (Figure 6) that addresses the relationship between participation and competing values in establishing trust.

**Figure 6: A Comprehensive Model of Public Participation and its Relationship to Trust**



Taken from Wang and Wart, 2007, "When Public Administration Leads to Trust"

The purpose of this paper is to determine whether small urban PTOs, often administratively and fiscally challenged to implement large-scale and protracted public outreach efforts, can effectively utilize CACs to enhance the public hearing process and increase their social capital within the communities they serve.

If our first two propositions are supported by the literature presented, that CACs can help enhance administrative responsiveness and address competing public values, it can be expected that this effort can also aid in engendering the public trust in the decisions made by small urban PTOs. In summary, *CACs help engender the public trust through diverse representation that minimizes participation bias and results in more legitimate decision-making.*

### **Enhancing Social Capital**

Robert Putnam defines the concept of social capital as having three components: 1) the moral obligations that exist between government and citizens; 2) the social values and trust that exist within communities; and 3) voluntary associations or networks that enhance cooperation (1993).

Ideally, public participation is a multi-faceted communicatory relationship between a governmental entity and the public it serves which, in turn, enhances the entity's accountability, engenders trust, ensures equity and representation, and results in more informed and collaborative decision making (King, Felty, & Susel, 1998; Simon, 1999; Wang & Wart, 2007). The reality, however, is that public participation does not always ensure accountability, equity, or true collaboration (Wang & Wart, 2007; deLeon, 1992; Yang & Pandey, 2011) and much of the current negativity regarding trust in government stems

from a concern that those who make the decisions (legislators, public administrators) are more and more disconnected from the public they represent (Fung, 2006; Chrislip & Larson, 1994). Social capital must be earned through establishing an integrated and legitimate process for informing the public, receiving input from the public, and collaborating with the public in the decision-making process.

The duality between the high level of professional expertise and technical skill required to manage and deliver public transportation poses an inherent challenge to the spirit of participation and collaboration required of transit operators. On the one hand, the scope of performance data and transit system planning models utilized by transportation planners provides clear answers as to how and where service reductions should be implemented to maintain equity and efficiency. On the other hand, transit planners must acknowledge the unique insight the riders themselves offer, including information unknown to administrators, new ways of understanding problems from a customer perspective, and a motivation to solve problems of unique concern to the public (Bryson, Slotterback, Quick, & Crosby, 2013). This information can often be integrated into planning decisions and result in better outcomes. Unfortunately, efforts to enhance public participation are sometimes perceived as ineffectual because this environment of professional and technical expertise leaves no room for the layperson's opinion (deLeon, 1992, King, Felty & Susel, 1998).

King, Feltey, and Susel (1998) argue that public agencies “need to move away from static and reactive processes toward more deliberative processes” (pg. 317). The authors conclude that effective participation goes beyond simply identifying tools and techniques,

and instead requires a paradigm shift regarding the perceived roles and relationship between administrators and active citizens.

CACs may offer an opportunity for small urban PTOs to gather a diverse group of individuals who use public transit (riders, customers) and who are affected by public transit (stakeholders and interest groups) to create an atmosphere of mutual education, information-sharing, collaboration, and decision-making. These committees may act as “shock troops” by which the PTO can communicate to the larger population within their communities, advocate for increased participation, and collaborate on issues to achieve consensus and minimize conflict. With the many diverse groups public transit serves, it is administratively challenging to attempt to engage these groups – and the individuals they represent – separately. CACs provide the opportunity to bring diverse groups together, where conflicting values and opinions can be aired in a collaborative atmosphere with a unified purpose. This may be a paradigm shift for some Operators, but one that can provide an opportunity to enhance their social capital and create a more customer-oriented mission. In summary, *CACs help enhance the small urban PTO’s social capital by establishing an integrated and legitimate process for informing the public, receiving input from the public, and finding ways to collaborate with the public in the decision-making process.*

## **Citizen Advisory Committee Best Practices**

### ***Developing a solid foundation***

Marie Mann Bibbs recommends that before recruiting members to serve on a Citizen Advisory Committee, a committee charter and a mission statement should be created (2006). For a small urban PTO, these two documents may more appropriately include

bylaws outlining the mission of the committee, terms of office, member responsibilities, member selection criteria, and quorum requirements; a conflict of interest code to ensure compliance with the Political Reform Act and other requirements set forth by the Fair Political Practices Commission; and a set of guidelines including short and long term goals and other committee support materials.

In addition to meeting the legal requirements for public agencies, providing unambiguous and formal guidelines to citizen committee members helps satisfy the “need for cognitive closure,” (Mannarini, Fedi, & Trippetti, 2009, p. 264) which describes an individual’s unique need for “stable and secure knowledge” as opposed to “ambiguity and uncertainty” (p. 264). Members of the public, while often willing to participate in group processes, might also feel intimidated and overwhelmed by many of the regulatory and formal processes with which PTOs must comply. This atmosphere can be minimized by providing as much information and education as possible prior to engaging in the businesses of collaborative decision-making; by paying attention to this need, the PTO provides an opportunity to establish a relationship of trust and create an atmosphere of collaboration for groups with competing values.

Other best practices that provide for cognitive closure include the need for *meeting frequency and consistency* (Bibbs, 2006, Clarke & Bringham, 2013), an *orientation and education process* (Bibbs, 2006, Clarke & Bringham, 2013, Bryson, Quick, Slotterback & Crosby, 2013), *established levels of authority* (King, Feltey & Susel, 1998) and *avoidance of participation bias*.

### ***Meeting frequency and consistency***

By meeting often and consistently, committee members remain engaged and informed.

When groups meet throughout the year at regular intervals emergencies are also minimized; members have time to discuss issues in context and plan in advance of major issues that can create a punctuated need for immediate input. In most instances, CAC members would be chosen by the small urban PTO “for a specific purpose or to address a specific issue, with meetings taking place over an extended period of time” (Rowe & Frewer, 2000, p. 9). Creighton, however, also warns that “the life of the advisory group, or at least the terms of the group’s members, should be limited” (2005, p. 184). By limiting the term of either the entire group or the individual members, the likelihood of the CAC becoming a “new group of elite decision makers” (p. 84) or simply outgrowing their usefulness is avoided. By establishing multiple CACs for different purposes, and gauging the frequency and purpose of meetings, this problem can also be avoided.

### ***Orientation and education process***

King, Feltey and Susel (1998) believe that when working with CACs, part of the education process should include research skills and leadership training. As a counterbalance to this training, Clarke and Brigham warn against the tendency of planners to provide information that is too “dense or detailed and too laden with jargon and ‘insider’ technology” (2013, p. 56). They advise that when preparing for public meetings, the organizers should consider using brief summaries of key points and avoid including too much information, utilize visual presentations and materials, and consider the best meeting design and facilitation for the subject under consideration (1998). Balancing the amount and content of information, and providing foundational training in collaborative decision-making,

“citizens and administrators can work together from the very beginning when issues are being defined and framed” (King, Feltey & Susel, 1998, p. 324).

### ***Establishing levels of authority***

Bryson, Quick, Slotterback and Crosby (2013) state that a “participation process is not automatically regarded...as legitimate” (p. 27). If small urban PTOs are to maximize the benefits of public participation to increase their social capital and “acquire the support necessary for...mission accomplishment” (p. 27) their outreach process must be seen as legitimate. Authentic participation builds trust and legitimacy, which is carried away from the confines of a CAC and out to the individuals and groups its members represents, the media who assists in shaping the public image of a PTO and, ultimately, the public-at-large who may be persuaded to support efforts like capital projects or sales tax measures.

By establishing clear levels of authority within the committee, participants are “provided the opportunity to influence the decisions that affect their lives” (Clarke & Brigham, 2013, p. 52). The importance of empowering committees with some level of authority is broadly supported by the literature on authentic public participation. The level of authority the public has in final decisions will necessarily vary according to the situation (Nabatchi, 2012, Fung, 2006, Clarke & Brigham, 2013). As stated previously, small urban PTOs and planners deal with highly technical issues that require a specific knowledge base and understanding of planning efficiencies and regulatory requirements. Authentic public participation and collaboration does not require that the public make every decision about transit services. It does, however, require an open and transparent process where administrators provide

specific opportunities for the input of committee members and the general public to have a direct impact on the final service or policy-related decisions.

### ***Avoidance of participation bias***

Perhaps the most important aspect of establishing a CAC is the selection process and its relationship to representativeness and the avoidance of participation bias. Rowe and Frewer (2000) acknowledge that CACs tend to be small groups of individuals, selected by a governmental agency, to represent a larger group of individuals but who may not comprise members of the “true public” (p. 9). Fung presents 3 primary mechanisms for selecting committee members from the general public: 1) self-selection; 2) selective recruiting; 3) and random selection. Two additional mechanisms include engaging 1) lay stakeholders; and 2) professional stakeholders.

Given the time and energy required to participate in a CAC, Fung warns that when participants are *self-selected*, “Individuals who are wealthier and better educated tend to participate more than those who lack these advantages” (2006, p. 67). *Selective recruitment* allows a small urban PTO to ensure that underrepresented groups who may tend to be excluded from the process are represented, either by providing incentives such as transportation to meetings or by enlisting representation by community organizers who have formed trusted relationships with the group. While *randomly selecting* participants from among the public-at-large ensures the “best guarantee of descriptive representativeness” (p. 67) it may not serve the purpose of small urban PTOs that need to ensure that committee members represent their particular demographic and have sufficient knowledge to make sound recommendations.

Fung (2006) offers that engaging *lay stakeholders*, who are typically individuals who have a “deep interest in some public concern” (p. 67) and who have both the time and energy to serve, may provide both the representation and diversity required to make CACs truly effective. The fifth selection mechanism includes including *professional stakeholders*. This group is often more appropriately engaged to represent the interests of public officials and are often paid for their services (p. 67), making them a questionable choice for the purposes of small urban PTO CACs.

The literature does not emphasize one selection method over another; each situation is unique and requires careful analysis of the PTO’s demographic to ensure the most plausible and representative way to choose committee members. Fung advises that the CAC organizer asks the following questions when determining the selection method (2006, p. 67):

- 1) Are the members appropriately representative of the relevant population?
- 2) Are important interests or perspectives excluded?
- 3) Do the members possess the information and competence to make good judgments and decisions?
- 4) Are participants responsive and accountable to those who do not participate?

The reality of modern life creates many barriers to the more idealized form of civic engagement. Today, barriers such as “transportation availability, time constraints, family structure, number of family members in the labor force, child care, and economic disadvantages” (King, Feltey & Susel, 1998, p. 322) preclude many individuals from attending the often minimal public hearings held to announce service reductions or fare increases. When only one public hearing is held in a city or neighborhood prior to

implementing transit service changes, one cannot be truly surprised if attendance is low. Additionally, cultural or language barriers often keep individuals from attending more formal meetings. CACs offer an alternative way to represent those who cannot or will not attend formal public hearings, and to offer reliable advice on the best method to notice public hearings or other informational meetings, as well as preferable meeting times and locations.



## RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The literature review has provided a body of knowledge regarding the central question this paper attempts to answer: **Can small urban public transit operators utilize CACs to enhance the public hearing process and increase their social capital within the communities they serve?**

The review confirms that in any study of public participation theory, methodologies, and applications, one will find an array of practical options and best practices, but no one definitive “best way” to enhance the public participation process. Psychological, emotional, social, economic, cultural, and personal issues all play a role in determining the public’s willingness or ability to have a voice in decisions made on their behalf by public institutions.

Because of the subjective nature of this topic – specifically, that there exists no broadly accepted measure of what constitutes sufficient public hearing attendance, nor can a transit operator’s success at public outreach be definitively quantified – the research design and methodology applied in this paper has been purposefully crafted to inspire reflection, encourage individual operators to analyze their agency’s methods and attitudes toward authentic public outreach, and compel change where appropriate.

This is not to say that a thorough analysis of data is not presented, nor is it to say that recommendations are not provided. Where appropriate, readers of this paper are offered valuable recommendations that can be adjusted to achieve desired goals, within the framework that each PTO must work.

The research instruments focus on the main topics discussed in the literature review regarding the use of CACs to enhance the public hearing process and increase the social capital of small urban PTOs. To this end, I posit the following assumptions:

**Assumption #1:** *CACs can help overcome administrative and fiscal constraints by acting as representative agents of the Operator, empowering a broader segment of administrative staff to engage in public outreach, and reducing the workload of higher level directors whose focus may be better directed at long range planning and goal attainment.*

**Assumption #2:** *CACs can help increase administrative responsiveness by collectively engaging a diverse group of a transit operators' ridership and including them in the decision-making process, minimizing hierarchies and information "silos" within an agency, and increasing employee morale and a sense of shared vision.*

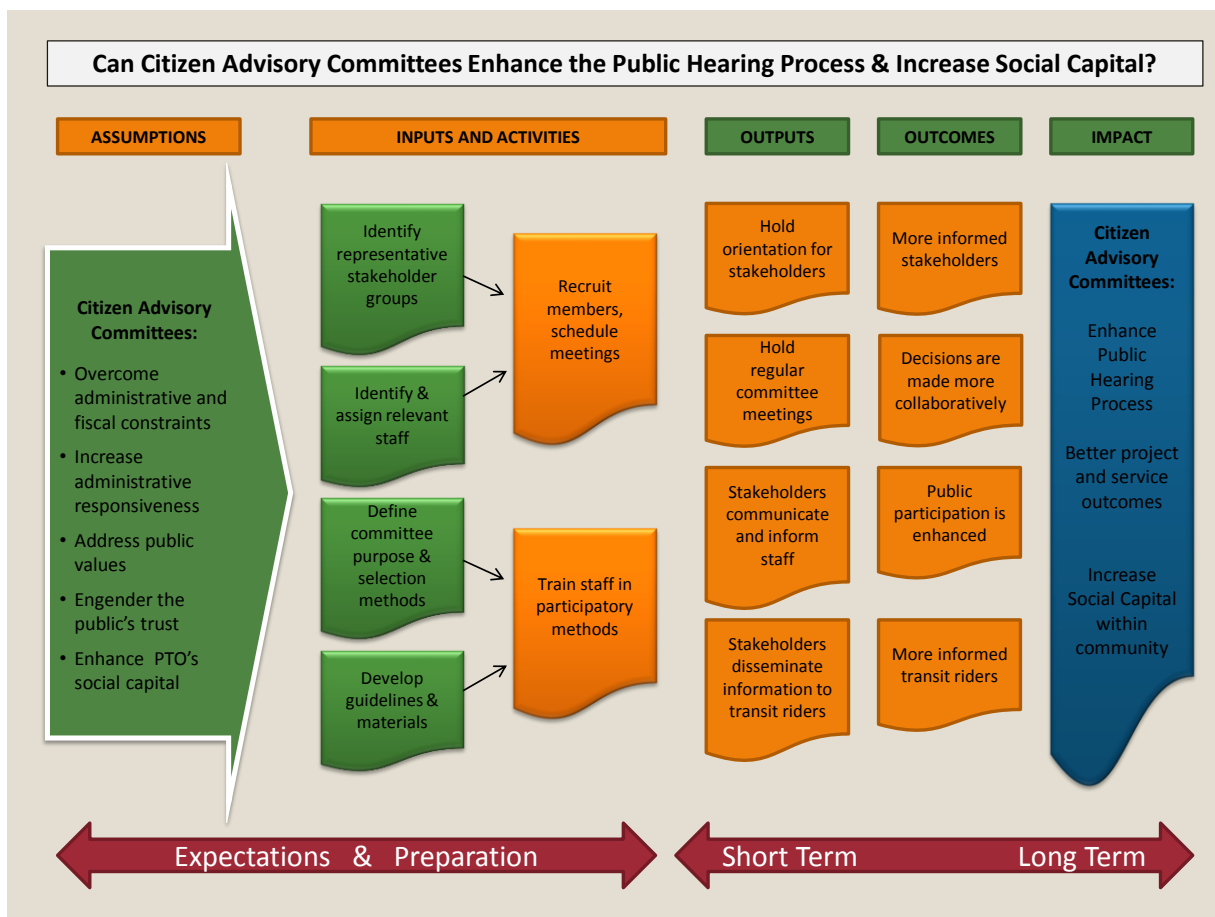
**Assumption #3:** *CACs address public values by offering an opportunity for PTOs and representative groups with competing values to inform and be informed, advise and consult, and collaborate in the decision-making process through an iterative and integrative process.*

**Assumption #4:** *CACs help engender the public trust through diverse representation that minimizes participation bias and results in more legitimate decision-making.*

**Assumption #5:** *CACs help enhance the small urban PTO's social capital by establishing an integrated and legitimate process for informing the public, receiving input from the public, and finding ways to collaborate with the public in the decision-making process.*

The logic model below is used to display the interrelationships between these five assumptions and the activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts that are expected to answer this paper's central question (Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Logic Model**



The research design includes three research instruments, which address the five assumptions listed above, from the perspectives of administrative staff working for small urban PTOs in California and members of the MST Mobility Advisory Committee.

Additional interviews conducted with other professionals working in the field of governance and public engagement lend additional insight into effective public outreach. It is my hope that this work will inspire a conversation among transit leadership and lead to experimentation with more integrative public outreach and collaboration efforts.

**Research Instrument #1: *Internal evaluation of MST's public hearings***

As stated earlier, MST's board of directors has expressed concern over what they believe to be low public hearing attendance and has asked staff to explore methods to increase participation. Since neither a defined number of attendees nor a percentage of attendees by population, ridership, or other metric has been established by the MST board as an acceptable participation goal, it is left to the readers of this paper to determine what acceptable levels of public participation at formal hearings may be for their particular agencies. Data related to attendance at, location of, and public notice for MST's public hearings from FY 2011 through FY 2013 is included as a reference point and to provide comparative information for other transit operators.

Given the number of cities MST serves (12 plus unincorporated areas) and the number of routes it operates (54), I determined that there were not enough resources, human or financial, to survey a reliable sample of MST's ridership to assess their opinions regarding notification of public meetings, whether meetings were held at convenient locations and times, and their views on how MST could enhance opportunities for public participation and input. MST's recent 2013 On-Board Rider Survey includes data relevant to these issues and is included in the following Findings and Analysis section of this paper.

## **Research Instrument #2: *Surveys***

Two surveys were created, one for small urban PTO administrative staff and one for members of MST's Mobility Advisory Committee. Both surveys were created in English and Spanish and were available in both web and written format. A small number of surveys were conducted by telephone at the request of the individual. Survey responses were anonymous, but respondents were provided an opportunity at the end of the survey to participate in telephone or in-person interviews.

### ***Small urban PTO administrative staff members***

Email survey requests were sent to 64 individuals from 18 small urban PTOs in California similar to Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST) in their demographics, size, administrative capacity, and funding levels (Table 1). The survey was designed to assess individual perceptions about working collaboratively with members of the public, opinions on the relative benefits of utilizing CACs, and the process by which the PTO integrates the CACs recommendations into the agency's decision-making process (Appendix B). The response rate for this group was 42 percent (27 respondents).

### ***MST Mobility Advisory Committee (MAC)***

Email survey requests were sent to the 12 members of MST's Mobility Advisory Committee (MAC), MST's one advisory committee dedicated to representing customers of the MST RIDES and paratransit programs to assess their satisfaction with their influence and participation, and to categorize their suggestions for improving the collaborative process (Appendix C). The response rate for this group was 50 percent (6 respondents).

**Table 1: Small Urban PTOs Surveyed**

<b>Federal Transit Administration Section 5339 Small Urban Formula Distribution</b>	
<b>Area</b>	<b>Agency</b>
<b>Fairfield</b>	Fairfield and Suisun Transit
<b>Hemet</b>	Riverside Transit Agency
<b>Merced</b>	Merced County Transit
<b>Salinas</b>	Monterey-Salinas Transit
<b>San Luis Obispo</b>	San Luis Obispo Regional Transit District
<b>Santa Barbara</b>	Santa Barbara Metropolitan Transit District
<b>Santa Cruz</b>	Santa Cruz METRO
<b>Vallejo</b>	Solano County Transit
<b>Chico</b>	Butte Regional Transit B-Line
<b>Delano</b>	Delano Area Rapid Transit
<b>Hanford</b>	Kings Area Rural Transit KART
<b>Lompoc</b>	City of Lompoc Transit COLT
<b>Madera</b>	Madera County Transportation Commission MCTC
<b>Redding</b>	Redding Area Bus Authority
<b>Simi Valley</b>	Simi Valley Transit
<b>Turlock</b>	Stanislaus Regional Transit StaRT
<b>Woodland</b>	Yolo County Transportation District
<b>Vacaville</b>	City Coach Bus System

State of California, Department of Transportation Call for Projects-Section 5339. Partial list from Attachment 1: Letter to MPOs and RTPAs, January 9, 2014.

**Research Instrument #3: *Interviews***

Seven interviews were conducted with PTO staff who responded to the survey. Five individuals agreed to be quoted and identified by name; two individuals requested anonymity.

Four interviews were conducted with members of the MAC who responded to the survey. Two individuals agreed to be quoted and identified by name; two individuals requested anonymity.

Two additional interviews were conducted from among experts working in the area of public outreach and at transit agencies outside of the small urban parameters of this paper who offered unique insight into public outreach and the use of CACs in general.



## **FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

### **Internal evaluation of MST's public hearings**

#### ***Findings***

During FY 2011-2013 a total of 34 public hearings were held for two changes or increases to fares and five reductions or changes in service. In FY 2011 one change to fare structure was implemented; in FY 2012 one fare increase and three changes or reductions in service were implemented; and in FY 2013 one round of community meetings were held for anticipated emergency service reductions resulting from a dispute between the Amalgamated Transit Union and the State of California over the implementation of the Public Employee Pension Reform Act (PEPRA), signed into law by Governor Brown on September 12, 2012. These meetings were followed by another round of public hearings later in the year when the reductions were deemed imminent.

While compiling this data, I found that there were no minutes taken for six of the seven public meetings held in FY 2011 regarding changes in fare structure, nor was there a record of attendees for each hearing. MST staff provided only a summary of the six meetings at the final hearing held at the MST board meeting, which included a record of the following: 35 total meeting attendees; seven comments received by letter and/or email; three comments received by telephone; and a summary of the nature of comments received, including concerns about fare increases for RIDES customers, fare increases for users who stay within the same fare zone, and other comments related to security concerns and requests for extended ticketing hours. Because of the lack of information on the number of

attendees per hearing and per location, data for FY 2011 was not able to be included in some of the following analyses. Additionally, data for public hearings held for the purpose of approving MST's Annual Program of Projects have not been included because MST uses these funds to pay for budgeted salaries, fuel, and security; they affect neither increases to fares nor reductions in transit services, and are not used for capital purchases or projects. Only one annual public hearing is held for the purpose of board approval of the annual Program of Projects; and no public comments were made related to these hearings during the period covered.

Information obtained from the minutes of all seven rounds of public hearings over FY 2011-2013 revealed that a total of 151 people attended a total of 34 public meetings, for an average attendance of 4.44 individuals per meeting. Of these 151 individuals, 78 (52 percent) were "unique," or had not attended more than one of the 34 total meetings (Table 2).

**Table 2: Total Public Hearing Attendance**

**Fiscal Years 2011-2013**

Total Meetings	Total Attendance	Average Attendance	Unique Attendees
34	151	4.44	78

52% percent of attendees participated in only one public hearing during FY 2011-2013.

Ninety-two people (61 percent) attended public hearings announcing service reductions or changes, nearly 44 percent more than attended hearings for changes or increases to fares (59 attendees or 39 percent) (Table 3).

**Table 3: Public Hearing Attendance by Type**

Fiscal Years 2011-2013		
Total Attendees	Service Reductions/Changes	Fare Increases
151	92	59

44% more people attended hearings for service changes than fare increases.

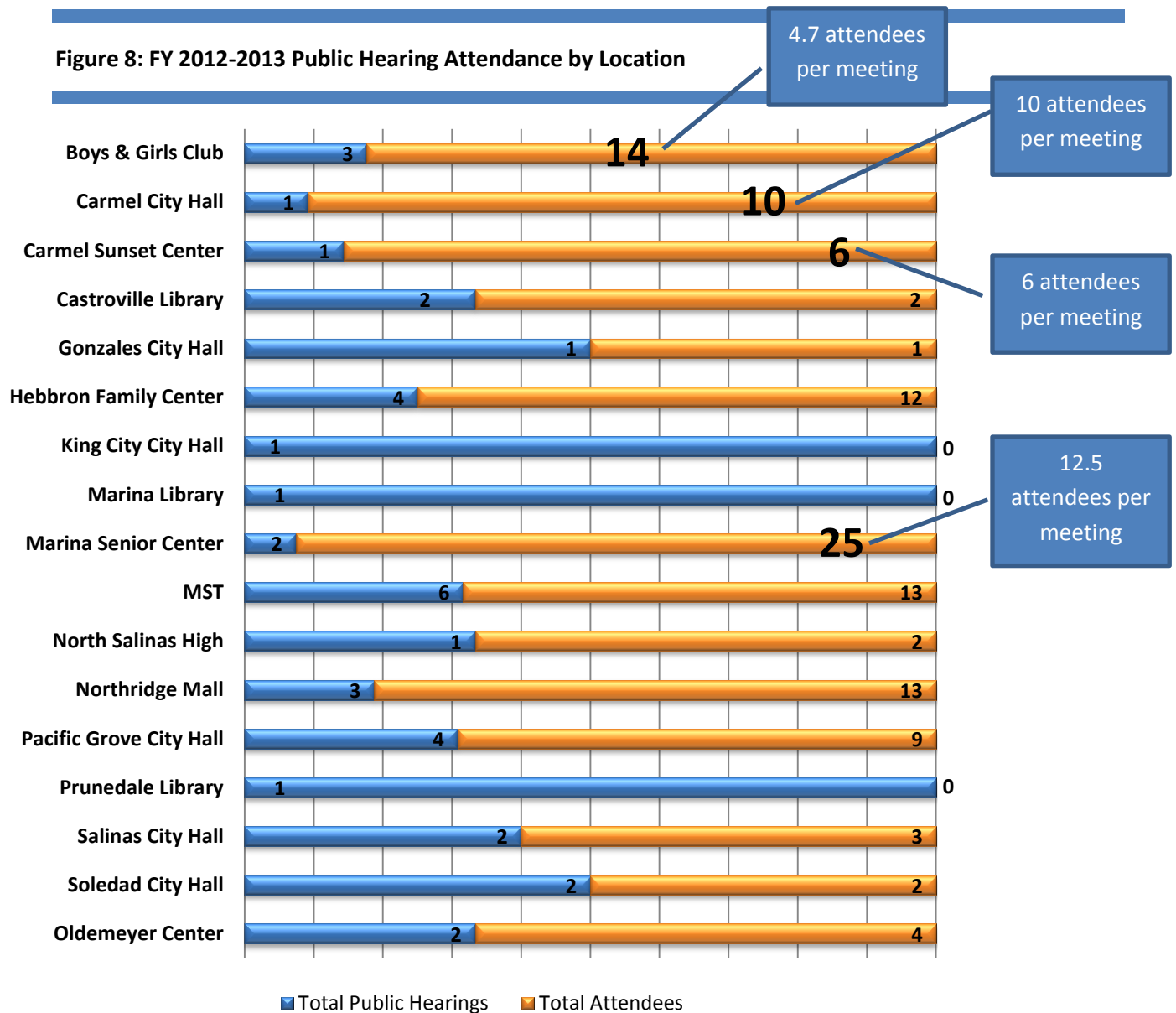
The larger percentage of attendance at hearings regarding service changes does not track with responses from the MST 2013 On-Board Rider Survey in which 47.8 percent of riders indicated they would ride less often if fares were increased, while 47.2 percent also indicated they would ride less often if the frequency of service was reduced. If changes to both fares and service equally cause riders to reduce their use of transit services, one could expect to see an even distribution of attendance at public hearings for both purposes.

Figure 8 below provides a detail of every location at which an MST public hearing was held during FY 2012-2013 as well as the total attendance at each location. Locations with the highest number of attendees per meeting (five or more) are the Marina Senior Center, with an average of 12.5 attendees per meeting; Carmel City Hall, with an average of 10 attendees per meeting; Carmel Sunset Center, with an average of 6 attendees per meeting; and the Boys & Girls Club, averaging 4.7 attendees per meeting.

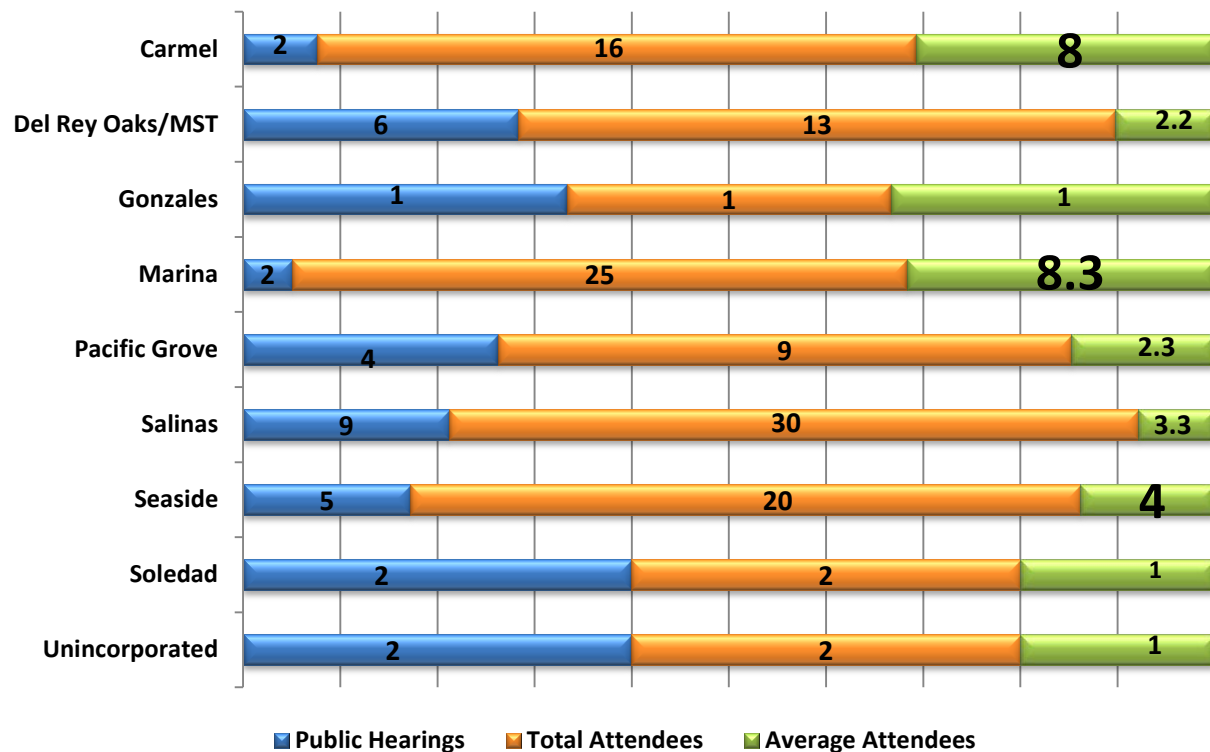
Attendees were also compared by the jurisdictions in which meetings were held (Figure 9). Because no public meetings were held in the cities of Greenfield, Monterey, and Sand City,

they are not represented in the graph; although one meeting was held in the City of King, no one attended the meetings.

**Figure 8: FY 2012-2013 Public Hearing Attendance by Location**



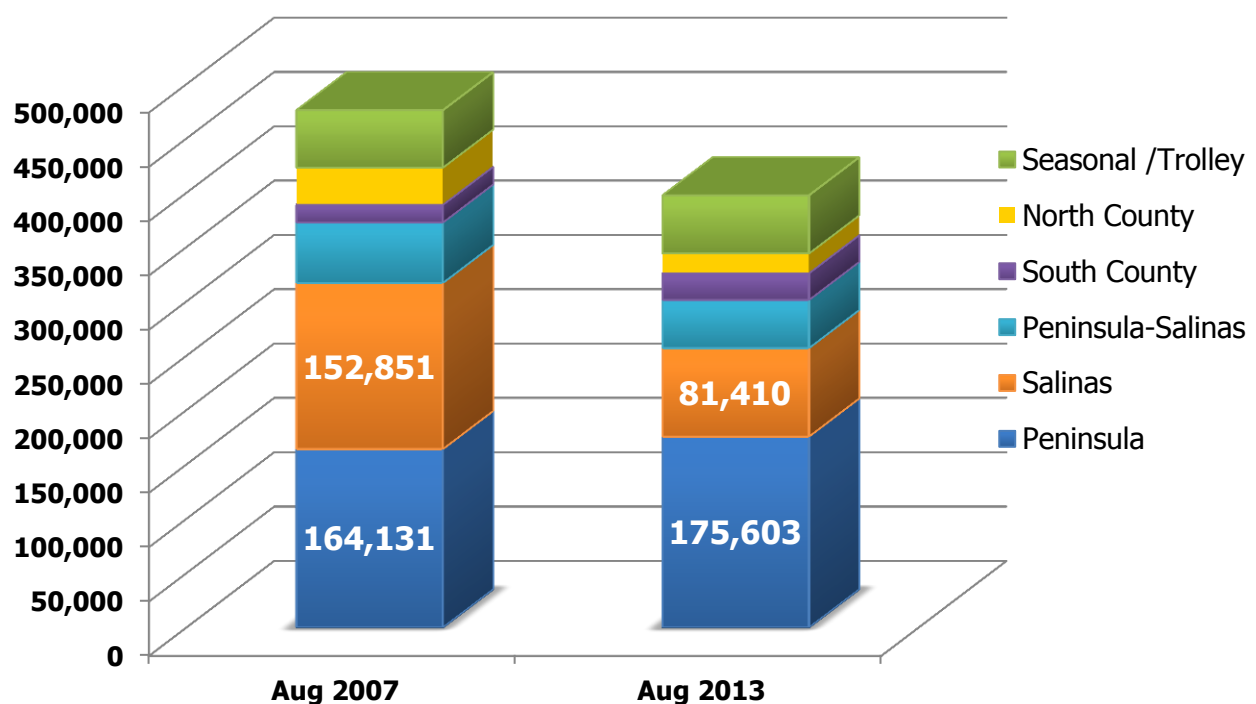
**Figure 9: FY 2012-2013 Public Hearings and Attendance by Jurisdiction**



Because the Monterey Peninsula includes seven cities within close proximity to each other (Carmel, Del Rey Oaks, Marina, Monterey, Pacific Grove, Sand City, and Seaside) the residents of Monterey proper are believed to be served by meetings held in surrounding cities. The MST administrative office is the location for all public hearings held at board meetings, and it is located closer to Del Rey Oaks than any other Monterey Peninsula city. For this reason, Del Rey Oaks is designated as the jurisdiction for MST public hearings in all comparisons by jurisdiction. The city of Sand City is also within three miles of the MST Administrative office and is served by this location for the purposes of public hearings.

Although only two jurisdictions drew more than an average of 4 attendees: the City of Marina (8.3 average attendees per meeting); and the City of Carmel (8 average attendees per meeting), both of these jurisdictions were represented by three of the top four meeting locations with the highest average number of hearing attendees, above. The City of Seaside—home to the Boys & Girls Club, which received the fourth highest average attendance by location—drew an average of 4 attendees per meeting.

**Figure 10: MST Comparative Ridership by Route Location**



MST tracks its ridership by route location. Figure 10 above displays significantly higher ridership levels on Monterey Peninsula routes. As of 2010, the City of Salinas had a population of 150,441, while the combined population of all seven cities representing the

service area of the Monterey Peninsula was only 101,490, making the top average public hearing attendance by meeting location and jurisdiction negatively correlated to population, but positively correlated to ridership levels.

### ***Analysis***

An attempt to analyze preferable meeting locations reveals no strong advantage by location type although, in general, community/family centers received higher overall attendance per meeting. Carmel City Hall is an outlier in this comparison; city halls in other jurisdictions received some of the lowest overall attendance. Additional location considerations not analyzed in this paper include the availability of public transportation and bus stops near meeting locations, as well as more subjective indicators such as the perceived formality/family-friendly atmosphere of locations; proximity to neighborhoods of high ridership; and other demographic data such as income, education, and primary language spoken at home, all of which have been identified in the literature review as potential barriers to public participation.

As stated earlier, population levels by service area is negatively correlated to public hearing attendance, while ridership by service area is positively correlated. The City of Salinas has the highest population among MST's service areas and was home to the highest number of public hearings, yet it averaged only 3.3 people per meeting. Again, subjective indicators such as the primary language of riders, conflicting work schedules, availability of transportation, and other socio-economic barriers may play a role in public hearing attendance. MST's 2013 On-Board Rider Survey reports that 28 percent of those taking the survey spoke Spanish or Spanish and English at home. While MST always provides Spanish

translation assistance at their public hearings, the presentations are not delivered in Spanish, which may contribute to participation reticence.

MST riders also have a high degree of transit dependency. The percentage of survey respondents from Spanish-speaking households without a valid driver's license and/or direct access to a motor vehicle is extremely high at 75.1 percent. Even among respondents indicating English/Other as their primary language, 66.2 percent were transit dependent. Transit dependent individuals will necessarily require meetings located near transit stations or bus stops as a condition for attendance.

In addition to easily accessible meeting locations, the time meetings are held may be a barrier to participation. MST board meetings are held on the second Monday of each month at 8:00am. While transportation is provided, there is only one bus, originating at the Monterey Transit Plaza, with service to the meeting. Since just fewer than 80 percent of MST's riders are either employed or students (MST internal data), the 8:00am weekday time may present as much of a barrier to participation as does location or transportation availability.

Most other public hearings were held on weekday evenings from 5:30pm to 7:30pm, and generally only one meeting per jurisdiction was held. A notable exception was the three public hearings held at the Northridge Mall Community Room. These meetings were held on a Saturday at 11:30am and public transportation serves this immediate location.

Attendance at the Northridge Mall location had the fifth-highest average attendance, at 4.3 persons per meeting. These details compare with the location of highest average

attendance, the Marina Senior Center, which also has direct access to public transportation. The meetings were held during the lunch hour when attendance at the center was high and there was a captive audience. Many of the center's seniors use public transportation.

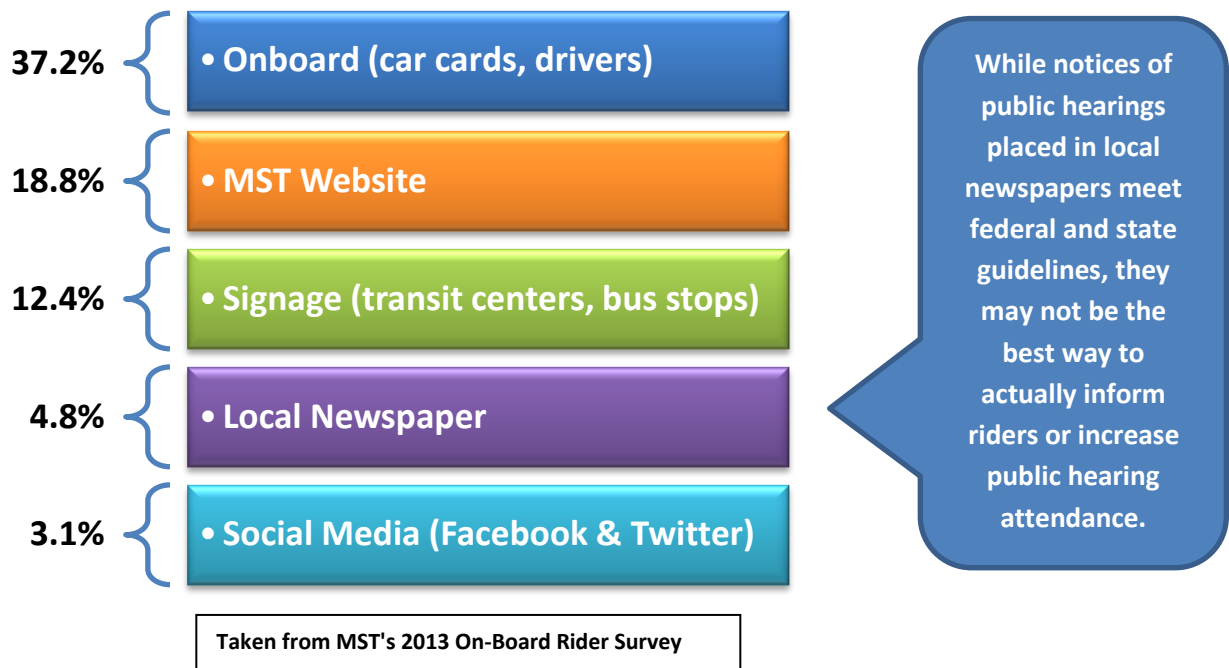
Even if a public meeting is held in a convenient location, at a convenient time, and access to public transportation is available, people must know the meeting is taking place in order to attend. Per its Public Hearing Policy, MST must, at a minimum, provide notice for its public hearings by placing advertisements in the Monterey Herald and the Salinas Californian (the two major newspapers of general circulation in Salinas and on the Monterey Peninsula), in at least one Spanish language medium (typically El Sol); posting car cards in all MST coaches; and providing a press release for local media. All of these must be posted during the minimum two-week notice period. In addition to these minimum requirements, MST posts notice on its website, on its Facebook page, and in other newspapers in South County areas when there are service changes affecting these areas or when fares are increased.

Figure 11 below displays responses from the 2013 On-Board Survey regarding how riders obtain information about service changes. Additional information resources cited were MST Rider's Guide (32.3%); Google Transit (7.9%); MST Customer Service Line (5.3%); and Other (7.3%), including 7 write in options with "observation" reporting the highest response rate at 1.7% of respondents.

MST provides notice in all of the preferred formats, although it is unlikely that the required newspaper notices are effective, given this outlet's low response rate. Car cards seem to be the best medium for communicating meetings, service changes, and other information.

Additional considerations would be to place notices at schools, community and senior centers, libraries, and other locations of high visibility.

**Figure 11: MST Rider Preferred Resources for Learning about Service Changes**



While I regard MST's overall per meeting attendance to be low, a deeper analysis of the data presented in this paper should allow MST staff to identify meeting locations that may be a waste of staff time, financial resources and, most notably, an ineffective way to engage the public. With some adjustments, changes could be made to maximize attendance, as well as the public and staff's morale. Hopefully, other small urban PTOs will use this analysis to compare and contrast their attendance against the considerations taken to maximize public participation.

## Survey and Interviews

In an effort to provide a cohesive analysis of survey and interview responses regarding the use of citizen advisory committees to enhance the public hearing process and increase the social capital of small urban PTOs, I have integrated my findings from both small urban PTO administrative staff and members of the MAC by addressing each as they relate to my five previously stated assumptions.

Also included are responses from other professionals who have offered their unique insight and expertise regarding effective public outreach. I believe the personal and candid narrative of interview responses provide an insightful counterbalance to the sometimes discrepant data obtained in the surveys.

27 of the 64 administrative staff surveyed participated, for a response rate of 42 percent.

Table 4 provides a summary of respondents by gender and age.

**Table 4: PTO Response by Gender and Age**

PTO Response by Gender			
Male		Female	
46%		54%	
PTO Response by Age			
25-34	35-49	50-64	65 and over
21%	33%	38%	8%

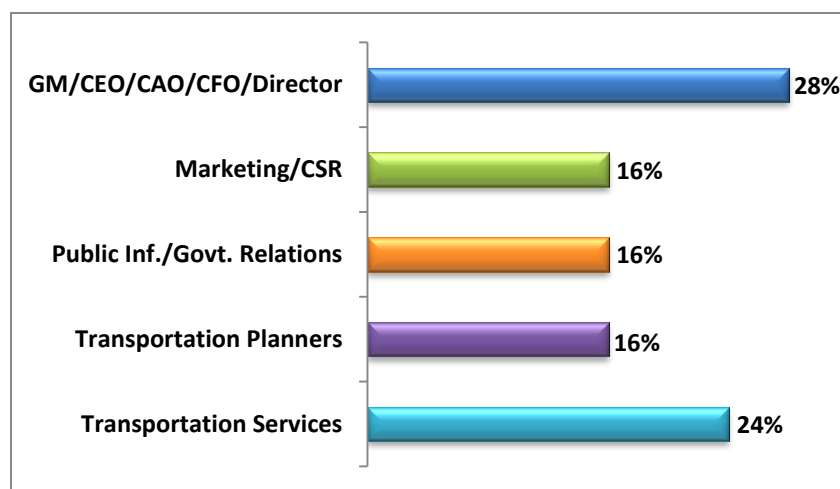
PTO respondents were provided seven work titles from which to choose, as well

as a fill in option for “other.” Nine different titles were received for the “other” category.

Titles were then consolidated into five primary categories according to scope of work, with executives combined into one category (Figure 12). (It should be noted that surveys were

anonymous; therefore, there is no way to cross tabulate respondents by transit operator surveyed).

**Figure 12: PTO Respondents by Title**



**72%** of PTO respondents work with Citizen Advisory Committees.

**80%** reported collaboration with their CACs to be an effective method of gaining public feedback.

Of the 28 percent of PTO respondents who do not work with CACs, 57 percent reported some level of dissatisfaction with their public hearing attendance (Table 5).

**Table 5: PTO Respondents Satisfaction with Public Hearing Attendance**

Our Public Hearings are Well-Attended					
Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
0%	0%	43%	29%	14%	14%

Eight of the 12 members of MST's Mobility Advisory Committee participated in the survey, for a response rate of 67 percent. Table 6 provides a summary of respondents by gender, age, and length of service on the MAC.

**Table 6: MAC Respondents by Gender, Age, and Length of Service**

MAC Response by Gender			
Male		Female	
20%		80%	
MAC Response by Age			
26-34	35-54	55-64	65 and over
0%	40%	60%	0%
Length of Service on MAC			
<1 yr.	1-3 yrs.	3-5 yrs.	
14%	57%	29%	

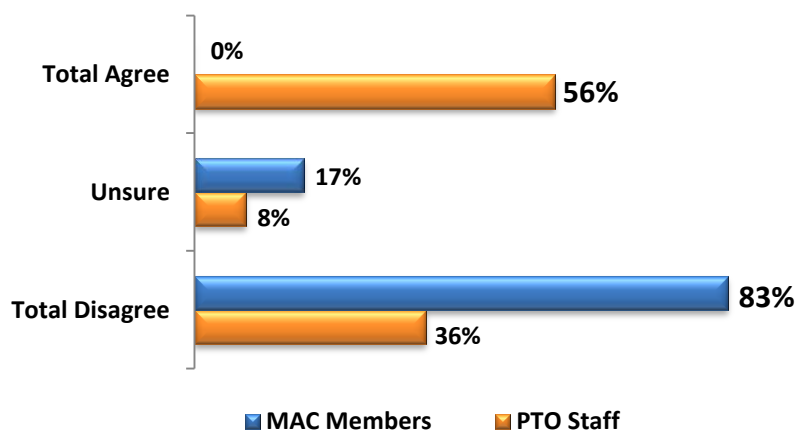
83% of MAC members have either a bachelor's or master's degree.

## Findings

**Assumption #1:** *CACs can help overcome administrative and fiscal constraints by acting as representative agents of the Operator, empowering a broader segment of administrative staff to engage in public outreach, and reducing the workload of higher level directors whose focus may be better directed at long range planning and goal attainment.*

Both PTO staff and MAC members were asked their opinions as to whether they believed public outreach efforts slowed the decision-making process (Figure 13).

**Figure 13: Does extensive public outreach slow the decision-making process?**



A majority of PTO staff felt extensive public outreach slowed decision-making, although **63%** agreed that CACs were “**very effective**” at producing better outcomes.

Among MAC members, **83%** agreed that CACs result in better long term results.

While 56 percent of PTO staff reported some level of agreement, and 12 percent “strongly agreed,” none of the MAC members agreed with the statement.

PTOs were also asked whether they believed it was important to include many staff members in the public outreach process. Assumption 1 implies that the more staff members who participate and who are empowered to engage with members of the public, stakeholders, and CACs, the workload of upper level executives can be distributed. PTO respondents overwhelmingly agreed in the importance of staff participation (Table 7).

**Table 7: PTO Response to Importance of Staff Participation**

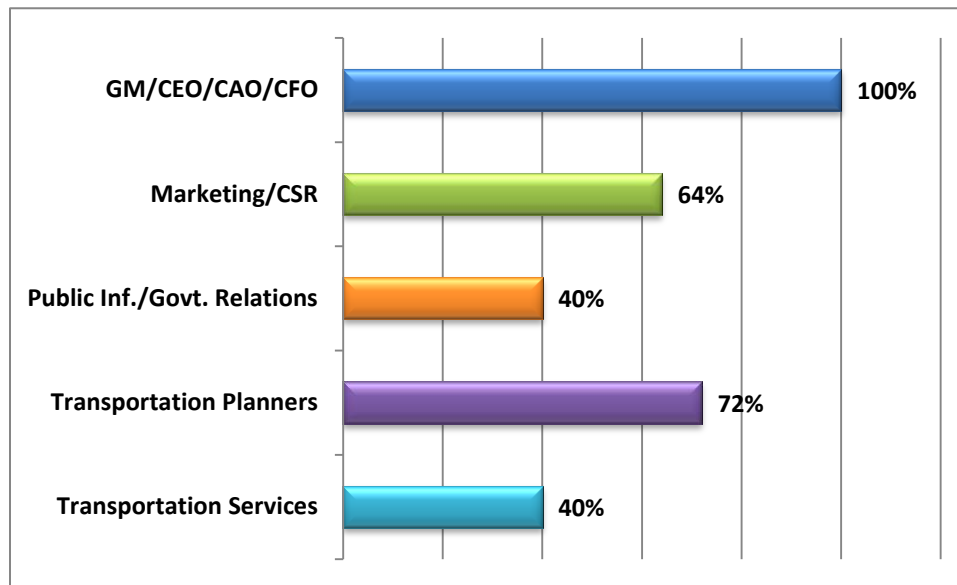
It is Important that Many Departments and Staff Members Participate in the Public Outreach Process					
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
0%	22%	0%	39%	22%	17%
Total Disagree			Total Agree		
22%			78%		

A total of 78 percent of PTO respondents agreed that a broad range of staff members should participate in the process. Figure 14 displays the titles of PTO staff members who survey respondents reported were directly involved in the public outreach (including public hearing) process.

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**Figure 14: Employees Involved in Outreach Process by Respondent**

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Aimee Wyatt, Manager of Marketing and Service planning at San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority (SLO RTA, RTA) didn't necessarily agree that their CAC, the Regional Technical Advisory Committee (RTAC), relieves the administrative burden on transit staff, stating, "When somebody says let's have a meeting, you have to send out 20 emails just to find a time that works for everyone. Someone has to manage that; it's another Brown Act public meeting to prepare for. And, with our low participation rate, our effort is probably more work than the benefit of the outcome."

Like many smaller agencies with limited resources, Aimee acknowledged that most of her time is focused on dealing with the details of "service change after service change," from signage changes to updating rider's guides. Additionally, she said that the committee meets

only once per quarter and often doesn't meet quorum requirements. "I can't say recruitment has been easy," she said, "some members almost never show up."

The RTAC meetings are held at SLO RTA headquarters, which Aimee conceded was not easily accessible by public transit. "It's hard for them to attend the meetings. The reality is that older or retired individuals have more time to attend, which makes forming a diverse group difficult."

"Maybe a change of meeting venue would help," Aimee said. "Having meetings at our agency is too out of the way. I'm just not sure." In the end, Aimee said that while she believed her board was satisfied with attendance at their public hearings, she and RTA staff always feel they could do more to reach out to the public, and she is especially concerned about RTA's Spanish speaking population. "In the back of your mind, you always wonder, 'have we done enough?'"

Eunice Lovi works at the Stanislaus County Department of Public Works and is the transit manager for Stanislaus Regional Transit (StaRT). While StaRT does not have an acting CAC to advise on transit services, Eunice explained that the Stanislaus Council of Governments (COG) has a CAC that reviews transit projects and infrastructure projects. The county has assigned only three and one-half staff members to manage StaRT in addition to her position—a staff services coordinator, a staff services analyst, an associate planner, and a half-time administrative clerk.

At the time of writing this paper, Eunice's staff was preparing for their annual August service change, making frequent visits to the local university and reaching out to students

and faculty to obtain input. She said it was a kind of “let’s meet, let’s talk” effort; informal and very “boots on the ground.” In addition, she and her staff participate in local events throughout the county to spread the word about transit, to solicit input, and provide information about service in the county.

“No way,” she said when I asked if she relied on public hearings as a public outreach effort, “if we want to let members of our community know what’s going on, or if we need to solicit input on projects or other service issues, we have to go to them, we have to make an active effort to engage.” When asked if she thought a CAC would help alleviate some of the burden on their small staff, she said she was interested in learning more, “With so few of us to manage outreach, it might be helpful, but even managing a committee would be additional work.”

In contrast to the challenges establishing effective CACs that Aimee and Eunice have experienced, Mona Babauta, executive director of Solano County Transit (Soltrans), told me that her advisory committees help make her more successful as a leader. Soltrans receives input from three advisory committees; the Executive Management Committee (EMC), which includes the city managers of Vallejo and Benicia and the executive director of the Solano Transportation Authority; the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), which includes staff members from each of the three agencies who are appointed by the agency CEOs; and the Public Advisory Committee (PAC), comprised of citizens appointed by city council and board members from each of the member jurisdictions.

Lulu Feliciano is the Public Outreach Manager for the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) that employs approximately 5,000 employees. I interviewed Lulu because she was referred to me as an expert in successful public outreach whose approach would offer insight into many of the best practices advocated by those cited in this paper. Lulu's fundamental role at SFMTA is to ensure that the public is informed and engaged on capital and construction projects, transit service disruptions, and other transit-related issues.

"Our agency has three or four outreach communicators, and hundreds of projects; there's simply no way this staff could conduct all the outreach alone and do it well," she said. Lulu agrees that their CACs help support the work of the agency and act as disseminators of information, saying, "We continuously inform them (CAC members), update them, and in return they offer feedback and input." Lulu makes clear in the application and charter that while SFMTA needs their input, they also need members to "help get word out." She explained that a project or service change may touch two or three community and/or commercial districts and her staff simply doesn't have the time to go to every single local monthly association meeting. Lulu has developed an application packet that provides prospective CAC members about what will be expected of them and details their roles and responsibilities. She credits the upfront work of establishing defined committee purposes, expectations, and goals with her success.

In fact, both Mona and Lulu discussed the importance of educating a broad base of transit employees in community outreach methods. Mona explained that because members of the EMC haven't been in the "weeds" of transit, they have needed some education on how

public transit works. Similarly, members of the TAC work in city departments such as public works and finance and possess a high level knowledge of transit funding but do not often interface directly with transit riders. She said working as a team with the other two committees increases their overall understanding of the transit staff/rider interface and that the input from the actual riders of transit has been enlightening for them.

Lulu agreed that educating a larger portion of staff in public outreach and communication techniques is important, “We were requiring our engineers and planners to talk to the public and they weren’t trained for it—it wasn’t fair to them or to the public.” Lulu explained that the SFMTA realized the need to educate their employees, “We not only have a resource issue, but a skill set issue as well.”

### ***Analysis***

My interviews with survey respondents and other professionals in the area of public outreach yielded two distinct perceptions regarding Assumption #1. The agencies that had invested a great deal of time and effort in developing their committees, provided a high level of specificity as to the purpose and expectations of the committees, and whose leadership was invested in empowering their staff to participate in outreach efforts generally reported greater satisfaction with their CACs. This supports the caveats of Pickering and Minnery (pg. 19) regarding the necessity of a redirecting of staff and financial resources to establish an effective outreach effort, and Bryson, Quick, Slotterback and Crosby’s assertion that this effort is worth the investments (pg. 19).

Survey responses reveal that perceptions regarding the effectiveness and impact of public outreach vary according to whether one is a member of the public or a staff member working for a government entity. While PTO staff believes that extensive engagement may slow the overall decision-making process of a transit provider, they also acknowledge that outcomes are improved when CACs are engaged and are a part of the process.

My interviewees included those who have had success with CACs and those who have found the very effort of obtaining meeting quorums a challenge. While a total of 78 percent of PTO respondents agreed that a broad base of transit staff should be involved in the outreach process, interviewees from smaller agencies found this to be an unrealized goal; even Lulu Feliciano from SFMTA works with only five staff members who are dedicated to the outreach process. In spite of this challenge, the success stories of interviewees support the over-arching theme within the literature review that this environment of collaboration and shared vision starts at the organizational level before it can be realized between staff and the public.

In summary, it cannot be assumed that implementing CACS will immediately reduce the administrative and fiscal constraints of small urban PTOs. The decision to work with advisory groups requires a commitment similar to that discussed by Mona Babauta and Lulu Feliciano; to move beyond the hope of employing a large department of community outreach experts to one that relies on educating and empowering all members of the PTO's staff to effectively engage – and appreciate – the benefit of working with CACs to support the overall work of the Operator and the service delivered to the public. This effort should be considered a medium to long range goal of the Operator, and a sufficient amount of time

and financial resources are required to create a change of internal culture among transit leadership.

***Assumption #2:*** CACs can help increase administrative responsiveness by collectively engaging a diverse group of a transit operators' ridership and including them in the decision-making process, minimizing hierarchies and information "silos" within an agency, and increasing employee morale and a sense of shared vision.

### ***Findings***

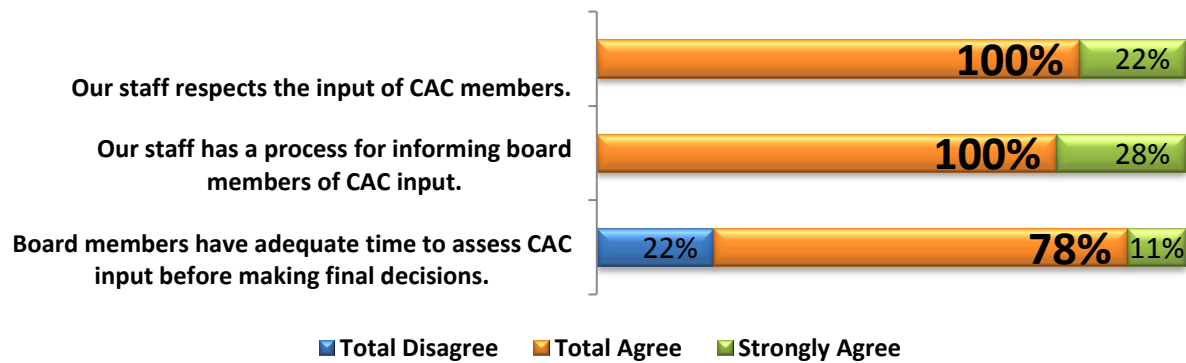
Lulu is emphatic that her job goes beyond just "informing" people. She continually reinforces to all staff members she works with the value of flexibility and administrative responsiveness. "My role is to make sure we do things effectively and in a way that encourages engagement."

Pete Peterson is the executive director of the Davenport Institute at Pepperdine University, staffed by a group of experts in the field of public engagement and civic leadership who help train and educate civic leaders and elected officials on effective public outreach. One of their caveats, confirmed in my interview with Mr. Peterson is, "If you cannot or do not intend to authentically engage the public and integrate their input into your final decisions, don't bother putting out the effort to hold public engagement meetings." Pete agrees that this advice goes for CACs, noting that members of the public who take the time to serve on committees realize right away whether they are there because their input is valued or just to meet a requirement.

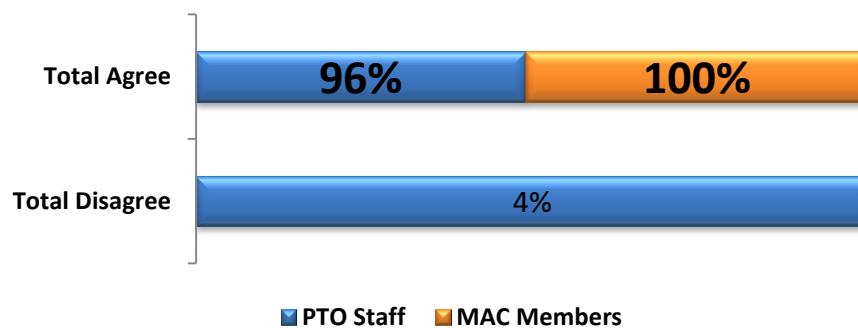
PTO survey respondents overwhelmingly reported that their staff both respects and has a process for integrating CAC input (Figure 15). Both MAC and PTO respondents agree that

the benefit of citizen participation includes the fresh ideas and perspectives gleaned from this engagement (Figure 16).

**Figure 15: PTO Responsiveness to CAC Input**



**Figure 16: Public participation improves decision-making by bringing new ideas and views to the attention of transit staff**



**100%** of MAC members believe CACs work best when their input is seriously considered in the decision-making process.

Mona emphasized that all three of her committees are tasked with receiving and vetting transit-related issues before they come to the Soltrans board of directors, and that she is committed to ensuring this continuous flow of information. The input from their PAC is

considered and valued just as highly as her EMC and TAC and, often, the insight from transit riders and citizens helps staff form their board recommendations and leads to efficient policy and service decisions.

Lulu agrees that CAC's help increase administrative responsiveness. She also agrees that allowing more staff to interact with the public increases their morale, saying, "Engaging employees ensures a sense of shared vision and encourages them to be part of the process."

Even though Aimee has been challenged to get the RTAs CAC functioning well, she said she has a solid communication network with the local colleges and Regional Ride Share Program in the area. "When we have service changes or other issues that need to be communicated, I can call up the transportation coordinator at Cal Poly who has an email list of over 800 students. Regional Ride Share has list of couple thousand."

Aimee is confident that RTA staff has a handle on the needs of their ridership and, at end of day, with the knowledge staff has of day-to-day processes, ridership data, and RTA's history of routes and service demands, they are able to make their service decisions in a very purposeful and careful manner, and she believes the public is supportive.

Two PTO respondents who requested anonymity were less enthusiastic about the benefit of advice received from members of the public in general. "It might be a mix of concern and relief that no one shows up," said one staff member.

Another said, “The public often asks us at public hearings, ‘Are you proposing this or are you telling us that this is what’s going to happen?’” She said that staff often thinks, “Well, we can’t just come and ask what you want; we don’t have any more money!”

Tom Hicks is the Mobility Manager at MST and facilitates the Mobility Advisory Committee (MAC). As a former practicing psychologist he has years of experience working in social services prior to coming to MST, and offered unique insight into the dynamics of communication and responsiveness. “There’s a common saying among social workers,” he offered. “In communication, it’s not what you say, but what they hear that matters.”

When I asked him to tell me what he thought was the unique value CACs brought to the decision-makers in transit, he offered the following, “Often, so many of the decisions made in transit are made by people who don’t work on the line and who are not directly affected by transit policies. While transit leaders are bright, dedicated people in many respects, they may not possess the skill to adequately get their point across. To them it all makes sense, and may be logical, and may employ latest technology, and be politically correct, but as far as how it will affect the transit rider—that is often very different.”

Both Tom and Ronn Rygg, an employee at United Way Monterey County, who has served on the MAC for nearly four years, agree that in order for a transit agency to be truly responsive, there must be enough time for a committee to collaborate on an issue before it goes to the board for a final decision.

Ronn offered, “There have times where issues were brought to us too late to allow for good discussion and recommendations.” But Ronn also explained that he is familiar with issues

that sometimes need immediate action. He understands that emergencies do arise and the agency must act quickly, “But you don’t want that to become the norm. The culture right now is to think that everything is an emergency; we’re so impatient, and we want the answer now. Some things just take time.”

Pete Peterson spoke of one of his mentors, a City Manager, who advised him that “If you aren’t doing effective collaboration within your organization, you’re going to have a hard time doing it externally.” Pete advises transit executives to ask themselves – before they even think about formally engaging the public – “Are we really ready, have we prepared our staff?”

### ***Analysis***

Although survey responses reveal that most respondents, whether transit staff or members of CACs, believe that public engagement is beneficial, that CACs can help support transit staff and offer unique insights to improve service, and that involving a broad base of transit staff in the process is a best practice, interview responses reveal the challenges in applying these noble goals.

As supported by the literature, the issue of public participation in a representative democracy dates back to the earliest days of America’s founding, and there has been extensive research conducted into improving management within governmental agencies. Just as Camilla Stivers addresses the difference between the responsible bureaucrat and the responsive bureaucrat (pg. 23), the tension between technical expertise and efficiency

must always be balanced with maintaining a collaborative and sensitive relationship with the public.

There is no one quick fix; rather, the process is continual and begins at the administrative level. CACs, while not the answer for all effective public outreach and not the sum total of the small urban PTO's public engagement process, can offer a direct link between transit staff and the public. Additionally, the process of involving and educating transit staff in collaborative decision-making, both within the agency and externally, as advocated in the five practices of exemplary leadership advanced by Kouzes and Posner (pg. 20), can increase staff morale and lead to a more effective work force.

**Assumption #3:** *CACs address public values by offering an opportunity for PTOs and representative groups with competing values to inform and be informed, advise and consult, and collaborate in the decision-making process through an iterative and integrative process.*

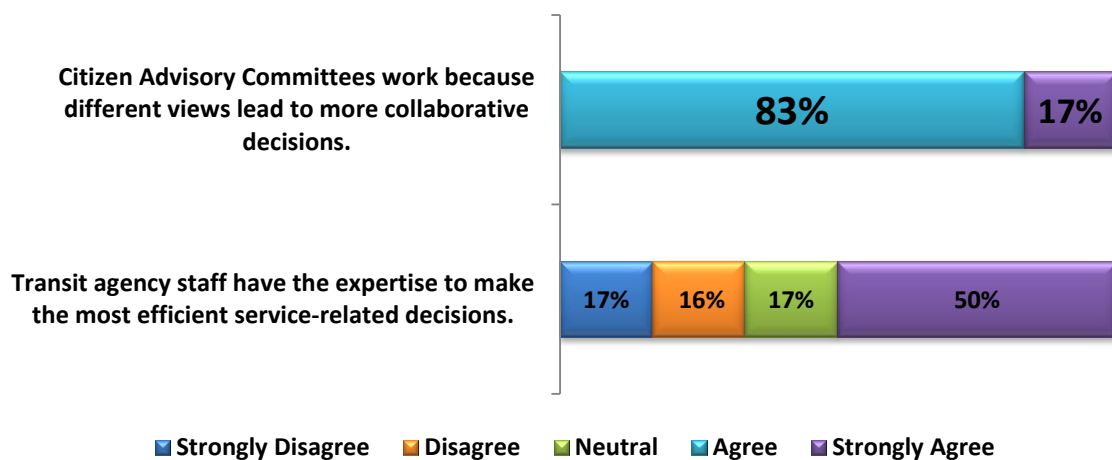
### ***Findings***

As mentioned in the literature review, "citizens can be the shock troops of democracy" (pg. 24), with "shock" being the operative word in many instances. Ronn Rygg appreciates and respects the views and opinions that each member of the MAC brings to the table and sees the committee as a successful group of people working toward a common goal. He believes that it is very useful to have transit riders with disabilities on the MAC because of their unique experiences, "There are practical matters that someone without a disability just can't see or imagine. It's frequently surprising some of the little things or even big things someone with a disability will see or experience others would not, and that can make a big difference in the quality of service. I value that input."

A MAC member who wished to remain anonymous told me that she takes committee member diversity very seriously, “It might not be easy to sit around the table and disagree, but isn’t that what being a representative is all about?” She said that she always watches for a “stacking of the deck” within advisory committees, “Avoiding conflict doesn’t really solve problems,” she said, “we all have good input and overall I think the MAC respects the process.”

Regarding the benefit of including a diverse group of individuals and groups on CACs, Lulu Feliciano says, “Mix it up, diversity is very important,” adding that she credits her success at committee member recruitment to “the upfront work we have done being specific about the nature of committee service.” Figure 17 reveals the level of importance MAC respondents place on collaborative decision-making.

**Figure 17: MAC Responses to the Benefits of Collaboration**



Tom believes the major benefit of the MAC is that all of the members are well-balanced in their approach and work directly with the individuals they represent. He has worked with poorly functioning CACs, citing an experience managing an advisory committee at the substance abuse division of a mental health department, “All the members were former drug and alcohol users who believed that their experience getting sober was how everyone should do it. It was very unproductive – almost useless really.”

**67%** of MAC members believe they are best able to provide valuable input when they are educated about all aspects of the transit industry.

To improve the committee, Tom set about hand-picking the best people he had met through his years in social services. “I trusted them,” he said. “They knew how to read data. They understood the amount of time and emotional commitment it would take to be involved, and it worked.” He agrees that including transit users and those who have disabilities themselves is important to

ensuring diversity on CACs, but that simply being an end-user does not ensure they are able to work collaboratively within a larger group.

PTO survey respondents were asked about the representativeness of their CAC (Table 8). Respondents were split evenly on whether including members with competing values cause difficulty in achieving consensus. While this same split was reported regarding whether their CACs represented the concerns of the community as a whole, 66 percent acknowledged that their CACs represented the *demographics* of their communities and ridership.

**Table 8: PTO Opinions Regarding Competing Values and Diversity on CACs**

Competing Values Make it Hard to Achieve Consensus		
Total Disagree	Unsure	Total Agree
44%	12%	44%
Our CACs Accurately Represent the Concerns of Community as a Whole		
Total Disagree	Unsure	Total Agree
40%	21%	39%
Our CAC is Representative of our Community's Demographics and our Ridership		
Total Disagree	Unsure	Total Agree
34%	0%	66%

**100%** of MAC members believe CACs work best when their input is seriously considered in the decision-making process.

Mona summarized the reality of dealing with a diversity of interests and values on her CACs, which also supports the opinions received in surveys and interviews, “There may occasionally be a couple of people who are self-interested, but most members of the PAC are reasonable and make excellent recommendations to board.” She acknowledged that her PAC is her most emotional group, but that by developing positive relationships, “the end result is just better.”

### ***Analysis***

It can be surmised that while addressing competing values may slow the process and lead to challenges reaching consensus, a majority of Operators nevertheless attempt to reflect the demographics of their ridership on their committees and seem to understand that outcomes are improved through collaborative decision-making. Nabatchi asserts that nearly every problem faced by decision-makers involves issues of competing values (pg. 25).

Just as Nabatchi stressed that a collaborative process must be integrative and iterative (pg. 25), employing a continuum of communication levels (pg. 26), survey and interview respondents also addressed the issue of ensuring that committee members have the tools to make sound decisions. One of the best practices of CACs, discussed on page 32 of this paper, is the benefit of an education process that helps CACs understand the fiscal, regulatory, and technical constraints PTOs must work within.

Tom Hicks also discussed his success at CAC member selection, noting that he has found selective recruitment to yield the most success on advisory committees. This echoes the advice of Archon Fung (pg. 35) who states that selective recruitment allows the Operator to avoid participation bias which could exclude less represented groups.

**Assumption #4:** *CACs help engender the public trust through diverse representation that minimizes participation bias and results in more legitimate decision-making.*

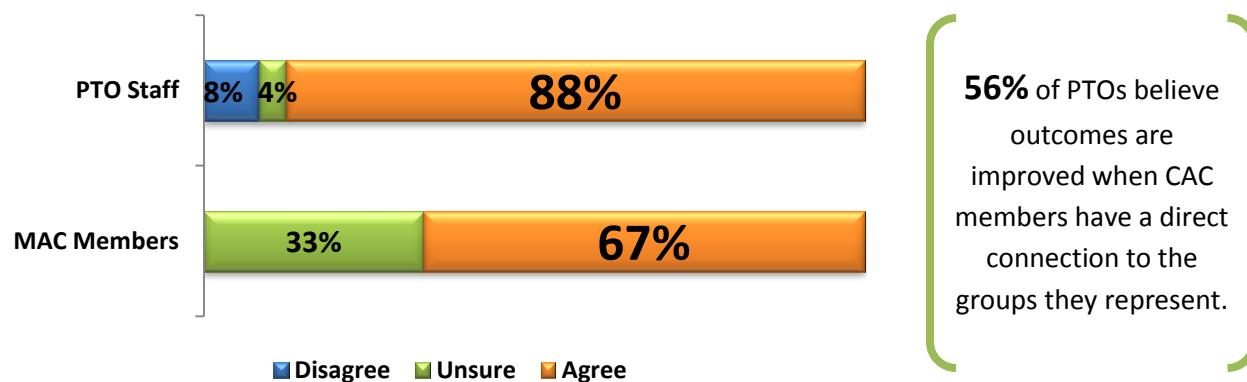
**Assumption #5:** *CACs help enhance the small urban PTO's social capital by establishing an integrated and legitimate process for informing the public, receiving input from the public, and finding ways to collaborating with the public in the decision-making process.*

### ***Findings***

While Assumptions 1 and 2 complement each other by focusing on addressing administrative hierarchies and developing an internal culture of collaboration as prerequisites to effective public outreach, Assumption 3 addresses taking those improvements out to the public realm and, for our purposes, into the deliberative and collaborative environment of a CAC. Because Assumptions 4 and 5 address the positive effects derived from these previous efforts, engendering the public trust and enhancing the Operator's social capital within its community, they will be presented together.

Both PTO staff and MAC members overwhelmingly agree that by utilizing CACs, the PTO is able to engender the public trust (Figure 18).

**Figure 18: CACs Create Trust between the Transit Agency and its Riders**



Mona Babauta told me that, overall, she is very pleased with the functionality between her committees, staff, and board. “But the most important benefit from our committees,” she said, “is the trust I am able to build.” In fact, for Mona, it all comes down to trust: the trust that exists between her three committees; the trust her committees have in her leadership; and the trust her riders have in her agency. “It’s all connected,” she said, “90 percent of my job is relationship-building.” Lulu agrees with the importance of building trust, “When people don’t understand they feel threatened, and when they feel threatened they’re more inclined to oppose you.”

Eunice, who doesn’t have the advantage of working directly with CACs, instead relies on sending staff to attend numerous community events as a way to maintain a positive relationship with the public. In fact, her small staff attended 30 events in 2013 alone. Often,

they provide a shuttle for transportation to the events and then use the shuttle as a way to familiarize event attendees with the ins and outs of using public transit. They always set up a booth and provide materials such as rider's guides and flyers on any proposed service changes or reductions, fare increases, or planned projects.

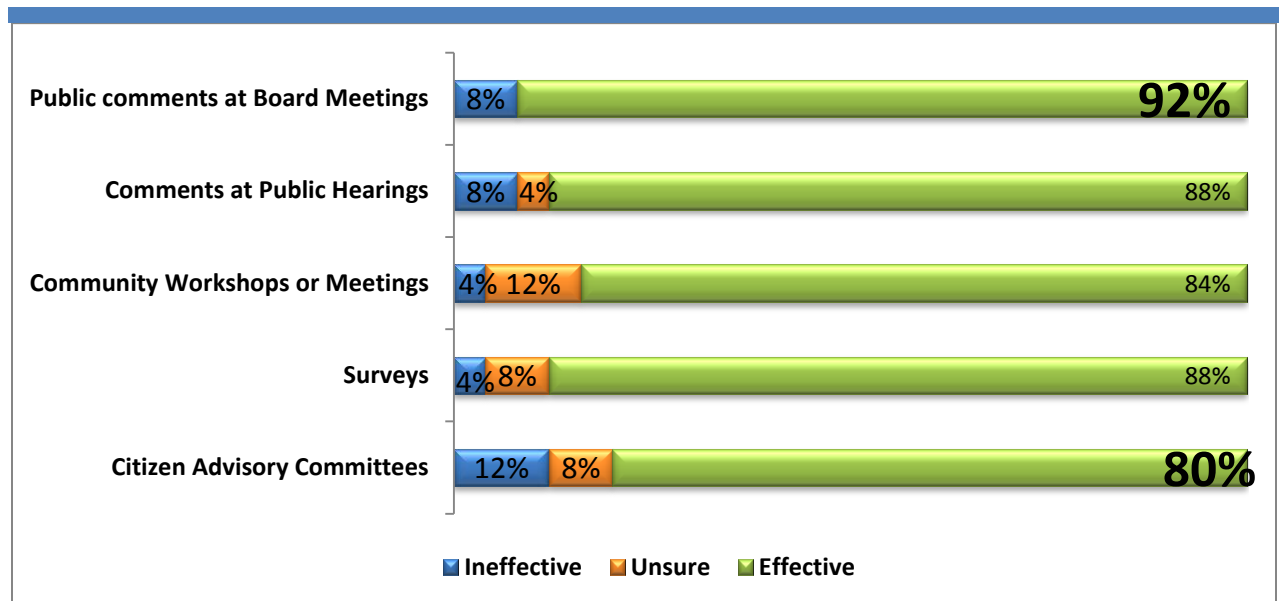
Amy, whose RTAC has had challenges meeting regularly, nevertheless believes SLO RTA maintains the trust and support of the community. She credits this to other relationships she has developed among related groups.

Ronn echoed the sentiments of both Lulu and Mona regarding the ability of a CAC to establish trust among a PTO's ridership, "To the extent that the community is aware of the MAC, it builds trust. We're a tool for MST to reach out to the public."

Pete Peterson offered advice on making sure the public knows of an agency's public outreach efforts, "It's important to know the difference between an engagement process and an informative process. Don't call marketing 'engagement,' don't call informing 'engagement,'" he said. He warned, "You have to circle back with the public to let them know how you have taken their input into consideration. Otherwise, they will form an opinion that their input doesn't matter."

Figure 19 displays a variety of methods PTOs rely on to receive information and input from the public.

**Figure 19: How Effective are the Following Methods for Gaining Public Feedback**



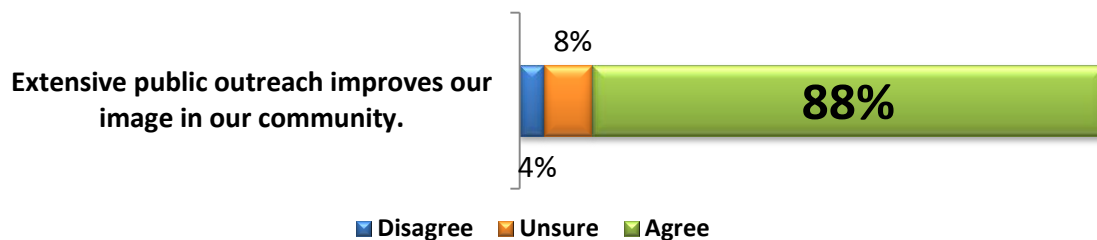
During my interview with Tom Hicks, when I asked him if he felt that MST would benefit from establishing a CAC for fixed route services or special projects, he was not enthusiastic. “An advisory committee for fixed route services?” he mused, “not really.” He stated that he foresaw this type of committee as a big challenge, and put more faith in MST’s bi-annual On-Board Rider Surveys. However, when I asked him again if he thought forming Ad Hoc committees for projects would be beneficial, such as the recently implemented MST JAZZ BRT line, he leaned back and was quiet for a good nine seconds.

“Well, JAZZ took some flak,” he finally responded. He acknowledged that the public didn’t fully understand the way funding for public transit works. “They didn’t understand how MST could simultaneously be reducing service while tearing up the streets, buying new buses for the route, and installing new ‘fancy’ bus shelters.”

He said that getting in front of the project and including representatives from businesses along the proposed route, local Chambers of commerce, and riders who would be using the route could have helped. “We may have been able to gain the trust and support of these groups if we had involved them more up front.”

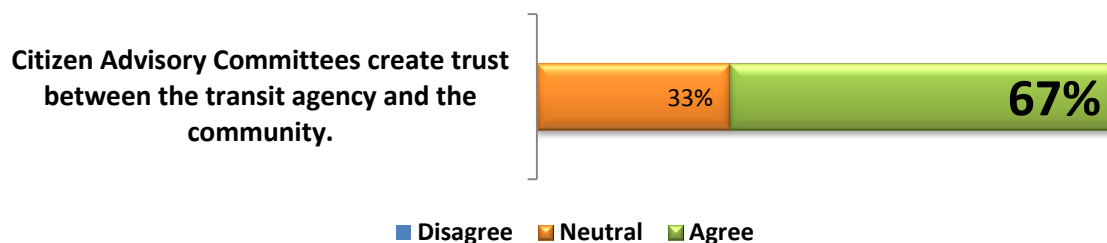
Figure 20 supports Mona’s belief that having the public's trust considerably changes how public may view PTOs in the community.

**Figure 20: PTO Opinion on the Relationship Between Public Outreach and Public Image**



Similarly, members of the MAC agree that CACs have the ability to create trust between the PTO and the community (Figure 21).

**Figure 21: MAC Member Opinion on the Relationship Between CACs and Public Trust**



Ronn believes that if the MAC didn't exist, the public would have a "legitimate beef that they weren't being heard." He also feels the benefit of advisory committees goes beyond the ridership and into the community. "There is also a value to reaching out to the business community, to understanding their needs and limitations when serving our constituents," he stated. Ronn admits he's not always comfortable with dissention, but offers, "As I get older, I appreciate the value of a diversity of opinion and the conflict it can bring. In the end, even if you don't like the final decision, most people at least appreciate the opportunity to voice their concerns. As an advisory committee, we can really help that process. People are overwhelmed with bureaucracy so you have to get ahead of it – this isn't really that difficult."

### ***Analysis***

The relationship between trust and the support of the community that Lulu mentioned, above, is the ultimate goal of public outreach. It is also part of the central question posed in this research paper. All PTOs must follow guidelines for informing the public of service changes, rate increases, and capital projects; going beyond these requirements to enhance the minimally required public hearing process and to increase the social capital, or support of the small urban PTO within its community, is the goal for which this paper attempts to encourage all transit operators to strive.

Not one person surveyed or interviewed claimed that public outreach was easy; no one claimed that CACs solved every conflict between small urban PTOs and the riders they serve. The overwhelming consensus, however, was that it was worth it. Smaller agencies who were short on staff and challenged to establish committees found other ways to

engage the public. They often, as in the case of Aimee and Eunice, wished they could experiment with CACs, but just didn't have the time to invest in the foundational work required to establish effective working groups.

King, Felty, and Susel regard public participation as a multi-faceted communicatory relationship which enhances an agency's accountability, engenders trust, and results in more equitable and informed decisions (pg. 30). The research findings in this paper reveal that the theory behind establishing trust and increasing social capital is broadly supported by small urban PTOs; the effort required to implement CACs as a tool to achieve these goals remains a challenge.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This research was inspired by a concern of the board and staff of Monterey-Salinas Transit regarding low public hearing attendance, as well as their desire to improve the hearing process and encourage public involvement. It is hoped, however, that the comprehensive literature review, survey responses, and interviews have inspired small urban PTOs to move beyond public hearings and toward more authentic public outreach. I posited five assumptions from the literature review regarding utilizing CACs: that they offered a tool by which transit operators can: 1) overcome administrative and fiscal constraints; 2) increase administrative responsiveness; 3) address public values; 4) engender the public's trust; and 5) enhance the public transit operator's social capital within their communities.

The assumptions are progressive in their application; merely gathering a group of willing participants to serve on an advisory committee will not guarantee the public's trust nor will it necessarily result in increased support within the community. King, Felty, and Susel emphasized the need for public agencies to be deliberative about their outreach, often requiring a paradigm shift in the relationships between public administrators, their staff, and the individuals they serve. Even if CACs are not in the future of every PTO who reads this paper, I offer several recommendations that can aid any transit agency's leadership in enhancing their public hearing process and laying the groundwork for increased collaboration with the public.

### **First Steps: Public Hearing Analysis**

I began my research with an analysis of MST's public hearings over Fiscal Years 2011-2013. From this analysis, supported by the literature review, survey responses, and interviews, I have created a set of criteria that should be considered to maximize public hearing attendance (Table 9).

**Table 9: Recommended Considerations to Maximize Public Hearing Attendance**

<b>Public Hearing Process - Considerations</b>	
<b>Location</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Does the location represent riders affected by changes?</li><li>• Is the location a common gathering place in the community?</li><li>• Is the location perceived as safe by members of the community?</li></ul>
<b>Access</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is there a bus stop or a transit station near the location?</li><li>• Is accessible transportation available at this location?</li></ul>
<b>Time</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is the time convenient for those who work or go to school?</li><li>• Is the time convenient for the primary industries in which our riders work?</li></ul>
<b>Frequency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can we offer both weekday and weekend meetings?</li><li>• Can we offer a variety of day and time options?</li><li>• Can we offer more than one meeting per jurisdiction?</li></ul>
<b>Format</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can we deliver the presentation in Spanish (or other language)?</li><li>• Is the format family-friendly?</li><li>• Can we provide food?</li><li>• Is the meeting too formal?</li></ul>
<b>Other</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have we surveyed the ridership to determine preferred locations, times, and days of the week for meetings?</li><li>• Have we advertised the meetings at locations frequented by our ridership?</li></ul>

Any effort at engaging the public should start by attempting to maximize the effectiveness, attendance, and comments received at public hearings. Additionally, while public hearings

are typically a formal process, I encourage Operators to consider holding more casual informational and exploratory meetings several times a year, to attend community gatherings and provide information on transit services, or as Eunice Lovi and her staff often do, park a trolley or bus at the gathering and conduct mini tours and “travel training” sessions. Many who are unfamiliar with public transit may find it daunting; some of the reticence toward using transit may be overcome if transit staff gets creative with their outreach methods.

Finally, along with myriad other data collected on a regular basis, PTOs should consider tracking their meeting attendance to ascertain the most popular locations and most effective meeting formats. I also suggest including questions in On-Board Rider or other surveys regarding preferred meeting locations, times, and formats.

### **Asking the Big Questions: PTO Internal Evaluation**

Assumptions 1 and 2 discuss the responsibility of the administrator to create a more participatory environment within their organizational structures and to assign a broader segment of their staff to engage in public outreach. Pete Peterson discussed the need for transit leadership to honestly assess their willingness *and ability* to set the foundation for launching a public outreach effort. While a high percentage of survey respondents acknowledged that extensive public outreach produces better results, there was also a consensus in the research findings that this often requires an investment of resources, both human and financial. Table 10 highlights some of the questions that should be asked, and considerations taken, when deciding whether establishing a CAC is feasible.

Throughout the literature review, survey responses, and interviews, the importance of preparing staff – with time, support, training, and encouragement – has been stressed. There are many entities offering training in proven outreach methods specifically tailored to governmental agencies. The Davenport Institute, The International Association for Public Participation, and America Speaks are several offering excellent support. Their training seminars also offer an opportunity to encourage other municipalities, special districts, or transit agencies to participate in group sessions, thus enhancing public engagement community-wide.

**Table 10: PTO Internal Evaluation Criteria for Determining Public Outreach Readiness**

<b>PTO Public Outreach Readiness - Internal Evaluation</b>	
<b>Staff Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do we have available staff to facilitate a Citizen Advisory Committee?</li> <li>• Do we have available staff to facilitate enhanced public outreach?</li> <li>• Is our leadership willing to empower staff to participate?</li> </ul>
<b>Financial Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can we allocate financial resources to support a CAC?</li> <li>• Can we allocate financial resources to support enhanced public outreach?</li> <li>• Are we willing to train staff in collaborative engagement?</li> </ul>
<b>Need</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have we identified a specific need for a CAC or additional CACs?</li> <li>• Are we pleased with our public hearing attendance?</li> <li>• Can we do more to engage the public, our riders, and community?</li> <li>• Will we need the support of the community in the future for (projects, local sales tax support, etc.)?</li> </ul>
<b>Purpose</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will our CAC(s) be established for a project?</li> <li>• Will our CAC(s) be standing or Ad Hoc?</li> <li>• Do we need a CAC to address specific transit services or fixed services?</li> <li>• Do we need to reach an under represented segment of our population?</li> </ul>
<b>Other</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify staff members for outreach.</li> <li>• Make changes to job descriptions as necessary.</li> <li>• Update Action Plans, Goals, and Mission Statement if necessary.</li> <li>• Identify professional trainers or facilitators to prepare and motivate staff.</li> </ul>

### **Preparing for Change: Establishing a Citizen Advisory Committee**

Beginning on page 39 of this paper, several best practices for establishing CACs were presented. These are summarized in Table 11 below. It should be noted that not all recommendations may be required of your agency; they are options only and each should be considered to suit the purposes and requirements of each Operator.

**Table 11: Considerations when Establishing a Citizen Advisory Committee**

Establishing CACs - Considerations	
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is the purpose of this committee?</li><li>• What will be its name?</li><li>• Will it be an Ad Hoc or standing Committee?</li><li>• How much authority will the committee's input have in final decisions? (your members should be aware of their role on the committee)</li></ul>
Foundational Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Committee Charter or Bylaws including mission statement, terms of office, quorum requirements, etc.</li><li>• Are members required to comply with AB1234 (Ethics) or FPPC (Form 700)?</li><li>• Create Committee Application and Guidelines.</li></ul>
Selection Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Will we selectively recruit, allow self-selection, or appointment members?</li><li>• Does our committee require individuals with technical expertise?</li><li>• How can we ensure diversity of representation?</li><li>• How can we best avoid participation bias?</li></ul>
Meeting Frequency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How often will the committee meet?</li><li>• Will the committee schedule allow ample time for feedback and collaboration before decisions are made?</li><li>• Develop a pre-determined schedule, and stick with it.</li><li>• Ensure that committee meeting locations and times are convenient for members and located near public transportation.</li></ul>
Orientation and Facilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide members with the necessary information to make a contribution.</li><li>• Do not overload the committee with unnecessary jargon or technical details.</li><li>• Provide an orientation including a session on collaborative decision making.</li><li>• If possible, staff should not lead the meetings and should speak only when necessary – LISTEN to your public's input.</li></ul>

### **Reaping the Rewards: Maintaining Success through Continuous Evaluation**

Just as with any project, strategic plan, or employee motivation program, success is determined by a continuous loop of inputs, outputs, identification of desired outcomes, and regular evaluations. If legitimacy is to be established, trust maintained, and your agency's social capital enhanced within your community you must maintain a good relationship with your committee(s). Avoid allowing the committee process to become perfunctory or your committee members to feel undervalued. Involve them regularly in the evaluation process and survey, poll, or meet with them personally to ask how the process can be improved. Figure 22 provides a visual reminder of this continual "collaborative loop" as a final recommendation.

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**Figure 22: The Citizen Advisory Committee Collaborative Loop**

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As a final recommendation to those who would further the research into public outreach for PTOs, it is acknowledged that this paper engaged a very limited sample of small urban PTOs from which to draw conclusions. While there is a multitude of literature addressing public engagement in general, and while much of this information is transferable to the transit industry, a deeper analysis of the barriers to participation between transit riders and transit administrators is urged. As stated earlier, only correlations can be drawn from the research topic undertaken in this paper; however, there is much to be learned about identifying effective methods for public engagement in the transit industry.

Public transit operators operate in a highly technical environment. Although they provide a service that can positively affect individual lives in profound ways, it is often a challenge to truly engage the public effectively. Achieving balance between governmental efficiency and responsiveness to public input has challenged legislators, public administrators, policy analysts, and academics since the founding of our country. There are many ways to enhance public participation and, as emphasized in this paper, public hearings are only one mechanism by which PTOs and citizens can communicate with each other. Indeed, Citizen Advisory Committees are but one more way to reach the public; albeit, they do offer the unique opportunity for representative engagement. It is the hallmark of a representative government to gather together those who can speak and act on behalf of larger groups in society. The benefits of this collaboration extend not only to the public, but help foster greater morale among public employees as well.



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## **APPENDIX A: MST Public Hearing Policy**

### **PUBLIC HEARINGS POLICY**

Adopted: July 10, 2010

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**OBJECTIVE:** To establish a locally developed process for soliciting and considering public comments for major service changes and fare increases.

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#### **Definition of Public Hearing Requirement**

In accordance with 49 USC Chapter 53, Federal Transit Laws, Section 5307, a grantee must have a locally developed process to solicit and consider public comment before raising a fare or carrying out a major reduction in service. The regulation does not require that fare decreases, service increases, or “special fares” be preceded by public comment. The grantee is not required to hold a public meeting, but must offer an opportunity for one. The grantee must establish guidelines or thresholds for what it considers a “major” change to be.

#### **Threshold for Public Hearing Requirement**

The MST Board defines a major change as one that results in a 10% or greater decrease in vehicle service hours or passengers on any single line, changes in routing that result in MST vehicles utilizing new streets and/or corridors, or any increase in fares. Changes not meeting this threshold do not require a public comment process.

#### **Public Hearing Guidelines**

1. The General Manager/CEO will seek board authorization to conduct a public hearing when required and the Board will assign a public hearing officer.
2. When appropriate, public hearings may be held on both the Monterey Peninsula, within the City of Salinas, and within a jurisdiction of the Central Salinas Valley.
3. The Office Administrator with guidance from the Director of Customer Services and General Manager/CEO or their designate shall seek input from Board members regarding the time, location and public notice requirements for the public hearing(s) to be held.
4. Special consideration should be given on the timing, location and public notice of the event to ensure that the public has the ability to provide comment by attending the meeting or submitting written, email, or verbal comments.
5. At least two weeks’ notice to the public shall be given prior to each hearing.
6. The public shall be invited to submit written, email, or verbal comments if they cannot attend the hearing.
7. Publicity for the hearing and written comments shall at a minimum include:
  - Advertisements in the Herald and the Californian, and at least one Spanish language medium during the minimum two-week notice period.

- Legal notice in the Herald and the Californian during the minimum two-week notice period.
  - Car cards in all MST coaches during the minimum two-week notice period.
  - A press release for local media.
8. Media releases related to the public hearing must be reviewed by General Manager/CEO, or his/her designate.
  9. The Clerk to the Board shall notify all MST Board members and their respective alternates of the time and location for the public hearing as part of the public notification process.

#### **Consideration of Public Comments**

1. MST staff shall provide the Board of Directors with all comments submitted by the public.
2. The Board will consider all comments submitted during the public hearing process.
3. The Clerk to the Board shall record each speaker's name and a brief summary of their comments.
4. The Board will take no final action until the public's written and oral comments have been presented at the final public hearing.

## APPENDIX B: PTO Survey and Data

My Report

Last Modified: 05/25/2014

### 1. What is your gender?

Answer	Response	%
Male	12	46%
Female	14	54%
Total	26	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.54
Variance	0.26
Standard Deviation	0.51
Total Responses	26

### 2. How old are you?

Answer	Response	%
24 or under	0	0%
25-34	6	23%
35-49	8	31%
50-64	10	38%
64 or over	2	8%
Total	26	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	2
Max Value	5
Mean	3.31
Variance	0.86
Standard Deviation	0.93
Total Responses	26

**3. What is your title? (Please choose the title that most closely describes your role)**

Answer	Response	%
General Manager/CEO	4	15%
Assistant General Manager or COO	0	0%
Assistant General Manager or CAO	1	4%
Finance Director or CFO	2	7%
Transportation Director	1	4%
Transportation Planner	3	11%
Public Information Officer	2	7%
Marketing or Customer Service Manager	4	15%
Other (please list below)	10	37%
Total	27	100%

**Other (please list below)**

Manager of Government Relations & Compliance  
Director of Marketing  
Transit Manager  
Interim Transportation Manager  
Transit Coordinator  
Manager of Planning & Operations  
Deputy Director  
CTSA Manager  
Transit Manager  
Grants Analyst

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	9
Mean	6.44
Variance	8.49
Standard Deviation	2.91
Total Responses	27

**4. Which of the following employees are directly involved in the public outreach process? (Please include those who are directly involved in communicating with individuals or groups, planning public outreach efforts, facilitating/attending meetings, and analyzing public comments)**

Answer	Response	%
General Manager/CEO	15	60%
Assistant General Manager or COO	4	16%
Assistant General Manager or CAO	3	12%
Finance Director or CFO	4	16%
Transportation Director	7	28%
Transportation Planner	14	56%
Public Information Officer	9	36%
Marketing or Customer Service Manager	16	64%
Other (please list below)	8	32%

**Other (please list below)**

Manager of Planning  
Transit Manager  
Planning Analysts, Manager of Planning & Operations  
Project Manager  
CTSA Manager  
Program Analysts  
Transit Manager  
Paralegal

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	11
Total Responses	25

**5. VARIETY OF INVOLVEMENT MECHANISMS** How effective are the following methods for gaining public feedback on transit services, fares, capital projects, or other issues that require a public hearing?

Question	Very Ineffective	Ineffective	Somewhat Ineffective	Unsure	Somewhat Effective	Effective	Very Effective	Total Responses	Mean
Public comments received at Board Meetings	1	0	1	0	11	8	4	25	5.40
Public Hearings	0	1	1	1	11	6	5	25	5.40
Community Workshops or Town Meetings	0	1	0	3	4	8	9	25	5.80
Surveys	0	1	0	2	5	12	5	25	5.68
Direct contact via phone or site visits	0	1	2	6	3	5	8	25	5.32
Indirect contact via elected officials	0	2	5	3	8	4	3	25	4.64
Collaboration with Citizen Advisory Committees	0	3	0	2	8	6	6	25	5.28
Other (please list below)	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	6.00

Other (please list below)									
Statistic	Public comments received at Board Meetings	Public Hearings	Community Workshops or Town Meetings	Surveys	Direct contact via phone or site visits	Indirect contact via elected officials	Collaboration with Citizen Advisory Committees	Other (please list below)	
Min Value	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	6	
Max Value	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	6	
Mean	5.40	5.40	5.80	5.68	5.32	4.64	5.28	6.00	
Variance	1.67	1.50	1.67	1.31	2.39	2.24	2.38	0.00	
Standard Deviation	1.29	1.22	1.29	1.14	1.55	1.50	1.54	0.00	
Total Responses	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	1	
6. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.									
Question	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Total Responses	Mean
Extensive public outreach efforts slow the decision-making process.	4	1	4	2	6	5	3	25	4.28
Extensive public outreach produces better long-term results.	0	0	2	2	10	4	7	25	5.48
Citizen participation makes it hard to achieve consensus because of competing values.	1	2	8	3	3	5	3	25	4.28
Extensive public outreach creates trust between our agency and our riders.	0	0	2	1	9	4	8	24	5.63
Extensive	0	0	1	2	6	1	14	24	6.04

public outreach improves our image in our community.									
Citizen participation improves the decision-making process by bringing new ideas and views to the attention of transit staff.	0	0	1	0	10	4	9	24	5.83

Statistic	Extensive public outreach efforts slow the decision-making process.	Extensive public outreach produces better long-term results.	Citizen participation makes it hard to achieve consensus because of competing values.	Extensive public outreach creates trust between our agency and our riders.	Extensive public outreach improves our image in our community.	Citizen participation improves the decision-making process by bringing new ideas and views to the attention of transit staff.
Min Value	1	3	1	3	3	3
Max Value	7	7	7	7	7	7
Mean	4.28	5.48	4.28	5.63	6.04	5.83
Variance	3.96	1.51	3.04	1.55	1.61	1.19
Standard Deviation	1.99	1.23	1.74	1.24	1.27	1.09
Total Responses	25	25	25	24	24	24

#### 7. Does your transit agency utilize Citizen Advisory Committees?

Answer	Response	%
Yes	18	72%
No	7	28%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Total Responses	25

**8. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.**

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total Responses	Mean
Most participants have the communication skills to make a valuable contribution.	0	2	1	2	2	10	1	18	5.11
Most participants have time to attend most scheduled meetings.	0	1	3	2	2	10	0	18	4.94
Most participants have sufficient understanding of the public transit industry to make a valuable contribution.	0	2	4	1	3	7	1	18	4.67

Statistic	Most participants have the communication skills to make a valuable contribution.	Most participants have time to attend most scheduled meetings.	Most participants have sufficient understanding of the public transit industry to make a valuable contribution.
Min Value	2	2	2
Max Value	7	6	7
Mean	5.11	4.94	4.67
Variance	2.22	1.94	2.59
Standard Deviation	1.49	1.39	1.61
Total Responses	18	18	18

**9. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.**

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Unsure	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total Responses	Mean
When conducted as a group, the participants accurately represent the concerns of the community as a whole.	1	1	5	4	3	4	0	18	4.06
Our committee is representative of our community's demographics and our ridership.	1	2	3	0	4	7	1	18	4.61
When participants are randomly selected, outcomes are improved.	1	3	3	10	0	1	0	18	3.44
When participants are self-selected, outcomes are improved.	1	2	1	11	1	2	0	18	3.83
When participants are selected by their qualifications and their connection to represented groups, outcomes are improved.	0	1	1	6	1	6	3	18	5.06

Statistic	When conducted as a group, the participants accurately represent the concerns of the community as a whole.	Our committee is representative of our community's demographics and our ridership.	When participants are randomly selected, outcomes are improved.	When participants are self-selected, outcomes are improved.	When participants are selected by their qualifications and their connection to represented groups, outcomes are improved.
Min Value	1	1	1	1	2
Max Value	6	7	6	6	7
Mean	4.06	4.61	3.44	3.83	5.06
Variance	2.17	3.19	1.32	1.56	2.17
Standard Deviation	1.47	1.79	1.15	1.25	1.47
Total Responses	18	18	18	18	18

**10. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.**

Statistic	It is important that many departments and staff members participate in the public outreach process.		Our staff respects the input of committee participants.		Our staff has developed a process for informing elected officials or board members of committee input.		Our elected officials or board members have adequate time to assess public and Citizen Advisory Committee input before making final decisions.	
Min Value	3		5		6		3	
Max Value	7		7		7		7	
Mean	5.28		5.94		6.28		5.22	
Variance	1.98		0.53		0.21		1.83	
Standard Deviation	1.41		0.73		0.46		1.35	
Total Responses	18		18		18		18	
Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Unsure	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total Responses
It is important that many departments and staff members participate in the public outreach process.	0	0	4	0	4	7	3	18
Our staff respects the input of committee participants.	0	0	0	0	5	9	4	18
Our staff has developed a process for informing elected officials or board members of committee input.	0	0	0	0	0	13	5	18
Our elected officials or board members have adequate time to assess public and Citizen	0	0	4	0	4	8	2	18

Advisory Committee input before making final decisions.								
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#### 11. How often does your agency convene Citizen Advisory Committee Meetings?

Answer	Response	%
Once a Month	8	44%
Every other month	3	17%
Once a week	0	0%
Every other week	0	0%
Quarterly	4	22%
Semi-annually (two times per year)	1	6%
Annually	0	0%
As necessary (please describe below)	2	11%
Total	18	100%

#### As necessary (please describe below)

When agency topics that are within the Committee's scope of work come up.

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	8
Mean	3.11
Variance	6.46
Standard Deviation	2.54
Total Responses	18

**12. Please rate the following practices where 0 = has no benefit and 5 = has great benefit.**

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	18

Answer	Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Standard Deviation	Responses
For a Citizen Advisory Committee to be effective it must meet often and regularly	1.00	5.00	3.29	1.31	17
For a Citizen Advisory Committee to be effective it must include individuals with a variety of interests and values	2.00	5.00	4.00	0.91	18
For a Citizen Advisory Committee to be effective it must include a diverse representation of riders and stakeholders	3.00	5.00	4.28	0.83	18
For a Citizen Advisory Committee to be effective transit staff must establish clear levels of authority in the decision-making process	1.00	5.00	4.29	1.10	17

**13. Please assess your satisfaction with the following statements.**

Question	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Total Responses	Mean
Our public hearings are well attended.	0	0	3	0	2	1	1	7	4.57
All demographic groups are well represented at our public hearings.	0	0	3	1	2	0	1	7	4.29
The public is happy with the way we notice our public hearings.	1	1	1	3	0	0	1	7	3.57
The public is happy with the level of public outreach we provide.	1	2	2	1	0	0	1	7	3.14
Interest groups voice their support for our transit agency.	1	4	0	1	0	0	1	7	2.86
The public is happy with our meeting locations and times.	1	2	1	2	0	0	1	7	3.29

Statistic	Our public hearings are well attended.	All demographic groups are well represented at our public hearings.	The public is happy with the way we notice our public hearings.	The public is happy with the level of public outreach we provide.	Interest groups voice their support for our transit agency.	The public is happy with our meeting locations and times.
Min Value	3	3	1	1	1	1
Max Value	7	7	7	7	7	7
Mean	4.57	4.29	3.57	3.14	2.86	3.29
Variance	2.62	2.24	3.62	3.81	4.14	3.90
Standard Deviation	1.62	1.50	1.90	1.95	2.04	1.98
Total Responses	7	7	7	7	7	7

**14. Would you be willing to take part in a telephone or in-person interview to provide additional information on the use of Citizen Advisory Committees in enhancing the public hearing process and increasing the social capital of your transit agency in your community?**

Answer	Response	%
Yes	5	20%
No	20	80%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Total Responses	25

## APPENDIX C: MAC Survey and Data

My Report

Last Modified: 05/25/2014

### 1. Please tell us how long you have served on either the MAC or ADAPTR Committee(s)?

Answer	Response	%
Less than 1 year	1	14%
1 to 3 years	4	57%
3 to 5 years	2	29%
Over 5 years	0	0%
Total	7	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	3
Mean	2.14
Variance	0.48
Standard Deviation	0.69
Total Responses	7

### 2. Which group do you represent on your committee?

Answer	Response	%
Seniors	3	43%
Veterans	2	29%
Disabled	5	71%
Transit Riders	1	14%
Students	1	14%
Other	3	43%

#### Other

Government Agency

All potential users of needed mobility assistance..

Homeless

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	6
Total Responses	7

**3. Please indicate your level of agreement with these statements about the benefits of Citizen Advisory Committees.**

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total Responses	Mean
Citizen Advisory Committees slow the decision-making process by creating excessive delays.	2	3	1	0	0	6	1.83
Citizen Advisory Committees produce better long-term results.	0	0	0	5	1	6	4.17
Citizen Advisory Committees make it hard to achieve consensus because of competing interests.	1	4	0	1	0	6	2.17
Citizen Advisory Committees create trust between the transit agency and its riders.	0	0	2	3	1	6	3.83
Citizen Advisory Committees create trust between the transit agency and the community.	0	0	2	3	1	6	3.83
Transit agency staff have the expertise to	1	1	1	0	3	6	3.50

make the most efficient service-related decisions.							
Citizen participation improves the decision-making process by bringing new ideas and views to the attention of transit staff.	0	0	0	2	4	6	4.67
Citizen Advisory Committees work because different views lead to more collaborative decisions.	0	0	0	5	1	6	4.17
Citizen Advisory Committees help inform their constituents of transit-related issues.	0	0	0	4	2	6	4.33

Statistic	Citizen Advisory Committees slow the decision-making process by creating excessive delays.	Citizen Advisory Committees produce better long-term results.	Citizen Advisory Committees make it hard to achieve consensus because of competing interests.	Citizen Advisory Committees create trust between the transit agency and its riders.	Citizen Advisory Committees create trust between the transit agency and the community.	Transit agency staff have the expertise to make the most efficient service-related decisions.	Citizen participation improves the decision-making process by bringing new ideas and views to the attention of transit staff.	Citizen Advisory Committees work because different views lead to more collaborative decisions.	Citizen Advisory Committees help inform their constituents of transit-related issues.
Min Value	1	4	1	3	3	1	4	4	4
Max Value	3	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5
Mean	1.83	4.17	2.17	3.83	3.83	3.50	4.67	4.17	4.33
Variance	0.57	0.17	0.97	0.57	0.57	3.10	0.27	0.17	0.27
Standard Deviation	0.75	0.41	0.98	0.75	0.75	1.76	0.52	0.41	0.52
Total Responses	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6

**4. The next section deals with the way Citizen Advisory Committees are designed. Citizen Advisory Committees work best when they represent diverse groups.**

Answer	Response	%
Disagree	0	0%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	0	0%
Agree	6	100%
Total	6	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	3
Max Value	3
Mean	3.00
Variance	0.00
Standard Deviation	0.00
Total Responses	6

**5. Citizen Advisory Committees work best when they meet often.**

Answer	Response	%
Disagree	1	17%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	5	83%
Agree	0	0%
Total	6	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.83
Variance	0.17
Standard Deviation	0.41
Total Responses	6

**6. Citizen Advisory Committees work best when they meet regularly.**

Answer	Response	%
Disagree	0	0%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	0	0%
Agree	6	100%
Total	6	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	3
Max Value	3
Mean	3.00
Variance	0.00
Standard Deviation	0.00
Total Responses	6

**7. Finally, tell us a little about yourself so we can better understand your answers.What is your gender?**

Answer	Response	%
Male	1	20%
Female	4	80%
Total	5	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.80
Variance	0.20
Standard Deviation	0.45
Total Responses	5

**8. What is the highest level of education you have completed?**

Answer	Response	%
Less than High School	0	0%
High School / GED	1	17%
Some College	0	0%
2-year College Degree	0	0%
4-year College Degree	3	50%
Masters Degree	2	33%
Doctoral Degree	0	0%
Professional Degree (JD, MD)	0	0%
Total	6	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	2
Max Value	6
Mean	4.83
Variance	2.17
Standard Deviation	1.47
Total Responses	6

**9. Citizen Advisory Committees work best when their input is seriously considered in the decision-making process.**

Answer	Response	%
Disagree	0	0%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	0	0%
Agree	6	100%
Total	6	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	3
Max Value	3
Mean	3.00
Variance	0.00
Standard Deviation	0.00
Total Responses	6

**10. Members of Citizen Advisory Committees are best able to provide valuable input when they are educated about all aspects of the public transit industry.**

Answer	Response	%
Disagree	0	0%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	2	33%
Agree	4	67%
Total	6	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	2
Max Value	3
Mean	2.67
Variance	0.27
Standard Deviation	0.52
Total Responses	6

**11. Members of Citizen Advisory Committees would benefit from training in participatory and collaborative decision-making.**

Answer	Response	%
Disagree	0	0%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	4	67%
Agree	2	33%
Total	6	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	2
Max Value	3
Mean	2.33
Variance	0.27
Standard Deviation	0.52
Total Responses	6

**12. Given my experience serving on a Citizen Advisory Committee, I believe MST would benefit from utilizing additional committees to address fixed-route services and capital projects.**

Answer	Response	%
Disagree	3	50%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	3	50%
Agree	0	0%
Total	6	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.50
Variance	0.30
Standard Deviation	0.55
Total Responses	6

**13. Please assess your level of knowledge about the public transportation industry:**

Question	Not at all	I Know the Basics	Better than Average	Very Knowledgeable	Total Responses	Mean
Transportation Funding	0	4	2	0	6	2.33
Transportation Regulations	3	2	1	0	6	1.67
Transportation Planning	3	2	1	0	6	1.67
Transportation Safety	0	4	1	0	5	2.20
Transportation Service Delivery	2	2	1	1	6	2.17
ADA Requirements	1	0	3	2	6	3.00
Alternative Modes of Transportation	0	1	4	1	6	3.00

Statistic	Transportation Funding	Transportation Regulations	Transportation Planning	Transportation Safety	Transportation Service Delivery	ADA Requirements	Alternative Modes of Transportation
Min Value	2	1	1	2	1	1	2
Max Value	3	3	3	3	4	4	4
Mean	2.33	1.67	1.67	2.20	2.17	3.00	3.00
Variance	0.27	0.67	0.67	0.20	1.37	1.20	0.40
Standard Deviation	0.52	0.82	0.82	0.45	1.17	1.10	0.63
Total Responses	6	6	6	5	6	6	6

**14. How old are you?**

Answer	Response	%
18-25	0	0%
26-34	0	0%
35-54	2	40%
55-64	3	60%
65 or over	0	0%
Total	5	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	3
Max Value	4
Mean	3.60
Variance	0.30
Standard Deviation	0.55
Total Responses	5

**15. Would you be willing to take part in a telephone or in-person interview to provide additional information on the use of Citizen Advisory Committees in enhancing the public hearing process and increasing the social capital of your transit agency in your community?**

Answer	Response	%
Yes	4	67%
No	2	33%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Total Responses	6