

TRANSPORTATION LEADERSHIP ACADEMY



Transportation
for America



U.S. Department of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

Performance Metrics Messaging Research

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Urban Rail proposition fails in Austin

CITY OF AUSTIN TRANSPORTATION BOND



Election night graphic on KXAN-TV News showed heavy loss for Highland-Riverside urban rail bonds proposition. Final tally was 57%-43%. Screenshot by L. Henry.

Example Scorecard

Project sponsors and Plan stakeholders can delve into the detailed performance results for a specific project using the online Project Dashboard tool.

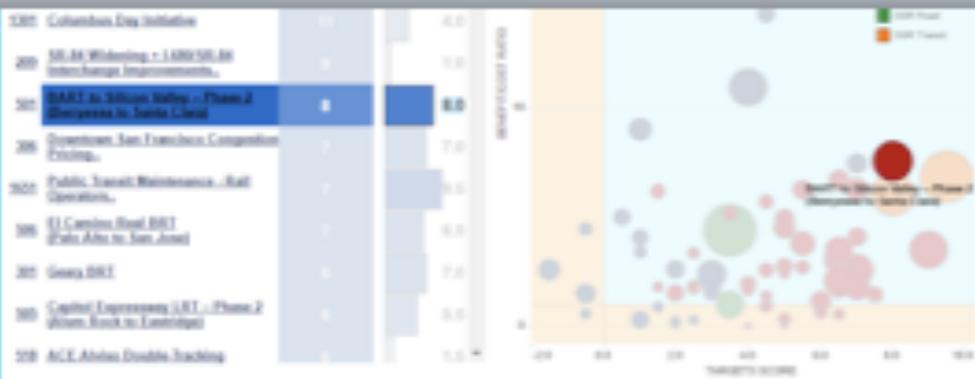
<http://data.mtc.ca.gov/performance/dashboard>

Project Overview →
High-Level Results + Geographic Location

Benefit-Cost Breakdown →
Benefits and Disbenefits by Category

Targets Breakdown →
Scores for All 13 Targets

Supplemental Results →
Confidence Evaluation + Equity Analysis



SELECT PROJECT FROM LIST ABOVE TO DISPLAY PERFORMANCE DETAILS BELOW

301
BART to Silicon Valley – Phase 2 (Berryessa to Santa Clara)
BTC: 8 Targets Score: 8.0

BENEFIT - COST ASSESSMENT

(Monetary benefits and costs are in millions of 2011 dollars)

ANNUAL BENEFIT (\$472M)		ANNUAL COST (\$2M)		CAPITAL COST (\$2,900M)			NET-CO-COST (\$290M)		
YEARS 1980 + COST SAVINGS		ALL OTHERS		BENEFITS - COSTS			NET-CO-COST		
Annual Benefits	Travel Time + Cost	Vehicle Ownership	GHG	PM	Other	Collisions	Physical Activity	Noise	
\$472.0M	\$390.7M	\$1.9M	\$2.0M	\$1.9M	\$0.2M	\$19.2M	\$20.9M	\$0.2M	\$0.2M

TARGETS ASSESSMENT

TOTAL TARGETS SCORE	Climate Action				Public Safety			Quality of Life			Transportation System Performance		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
8.0	STRONG SUPPORT	MODERATE SUPPORT	STRONG SUPPORT	STRONG SUPPORT	STRONG SUPPORT	MODERATE SUPPORT	MODERATE SUPPORT	STRONG SUPPORT	STRONG SUPPORT	MODERATE SUPPORT	STRONG SUPPORT	MODERATE SUPPORT	MODERATE SUPPORT

CONFIDENCE ASSESSMENT

Source/Model Accuracy: ✓
 Fragmentation Completeness: ✓
 Data Source Reliability: ▲

EQUITY ASSESSMENT

Equity Target Score: 4.0
 Service Continuity at Location: Yes 11

The project is likely to be complete toward the end of the Plan, reducing the total benefits potentially accrued during the Plan period.

For a map of all projects and their relationship to Communities of Concern, please refer to the Equity Map.

Quotes from Metrics Research Interviews

The big question is funding and where that is going to come from, not metrics. -- Mayor

I never really thought about metrics. Logic doesn't work well with politics. The number one metric is the impact on our economy. We look at dollars spent and that is not considered a metric here. It is considered economics. -- Mayor

Metrics – we measure everything. But for metrics to be successful they have to be linked to political accountability. I don't think metrics are useful because we don't have a regional level of accountability. Our regional level of accountability is toothless.-- Mayor

We are not paying attention to the changing way that transportation is affecting our lives. With social media we don't need to drive as much to get to our goods or see people. We are not spending enough time considering how we need to invest in transportation. Are we thinking through intelligent vehicles? Will we need fewer lane miles? We are... mired in the present day expectations and let those determine our future. --Mayor

Quotes from Interviews, continued

My take on metrics is the way they are used or not used. In the majority population metrics and numbers are their cultural fall back. But in communities of color, qualitative measures are more important. In non-white communities, what gives life meaning is not numbers. The shared community value – that kind of metric is not commonly employed. --Advocate

If we changed the metrics alone, not much would change unless we change the funding formulas too. The community priorities and metrics behind them are treated as “advisory” with “how do we get the most dollars possible” being the primary driver for each project -- Planner

Summary of Findings

- ① Performance Metrics are Perceived as Necessary but Not Transformative (even by those regions who are using a full suite of them)
- ② Metrics:
 - A. The Most Important Metrics are Economic and the General Focus Has Transitioned to People-centric Measures and Messaging Not Vehicles or Congestion
 - B. Health and Environmental Metrics should focus on Air Quality and always address the economic costs and benefits first.
- ③ Regional Geographic Scale is a Performance Metrics Challenge
- ④ Multiple Definitions of Transportation “Equity” Are in Play
- ⑤ Social Equity in Transportation has Widespread Intensity but Not Enough Implementation Traction
- ⑥ Top Regional Issues Vary – but the Fundamental Role of Transportation as “Rocket Fuel” Does Not
- ⑦ Innovation and New Trends Are a Powerful Topic and Potential Relationship Cultivation Driver

Highest Priority Metrics

Top Tier

- ① Access to jobs, job creation and economic development
- ② People throughput (number of people travelling by mode and/or by corridor)

Second Tier

- ① Equity
- ② Air Quality

Third Tier

- ① Health
- ② Other environmental (climate, land, water not including air)
- ③ Density

Last Tier

- ① Minutes travelled
- ② Traffic congestion
- ③ Creative Place-making
- ④ Tax base/fiscal

At Least Three Definitions of Social Equity in Transportation

1. Funding and service balance between urban, suburban and rural areas.
2. Funding and service balance for people of color and low income communities
3. Funding and service balance between mode share: roads/transit/bike/ped

source: Research among Transportation Decision Makers and Influencers 2015, funded by Smart Growth American conducted by Collective Strength

Key Barriers to the Use of Metrics

- A number of categories of metrics, including classics such as vehicle miles travelled and traffic congestion as well as newer metrics **including health and environment – are not a high priority.**
- The goals and tangible **outcomes of metrics are not clear enough.** Some don't see how reverse engineering from metrics gets you to a better project selection process let alone to better projects.
- A sense among many policy leaders that economic metrics are the only effective way to measure return on investment and that **economic framing** (that is not necessarily tied to metrics) is the most important way to communicate about transportation investment.
- A widespread frustration that while metrics are increasing, **transportation choices are not improving** and real community impact is not improving either.

Key Barriers, continued

- Other topics - such as **ways to increase funding and future trends – are far more relevant and compelling** to this audience than any discussion of metrics can be.
- A feeling that the process is too complex. **Transportation planning already seems overly involved**, and this adds to it. In addition, the complicated analysis needed makes the policy makers feel too dependent on staff or other experts who too often talk in terms they don't relate to;
- A feeling that the exercise is a waste of time without more resources. Rather than helping to make better use of limited dollars, it feels like **setting goals that can't be met for lack of money**;
- A sense among equity advocates that attempting to reduce everything of value to numbers will **miss critical factors such as social cohesion**.

New Imperatives for Metrics

- ① Working more deeply to draw clear lines between **metrics and tangible, visible outcomes**. Progressive advocates assume the outcomes are already obvious--this is almost universally problematic.
- ② Training advocacy groups that are focused on lower-priority metrics including **health and environment to tie their agenda to economic framing** and to find economic metrics that incorporate their goals.
- ③ **Focusing on more strategic discussion** about metrics with policy makers and leave the detailed, tactical discussion to more technically minded staff members
- ④ **Clearly defining the term “equity” in social, geographic and mode terms**. Provide both goals and suggested metrics that encompass and describe the specific degree of inclusion and economic benefits to be gained.
- ⑤ **Use case studies** to educate policy makers about examples of working social equity metrics and policies **that local communities of color, low income communities and policy makers are profoundly satisfied with**.
- ⑥ Making more of a concerted effort to provide **more non-car options for rural and far-suburban** areas and generally re-dedicated efforts to include rural needs into all metrics.
- ⑦ **Finding better ways to scale metrics** so at the neighborhood, community, city and county level impacts can be shown and not just the broad regional impacts.
- ⑧ **Wrapping the discussion of performance metrics up into other, more relevant topics** such as increasing the available funding, adopting new funding models and the impact of new trends like shared mobility services, demographic changes and driverless vehicles

Best Ways to Communicate w/ Policy Makers 1

- Frame your message around economics and use these terms:

“talent attraction/retention”

“jobs,” “return on investment”

“shared opportunity”

“shared economic growth”

“our shared future”

- If you can't frame the message in economic terms, position transportation as a rocket fuel for progress:

“Transportation - a driving force on every issue we care about from jobs to equity to climate to the cost of living. We can't move forward unless we can move.”

Best Ways to Communicate w/ Policy Makers 1

- Lay down a rock solid foundation of economic growth, talent attraction and ROI
before messaging around sustainability, health, climate, environment, creative place-making or other progressive issues.
- Don't confuse communicating with your base and funders with communicating for funding, policy changes or project support.
Unlike progressive activists, regional, state and federal decision makers require strong economic messaging first and foremost.
- Make economic framing and access to opportunities the entrée of your message.
Use environmental, health and equity frames as added "spice."

Best Ways to Communicate w/ Policy Makers 2

- Always define “equity.”

Understand that in the context of transportation, equity can mean balance across any combination of geographic (rural/suburban/urban), modal (bus/rail/car/bike/ped) and/or community (communities of color/low income communities) interests.

- Instead of “equity,” consider the words **equality, balance, choices** or **freedom to choose**.

- Focus on solutions that are framed in economic terms.

In many regions, the issue of inequality has a special intensity and relevance. Speak to “shared opportunities,” “choices,” and “connections.”

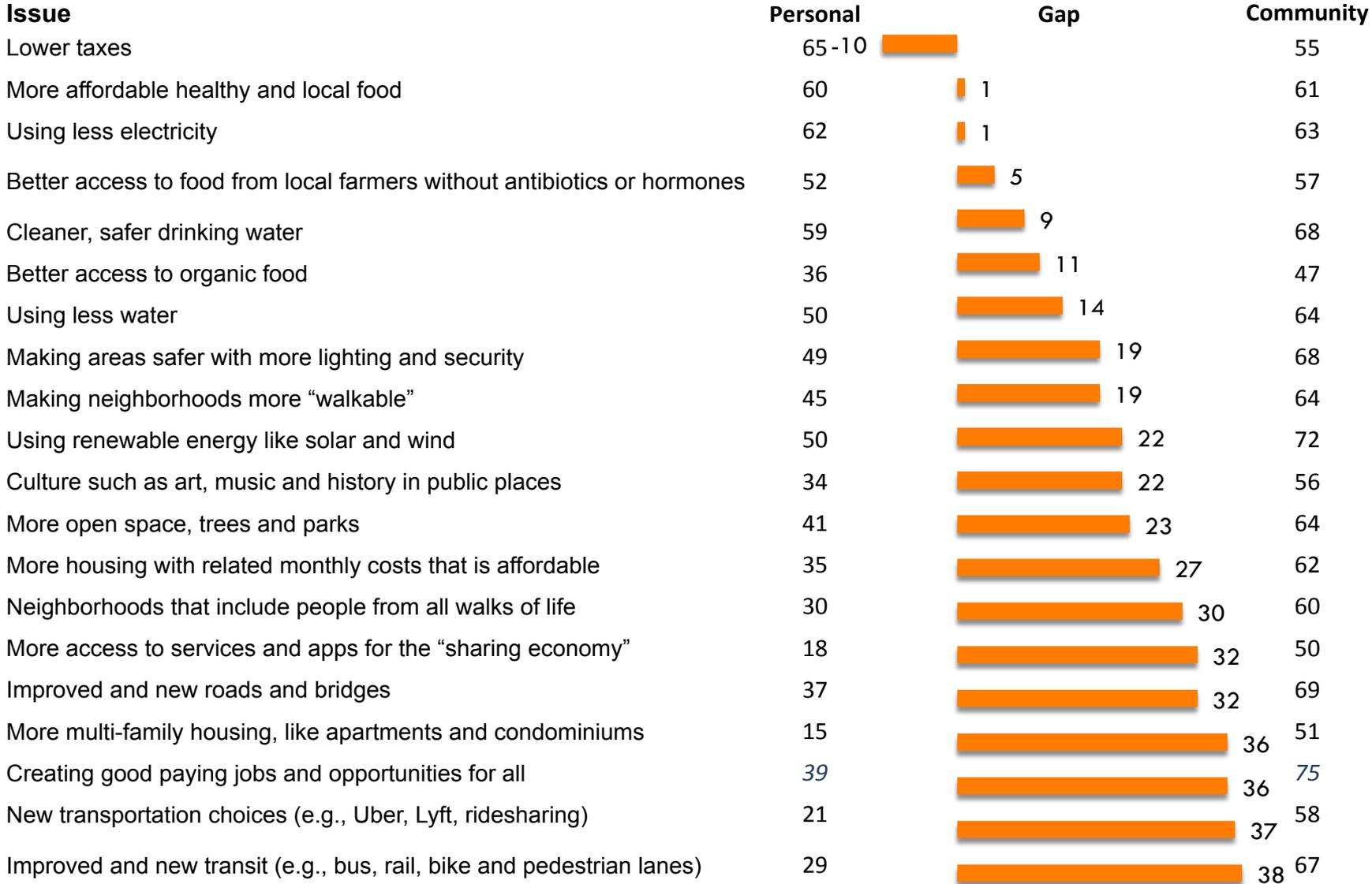
Best Ways to Communicate w/ Policy Makers 3

- **Work harder to include rural needs**
when addressing transportation choices and actively include the creation of non-car options aimed at rural areas.
- **Don't assume that metrics are a hot topic.**
For many, metrics are nice, but not a transformative driver. Don't underestimate the power of anecdotes and personal stories to demystify and humanize the numbers and drive home the real-world goals of using particular performance criteria.
- **Realize that many elected officials and key stakeholders want to hear about innovation**
Share new trends and private sector solutions such as mobility services (Uber/Lyft/rideshare apps) in addition to traditional modes.

Outlook from Interviews

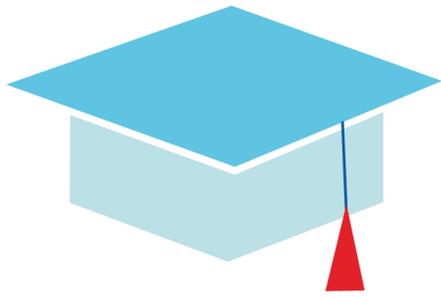
- ❑ Discussions about Shared Mobility and Driverless Cars will dominate – Innovation will rule Transit as it did Computing.
- ❑ Funding may move from the Federal Sector to the Private Sector – crowdsourcing and infrastructure banks will help fill the void.
- ❑ Social Equity – in all its definitions but especially for people of color/low income communities will stop being a “topic” and start being a funded reality.
- ❑ Messaging that focuses on **People** and not VMT or Traffic will win.

Gap: Importance of Issue “For Me” vs. “For My Community”



Q16. Tell me for each of the following whether it is a high, medium or low priority for you personally and for your community resilience.

Base: National sample of US adults over 18 in urban and suburban (metro) areas. Source: NRDC internal polling designed by Collective Strength and fielded by Nielsen/ Harris Interactive August 2015. Send questions to robin@collectivestrength.com



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Questions and Discussion

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