

Getting To “Yes”¹

Or, How To Help Elected & Agency
Officials Do Your Bidding

¹(With Apologies to Professor Fisher)

Part 1:
Understand the
Structural Barriers to Success

The Status Quo Is Public Enemy #1

And its Great Enabler is Delay

Risk and Delay

Risk

- **Non-elected Public Officials – especially those who make a career of public service – are generally risk-averse.**
- **Risk** threatens stability.
- **Risk** inherently assumes the possibility of failure. *But:*
- **Making decisions** almost always requires some risk taking.

Delay

- **Delay** enables risk avoidance.
- **Delay** is the calming anesthesia that enables officials to appear to be working, while never making decisions.
- **Delay** degrades public confidence that the public sector can get important things done.

**“It Seems To Me I’ve Heard That
Song Before
Its From An Old Familiar Score
I Know It Well, That Melody”¹**

¹With Apologies to Harry James

“That’s the way we’ve always
done it.”

Or its counterpart . . .

“We’ve Never Done It That
Way Before”

Part 2: Know Your Audience

Two Distinct Categories

- **Key Decision Makers**
 - Elected officials: federal/state/local
 - Board Members
 - Federal and State agency officials
- **Key Decision Influencers**
 - Advocates
 - Riders/Motorists
 - Impacted Residents
 - Media

Decision Makers

- **Facts**
- **Context**
- **Coherence**
- **Congruence**
- **Legacy**

Decision Influencers

- **Facts**
- **Context**
- **Commitment**
- **Compelling Story**
- **Strategic Plan**

Three Examples of How Success Was Wrestled Out of the Jaws of Failed Advocacy

Lessons Learned In The Trenches

The Silver Line Story

- The failure of the “28X” bus and the success of the “Silver Line 4” bus.
- How Opportunities Are Created (and sometimes) Missed
- Advocacy Intransigence: **Stubbornness is no substitute for Strategy**
- Decision making enabling each party to leverage something positive for its position and its ultimate goals.

The Green Line Story

Parties stuck in a non-negotiable position on location of maintenance yard. Schedule and cost were being negatively impacted.

Fresh perspective (and leadership) broke the logjam, without help from advocates.

Needed someone in a position of authority to say clearly to entrenched state planners: “no”, **and** “if it means we pay a little more that is fine as long as we get this done”.

The South Coast Rail Story

- Getting a foot in the door and keeping hope alive.
- Managing unrealistic expectations from the boss (governor) and leveraging a Mayor's need to **get *something* done.**

You can easily get to “nothing” in an “all or nothing” approach. But if you can accept incrementalism you can get things done and lay a stronger platform for the future.