It Takes Two to Tango

Tangoing at the Ballot Box: An overview of one of the most dramatic forms of public participation - an initiative or referendum!

Presenter: Stephanie Vance, Center for Transportation Excellence
Our Premise

- Transit Initiatives are in some ways the ultimate form of “public participation”.
- You might even say that they are essentially “bake sales” or “community yard sales” with proceeds going to transit.
- Our goal? How to have a truly successful “bake sale”
Transit “Bake Sales” Nationwide

- Need for local financing for transit is increasing
- Record number of local transit initiatives in 2004
- Passage of transit-related initiatives is unrelated to overall political leanings of state
- Transit-related initiatives are passing in urban, rural and suburban areas
- Over 30 Communities considering in 2005 or 2006
Top 10 Ideas for Gaining Community Support for Transit Initiatives

(with apologies to David Letterman)
A Successful Transit Initiative Campaign is About People, Not Things
That said, people want to be very clear on “what’s in it for them”. **Be as specific as possible!**
Number 8

- Reach out early and often to the most affected communities. **Don’t avoid controversy – neutralize it!**


- **Under-promise and over-deliver.**

  People want accurate ideas on what it’s going to cost and what they’ll get out of it. They’d rather hear they’re getting less and actually receive it than pie-in-the-sky projections.
Different people listen to different sources: **Build Coalitions that can Deliver Your Message to Different Groups!**
Number 5

- Understand your population
  - Die hard supporters (your volunteer base)
  - General supporters
  - Undecideds
  - “Gettable” opponents
  - Die hard critics (not a good use of time and resources)
Number 4

- Don’t let the critics get you down
  - Remember that you’re paying more attention to them than most of the public
● **Your word is your bond**
  - Everyone dealing with the campaign must worry about accountability, from the agency to interest groups to individual spokespeople
Number 2

- Take off the blinders
  - What you’re working on everyday is a small part of everyone else’s life. It’s only when you’re heartily tired of the message and wondering whether it’s penetrating that you’ll start see results.
Number 1

Transit Rocks!
(and everyone knows it)
… so use it to your advantage!
Resources

- Online Transit Initiative manual at www.cfte.org
- Resources from the two transit initiative conferences (including panels on public participation) available both online and through e-mail at info@cfte.org
- CFTE personnel – Stephanie Vance and Jason Jordan