Advocacy 101: Getting Your Elected Officials On Board!

A Presentation / Facilitated Workshop for Rail-Volution
Topics

- Context – What Influences Elected Officials
- Great Meetings
- Great Site Visits
- Great Written Materials
- Great Campaigns
- Bring it all Together
- The Top 10 Things Elected Officials and Staff HATE to Hear
- The One Little Thing That Makes ALL the Difference
Is Government Broken?

- How much money for transit is in the recently passed federal transportation bill?
- How many bills have been introduced so far this Congress with the word “transportation” in them?
- How many bills are generally introduced in a two year Congressional session?
- How many actually pass?
- How many of those are related to renaming Post Offices and federal buildings?
- Average time for a meeting with an elected official
Factors that Influence Elected Officials

What factors do YOU think influence an elected official?
Potential Factors:

- Friends
- Staff
- Jobs / Development Issues in Their Districts
- The Media
- Money
- The Message
- Their Own Principles
- Good Public Service

MOST IMPORTANT

Their Constituents

Representative Democracy reflects and amplifies the POWER of the Grassroots
Great Meetings

- **What** do you want?
- **Who** should you ask?
- **How** should you ask?
- **How** should you follow-up?
Great Site Visits

- Decide who to invite
- Sketch out a plan
- Issue invitation
- Logistics
- Recording the event
Great Written Materials

- Succinct (no more than 2 pages)
- Relevant
- Personal
- Thoughtful
- Ask for a response (if appropriate)
- Have a web component
Great Campaigns

- Identify Goal
- Identify Audience
- Identify Supporters / Opponents
- Developing the Plan
- Implementation / Revisions
Your Turn!
The Top Ten List: What Staff & Elected Officials Hate to Hear

10. But I thought my appointment was with the Senator!
9. Here’s some reading material for you – our 300 page annual report
8. How much of a campaign contribution did your boss get to vote against (or for) this bill?
7. I assume you know all about bill number 1234
The Top Ten List, Continued

6. No, I don’t have an appointment but I promise I’ll only take $\frac{1}{2}$ hour of your time.
5. No, I don’t really need anything specific.
4. We have ten (or more) people in our group.
3. What do you mean we have to stand in the hall?
2. What you’re telling me can’t be right. I heard Jon Stewart of the Daily Show say otherwise.
… And the number one item?

- No, I don’t represent anyone from your district. I just thought you’d be interested in what I have to say.
The One Little Thing That Makes ALL the Difference

Yes, there is a “silver bullet”…
Persistence

Nothing in the world can take the place of Persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and Determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan “Press On”, has solved and will always solve the problems of the human race.

Calvin Coolidge
Or, for the more “Zen” oriented…

Persistence can grind an iron beam down into a needle.
How Can YOU Be More Persistent?

- Ask Again!
- If you get a negative answer (or more likely no answer) ask a different question
- Work with MPTA and MASSTrans
- Review and respond to Action Alerts
- Stay “United for Transit”!
This is JUST THE BEGINNING

In the immortal words of School House Rock...

“It’s a long, long journey through the Capitol City…”
Ideas for an Ongoing Relationship: Come up with your OWN plan

Ask members to...
- Meet in the district
- Visit a transit facility / center
- Write an article
- Demonstrate ongoing support through:
  - Letters
  - Votes
  - Legislation

You should...
- Attend fundraisers
- Give recognition awards
- Thank your lawmakers
- Learn as MUCH as you can
- Train and organize your grassroots
- Keep track of important data about your community
Go Forth and Advocate!

Persistence is Key
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