2021 Rail~Volution
Call for Speakers Information

Calling your voice & expertise for our virtual conference and year-round learning.

Policy Change
Implementing Equitable Transit-Oriented Development
Transforming Transit
Health, Climate, Jobs and Safety
Making Connections Convenient

Call for Speakers Open
April 1-30, 2021

For information and to submit: railvolution.org/callforspeakers
A Tipping Point for Transit & Community Development

Calling on your voice and expertise — what answers can you bring to advance livable communities?

What should communities look like coming out of the pandemic? How should they move and develop? For whom? With so much changed over the past year, now’s the time to dig into decisions about the way we will recover. We’re at a tipping point moment.

The 2021 Rail~Volution Call for Speakers asks for your voice, experience and expertise about all aspects of building great places to live around high capacity transit. Our conference and programs uniquely bring together transit, new mobility options, land use and community development. We dig into the issues and share innovative, real-world solutions. See the Tracks later in this document for more information.

At Rail~Volution we believe that instilling equitable approaches into the work flow from start to finish will deliver the best outcomes and make our communities resilient. To do this takes participation from cross-sector stakeholders willing to listen, share and learn. Are you in?

WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR

The Rail~Volution National Steering Committee (NSC), made up of 50+ livability professionals from across the United States and Canada, reviews proposals to create high-quality, content rich learning opportunities. They are looking for proposals that represent:

- Cross-sector viewpoints: from different industries, geographies, and professional backgrounds, including lived experience.
- Approaches that achieve equitable outcomes.
- Speakers representing different gender and cultural identities as well as people with disabilities.
- Perspectives from historically underrepresented communities, such as communities of color, and those addressing structural racism.
- Innovative partnerships and collaborative solutions.
- Real- world, community-derived, practical applications to solving problems.

TIPPING POINTS

Just two examples of what’s at stake:

- Should transit recovery focus on “bringing back the other 80% of riders” OR on improving service and reliability for existing & essential riders
- Should development decisions by transit agencies (and others) focus on achieving the best return on investment, especially at a time of strained budgets? OR should community needs – affordable housing and small business recovery especially – drive decisions about station areas and new projects?

For more information and to submit, visit railvolution.org/callforspeakers

Questions? Contact Andrea Ostergaard at andreao@railvolution.org

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**2021 Call for Speakers - More Options!**

The 2021 Call for Speakers is your chance to influence more of our programs. Submit for the Rail-Volition virtual conference in October and our year-round Information Exchange program of podcasts and webinars, which will be scheduled between summer 2021 and spring 2022.

All Call for Speakers proposals will be submitted via an online form. Proposals can be submitted by individuals or for a group. The form will ask for the proposer’s preference for format. The Rail-Volition National Steering Committee will make the ultimate decision about proposals, including when, where and how they are used.

**RAIL-VOLITION FORMATS**

Proposals will most likely fall into one of these formats, but new ideas are welcome!

- Conference Virtual Session
- Conference Deep-Dive Discussion
- Conference Keynote Address or Discussion
- Peer Learning or Training
- Conference Virtual Mobile Workshops (Track 6)
- Webinar
- Podcast

**THE RAIL-VOLITION APPROACH**

No matter what topic you propose to cover or track you choose, make sure to indicate how you incorporate or advance these Rail-Volition priorities:

- Equity & addressing systemic inequities
- Community participation
- Making the case for transit-oriented communities
- Innovation or new technology
- Leadership at different levels
- Partnerships and collaboration
RAIL-VOLUTION 2021 TRACKS

Proposers should indicate which of the following tracks best fits with their proposal. Read on for more information about the tracks.

TRACK 1
Advancing Community Change and Responding to Disruption Through Policy

TRACK 2
Implementing the Vision for Equitable Transit-Oriented Communities

TRACK 3
Transforming Transit Now! Tightening the Belt and Reprioritizing

TRACK 4
Transit at the Intersection: Health, Jobs, Climate, Safety. Telling the Whole Story

TRACK 5
Making Connections Convenient: Design, Technology and Transit Services

TRACK 6
Virtual Mobile Workshops
Track 1: Advancing Community Change and Responding to Disruption Through Policy

How do new policies support building livable communities - and why is this still relevant? What innovative approaches to policy at the federal, state and regional level exist and are working? What is the new federal administration thinking and changing? This track looks at the overarching attempts to change policy. (This track is not focused on implementation.)

Given the disruptions of 2020, how can we influence implementers from the top down and the bottom up? How do you as a city or agency incorporate grassroots or community-based organizations in shaping policy? What policies guide ways transit can repair damage to communities from displacement or preserve community assets in the future? Do our institutions have capacity to make the changes necessary to set the course of future growth?

Seeking these voices

- Local or area-specific advocacy groups with a broader community focus – not solely transit/transportation

Specific Ideas for Sessions or Webinars

- Putting the “Friend” in Frenemies. Finding common ground with our adversaries
- How do we measure achievements in equity that are not simply data-driven?
- Advocacy v. Activism: Putting the muscle into the heavy lift. Funding is only a piece of the puzzle

HOT TOPICS

- Policy – Overarching attempts to affect policy change (note: not implementation)
- Federal, State, Regional, City policy in response to disruption
- Understanding the new administration
- Innovation in funding policy — aligning funding with infrastructure that promotes equity
- Understanding the difference between advocacy and activism
Track 2: Implementing the Vision for Equitable Transit-Oriented Communities

How do we overcome hurdles and disruption in the post-Covid 19 real estate market? How will ridership and city growth shift the dynamics of real estate and TOD markets? We know that transit and other mobility investments create value. Let’s dig into the tensions! For instance, those that can exist between value capture (when transit agencies must produce revenue) and equitable development outcomes (such as community benefits, affordable housing or other uses that require subsidies). What are the challenges of providing transit access to high-opportunity communities? Does that mean increasing services in underserved communities or increasing housing access in those areas already well-served by transit? How can we avoid displacement, and what strategies or tools can be applied? How is the market downturn creating new opportunities to advance equitable development, especially in “hot” market areas? What are options for supporting small business, especially locally-owned? How do we seize those opportunities? What are the “nuts and bolts” ways equity is being imbedded in development, i.e. community land trusts and other community ownership models? How do we address racial equity while implementing the vision of transit-oriented communities?

Seeking these voices

- Smaller community-based developers able to share the real equity work being done in communities
- Nonprofit activists, especially those focused on coalition building
- YIMBY movement participants
- Elected officials with questions about TOD (beyond highly technical questions for implementors)
- Transit-oriented development practitioners & innovators

HOT TOPICS
- ETOD – emphasis on anti-displacement strategies and tools
- Value Capture – tensions between bringing in revenue and creating affordable, equitable community benefits in joint development
- Supporting small business
- Real estate and TOD market changes

Specific Ideas for Sessions or Webinars

- Banning single-family zoning & other recent zoning changes to support “missing middle” housing
- The mechanics of implementation: Land banking, creative financing or real estate structures
Track 3: Transforming Transit Now! 
Tightening the Belt and Reprioritizing

How do we look at transit through the new lenses of COVID-19, racial justice and revenue shortfalls? Agencies in the midst of capital expansion are challenged with rethinking program delivery and reframing the value proposition altogether. How should we strategically reprioritize and right-size projects in the new environment? What are priorities for transit system redesign? Is ridership the right metric for the industry? Or is it access or other metrics? Addressing ridership will be critical for recovery. Many agencies are looking at free transit or decriminalizing fare enforcement and new loyalty programs. Is the focus on “choice” riders the right strategy or should we prioritize “essential” or “transit dependent” riders? Do these terms even make sense or can we reconsider the way we speak about riders? If 2020 was the year of the pivot, then 2021 is the year of transformation.

Seeking these voices

- Elected officials, planners, transit agency operations
- Data crunchers with evidence about transit trends
- Agencies developing and implementing diversity or equity programs into service delivery
- Cities or regions with new transit funding
- International experience with ridership recovery

HOT TOPICS

- Changes in service planning or delivery
- Capital expansion program delivery
- Metrics – ridership vs access or other metrics
- Fare programs – decriminalizing, free and new loyalty programs
- “Choice” riders vs “Transit Dependent” riders – strategy and communication

Specific Ideas for Sessions or Webinars

- Decriminalization of fare enforcement: New ideas for transit agencies
- Post-Covid transit recovery in a new environment: What will it take? When will it happen? How will we get there?
Track 4: Transit at the Intersection: Health, Jobs, Climate, Safety. Telling the Whole Story

Transit is the backbone of an equitable, connected economy, producing benefits related to health, jobs and climate resiliency, and in turn a happier, more livable community. How can we tell the whole story? What projects or case studies prove that working with the community addresses more than “project input”? What successes do we have with community-led initiatives, rather than those that cities and agencies are leading? What models of community engagement include culture - and how? How can art, public space and health be connected to transit and community? How does rethinking parking advance bigger community goals? And finally, what must be done to mitigate against climate change, arguably the greatest threat to our communities and humanity? What are the challenges and successes of implementing sustainable development? How are cities and regions responding to and planning for increased extreme weather events, especially as it relates to our infrastructure? What large and small projects and policies can be implemented today? Tell us the whole story.

Seeking these voices

- Thinking from other sectors - e.g., insurance companies - about mobility options (especially transit) and climate change mitigation
- Public health perspectives on transit-oriented communities

Specific Ideas for Sessions or Webinars

- Cautionary tales – what gaps in resiliency have been revealed in recent natural disasters?
- Electrification of transit – stories to tell and questions to ask. Could the charging station be the new community well?

HOT TOPICS

- Intersectionality of intentional (or unintentional) benefits related to transit
- Community led initiatives
- Art and placemaking
- Climate change, including decarbonizing transit-oriented development
Track 5: Making Connections Convenient: Design, Technology and Transit Services

More than ever, bringing back riders will take creative design and the convenience technology provides. Let’s focus on first and last mile, micro-mobility, MaaS (Mobility as a Service), AV (autonomous vehicles), mobility hubs, wayfinding and integrated fare systems. How do they increase convenience and make transit more attractive and intuitive? Do they serve all riders, from all backgrounds and income levels? Convenience, safety and security will help get riders back on board. Think of a world where an app calculates different alarm wake up times based on different modes and travel times! (Is this good?) Through design, how can we re-envision the right-of-way of streets and make them better places? COVID-19 turned some streets into woonerfs (living streets) overnight. Can we capitalize on this new freedom to repurpose space and prioritize corridors for transit and people walking, bicycles and scooters? How is right of way being addressed in BRT and LRT projects? All major BRT and LRT project updates welcome!

Seeking these voices

› Those working in the trenches on design and right of way

HOT TOPICS

› New mobility – micro mobility, FLM, MaaS, AV, mobility hubs
› Technology and convenience – integrated fares, mobile apps
› Streets and allocation of right of way (all modes)
› Picking the Mode: Mode decision making
› BRT and LRT corridor project updates

Specific Ideas for Sessions or Webinars

› Allocation of right of way – navigating competing needs
**Track 6: Virtual Mobile Workshops**

Explore transit-oriented communities virtually! This track invites proposals for exploring your project, development or corridor through videos, interactive maps, audio recordings, pictures, graphics, or other formats. Gather project influencers, managers and builders to tell the story and capture the issues from multiple perspectives. Attendees will explore your mobile workshop on-demand and join a live question-and-answer session during the conference in October.

**Minimum Requirements:**

- Incorporate multiple perspectives and views. Make sure those directly responsible for or impacted by the project are represented, especially community voices if applicable.
- Choose a format suited to on-demand learning, one that speaks to audiences including planners, community activists, transit officials, engineers, developers, lenders, community-based organizations, academics, elected officials, health advocates and housing advocates.
  - Videos, photos and audio explaining multiple facets of a project or corridor
  - Interactive map that allows attendees to explore
  - Perspective view of a project with commentary: Aerial view, first person, third person, 360-tour
  - Virtual tour software (free or open-source software available online)
- Be available for a live question & answer session at the 2021 Rail~Volution Virtual Conference in October

**Example from Rail~Volution 2020:**

**Phoenix, Tempe and Mesa, AZ: Community Development Through Public Art**

Take a virtual journey on the 28-mile Valley Metro light rail, connecting communities in Phoenix, Tempe and Mesa. Discover dedicated public artwork created by local and national artists: paint, sculpture, two- and three-dimensional art and more. Experience this virtual mobile workshop through photos, videos and audio of artists and community members as you click along the line.

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