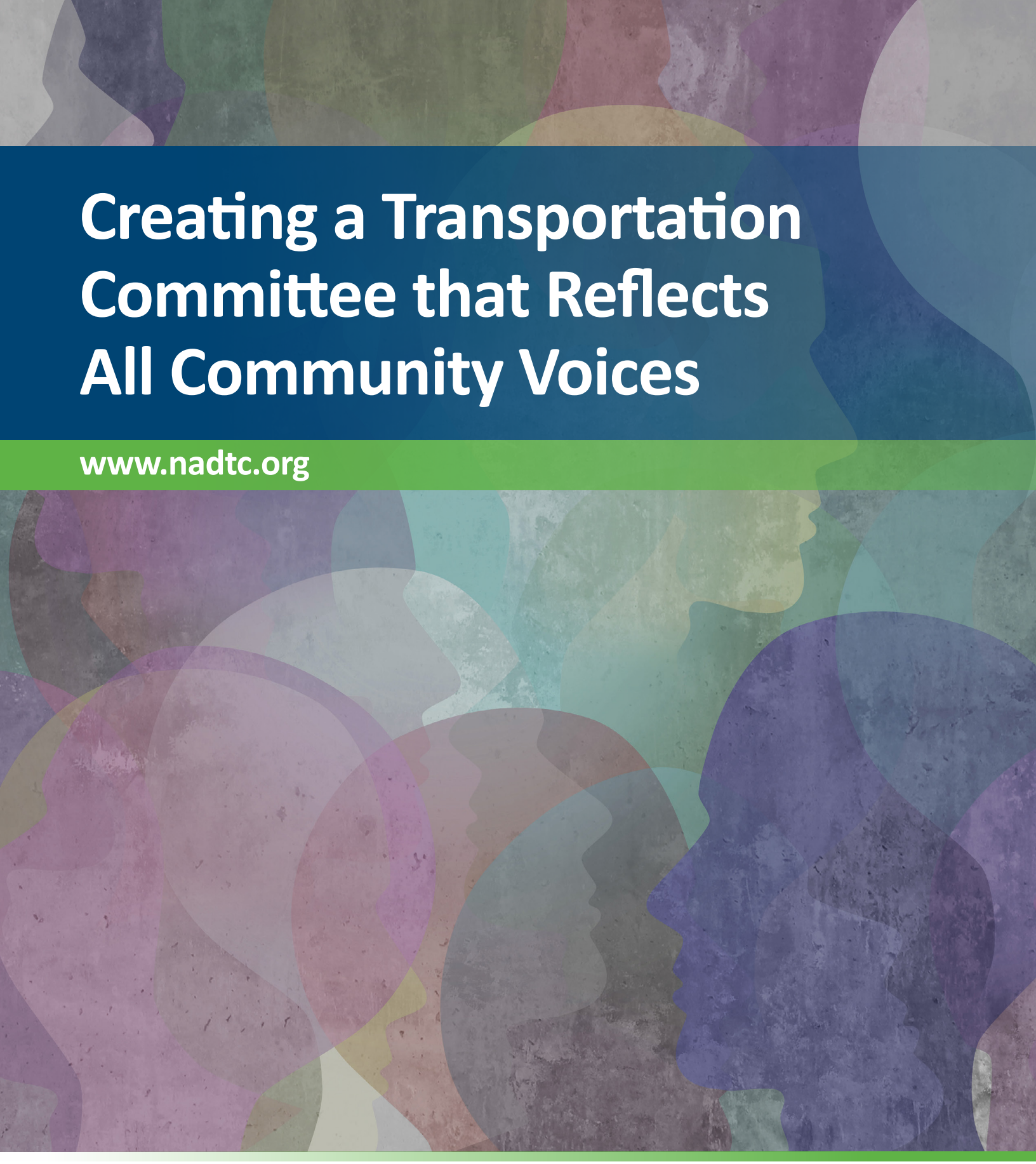

Creating a Transportation Committee that Reflects All Community Voices

www.nadtc.org

nadtc
National Aging and Disability Transportation Center

easterseals

USAging

Creating a Transportation Committee that Reflects All Community Voices

The National Aging & Disability Transportation Center thanks the following individuals for generously contributing their resources, expertise, and time to the creation and review of this guide.

- Michelle Lichtig, Project Manager, Office of Transit and Active Transportation, MN
- Jessica L. Maurer, Esq, Executive Director, Maine Council on Aging
- Felicia Mondragon, CCTM, WACOG Transit Mobility Manager
- Christy Allen, Coordinated Mobility, Utah Transit Authority
- Janice R. Yancey, MDOT
- Donna Bailey, Mobility Manager, DJ Transit, Inc, Southern Counties of MS

National Aging & Disability Transportation Center (NADTC) is funded through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, and is administered by Easterseals and the USAging. This document is disseminated in the interest of information exchange. Neither Easterseals, USAging nor the U.S. DOT, FTA assumes liability for its contents or use thereof.

Transportation Committees: The Link Between Transportation Agencies and Customers with Disabilities & Older Adults

The National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC) compiled this guidebook to serve as a helpful resource to groups who are considering creating a transportation committee for the first time and agencies who are looking to help their current committee increase its effectiveness.

> "Alone we can do so little. Together we can do so much."
>
> ***—Helen Keller***

Many older adults and people with disabilities rely on public transportation to get to school, work, places of worship, retail stores, medical appointments, social events, and a myriad of other places. Transportation committees present agencies the opportunity to engage directly with customers who use their services on a daily basis, citizen advocates, local leaders, human services agencies, and business owners.

By involving the public and bringing together a diverse group of stakeholders, committees can help develop successful initiatives, resolve problems, and create an ongoing dialogue that includes everyone in the community.

This guidebook is designed to be useful to many types of committees. It contains general guidelines that can be modified depending on any local, statutory, or capacity the committee was created to serve.

Contents

I: Purpose, Structure, and Membership... 2

II. Orientation 7

III: Making Meetings Accessible 9

IV: Holding a Meeting..... 11

V: Community Involvement..... 15

VI: Resources 18

VII: References..... 19

I: Purpose, Structure, and Membership

Purpose

Committees can serve a range of purposes and may be referred to by a variety of names, including council, task force, coalition, committee or board. Groups should use board with caution as many boards of directors are fiscally responsible for the agency and often have authority that advisory committees may not have. Advisory committees more often aim to help an agency implement its objectives, such as being more accessible. Considering what to name a committee is important because that will define the group internally and externally to the public.[1]

Whether a committee is established to facilitate regular communication between the disability community and a transit agency or to provide input for a specific activity, such as the design of a route, all advisory committees must clearly define their purpose and scope to both attract the right membership and keep the group on track.

Utah Transit Authority's purpose is to

"Strengthen and connect communities enabling individuals to pursue a fuller life with greater ease and convenience by leading through partnering, planning, and wise investment of physical, economic, and human resources."[2]

One of the first steps for a committee to undertake is to draft and approve a purpose statement.

Structure

How the committee interacts with the local or regional government and transportation agency must be determined because there are many types of advisory committees. Some committees are statutorily required to advise transit agencies, some give recommendations to local governments on transportation coordination, some have decision-making and governing powers, and others may serve as a sounding board and are only advisory in nature. Whether a committee has power to make decisions or not, they should be aware of what they can do and how the agency or local government uses their advice and takes action.

After defining the purpose of your committee, it is time to think about the structure of your committee. The frequency and format of meetings should be established as well as the terms of service, and what officers the group will have, if any.

MaineDOT Public Transit Advisory Council:

"The Public Transit Advisory Council is a voluntary board that was established by statute in 2015 to advise the Departments of Transportation, Labor and Health and Human Services on public transportation policies and priorities. The Council is charged with evaluating needs, recommending levels of service, identifying funding requirements and seeking maximum coordination of resources."[3]

Committees often have bylaws. Bylaws are the operating manual of the committee and can include rules for membership, frequency of meetings, selection of officers, roles of subcommittees, and principal duties of officers or committee chairs.

Lines of communication, both internal and external must be clear and may vary according to the size of the community (i.e., large urban, urban, small urban, rural), membership of the committee, or technological limitations. A strong line of communication between the committee and the local governing body and local leaders will facilitate successful campaigns, programs, and other efforts in the community.

When Membership is Mandated

Elements of Title VI and Environmental Justice (EJ) laws may affect what membership is best for the advisory committee. Title 49 CFR Section 21.5(b)(1)(vii) states that a recipient may not, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, "deny a person the opportunity to participate as a member of a planning, advisory, or similar body which is an integral part of the program." Recipients that have transit-related, non-elected planning boards, advisory councils or committees, or similar committees, the membership of which is selected by the recipient, must provide a table depicting the racial breakdown of the membership of those committees, and a description of efforts made to encourage the participation of minorities on such committees.[4]

Coordinating Council Example

For programs receiving Section 5310 funding, it is a requirement that the projects be "included in a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan." Part of this planning process is the participation of a wide stakeholder group in the development of the plan. (FTA Circular 9070.1G Chapter V.) This is one example of how an advisory committee can be formed for the specific purpose of providing input on and advising the coordinated planning process.[5]

Membership

It is important to consider committee membership carefully to create an effective committee for your community. Recruiting membership that is representative of the community is also crucial to having a productive committee. Do not exclude an agency or partner that has the potential to bring ideas, resources, or funding to the table. There may be stakeholders who will be great committee members who hold contracts with others on the committee or the host agency. In most cases, this should not prevent their membership on the committee; however, the committee should discuss what constitutes a conflict of interest and when abstaining from voting is appropriate.

When assessing the membership of your committee, ask yourself: 1) what is your group's purpose; 2) who is already involved in the conversation; 3) what are the needs of the community; and 4) who should be included when looking at future projects and financial support.[6]

> "Identify your leaders and use them to motivate the rest. Make the committee their committee, not just another thing they have to do for compliance."
>
> ***—Felicia Mondragon, CCTM***
> ***WACOG Transit Mobility***

Actions to consider when beginning recruitment include:

Determine the demographic make-up of your community (e.g. people with disabilities and others of various ethnic groups, economic statuses and ages) and ensure your committee resembles the diversity in your community. Adding representation from non-traditional stakeholders, such as from school districts or even students, can also contribute to the richness of the committee. Be sure to include decision-makers in government so they are aware of your group's activities and the needs of the community. It is also valuable to have consumers on your committee to offer their unique viewpoints.

Recruitment

A variety of methods should be used to recruit new members. These should include traditional methods like word-of-mouth, flyers on vehicles, articles in newsletters, and non-traditional methods like LinkedIn and other social media sites.[7]

Posting information online about membership can be an effective and efficient manner to reach a wide audience. Information posted about the committee should include:

- Application that prospective members can complete, to include such information as the reasons the person wants to participate and any relevant background, experience, or special knowledge/expertise
- Meeting schedule
- Membership responsibilities
- Contact information (email address, mailing address, phone number, and TTY/TDD number)
- Past meeting notes or handouts
- Photos from past meetings showing the diversity of the committee. Inclusion of older adults and people with disabilities demonstrates a commitment to accessibility and inclusion that may also help attract new members. Be sure that documents posted online in PDF are also available in RTF or TXT format to be accessible to screen readers.

Steps to committee formation include:

- Have a group or a nominating/membership committee interview the applicants in order to:
  - communicate what commitment is required for committee membership,
  - ensure new members understand the functions and role of the committee, and
  - identify potential members who have expertise or knowledge that is pertinent to the work of the advisory committee.[8]
- Limit the size of the group. More than 20 members can make it difficult for all members to be a part of discussions.

After forming the committee with the right mix of people and skills, it will be necessary to make sure members are properly oriented to the purpose of the committee and expectations for their participation in the group.

it is important to continually watch for potential members and have a plan for recruiting them.

Through strategic recruitment of new members, communication and involvement of the community, a committee can successfully address and adapt to situations as they arise.

Committee meeting for Southern Connect Regional Coordination Transportation Group, Southern Counties of Mississippi, 2019.

II. Orientation

A thorough orientation on the purpose, goals and objectives of the advisory committee provides new members with a sound foundation that will guide them in carrying out their duties. Items that should be covered in an orientation include:

- The roles and responsibilities of the committee as a whole, including how the committee interacts with the local government
- History of the committee, including when, how and why the committee was formed and overview of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). You may also include an overview of other disability-related legislation and issues, including defining independent living philosophy and consumer-control and use of person-first language.
- Examples of how the committee has effectively worked with the transit agency to promote positive change
- The roles and responsibilities of the individual committee members, term length, bylaws and operational guidelines
- The structure and schedule of meetings (i.e., time, place, who are elected officers)
- The decision-making method(s) the committee follows (i.e., majority voting, two-thirds vote)
- Relationship between this advisory committee and the transportation board of directors or local governing body
- Funding mechanisms and general operations of the program
- How the committee communicates with the transportation staff, including addressing differences of opinion between the committee and the agency
- Ways the committee completes work (i.e., at committee meetings, sub-committees, individual assignments)
- A typical agenda and how it is prepared (i.e., originated by agency staff, drafted by committee chair with input from members)

The more informed new members are from the beginning, the more effective they will be, and the more they will achieve as a group.

Pro Tip

To ensure every member understands their important role in the committee and to balance the power among citizen members and elected officials, make business cards for all committee members. Not only does this let them know their work is valued, but it helps build awareness of the committee in the community and beyond.

III: Making Meetings Accessible

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is legislation that ensures equal access to participation in society for people with disabilities.[9] Making meetings accessible is not just the right thing to do — it's the law.

Best practices for making a meeting accessible include:

- Ensuring the meeting is physically accessible to everyone, including people who use wheelchairs
- Ensuring the meeting is held in a building that is accessible by public transportation and at times that are within the public transportation service availability
- Ensuring the times and locations of meetings are accessible to minority, low-income and limited English-proficient populations (i.e., hold meetings during off-peak periods and at community facilities)
- Live Streaming meetings for those who cannot attend in person
- Ensuring online meetings are captioned
- Offering accessible seating locations throughout the room so individuals with disabilities have a choice of where to sit. If 10% or more of participants are expected to use mobility devices, plan for 30% additional space.[10]
- Posting accessible signage to direct participants to the meeting room
- Ensuring the meeting room has enough space to accommodate participants using mobility aids
- Providing materials in alternative formats (i.e., plain text, braille), assistive listening devices and sign language interpreters and/or captioning as needed by committee members
- Placing microphones at a height that is accessible to people using wheelchairs
- Ensuring that everyone uses the microphone if one is provided
- Reading all of the text on presentation slides aloud

- Saying the count aloud if people raise their hands to vote
- Providing a nearby relief area for service animals
- If food is provided, checking if any attendees have food allergies.

For more tips on inclusive engagement and accessible meetings, see the following resources: U.S. Department of Transportation's Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making[11] and U.S. Department of Justice's Accessible Information Exchange: Meeting on a Level Playing Field.[12]

IV: Holding a Meeting

Holding productive meetings is essential to the success of an advisory committee. A successful committee provides a forum for hearing and acknowledging diverse opinions.

As stated in the U.S. Department of Transportation's report, Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making, "A [Civic Advisory Committee] molds participants into a working group. It is democratic and representative of opposing points of view, with equal status for each participant in presenting and deliberating views and in being heard."[13]

Without organization and strong group communication skills, even the most diverse and well-oriented committees will be unable to build consensus.

Practices and Procedures

While not all meetings will be bound by Robert's Rules of Order, many chairpersons find it helpful to manage meetings according to these parliamentary guidelines. Robert's Rules may not be required, nor work for all groups, but it is important to establish some set of guidelines for voting and speaking in order to keep meetings productive and avoid conflict.

Below are some best practices to ensure everyone is engaged and all voices are heard.

- Understand the purpose of your meeting. One technique is to post a focus question or to keep the committee mission visible during meetings. This keeps the group on track and ensures the goals of the meeting are accomplished.
- Distribute the agenda and related meeting materials in advance of the meeting to give members an opportunity to prepare for specific agenda items and review all documentation. This is particularly important for members who need the agenda in a format other than standard print. Make the agenda and meeting materials available to the public who chooses to attend these meetings.

WACOG
Western Arizona Council of Governments

COORDINATION COUNCIL AGENDA

DATE:		TIME:	10:00 AM to Noon
PLACE:			

Shaded items are action items.

ITEM#		AGENDA ITEM	PRESENTER
1		**Call to order**	Chair
	a	Introductions	
	b	Review/approval of minutes - June 13, 2019	Chair
2		**ADOT**	
	a	ADOT News/Updates; FFY2019 Grants, FFY2018 vehicle orders, DBE reporting, etc.	
3		**WACOG**	
	a	WACOG News/Updates	
	b	Quarterly Reporting	
	c	Program Visits	
	d	Gaps in service - process/planning	
4		**Coordination Council Topics**	
	a	Coordinated Council Contact list	Chair
	b	2019 Coordinated Council Training Resource Guide - approval	Chair
	c	FY2020 Coordinated Council Meeting Dates Calendar	Chair
	d	FY2020 Election of Chair and Co-Chair positions	Chair
	e	Lake Havasu City/MPO - Transit Study Update	
	f	Discussion item: What current camera systems do agencies have on their vehicles.	All
	g	5310 Program specific discussion (time to talk about what is currently happening in the 5310 program, concerns, questions, assistance, etc.)	All
	h	5311 Program specific discussion (time to talk about what is currently happening in the 5311 program, concerns, questions, assistance, etc.)	All
	i	Agency Presentations: WestCare, Hualapai Transit, New Horizons DEC, New Horizons CPSN, Rise, La Paz County Health Dept, & NAU Senior Companion Program	Agency Rep
5		**Announcements:**	
	a	*Next meeting date: October 10, 2019	Chair
		I	
	b	Training opportunities in the region:	
		Agency training announcements?	All
6		**Wrap up:**	
	a	Agenda Items for next Meeting?	
		Review/Approval Coordinated Council By-Laws	
		Suggestions/requests?	All
		Agency Spotlights - Nazcare, BATs	Chair
	c	Discussion:	
		*Who is coordinating with who?	All
	d	Agency announcements	All
7		**Adjourn**	Chair

***Any agenda item or proposed agenda item can have discussion and action.*

Special Needs Accommodations

Individuals with disabilities who require special accommodations may contact [redacted] at least 24 hours before the meeting time to request such accommodations.

- Meetings should start and end on time and be action oriented. Push for commitments from members and identify who is responsible for next steps and by when.
- Follow the agenda during the meeting. The sample provided is an agenda used by Western Arizona Council of Governments (WACOG).[14]
- Establish a set of guidelines for voting and speaking to keep meetings productive and on task.
- Cultivate an atmosphere of participation. Don't let one person dominate the meeting. This can be accomplished by establishing ground rules for participation or by creating a non-verbal mechanism to gather everyone's input.
- Follow up on tasks, recommendations, or unanswered questions. Draft meeting minutes should be distributed promptly after the meeting. Minutes should show progress, assignments, and action items.
- Don't meet just to meet, but be wary of canceling too many meetings as it can send the message that the committee is unimportant.
- Continuity and consistency in attendance is vital for a committee to be effective. To achieve this, you may need guidelines for attendance in the bylaws or allow for alternates to attend if the regular member is unavailable.

Continuity and consistency in attendance is vital for a committee to be effective. To achieve this, you may need guidelines for attendance in the bylaws or allow for alternates to attend if the regular member is unavailable.

Consensus Building

Even with an established set of guidelines, groups may experience certain conflicts due to internal issues, such as differing personal styles or temperaments, differences due to authority or position, or mistrust within the group.

Group members should make every effort to listen to each other respectfully without resorting to personal attacks. Ensure everyone has their moment to speak while others listen and agree to disagree if the conflict cannot be settled. Instill in members the idea that they should be willing to learn and adjust their viewpoints when presented with new information; the success of the committee relies on compromise.

When disagreements occur, committee members can work toward building consensus. Steps in reaching consensus include:

1. Each member of the group shares a new insight gained during the information gathering stage.
2. Each member of the group declares his or her current position on the issue.
3. All members of the group ask questions to clarify the various positions that have been presented.
4. Each member of the group states the rationale for his or her position.
5. One member of the group states what appears to be the emerging consensus.
6. Each member of the group has an opportunity to respond to the stated consensus.
7. One member of the group restates what appears to be the consensus.
8. The consensus stands when there are no further comments made.
9. Steps five through eight are repeated to develop a back-up contingency option if needed.

Additionally, when conflict does occur, group members should make every effort to do the following.

- Listen to each speaker and ensure that only one person speaks at a time
- Remain respectful of others
- Be willing to learn
- Be willing to change
- Separate the issue from the person
- Agree to disagree when necessary
- Maintain a sense of humor
- Support the consensus decision even if they do not agree fully

V: Community Involvement

Keeping the Committee Going Strong

After a committee is fully formed in an inclusive manner that reflects the community and is addressing and supporting needed change, it is important to regularly enlist community involvement. The committee must stay current on issues the community is facing and seek out potential solutions.

Citizen involvement is critical to any changes or improvements in the transportation system. Gaining public support will be necessary to make transportation a community priority.

Committees can solicit and include input from the public through a variety of methods, including conducting a community-wide survey or hosting an open forum. Regular opportunities for input both during meetings and beyond can help bridge the communications gap between your committee and those you serve in the community.

Citizen involvement is critical to any changes or improvements in the transportation system. Gaining public support will be necessary to make transportation a community priority.

With a diverse membership, orderly meetings, and an established reporting structure, groups can serve as catalysts for, and supporters of, positive changes in advancing community mobility. Although sometimes challenging, the work and service of committees is invaluable. Your committee members can become ambassadors to the community, and you can designate a committee member tasked with media outreach to ensure your work does not go unnoticed.

Celebrating and publicizing your committee's successes will encourage the community to get involved with what your group is doing. Share your stories through local news stations, newspapers, blogs, and other social media sites.

Social Media Engagement

Committees can solicit input from the general public through a variety of methods, including conducting a community-wide survey, hosting an open forum, as well as through social media.

Social media is a great way to keep the community involved and to share the results of your committee's work. Every social media platform is designed with different outcomes and audiences in mind, and each platform has different accessibility features.

Facebook is ideal for live or pre-recorded video events, such as streaming meetings, or hosting talks with experts who can help inform your committee's work. Facebook is also widely used for sharing community news and getting feedback in the comments.

Twitter is another popular platform where you can bridge the gap between current or potential members and the local community; tweet links to news stories, blogs, or information graphs; re-share tweets from knowledgeable people; and use polls to gauge interest or understanding for your committee's goals. Using hashtags in your tweets can also help others find you.

Instagram is a powerful visual medium for sharing pictures and short video clips of your committee's work in action. Like Twitter, hashtags are crucial for engagement and discovery on the platform. Also note that, while you can scroll through Instagram on your computer, most of Instagram's features are only for smart-phone users, which may limit your audience.

Regardless of what platforms you use, accessibility is important to ensure everyone can engage with your material. For visual posts, describe all images and voice-over any text or vital information on a video. Do not use emojis or special characters in your text-based posts. Make sure important information is written out before you start to use hashtags.

Whether holding a meeting or using social media, it is important to ensure accessibility of any platform.

The Partnership on Employment and Accessible Technology (PEAT) released a resource to help agencies evaluate accessibility for the platforms they use to host virtual meetings and events. Tips include checking whether the platform is compatible with assistive technologies like screen readers, captioning is high quality, dial-in services have access to relay service that enables text-telephone (TTY), and ensuring you are an inclusive host.[15]

Prior to using social media platforms, it is important to review your agency's social media plan or create one if one does not exist. Guidelines should include who can post on behalf of the committee, how to post to each platform, and who and how social media accounts are monitored. Designating a position to post and monitor social media accounts is a best practice. Accessibility requirements (image descriptions, captions, and clear messaging) should be specified for each post type, post frequency, as well as how negative or offensive comments are handled. There are many advantages to using social media for information sharing and engagement, and it starts with intentional planning as to your purpose in using it, your target audience, and your internal policies and procedures.

VI: Resources

Listed below are resources and organizations that committees may find helpful.

Easterseals

Facts About Disabilities: This website includes a disability etiquette guide, as well as general facts about different types of disabilities. https://www.easterseals.com/explore-resources/facts-about-disability/

Making Life Accessible: This includes the guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act and information on web accessibility. https://www.easterseals.com/explore-resources/making-life-accessible/

Other Organizations

BoardSource: This organization helps nonprofits build strong boards and inspires board service. They supply resources, trainings and other services. www.boardsource.org

Conflict Resolution Network: This Australian organization conducts research, develops, teaches, and implements the theory and practice of conflict resolution throughout a national and international network. The Network's website has free training material, including a 12-skills approach to conflict resolution. www.crnhq.org

VII: References

1. Building an Effective Advisory Committee, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools. No. 21, April 2008. Retrieved Dec. 23, 2020. https://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/factsheet21.pdf
2. Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan, Utah Transit Authority's Coordinated Mobility Department, 2017.
3. Public Transit Advisory Council. MaineDOT, 2020. https://www.maine.gov/mdot/transit/ptac/
4. Title VI Requirements and Guidelines for Federal Transit Administration Recipients, Circular 4702.1B Appendix F. https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/docs/FTA_Title_VI_FINAL.pdf
5. Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program Guidance and Application Instructions, FTA C 9070.1G, updated March 2016. Retrieved 12/21/2021. https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/fta-circular-90701g-enhanced-mobility-seniors-and-individuals-disabilities
6. Transportation Coordinating Committees: Connecting People, Communities, June 2015. Carrie Porter, Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources, Inc., Retrieved 12/23/2020. https://gwaar.org/api/cms/viewFile/id/2002596
7. Transportation Coordinating Committees (See reference 6 above).
8. Building an Effective Advisory Committee (See reference 1 above).
9. What is the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)? ADA National Network, October 2020. Retrieved October 2020. https://adata.org/learn-about-ada
10. A Guide to Planning Accessible Meetings, Prepared by ADA Hospitality, August 2016. Retrieved 12/22/2021. https://www.adaatyourservice.org/accessible-meetings-events-conferences-guide/book

11. Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making. Prepared by Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates, Inc. and Parsons Brinckerhoff Quade and Douglas for Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation. June 2015. Retrieved 12/22/2021. https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/public_involvement/publications/techniques/chapter00.cfm

12. Accessible Information Exchange: Meeting on a Level Playing Field, U.S. Department of Justice. Retrieved August 25, 2011. http://www.ada.gov/business/accessiblemtg.htm

13. Public Involvement Technology for Transportation Decision-Making (See reference 11 above).

14. Coordination Council Agenda, Western Arizona Council of Governments (WACOG), October 2020. Retrieved September 2020. https://www.wacog.com/mobility-transit/

15. Four Elements of an Accessible Meeting Platform, The Partnership on Employment and Accessible Technology (PEAT). Retrieved 12/2020. https://peatworks.org/4-elements-of-an-accessible-meeting-platform/?utm_source=govdelivery&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=ODEP_Newsletter_11-20

866.983.3222 • www.nadtc.org • contact@nadtc.org

Follow us on Facebook Twitter LinkedIn YouTube

The National Aging & Disability Transportation Center is a program funded by the Federal Transit Administration and administered by Easterseals and USAging with guidance from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living.

nadtc
National Aging and Disability Transportation Center

easterseals

USAging

01/22