

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING: The Superficial contrasted with the Substantial --- How should we rate the MTA, the BRTB, and BDOT in 2014?

<i>Superficial</i>	<i>Substantial</i>
1) MINOR PUBLIC ROLE: The public is viewed as "providing input" by making essentially reactive, passive responses to plans and budgets prepared by planning and program officials and their consultants.	A) FULL PUBLIC ROLE: The public is treated as a full partner throughout the planning process, with its suggestions and reactions solicited at every stage by planning and program officials and their consultants.
2) MINOR PUBLIC ROLE: Selected members of the public receive newsletters, and other mailings, or those with access to computers are able to view +/- or copy information from the internet.	B) FULL PUBLIC ROLE: The public participants represent a wide variety of constituents, and their deliberations are regularly made available to members of the general public through libraries and the media.
3) MINOR PUBLIC ROLE: Members of the public may attend open houses or other public informational meetings and "stakeholder summits" or take tours.	C) FULL PUBLIC ROLE: As needed, effective technical training is provided for all representatives of the public who are to work with the transportation planning officials.
4) MINOR PUBLIC ROLE: The public may be given surveys to take, but detailed ongoing survey feedback is often not provided.	D) FULL PUBLIC ROLE: The public is included in the planning process from the very start, working side by side with planning and program officials and their consultants in their offices - during normal work hours.
5) POOR TIMING: The public is involved only after the drafts have been prepared by the planning officials and their consultants.	
6) POOR TIMING: The public gets notified about and sees a full draft only a few weeks before it is to be finally decided upon (other than summaries which may be published earlier with little or nothing against which to verify their contents or points of view).	E) FULL PUBLIC ROLE: Public participants are included on a continuous basis - throughout the entire planning process and until final decisions on the plans. Plenty of time is allocated in which to conduct the transportation planning process. Other than publishing a general planning schedule, unless there are schedule changes, it is less necessary to constantly notify the public because the planning is ongoing and follows the schedule.
7) POOR TIMING: Officials do most of the planning under great time pressure at the last minute, thus requiring the public to react under similar conditions.	
8) MINOR PUBLIC ROLE: Documents (and even the summary) are presented to the public in very technical language, with technical graphics [i.e. "untranslated"].	F) FULL PUBLIC ROLE: Plan documents are written in very plain language, with clear graphics, showing an intention to meet a high standard for public communication.
9) MINOR PUBLIC ROLE: Documents are very voluminous, without meaningful summaries.	G) FULL PUBLIC ROLE: Plan documents and summaries are written concisely in the main body of the document, with technical documentation put in easy-to-use appendices.
10) MINOR PUBLIC ROLE: The public gets a chance to review the materials which have already been drafted by the planning officials.	H) FULL PUBLIC ROLE: Public participants in the planning process provide suggestions and feedback throughout the process. <i>---> please turn over the page ---></i>

Superficial	Substantial
11) MINOR PUBLIC ROLE: The public gets a chance to make written comments.	- see H) above on previous page -
12) MINOR PUBLIC ROLE: The public may testify orally at public hearings.	
13) MINOR PUBLIC ROLE: Official responses to this public input are produced, but they may be sketchy and usually do not address underlying policy questions.	I) FULL PUBLIC ROLE: All public suggestions and feedback are documented, along with detailed official responses to each of them.
14) PUBLIC'S NEED TO FORCE INCLUSION: In order to obtain the planning and budgetary documents, and their supportive materials, the public has to make requests for them.	J) FULL PUBLIC ROLE: Any resources used by or made available to planning officials and their consultants are automatically and immediately also made available to their planning partners who represent the public. Thorough documentation is made of all such official use.
15) PUBLIC'S NEED TO FORCE INCLUSION: The public sometimes finds it necessary to file Freedom of Information (FOI) requests for documents, which by law allows a time delay of up to 30 days.	
16) PUBLIC'S NEED TO FORCE INCLUSION: With such FOI requests, members of the public usually must pay for documents copied for them.	K) FULL PUBLIC ROLE: There is payment of travel, parking, other expenses, plus a modest stipend for the time taken by all the public representatives who participate in the transportation planning process.
17) PUBLIC'S NEED TO FORCE INCLUSION: Official meetings and votes of public transportation agencies take place behind closed doors, so the public finds it necessary to file objections under the Open Meetings Law, a cumbersome and uncertain procedure.	L) FULL PUBLIC ROLE: All official deliberations and votes about transportation planning and budgets are conducted openly, and the proceedings are recorded in detail. The meetings may be attended by and the records inspected by the general public.
18) IGNORANCE OF REALITIES: Transportation officials may or may not regularly use or ride public transportation. Many top officials have official cars and drivers to take them around. They live at a considerable "social distance" from the burdens endured by transit-dependent and other transit riders.	M) FULL PUBLIC ROLE: As reality tests for transportation officials, all such officials should be required at least once every year to get to their jobs and other activities solely using public transportation for one full work-week and weekend, and to publicly document and explain any problems they experience.
RATIONALE - <i>Transparency is not viewed as important, or officials just do not know how to make it possible. There is skepticism about public preferences and input, and the ability to learn from public participants. There is technical (but superficial or token) compliance with federal public participation regulations and guidelines. Public participation is seen as too slow and cumbersome.</i>	RATIONALE - <i>This planning addresses public (not private) transportation, so by its very nature should <u>engage members of the public as full, equal, and informed partners</u>. Public transportation exists for the public and is paid for by transit users' fares and public tax dollars. Such fuller public participation has thus been the practice followed by MPOs in other metropolitan transportation regions.</i>

- THE END -