

Transportation Efficient Communities Webinar #4
Meaningful Engagement Tips
From Successful Regional Transportation and Metropolitan Planning Organizations
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>> Good morning! And welcome to the Transportation Efficient Communities free webinar series on successful regional transportation and metropolitan planning organizations engagement tips. Please indicate in the chat box if you're not able to hear this webinar. And we'll also have a question and answer session afterwards and you'll be able to ask questions.

I'm Teri Chang. I will be your moderator for today's webinar. This is the fourth in a series that is brought to you by the Washington State Department of Commerce, Ecology, Health, And Transportation. Working together to improve health, reduce costs, and emissions. Special thanks to the Planning Association of Washington, which has requested credits for participation in this webinar. Details will be applied at the end of this webinar. And a very special thanks to our speakers Mark Hamilton from the Skagit Council of Governors and the Karen Parkhurst from the Thurston Regional Planning Council.

Local and regional governments are already doing great work in their communities planning for a more transportation efficient future. We want to leverage that good work by sharing it across the state. Our work is organized into five activities:

- General assistance. Developing guidance and resources endorsed by all four state agencies that will be shared.
- Coordination. To ensure consistency and avoid duplication.
- Direct assistance. Providing early and continuous one-on-one technical assistance to local governments during plan updates.
- Incentives. Investigating how state resources could better support local planning for transportation efficient communities.

- State decision-making. Working to integrate the results of local transportation efficient planning into state decision-making.

Transportation efficient communities is a work in progress and we hope to hear from cities and counties like you about how we can be most helpful. As we developed our work plan, one thing we heard from you across the state was that you wanted to hear more about how to plan together for walking, biking, driving, transit, ferry, and freight. So we're very excited to introduce you to today speakers who will share their experiences and engage with communities during their transportation plans and programs.

Mark Hamilton comes from the Skagit Council of Governments. He's a transportation planner. He worked in tribal and city governments. He has a bachelor's degree in environmental studies from Western Washington University and a master's degree in urban planning from the University of Washington. He has been a certified planner since 2009.

Karen Parkhurst from the Thurston Regional Planning Council. She came to the council in 2000 after a stint in systems management at the High Court of American Samoa, 17 years in management and policy at the Washington State House of Representatives, several years in government relations, and management of the county wide Commute Trip Reduction program at Intercity Transit. She leads state and federal legislative strategies efforts, working with legislative liaisons from municipal and professional organizations to develop and educate on regional priorities. She has a bachelor of arts degree from the Evergreen State College with a focus on Labor and Cultural studies. Now I would like Mark to go ahead and get us started.

Mark, you're on.

>> MARK HAMILTON: All right, well thank you Teri for the introduction. Again, my name is Mark . You're probably new to Adobe Connect. I'm going to try to do a couple of things that may or may not work. For the audio, I think you've called in. I don't know Teri if we have the ability to have the microphone speakers work through computers. Many of you have your speakers muted. So you've received a phone call or were able to call in. I'm going to talk about the work that we've done on planning for special needs transportation in Skagit Island over the last couple of years. I'm going to talk about what worked well and some challenges that we had. I hope you'll be able to walk away today with some ideas that you can use in your local communities.

So one of the things that I'm going to try out here is a poll question. Here goes. It's a question about which of the following best describes your employer. So if you see that on your screen, click the button that best describes your employer, and results should show up as everyone enters their information. It looks like it's working. I'll just give that a few minutes to fill up. Kind of see what the audience is today.

All right. So it looks like so far it's primarily state government, local government employees, one federal, quite a few MPO and RTPOs, some nonprofit, and maybe some retirees or people who have other employers. It looks like a pretty good cross section. So I'm going to end that poll. And I got one more here. So let's see if I can pull it up pretty quick.

This is just does your employer provide a transportation service of any kind?

Hold on. Still testing here. Hold on one second. Let me pull it back. There we go.

Okay, great. It looks like by and large most of your employers provide transportation services of some kind. If you do not, and a few is NA. So thank you for answering those poll questions. And so as I talk through my presentation today, I'm going to talk a lot about special needs populations. Really, when we describe special needs, we have a narrow definition. Seniors, people with low income. You could easily make the case for adding other groups like veterans, youth, people in rural areas and more. We chose to have a fairly limited definition to help meet grant requirements and state transportation plans. To provide a little bit of context for our area, Skagit and Island county, we're probably in the small to medium range. Skagit is probably 120,000 people. And our largest city is 120,000. We have a number of smaller cities and towns and populations are fairly dispersed in what are largely pretty rural counties. But not as rural as many in Washington state. And for both counties, regional connections are extremely important as they are across the state. Connection to the mainland are through island and ferry and bridges services. But for special needs populations and indeed the whole population, the regional connections are extremely important. So it's kind of a semiautonomous structure between the two counties. And some were made at the two county levels. And

What we're doing is looking at the population to plan for. Veterans, use, seniors, people with disabilities, low income. And the intent was to get representatives of that group. We contacted tribes, private non-profits and others to see if they provided any transportation services to those populations. Our intent was to have a one to one representation. We found when we tried to contact those folks that was probably no surprise to the listeners that some didn't provide services to more than one group. But there was quite a bit of cross over that we anticipated. The group on the left, we had 11 committee members representing all of the groups. The veterans, Medicaid, youth tribes, et cetera. The committee was formed on an ad hoc basis. It was for 2014 only. And we had a couple of primary tasks that they would be working on in 2014, which I'll get into in a moment. But just really briefly, they were formed in March and then they met five times over the course of 2014. In the beginning it was more of an educational component. Talking about what we were working on in terms of the planning process and then moving all the way through the process to finally

recommendations at the end to our elected officials that were the RTPO policy board.

So I'm going to do another poll question here. Let me pull it up. Okay. So how familiar are you with coordinated public transit human services transportation plans before I start talking about them?

It looks like so far we have a pretty good spread between those of you who are somewhat familiar, very familiar, and have no idea what I'm talking about.

So thank you for responding. I'm going to go ahead and end the poll and continue on. So according to public services human transportation services plan, it's something that the RPTOs do every four years, and it's really something for the special needs populations in the region. And for the counties who don't have RPTOs, the county usually leads the efforts for developing these plans. They're required by the federal government, but they're planned at the regional level.

And developing the plan is really an effort that involves seniors and persons with disabilities, and public transportation providers, and human services transportation providers and others in the process to really develop a plan such as this. And it's something that, you know, every region across the state has a plan, human services transportation plan. I'll just call them a plan. Because human public coordinated human services public transportation plan is way too much of a mouthful to say all the time. And ATP is too acronym heavy. So I'll just say "plan" and you'll know what I'm referring to.

This was completed in 2014 in Skagit Island county. Part of what we did was an inventory. We needed to know what was out there. What we found was we really have a couple big providers of special needs transportation. Island Transit and Skagit Transit. We actually had very few smaller providers. And many of them, they had volunteer services, they did meals on wheels. They had volunteers to drive people to medical appointments. We had the Camano Center who had a couple of senior drivers with volunteers. And we had a substantial level of service among the transits, and other than that we had very little. We had a Medicaid brokerage who was a North West Regional Council in our area. But there weren't many providers. That's something that you'll see when you go to different parts of the state. When you go to the Puget Sound area, it's quite different. But one common thing is we had services that crossed county boundaries. Quite common.

So kind of moving on, we did an inventory of the paratransit origins and destinations. Let's see here. Pardon me for just a second. Really, for paratransit, this was the paratransit information. We had the most data on paratransit quite frankly. For a lot of those other services, there was very little information available. But we did have a lot of very good information for paratransit. So what were some of the most frequent or most important paratransit destinations. We have dialysis centers that were our top destination. The Mount Vernon Dialysis Center. And there was an employer who

provides employment for persons with disabilities, and that was a major destination. And coming from senior centers was big in both counties. And finally different shopping facilities in both counties were major destinations, as well.

So for demographics, we did a profile of some of the demographic characteristics in Skagit and Island County. And we looked at persons without access to a vehicle, persons below 150% of the poverty line, and persons with a disability. This was all using census data and using census tracts and block groups across the two counties. And when we combine that all together to form a special need, we call that a special needs transportation index, combining all of those four factors. And we looked at it in two different ways. We identified the top quartile percentile census tract. And we looked at it based on density, which was persons per acre, and then we looked at it based on the percentage of the population. And so some of the more urban areas did better in the density-based calculation. Mt. Vernon and Oak Harbor. And some of the others did better in the proportion-based calculation. And in some areas there was a little bit of overlap like in Oak Harbor. But that was I think a pretty interesting look at, you know, a comparison across the region and some of these different characteristics.

So I'm going to talk a little bit about the outreach we did. We did a paper survey that we distributed. Actually our committee helped us distribute it around. And we also posted it on Survey Monkey. And the picture to the left was one of the transit agencies provided a link to the Survey Monkey, and there were little business card type things that people could take it home and follow the link. We had 143 response to the surveys. And just looking at the results from the surveys, you know, we published a lot of them in our plan. And then we also, we had some that were put in our appendix. And the one to the bottom, would you like to learn how to ride, was something that our transit agencies wanted to add to see if people were interested in finding out more about paratransit or transferring to regular bus service. If they were interested in training, they could enter their name and travel information. We got 18 people who did that, and they were later contacted by Skagit Transit and Island Transit. We also did ride alongs agencies, as well. We had people go along on the paratransit. And they had open ended questions, and they talked to people for as long as people were willing to talk to them about what they think about the service, how they like the service, where they're going. And we put all those results in the plan, and that was a really good way to have more of an informal conversation with people as they rode the bus back to their destination.

One of the things that we really found helpful is we had a number of events in the past and you had the same people to show up or hardly anyone to show up. And we didn't want to go down that road. So in the very beginning, when we were working on getting the public participation process together, we decided to go to events where people were going to be at. Or we thought people who could be in special needs populations could be at. We went to Skagit Project Homeless Connect, and

Skagit Buddy Walk, and other events and talked to people directly about their needs.

There were much more events in Skagit County during our planning process than in Island County. It worked a little bit better in Skagit than in Island. In island, we had a focus group and went to the senior center. We did try to do some outreach there, but it wasn't at the same scale as the larger events that we had in Skagit County.

Jumped ahead there. So where is the most important place you usually need to get to? This was one of the exercises we had at our event. It was a little push pin exercise that most of you are probably familiar with. They're color coded. This event was in Mt. Vernon. Not surprisingly, a lot of the locations were in mt. Vernon. We had within person with a medical need way out in the rural part of Skagit county. As they were putting the push button down, I didn't question them. If you have a medical appointment out in the middle of nowhere, more power to you.

This is one of the examples of what we did for outreach. We got quotes from participants earlier in the process. This slide is a little dark. But we basically wrote down the quote. So the first one was we need more services on the weekends, more buses, and longer hours. We asked if they agreed to put a green check mark. And if they disagreed, to put a red cross. In most areas people agreed. There were a few areas there was some disagreement. But we thought it was a good way to help validate some of the things we heard earlier on and kind of see the level of agreement from participants.

So for the needs slide, there's a whole bunch of information here. I don't expect you to process this. But we basically identified going through what we did with the inventory and going through the outreach. We categorized them into these four categories. Maintaining service, increasing access, and increasing and improving services. And then we published that within our plan on a single page

And just kind of getting into the process itself for the final, we had our committee recommend approval of the plan in November and it went to the Sub RPTOs for Skagit and Island. They recommended approval and then it finally went to our full board in December of 2014 and was approved.

We had regional human services transportation projects. That was the big way to implement the plan. Or we felt the primary way to implement the plan, which was through the projects within the plan. Which I'll talk about in a second. And then we had a menu of options to continue coordination engagement. These were things that we identified in the plan to help with implementation. We've been doing one of these so far. We had one in 2015 and we will have one again this year. We didn't actually have firm commitments in the plan for who would do the implementation. And so this is something that SKOG has done. The annual transportation plan that we will continue to do. And within the plan there was a list of options that participants

could choose from in how they help implement the plan.

So for the projects, I've got one more poll question here. So just one moment.

So how familiar are you with prioritizing special needs transportation projects? Very, somewhat, not at all?

And I'm glad to see that everyone, it seems like almost everyone is still listening and participating. My motive for this was to see how many people had left or had gone to the bathroom, but it looks like everyone is still participating. So thank you for that. So I'm going to briefly touch on how we did prioritize special needs transportation projects. This is something that we do every two years. The committee assisted with this. And this is something RTPOs have the responsibility for doing. And what they do is we get grades from the State Department of Transportation every two years and it's either by RTPO or for the counties who don't have RTPO, they get a single county set of grades. And so for Skagit and Island County, there were five A's, five B's, and four C's we received in 2014. And then we could use those grades on projects within the region that were regional priorities. So it's really a way to evaluate projects on a regional level and say how high a priority are they for the region. And then when the projects go on the statewide level, they get potentially more points if they receive a higher grade. An A versus a B versus a C versus a D. A's would receive the most points and D's would receive no points. This is something that we completed in 2014 with the plan. And it's something that we'll be doing again in 2016.

And just to talk a little bit about how we evaluated the projects, so within the plan we had these implementation strategies, which are the same. They were really taken from the state human services transportation plan. And we had these number of strategies. And our committee and our board went through exercises where they weighted the different strategies to see how they're prioritized against one another. And we originally had 100 points that were distributed amongst the strategies and our policy board said well, hey, we value some of these more than others. We want to bump up the points to I think it was addressing high-need areas, the third one on that list, and also expanding services was felt that it needed a little bit higher weight. We went from 100 priority weight points to 120. And the preserving versus expanding services, I know a lot of other areas have that debate about which is more important and which we should focus on first. First Skagit and Island, they were equal in terms of priority.

So this slide has a lot of information. I wouldn't expect you to look at all of this at this point. When you see what our evaluation sheet looks like. We had seven projects submitted. Three from Skagit Transit, one from Community Action, and three from Island Transits. It was a qualitative evaluation, we used each of those criteria, and went through and evaluated each project. For the sponsors of the project, they didn't

evaluate their own projects. Just the other ones. We went through and averaged out all the totals, ranked them, and then the committee recommended a grade. And then our policy board decided on ultimately what grades the projects would receive. So this is our final list. We had five A's, and then we had three B's. We did get two projects at the very bottom of the list that came in after our evaluation process and our board decided that they should still receive a grade. And they received a B. And so five A's, two B's. And all four C's weren't assigned for the region. I'm running out of time, but I'm going to briefly talk about what worked and our challenges.

One of the things that I thought worked really well is we had all of these different processes happening. And the timing had to work out extremely well and make sure that application were aligned. And that worked. We got done by tend of the year. And then engaging special needs populations at familiar place to them was extremely beneficial and I would recommend it to others. Because it was a great way to talk to people that otherwise wouldn't come to kind of a planning event. When going to them, I think people were really free to talk. And we made sure and recorded what people said and also put it within the appendix of our plan. We hired a consultant who had done work like this before, and that was beneficial. And the staff was extremely helpful. I bugged Evan Olsen every week and he was extremely helpful. There was a great cooperative spirit throughout amongst our board and our committee members. And I think in how we evaluated projects, it seemed fair to everyone and transparent. And I think when the applicants went through and were evaluating others' projects, they weren't purposely grading them lower so theirs would do better or anything like that. Everything seemed above board and everyone was happy with that process. So quickly the challenges. Just getting all the meetings in processes to a align. Similar to the timing of the previous slide. It was a challenge, it worked out, but it was hard because there were so many things that had to align. It was like a jigsaw piece fitting in a puzzle together. The other challenge was just a lack of providers. We don't have that many. And trying to educate and tell people about what this is and why we're calling them and why we went them to be involved. And also trying to learn from them and what services they provide and how they operate and what their challenges are. I think it's a very iterative process. We had some curve balls thrown into our process. One of our service providers had to cut services substantially mid way through, which no one saw coming. We had very few projects in the end, which I think was a surprise to many, especially our elected officials that we didn't have more. And projects always meeting needs. So some of the projects didn't seem to meet the needs in the plan exactly how they were intended. I think that was a little bit of a challenge. And also the responsibility in implementing the plan. There was no responsible body or official. You know, SCOG helps with coordinating the plan, but implementation isn't just SCOG. So defining those roles. It's something that I think was a challenge. You want to coordinate, but then it's not always certain. And I think always are we talking to the right people is always a question. Even if we're contacting the right organization, are we talking to the right

person at the right organization. And really are we in touch with the person that we need to talk to that should be involved with this process. And lastly, I'm just going to talk about in 2016 we're going to have another special needs transportation forum. We're going to continue to talk about and work toward implementation and implementing the plan. We plan on having a similar committee that we did in 2014 and maybe having it a little bit more open ended so they're not just representing a certain group. We'll get a list, or we'll get our grades again from the Department of Transportation, and we'll be developing our prioritized list of projects. And we'll continue to build on the partnerships that have been developed and then continue educating and then learning at the same time.

So I may have gone a little bit over there, but that is my presentation and I'm happy to answer any questions if there is any time. I'll turn it back to Teri.

>> TERI CHANG: Thank you so much, Mark. We have a couple of questions in the chat log. Did you receive this request from WSDOT public transportation, as well? Mark?

Mark?

Lost you.

We'll go ahead and take a break from questions and we'll go ahead and move to Karen's presentation.

All right, Karen, you're on!

>> KAREN PARKHURST: All right. Thanks! Again my name is Karen Parkhurst, I work for the Thurston Regional Planning Council. I'm going to be talking about our sustainable Thurston project, which in the end was calling creating places, developing spaces. We are a single county regional transportation planning organization and metropolitan planning organization. And in 2009, our policymakers, our council had a retreat. And they talked about water climate change and land use and official government services. And they said we're struggling with these things. And it was our job as staff to go out and find some resources and study these issues for our council. And along came the livable communities grant opportunity from Transportation, and the Environmental Protection Agency. We were lucky to receive that grant so we kicked off a long process. And we really referred to this as a community conversation. And it was a way of asking our community how do you want your community to look, function, and feel in 2035? Obviously a big topic. I can remember when we first kicked this off, used a diagram with the Maslov's theory of what do we deal with first? Food and water and air and energy. All of those things. That hierarchy of need was really what we were looking at.

To kick this off, we spread the word in everywhere we could think of. We still have a newspaper presence in this region. Print media, online media. Social media we were fairly new to at this time. But we kicked in and became Facebook users and Twitter users at the business level. We really worked through our influencers, our elected officials, and other important people in the community who could reach out and provide credibility and excitement about this. We have a local TV presence, both at the state and local TV that covers the legislature and the like as well as a local community resource. Radio was something that we don't do a lot, but we do here. We provided a lot of bookmarks, materials that were really well received, including bookmarks, with just a little logo and contact information and that really resonated with people. Did posters and brochures, sent out a postcard to everyone in our community as well as used stuffers in energy bills. Created a lot of e-mail lists and included e-mail lists that we already had. Reached out to our partners, tabled at events. Did some translations of many of these materials. And also, we are the lead agency for commute trip reduction in our community. And so we reached out to those work sites, over 200 that are affected under the Commute Trip Reduction Law. And in fact received a lot of interest in those folks in making it work. We also wanted to get a baseline that asked some questions about people's hope, fear, and dreams. Also, our credibility as an organization. Do people know who the regional planning council was? And did they think we were the appropriate people to be doing this work? And so we had about 1800 people respond to those early countywide statistical baseline and then follow-up surveys as well as the county-wide online survey. 85% said that working together to improve for the future would lead to an improved quality of life. 66% said their actions could affect the planning process in the future. So we had folks who were engaged and felt like they could make a difference. We do know that when we do county-wide surveys, even these statistical ones, we tend to have responses from middle to upper class, Caucasian, 50-65 age range. Typically urban and suburban. So we knew we needed to work and reach out to other populations. So we worked with our colleagues at the Food Bank and the housing and homeless kinds of organizations and did a low-income survey that was also translated into Spanish. Basically we have about 5% of our population speaks Spanish. About 8% speak Asian or Pacific islander languages. So those were only translated upon request because there's a wide variety.

Here's a slide I'm not going to talk to at all other than to say if you want to understand how our process worked, this was the structure for sustainable Thurston that we did all of our work under. I'll talk a little bit in detail. We were led by our task force. Their job was to create divisions and goals, bring everything together, hear what we were hearing from the public, and craft the plan. This was comprised of members of our regional council, our transportation policy board, the chairs of the panels, which I'm going to talk about in a little bit, and then they reported to our regional council and reported to all of our partner councils and the adoption of the plan took place at those levels.

The next level were the local expert panels. And this was a series of groups that were created that were local experts. But their main questions were what's working, what's not working, what do you want to see in the future. So as you can see we had folks dealing with water, with school transportation, with emergency services and the like. And no matter what we were doing, it was really about people to people. People talking to each other. This community conversation. So we had a big kickoff that we held at the Evergreen State College and then we were all over the map.

And then the panels and the task forces were meeting at least monthly, sometimes much more often than that. We also had informal conversations at grocery stores, other places where you would just run into somebody and say hey, have you thought about what we're going to look like in the next few years? We have great partnerships in our community and we took advantage of that. Also, spoke to a couple of college classes, a couple of high school classes, went to transit fairs that were sponsored by our transit agency. We tried to make our interactions very multimedia and help to bring people to the table. So we had a Lego exercise that we did that basically said we're going to have X-number of new people coming to the region by 2035 and this many jobs, where would you put them? Build your community. So for the most part that was very successful. We did have one person who felt the need to build a nuclear power plant. But other than that, it was a fairly successful exercise. We had small and large groups within a meeting. We would make sure there was an opportunity to speak in a large group or in a smaller group, trying to work on people's level of comfort. Did some video interviews at the meeting, asking people the kinds of questions they were asking, and then typing them and making sure we had their approval to use those in our marketing and outreach. We also had a graffiti wall. Because we are planners, we had dot exercises. And then we had a variety of way to comment. So you could talk to us in person, by e-mail. You could post on our website. And then we had an online collaboration tool. And this is just a sign on this slide from the town of Bucoda which was advertising a meeting that was going to be in the town over. So lots of participation in the rural community.

The other piece that we did was realize that people learn differentially. We used charts and graphs and infographics and tables and maps and just talking to people. Any way we could think of to be able to get the message out of what our conditions are currently, and then what kinds of possibilities or opportunities there would be in the future.

And we found that some people reacted to those different kinds of things in different ways. So it was important to continue to provide a lot of access into the ways we do things. We had a couple of special members of our audience in that part of our grant we were providing ongoing education through the League of Women Voters and the Department of Commerce. So for the league, we were working with them to write a chapter for a curriculum guide that they used that's used in the schools. And for the Department of Commerce. Sustainability Segment for their planning webinars and

online kinds of help. We're very lucky. Tribes is certainly on our list of folks that we wanted to engage. But the Nasquale Indian Tribes and other tribes are already members of our council. We didn't have to get them to our table. They were already at the table.

The business community, that's hard for us to reach. And so we did some special effort with those.

Youth and elders, I love the opportunity I had to speak to a high school class that was all 18-year-olds. So I told them that they were the millennials and this is what I know about you. And that's that you don't want to drive a car, you're going to marry late, you want to live in an urban community, and they all raised their hands and said "No, that's not me! What are you talking about?" So I was able to say well, if you don't get involved, that's the community that we're planning for. You might start by voting, because you're all 18. So I was able to have that conversation. People with low incomes and language barriers and I guess one of the things that we were really lucky about is because we do that coordinated transportation plan that Mark talked about. We have partnerships in the community be it DOT, be it the department of health, others, that we work with routinely. So we didn't have to really invite people into the process and introduce ourselves in the way of many of those nonprofits and the like. There already are colleagues and we already work together. That was really helpful. That includes folks with disabilities, our veterans community we're already actively involved with. There were a couple of groups. The Organized Against. There was a national movement that was going on at this time that believed that processes such as these were somehow associated with the United Nations. And there was just a lot of buzz out there about a particular thing.

And what we learned was to just smile and write it down. That it was our job to keep the record. I remember one time I was at a meeting. There were three generations of a family at a table that I was facilitating. And I turned to the father of this probably four or five-year-old that was playing and I said what is it that you want for your child in 2035? And he said I want for her not to come to a meeting and have someone like you try and take her land away from her. So my job was to smile and to make sure that I wrote down that comment, was respectful of that viewpoint, and just moved on. Because that viewpoint from that person was just as valid as others.

The other piece I learned actually very early in my career working for the legislature and I worked it from now Congressman Denny Hackman. And that was to hold onto the microphone.

We have professional participants in our community. Folks who can be very effective. I tried to have one of them try to wrestle the microphone away from me. He didn't get the microphone. But my personal view of myself and my team, it is my job in a public meeting to make sure there is a place for that person who has never come to a

meeting, who has no access to the people who are making decisions, and make sure that they have a chance to participate and be heard. And if that means wrestling the microphone away from the bully, then that's my job to do.

Public engagement as a sacred contract. We were very clear throughout the whole process that everyone knew when, where, and how they could participate, influence, and protest. Oftentimes you'll see people who say I want to stop this. You have to tell them it's too late. You should have been at the previous meeting. It's very clear that at every meeting here's where we are in the process and here's how you can influence it. When you do make changes, make sure you document and celebrate that. When we started this grant we didn't include energy and local food systems. We quickly heard from our community that we needed to add those to our panels. So we created new panels. We let everybody know that it was the public that had told us "Hey, this is important to us" and so we added those.

This is that overview slide that says it's our job to provide a safe, open friendly place. We tell factual information. It's accessible. We made sure when it was possible that our meetings were scheduled where there was transit service, times, and locations of transit service offered to bring people to meetings if that was necessary. That there was that predictable schedule that they could follow. Again, multiple entry points. If you don't want to talk out loud in the big group, you can talk in the small group. If you don't want to send us an e-mail, then you can participate in the online communication tools. We also thought it was really important that it wasn't just about us. We needed to know what people's hopes, dreams, and fears were as we moved into this conversation.

For those of you who know me, this is one of my soapbox issues. When we say we want citizens to come to a meeting, especially in some of our rural communities with undocumented, or especially with the political discourse that goes on, words like "citizen" matter. I refuse to send out anything that talks about citizen engagement. It's public engagement. It's resident engagement. We really aren't going to be checking green cards at the door. We want to be clear about that. I also don't like to be referred to as an aging Baby Boomer, even though I am. So using those terms, rural, urban, millennial, those are very loaded words. So we try to be very careful on how we make those work.

One of our challenges is this is a three-year process. That is sustainable in and of itself. How do we get people to engage for that long? We did have that calendar saying this is when it is going to happen and when it's going to happen. There are some times when we're writing white papers that we're going to go dark for a while. But we also kept our website up to date. We had headlines and newsblasts. We worked with our partners to keep this conversation happening. And then we accepted comments along the way, again adding all those different ways that we had for people to interact with the system. And that happened all along. I remember

looking at this chart a lot, which basically says, you know, for ten seconds you have 896% of the people engaged after 5 minutes. You have 9.42. And we had three years. And so this was that reality check that says how can we keep people involved so that when it is time for them to really weigh in on a decision that matters, that they know that it's coming. That was challenging, but as I said, we tried every way we could think out.

The next couple of slides are ones that I'm not going to go over. But they just are ways that we reached out to the community and the next slide says we kept reaching out. And then they came. People did participate. Again, these next two slides deal with who participated and how many of each that we did. And what did that look like? So at the end of the process, we said our report ends with the imagination and power to create a socially and economically sustainable future. Let's get to work. So we are making sure there is relevant news, and events. And when we win awards, which we've won several for this process, that those are posted. We have an annual and it may be a semiannual newsletter. Connection to new and ongoing projects. We often come to our council or a chamber and reference Sustainable Thurston and what we learned about it as we go forward. And then making updates to groups.

One of the things they love about your community, the director of the health department came to us and said we want to update our health plan. And we want to steal everything that you've done. All of your panel structure, your task force structure. It worked. But we are going to look at things from a health lens. We're participating in their Thurston Thrives process, which is continuing as we speak. And they have a public-private partnership, that is leading that effort. So that was that real tangible result of our work.

So challenges and opportunities, I think we underestimated the Against movement and the influence they would have. The timeline of three years. And then who will implement. So the fact that we were putting something together that each of the individual jurisdictions would implement and adopt. And they may or may not adopt or implement what the overall vision was. We also found out one of the challenges is we are not cool, no matter how we try to reach out to youth. Apparently we're just not cool enough. So that is something we still need to work on.

What did work, the opportunities that we had, we already had so many of those relationships in place. And how important it is to continue those. That we just kept working the program and principles. Being respectful, being clear on what the process was. The fact that people jumped in and stayed in, and the fact that things changed. People change their opinions. We changed the directions they were going based on that input. So in the end, it was about connecting, and creating community. All about it. A community conversation at many different levels with many different people. And here's all the contact information. I didn't go into detail

at all on the results of our study. I wanted to really focus on the outreach efforts. But you're welcome to go to the website. We are very proud of this plan and thought it was a great effort. Thanks.

>> TERI CHANG: Thank you so much, Karen. We do have a few questions in the chat box. And we have some time to address them. Can you talk more about the grocery store example? Did you just talk to one person at a time? And how effective and efficient was it?

>> KAREN PARKHURST: Basically it was quite effective because people would see news the community or see us on television, because it's a small community in the sense that we all know each other. But I had people come up to me at the farmer's markets and say hey I saw you when you had that table at the food forum. Can you talk to me about this? And then we had a conversation. That happened to many of our members. And of course we always have those conversations. We didn't actually go to a farmers' market or a grocery store and set up a table. Our experience has been a little questionable about that in the past. But it was just is there an opportunity to talk about it? And are we going to take it? And make sure our elected officials and others have those basic talking points so we can engage in the conversation. Everybody carried those bookmarks around with them so they could pass them out and say "Hey, are you interested in the future of our community?"

>> TERI CHANG: Great. Who conducted the people to people outreach? Was it county staff or other organizations?

>> KAREN PARKHURST: It was primarily the Thurston Regional Planning Council. Although certainly when we were working with Boys and Girls Club, their executive director was the one who set up the meeting. And provide that had credibility. We needed to be in the door. We would usually talk to people in advance and say help me understand how this process impacts what you're doing in your group so we can find those connections.

Because this was a broad process, there were connections. Most people do care about clean water and breathable air, and having transportation for folks. So we usually were able to find that and make it relevant to that community.

>> TERI CHANG: Thank you. Can you elaborate on how the graffiti wall worked?

>> KAREN PARKHURST: Yeah. A couple of times we were in places where there were white boards where people could write on them. But we also put up is there something that is working or not working for you? What's working, what's not working, what do you want your future to look like? But we could also say when you're taking a break in the middle of this three-hour meeting, feel free to go jot something down on the wall. Is there some group that hasn't been represented? Some group that we need to get in contact? Then we could take those papers down and see what

everybody else said. It was one more way to engage especially for people who may not feel comfortable speaking in a public situation.

>> TERI CHANG: One more question. How many FTEs and hours would it take for another organization to follow your lead and replicate this elsewhere?

>> KAREN PARKHURST: We were very lucky in that we had a large grant and we were able to hire some staff to do it. There was no one in our agency, we have an agency of about 20 people, that wasn't involved at some level over this three-year period. Part of that was working on these wonderful kinds of images that you have. You saw on the PowerPoint some were doing those one on one meetings. So often we would have four or five different presentations in an evening and needed the staff to go out and cover it. I think it would be easy to scale back and we obviously have had to scale back these efforts because we no longer. But I think we learned some way to do it a little less expensively and to just recognize and get back to that people talking to people. And so we would love to have another grant like this to do more. But we don't.

>> TERI CHANG: For sure. Well we've run out of time. And there were a couple of questions for Mark. So we're going to be sure to get the responses from Mark and e-mail them out to everyone. For your reference, everyone on the webinar, here is the presenters' contact information. We will be providing the recording of this webinar and the presenters' materials online at www.wsdot.wa.gov/planning/community/gma. This webinar will also be available for AICP credits in about six weeks. The URL for the website is above. You can check it on your own. Or as soon as I know it's available, I'll be sure to e-mail all of you. Thanks so much to our presenters, Mark and Karen, and for everyone who tuned in today. Please stay tuned for future webinars And have a great day!