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# TRANSIT LEADERSHIP SUMMIT: 2012 TO 2014

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## THIS BRIEF TARGETS

- Executives at transit agencies and corporations searching for high-level policy recommendations to address operating, financial, political and planning challenges.
- Academics, researchers and students working in the fields of transit management, planning, design and engineering.

## KEY MESSAGES

- The public-transit customer experience should extend beyond the environment under transit agencies' control to include the surroundings encountered when walking or biking to transit stations.
- Involving the private sector can help an agency raise upfront cash, complement its skills, and insulate it from politically-difficult situations. The public sector should set the goals and closely monitor its private partners.
- Building the environmental and economic case for public transportation, by developing new metrics, is critical to ensuring that the government continues to fund transit at appropriate levels.

From 2012 through 2014 the Transit Leadership Summit (TLS) provided a forum for critical international dialogue about transit issues at the highest levels of executive management. The small group setting, underpinned by research, promoted exchange of ideas that led to innovation in the world's leading transit agencies.

The 2012-2014 Transit Leadership Summits brought together senior transportation executives from 17 cities in a closed-door setting to discuss common challenges and share solutions. They engaged in candid dialogue about promising strategies and technologies to improve the transportation experience.

White papers and city case studies were commissioned specifically for TLS, on a variety of topics including: funding; advances in fare collection and policy; improving customer experience; capital investment priority setting; climate change; improving first- and last-leg connections, physical design; institutions, and; value-capture strategies. Regional Plan Association collaborated with sectoral experts, academic institutions and the participating cities to produce these works.

## Key Lessons

The studies and working sessions at the summit generated multiple findings, some of which are summarized below:



► **The customer experience must be prioritized**

- Customer perception is reality. It is imperative to improve the experience of younger riders: they will be customers for decades to come.
- The public-transit customer experience should extend beyond the environment directly under transit agencies' control, to include the experience of walking or biking to the station from the surrounding community.
- Branding and good design in physical settings and in social-media outreach and advertising are essential for building positive customer perception of transit.
- Transit providers have an essential role in coordinating and rationalizing connections that happen informally, such as dollar vans, car sharing and bike-sharing systems that emerge independently of the transit agency.

**Climate change creates opportunities and challenges**

- Urbanization drives growing environmental degradation and greenhouse-gas emissions. Improving public transit systems can help to counteract this trend.
- Building the environmental and economic case for public transportation is critical to ensuring continued government funding at appropriate levels. New metrics are needed for measuring the benefits of transit on greenhouse-gas emissions and on the economy.
- Service providers must understand changing local climate-related conditions and adopt measures to build resiliency into transit systems to avoid catastrophic impacts on the local economy.

**Funding must be diverse and innovative: Fares alone are insufficient**

- Transit executives are constantly under pressure to raise revenues to maintain and improve their systems.
- The key to building public support for increasing fares is to elevate the discussion beyond fares, addressing larger urban goals like livability, the environment, public safety, customer convenience, and economic value.
- Diversified revenues are critical to ensuring the long-term stability of transit agencies. Value capture – secured via land values, property taxes, development fees, payroll taxes, parking fees, etc. – works best for entrepreneurial agencies and when it

is clear that transit will improve the area and that local residents and workers are able to pay. Agencies focused purely on service provision and more dependent on government subsidy are least likely to be able to leverage this funding option.

- Involving the private sector in developing new transit systems can help raise upfront cash, complement the skills of the public agency, and insulate them from politically-difficult situations like fare increases and labor negotiations. The public sector, however, should set project goals and closely monitor its private partners.

**Institutional environment is the primary impediment to or driver of “best practices”**

- The composition of a transit organization and its operating environment dictates how it responds to challenges. Transit organizations with narrow operational missions are ill equipped to address broader issues like funding and climate change. Those embedded in government must contend with a political agenda, which can result in suboptimal decision making.
- Implementing “best practices” requires understanding how the organizational dynamics of transit organizations may need to be adapted to achieve positive outcomes. Considering the role of the institutions that govern the delivery of transport service, and how these interact with public and private stakeholders, is critical.
- Dramatically changing institutional structures can be beneficial at times, but is often disruptive and takes time and energy better devoted to improving service. Another approach is to adopt new systems and strategies incrementally. For example, Enterprise Asset Management systems can be adopted for a new line or a new set of assets rather than simultaneously on the entire transit system.

**WHITEPAPERS**

- *Kwon, Y., et. al.,* Improving the Customer Experience
- *Perrotta, A.,* Fare Collection and Fare Policy
- *Zupan, M. and Barone, R.,* Capital Investment Priority – Setting for Transit in Large Metro Areas
- *Salon, D.,* Location “Value Capture” Opportunities for Urban Public Transport Finance,
- *Solecki, W.,* Urban Transit Systems and Conditions of Enhanced Climate Variability
- *Lane, R. and McGuire, V.,* Door to Door: Combined Mobility and the Changing Transit Landscape

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