



Transit



LYNX Community Advocacy & Service Engagement (CASE) Project Final Report

Background

This report is a final assessment of the Community Advocacy & Service Engagement (CASE) project, an FTA-LYNX (Central Florida Regional Transportation Authority) research project designed to study transit education and public engagement methods in Central Florida. In the Orlando area, as in other parts of the country, public transit is generally viewed as a transportation mode of “last resort.” The research conducted through the CASE project examines the viability of volunteer “coalitions” in changing misconceptions about transit and advocating for the improvement of transit alternatives. CASE was a five-phase project that used a diverse body of public opinion research to identify common misconceptions about transit and then set out to correct those misconceptions through town hall forums.

Objectives

To earn dedicated funding and develop a broader transit vision, LYNX recognized the need to educate the business community and the general public on the important role transit plays in the region. The agency opted to go directly to the people. The project had two ultimate goals:

- Develop a Community Transportation Vision (CTV), which would serve as a concept for the development of future transportation systems premised on direct input from citizens. The CTV encompassed input from local businesses, community groups, agencies, and citizens.
- Before any Community Transportation Vision could be put into practice, LYNX determined that it must first secure a source of dedicated funding.

Findings and Conclusions

Town hall forums were promoted to all residents throughout the LYNX service area, but special focus was given to groups that LYNX identified as being natural potential partners: the older adult demographic and the general business community. Residents who participated in one of five town hall forums were then encouraged to join a LYNX “coalition group” that would advocate for improved transit in Central Florida. Nearly a year after the town hall forums were held and the LYNX coalitions were formed, Central Florida saw considerable progress in attitudes toward transit. After three years of unsuccessfully championing legislative passage of a local surtax option for transit, the state legislature authorized local governments to pursue a Charter County Surtax during its 2009 legislative session. LYNX staff credits this development to the advocacy and general climate of support fostered by outreach that took place during the CASE project. However, despite its success, CASE research also indicates

that the project was generally time-intensive and staff-intensive. In particular, the coalition groups that successfully advocated for change in Central Florida required regular staff attention and tasking to be successful. These staffing needs made CASE a project that was best tackled by multiple departments working in tandem and may not be viable for smaller agencies without the resources to devote to promoting town hall forums and maintaining large coalitions of volunteer advocates.

Benefits

This report serves as a “how-to” guide and discusses the merits of the project’s coalition-building efforts, public education strategy, and community visioning component, providing a “roadmap for replication” so that other regions can adopt or adapt the CASE project to their locality. The report includes an instructive step-by-step analysis of CASE project phases and specific recommendations for organizations seeking to reproduce all or part of the CASE model in their region.

Project Information

FTA Report No. 0017

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