



Community Engagement in Transit-Related Planning in the Twin Cities

Final Report on Strategies, Impact, and Potential Sustainability

J U N E 2 0 1 4

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Contents

Introduction.....	1
Report structure.....	2
Evaluation methods.....	4
Findings.....	7
What “opportunities” (planning decision points) did grantees plan to address, and through what means (activities/strategies)?.....	7
What evidence is there that the targeted opportunity was addressed? To what extent were grant goals achieved?.....	15
What evidence is there that new relationships were built between community members and planning organizations/agencies?.....	22
To what extent have community members changed their perceptions of the potential threats and/or benefits represented by transit and its related development? Do they feel that plans reflect community needs and values?.....	28
What is the CET’s model of engagement, and how is it similar to or different from previous work in the region?.....	34
What evidence is there that the intended results are occurring? Is there evidence that these are different than under the models in previous use?.....	55
Challenges and lessons learned.....	72
Sustainability.....	74
Conclusion	84
Evidence of durable change	84
Not finished yet.....	87
Moving forward	88
Appendix.....	90
Community Engagement Team vision, values, and objectives	90
Table of grantees, award amounts, and corridors	92
Corridor map of grantees	93
Community Engagement Steering Committee Policy	94
Grantee organization profiles.....	96

Figures

Descriptions of groups interviewed for the evaluation	5
1. Engagement outcomes	16
2. As a result of [grantee's] activities, how much did you learn about... ..	17
3. Community members' relationships with other community members, CBOs, and public agency staff	23
4. Communities' relationships with public agencies	24
5. Community perceptions of transit system's usefulness	30
6. Community members' perceptions of potential impacts of the new transit line	31
7. Community engagement strategy for Corridors of Opportunity initiative	40
8. Community observers: Effectiveness of the CET	47
9. Public agency perceptions of the effectiveness of CET support	49
10. Public agency perceptions of the usefulness of community engagement	56
11. Public agency perceptions of community engagement's effect on timeliness	57
12. Public agency perceptions of community engagement's effect on quality of planning	58
13. Public agencies' awareness of community perspectives	60
14. Effectiveness of grantees in relaying community needs to public agencies	60
15. Change in public agency engagement practices	61
16. Community members meeting with public officials	68
17. Participation in grant activities by interviewed community participants	68
18. Participants' estimate of overall community involvement	69
19. Future involvement community participants expect for themselves	69
20. Plans with long-term community benefits	71
21. Vision for the longer-term state of community engagement in the Minneapolis-St. Paul region	76

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Introduction

In the fall of 2010, the Twin Cities received a three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under the Sustainable Communities Regional Planning grants program. The purpose of this grant program was to encourage metropolitan areas to integrate multiple sectors of planning (including housing, land use, transportation, and others) to develop regional plans that incorporate economic competitiveness, social equity and inclusion, energy use, and environmental and public health impact. The grant explicitly charged the recipients to include the meaningful engagement of historically underrepresented communities as one of the strategies toward this goal of change in the public planning process.

The Sustainable Communities grant was combined with a different grant with similar purposes from the Integration Initiative of Living Cities, a consortium of 22 of the nation's largest philanthropies and financial institutions. Both were for the period from January 2011 through December 2013. Together the two grants were governed by a single Policy Board as the Corridors of Opportunity initiative.

In fulfillment of the HUD grant's requirement to strengthen the regional planning process, the Corridors of Opportunity work linked to the Metropolitan Council's long-range planning process, feeding directly into the development of the next decennial regional plan, due to be adopted in 2014. Called *Thrive MSP 2040*, this plan spells out the vision for the region for the next 30 years. It includes both aspirations and projections of anticipated future needs, and provides the guidance for regional policy for which the Metropolitan Council has statutory responsibility in the content areas of transportation, water resources, regional parks, and housing.

The Sustainable Communities grant also required grantees to complete a Fair Housing and Equity Assessment as part of the regional planning process. This assessment is a means of identifying disparities in the distribution of burdens and benefits experienced by groups in the region based on race and income. In the Twin Cities, this exercise and its resulting report was entitled *Choice, Place and Opportunity: An equity assessment of the Twin Cities region*. It addressed three main questions: What do people in the region's communities consider "opportunity;" How are these opportunities distributed across the region; and How can we structure the region's public investments to make sure all residents can access opportunities? The results of the assessment informed the *Thrive* planning.

Of the \$5 million HUD grant, \$750,000 was dedicated to engagement of historically underrepresented communities. This work was led by a Community Engagement Team (CET) made up of three local organizations with strong relationships with community-

based organizations (CBOs) in the Twin Cities region: Alliance for Metropolitan Stability, Minnesota Center for Neighborhood Organizing, and Nexus Community Partners. With guidance from a wider group of CBOs, this team prepared a plan for the use of the community engagement funds. The Twin Cities plan included re-granting \$720,000 of the \$750,000 grant to CBOs,¹ and also developing (with other sources of funding) an infrastructure to support the work of those organizations.

This multi-level plan has developed into a model of community organizing and engagement that has elements that are new to the region and different from other models of community organizing and engagement practiced elsewhere.

In its first year, the overall evaluation of the Corridors of Opportunity (CoO) initiative began to find evidence that the engagement work was affecting a wide variety of processes and outcomes across the initiative. Additional evaluation resources and efforts were focused specifically on the community engagement work to describe what the model of engagement is that is being practiced, and more fully document its impacts at three intersecting levels: (a) the overall region, including the public agencies whose planning processes are the primary focus of the Sustainable Communities grant; (b) the CBOs that received the engagement grants; and (c) individual community members who have been involved in the grant-funded work.

Two rounds of community engagement grants were funded in 2012 and 2013, and were followed by an additional round of grants funded by The McKnight Foundation in 2014 to continue this work.

Report structure

The evaluation of the CoO's community engagement efforts was structured around a series of key research questions (see "Evaluation methods" section below) that guided the data collection efforts throughout. For the purposes of addressing the original guiding research questions adequately, this report is organized and structured according to the guiding research questions, presenting the corresponding data and analysis for each.

Because the evaluation of the CET covers two different rounds of grants and two corresponding rounds of data collection, there are a lot of data, findings, and lessons learned that is important to present. Each section begins with a "balcony-level analysis" section that summarizes and interprets the bigger picture findings and what they mean for

¹ Nexus Community Partners received a one-time administrative fee of 4% to cover accounting costs and related expenses (such as convening and meeting costs, videos for the first round of grantees, etc.) to serve as the fiscal agent for these grants. The CET lead organizations received no funding for the staff time required to implement the strategies outlined in this document.

community engagement around transit-oriented development (TOD), as well as systems-level and durable changes to community involvement in planning and decision making processes. The data that support these analyses are then presented throughout the rest of each section, presenting data from individual rounds as well as combined from both rounds when appropriate and available.

Evaluation methods

This evaluation was designed to answer the following research questions:

- What is the CET’s model of engagement, and how is it similar to or different from previous work in the region?
- What does it take to implement this model? What different capacities are needed with respect to staff skills, resources, time, partners, etc.? What additional funding was secured?
- What “opportunities” (planning decision points) did grantees plan to address, and through what means (activities/strategies)?
- What evidence is there that the opportunity was addressed (i.e., the identified community-driven concerns were addressed in planning)?
- What evidence is there that new relationships were built between community members and planning organizations (cities/counties/Metropolitan Council)?
- To what extent have community members changed their perceptions of the potential threats and/or benefits represented by transit and its related development? Do they feel that plans reflect community needs and values?
- What evidence is there that the intended results are occurring? Is there evidence that these are different than under the models in previous use? For example:
 - Are public transit and TOD planning agencies doing their work differently?
 - Are community-based organizations and residents using different approaches to engage with government entities?
 - Is there any evidence that planning decisions are more beneficial for low-income and other historically underrepresented groups?

To explore these various research questions, Wilder Research staff interviewed respondents with a variety of perspectives in public agencies, philanthropic organizations, community-based organizations, and historically underrepresented communities, collecting data for the first and second round of grants. These groups are briefly described in the table below. The first round of interviews were conducted from January through April 2013. The second round were conducted from December 2013 through February 2014, and included the two grantees from the first round of grants who had received extensions to complete their activities.

Descriptions of groups interviewed for the evaluation

<u>Interview group</u>	<u>Description of group</u>	<u>Interview content areas</u>	<u>Sample size (N)</u>		
			<u>Total N</u>	<u>Round 1</u>	<u>Round 2</u>
Grantees	Leaders of community-based organizations that received any of 23 grants from the Corridors of Opportunity. Term is also used in this report to refer to the organizations themselves.	Grant activities and strategies; factors that helped or hindered effectiveness; changes in engagement practices of their own organization and public agencies; plans for future activities	21	8	13
Community observers	Leaders with fairly high-level positions in cities, counties, the Metropolitan Council, philanthropic organizations, and the Community Engagement Steering Committee, selected for their broad perspective community engagement practices across the region. Groups in the two years were partially overlapping and partially unique to the year.	Kinds of engagement activities that were most effective, and factors that helped and hindered effectiveness; change in engagement practices of community based organizations and public agencies; outcomes of engagement including new policies and/or practices	34	17	17
Community participants or Community members	Community residents who were actively engaged in grant activities. Each grantee provided evaluators with a list of 10 participants, from which evaluators selected up to three with diverse experiences to be interviewed.*	Kinds of grant activities in which they participated; what they felt was most effective; changes in knowledge, skills, and attitudes as a result of grant activities; plans for future engagement. Interviews were conducted in English, Spanish, and Somali.	34	15	19
Public agency counterparts	Public agency representatives (from multiple cities, counties, and Metro Transit across the Southwest, Gateway, Central, and Bottineau corridors) who were directly involved in some way with individual grantees regarding their community engagement efforts.	How their agency engaged with the grantee; factors that helped or hindered effective engagement; changes in engagement perceptions and practices and/or policies; changes in outcomes of planning	26	11	15

Note: * Wilder Research staff received community member lists from seven of the eight first-round grantees and 10 of the 13 second-round grantees. An average of two community members for each grantee were interviewed. The groups were racially diverse and evenly split between men and women. Most were over age 25 and over half were over age 40. They represent communities along the Gateway, Southwest, Bottineau, and Central Corridors. These respondents are necessarily among the more actively engaged community members, so while they cannot fully represent the viewpoints of all community members, they do provide well-informed and detailed feedback on the grant activities and the perceived impact of those activities.

Wilder Research supplemented the perspectives of the interviewed groups with analysis of a number of supporting documents from throughout the CoO initiative, including notes from focus groups and key informant interviews conducted for the CoO evaluation in 2012 and 2013-2014, CoO Policy Board notes, documents prepared by CoO partner agencies, and notes from evaluators' meetings with the CET.

It is important to note that each of the interviews and other data sources used in this report reflect a specific point in time within an initiative that is constantly changing and within a region influenced by many other circumstances and conditions. Given this fact, it is possible and even likely that experiences and perspectives related to community involvement will also evolve and change and that the reader will be well served by taking this context and timing into account when interpreting the findings. This also makes generalizing and combining the two sources of data across the two different rounds of grants difficult, especially since the samples changed from year to year, making "pure" trend/comparison analysis impossible in that sense. However, data are occasionally combined to draw on broader impacts, while specific data and examples are shown from each round to more accurately portray the impacts of the grants in different communities at different points in time, as well as highlight patterns across the two years.

Findings

What “opportunities” (planning decision points) did grantees plan to address, and through what means (activities/strategies)?



Balcony-level analysis

Because the community engagement grant money was distributed to community-based organizations, the engagement efforts were more adaptive to the local context, responsive to each community’s needs and priorities, and innovative in their approaches to educating and involving community members than if it had been done in a more uniform, broad-sweeping approach through one lead organization.

Over the two years of community engagement grant funding, grantees took on a myriad of nuanced approaches to effectively engage their target communities in ways that were contextually and culturally appropriate. For almost all grantees, this generally included some type of active outreach and recruitment, education, and community power-building.

At the core of these successful engagement strategies were relationship- and trust-building with community members, meeting them where they were in a culturally appropriate manner, and empowering them to effectively understand and advocate for their community’s needs and priorities.

Grantee goals

In order to see how effective the grantees’ activities were in their community, it is important to first have a better sense of their stated goals for their grants. The goals of the grantees generally included:

- Educating and raising the awareness of their communities about transit and transit-oriented development (TOD) planning and its potential impact on their communities
- Engaging residents to advocate for plans that benefit their community and reflect their needs/desires

They also frequently included:

- Holding public officials accountable for developing plans that reflect community issues and priorities
- Getting community members at the same table as planners and decision makers
- Building the leadership capacity of residents for engagement and advocacy
- Creating ongoing networks of residents to continue engagement in TOD-related issues

Grantee activities

When looking at the activities of the grantees, it is important to keep in mind that each individual grantee's activities were specific to their own community, corridor (and its level of development at the time of the grant), the grant round, and the grant type (i.e., for the second round of grants, either a capacity grant or implementation grant).

Though each grant filled its own niche, the activities of the two rounds of grantees tended to fall into similar categories.

- Almost all grantees planned some kind of active recruitment, engagement, and/or outreach efforts to their respective community members, often through phone calls, fliers, local media, etc. Grantees completed these outreach efforts in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner in order to most effectively reach out to and help build the power of all of their local constituents, and some formed local advisory committees or roundtables of community resident leaders.
- It was very common for grantees to host public events to hear community members' voices, ideas, and concerns, often through town halls, open houses, workshops, forums, or focus groups.
- Grantees often did educational outreach for their community members about transit-related and development-related issues, typically through community events, presentations, one-to-one meetings, and trainings or workshops.
- Outreach efforts and the gathering of community input led many grantees to develop local transit-oriented development plans or visions for their respective communities in partnership with local residents and stakeholders, which they hoped to use to influence planning and policy decisions. This was particularly the case for the first round of grants, and those who received both first and second round grants often focused their second round grant activities on trying to implement those plans/visions.
- Many grantees also focused efforts on information dissemination to their community members through local newspapers, newsletters, local media, and fliers.
- Some other common activities included local data collection about community concerns through surveys, focus groups, interviews, and community asset mapping.
- Some grantees focused much of their outreach and engagement on local businesses and helping to support them during planning and construction phases. Some focused on providing tangible services and supports such as job fairs, while others identified, recruited, and trained local leaders to help sustain the community engagement efforts.

Finally, most grantees sought to build partnerships or relationships with other local organizations in their work, as well as partnerships or relationships with local public agencies in order to most effectively shape local transit-oriented development plans for the benefit of their communities.

Most successful approaches/strategies

According to both grantees and public agency representatives, the most effective strategies were those that included:

- Two-way exchange of information that includes listening as well as information sharing
- Equipping community members, in culturally appropriate ways, with knowledge and skills to provide useful input in the transit development process
- Developing new and more direct avenues for communities to share their needs with public agencies

For grantees, this model of engagement that includes these three effective strategies requires a number of steps, including (at a minimum):

- Informing the community about the current transit system, the coming transit line, and the transit development process
- Encouraging community conversation, and collecting community input, about their transit-related concerns, issues, and priorities
- Communicating those needs to public agencies, facilitating a direct conversation between the community and the agencies, and partnering with public agencies to co-create new ways of engaging communities

Findings about the effectiveness of approaches to this work are described below.

Informing the community and identifying community needs

Most community participants felt grantees' activities in this area were very effective, specifically citing informational meetings, explaining the meaning and relevance of the issues to the community, training and building the power of community members for effective participation in decision-making, and organizing opportunities where views could be shared with policy-makers. These themes were reinforced by agency counterparts.

When asked what strategies were most effective for teaching their community about transit and TOD, grantee responses varied:

- Grantees most often described having educational sessions/meetings held in a community space, which created a safe environment for community members to ask questions and process the information in a familiar and trusted place.
- Some grantees described using small group approaches where they would process information together in small groups and then ask questions as a group, rather than having each individual ask questions. This made community members more comfortable asking questions, as well as giving them more perspectives when processing the information. As one grantee described:

We had [Metropolitan Council Chair] Sue Haigh attend and people from Hennepin County attend these listening sessions and provide information. [The most effective strategy was] [to then] let people gather in small groups and talk together and reach consensus [on] a question to ask. Because we're working with a lot of people whose first language isn't English, by being in small groups we can capture what they want to say without having every individual needing to talk in front of everyone. (Grantee, Round 2)

- Some grantees who worked with specific cultural communities described holding community meetings in their particular community's language using a culturally appropriate approach, especially using small groups and one-on-one learning opportunities:

One-on-one meetings were most effective because we work with immigrant communities where language can be a barrier, so access to meetings and emails is often difficult for them. So we did one-on-one meetings which allowed us to work closely with individuals to learn about transit planning and development. We've done other activities, but that was the most effective. (Grantee, Round 1)

- Community events that brought people together around shared activities in shared spaces were also helpful for teaching community members about transit. This includes interactive learning experiences like riding the light rail and taking transit tours.

The [light rail] tour [was most effective]. Everyone learns differently, and our community needed more of that tangible learning as opposed to just sitting down and educating them. It was able to connect them with different people in different sectors that they wouldn't normally interact with. (Grantee, Round 1)

- One grantee described hosting a series of trainings and presentations on transit with partners from the Alliance for Metropolitan Stability, which benefitted both the community members and their own staff:

It's been beneficial for us to have the Alliance for Metropolitan Stability be our technical support partner. An organizer with the Alliance comes to our transit planning meetings and open houses and a lot of meetings with community members, they fill in those knowledge gaps and translate that information. They'll do a training on how to [prepare and submit input on a] draft environmental impact statement [and] the benefits of [doing] it.... That information is something I didn't even know, so it's been really helpful to have them there step-by-step along the way ... to walk us through that. (Grantee, Round 2)

Differences in approaches and amount of emphasis on education and outreach in communities differed by the level of development and stages of the different corridor(s) in which the grantees were focusing their efforts. For example, some grantees that were working in earlier-stage corridors such as Bottineau or Gateway mentioned how much of their work needed to focus on educating and informing community members about basic transit planning since the topic had not been discussed as much there as in Central, Hiawatha, or Southwest corridors where light rail has been built or planning is at a much more advanced and public stage. This highlights the importance of using engagement approaches that are adapted to each community context, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

Some grantees in the earlier-stage corridors also mentioned having to come up with new approaches to keep their communities engaged in a sustainable way over time. Since the planning is at such an early stage and is still at an abstract level, the task of sustaining the community's engagement energy over time is more difficult. This is important for planners, policymakers, funders, and community organizers to keep in mind when considering engagement sustainability over time in some of the corridors.

Increasing community participation

Grantees most frequently said that their most effective strategies for getting the most people to participate were:

- Hosting community events and open houses, which brought people together around activities in their own community context/environment.
- Organizing community/public meetings and forums, particularly those that also included public officials.
- Engaging in street-level or door-to-door engagement and outreach, community surveys, and active learning experiences such as light rail tours.



Not all community observers were familiar with specific strategies of grantees. Those who were reported the most effective strategies for increasing participation were face-to-

face engagement and building personal connections with community members. They also frequently mentioned community meetings and events, educational outreach sessions about transit planning, and grantees' ability to effectively make policy relevant to the lives of the residents:

They've made public policy relevant to people. They don't start where the Met Council would start. We [at a public agency] would talk about, "Oh, we've been a regional planning agency to do what no city could do on its own." What does that mean to my day to day life? What [the grantee leader] says is that they decide whether your bus comes or not, whether the water's going to be clean when you turn on your tap; when you flush your toilet, they're the ones at the end of it. They handle the housing vouchers. That's a different place than where we used to start. (Community observer, Round 2)

Some observers, particularly from the first round of grants, mentioned how the grantees helped community members identify and articulate their transit needs and priorities. As one community observer said:

I think what they have done is empower people to know who the decision makers are, and gain a seat at the table to shape those decisions. It's a sustainable way of building relationships, not just offering input and going away. It is about understanding what the public agencies do and how individuals can influence those decisions. (Community observer, Round 1)

Community observers from both grant rounds mentioned light rail tours and other transit-related tours and experiential learning opportunities as effective grantee strategies. One observer from the second round described how one grantee's transitway tour with community members and public agency staff had a lasting impact:

I think back to how one grantee did a tour of the region's transitway corridors, which included a bunch of agency staff. It was a very beneficial, educational tour that still sticks out. People remind us of that and the benefits of it to this day. And I think...us supporting community events has been a really beneficial activity. (Community observer, Round 2)

A few other observers mentioned the importance of some grantees engaging with youth, seeing it as engaging those who will be the most impacted by the transit planning decisions in the long-term.

When asked about the effectiveness of the grantees' activities in involving members of the community in discussions around transit (which could represent either or both of the first two steps above), most community members described grantee activities as very effective, and the rest described the activities as somewhat effective. When asked about the most effective activities in involving members of their community in these discussions, several community members cited the grantees' educational efforts:

Informational meetings. At first we didn't know anything in the community about light rail at all. [Through grant activities] neighbors got together and talked about it. We became more engaged and more informed. People didn't know much about the project and they wanted to be involved. (Community member, Round 1)

Other community members said the most effective activities were those that gave them opportunities to explore their communities' needs, share their input with grantees and policymakers, and truly feel heard.

Communicating needs to policymakers

A central role of the grantees was to act as a bridge between public agencies and communities, building trust and empowerment by helping community members to shape the agenda. Their work was most effective when it also served the public agencies' needs by bringing the coherence of a representative, collective vision on behalf of the community.

Region-wide observers felt there was variation in the effectiveness of grantees in this work, depending on the grantees' capacity, the fit of the selected issue to the stage of corridor decision-making at the time, and the individual readiness of public agencies and/or officials to receiving input. Some grantees were viewed as very effective. According to the observers, one of the most effective strategies for communication has been to bring community members and public officials together in person.

Grantees most often reported that the best approaches for working effectively with public officials or agencies were bringing public officials to the community and letting them see the community and interact with community members directly.

Having leaders come into our space and our meetings has been really helpful. The Community Works and city offices have been really accommodating about meetings. I would love to see someone from the city door-knock with us and answer questions for residents—I haven't asked them, but that would be an ideal and eye opening for us and them and community members to have them on the ground with us. That would go a long way. Any time that there's a chance to connect with people on a government level outside of a formal meeting space always goes a long way. It's really easy to villainize the others if we don't see them as real people and only working in the ivory tower of city hall. So when there's a chance to chat with them outside of a meeting structure, it goes a long way. (Grantee, Round 2)

Similar to the community observers' responses, grantees also reported other effective strategies, including:

- Sitting in on meetings with public officials, being at the decision-making table, as well as building relationships with them

- Sharing their community’s stories, perspectives, and information with public officials, making sure that the community’s voices and experiences were heard
- Bringing together public officials who had not previously worked together
- Learning how to carefully approach discussing sensitive topics with officials
- Building trust and productive dialogues through interactions with policymakers in smaller groups and more personal settings

Connecting community members to public officials directly

Grantees most frequently said that their most effective strategy for connecting community members to public officials was building relationships and partnerships with public officials or planners and then asking them to attend community meetings or events. They said this was effective because it brought public officials to the community on “their own turf,” and officials were willing to do it because of the previous relationship, trust, or commitment to the grantee organization.

Bringing together the group of people we all had together in the room made it so effective. Usually those in the community don’t get to interact with public officials who have impact on policy and city planning. So it was a group of people all getting together in the same space that made it so effective. (Grantee, Round 1)

*Their [grantee's] activities have brought more voices to the table, and thus the elected officials who are making decisions are now seeing the comments and opinions **before** making a decision. (Public agency counterpart, Round 2)*

Grantees said another effective strategy for connecting community members to public officials was through making presentations to them. This allows the public officials to hear directly from community members and provides opportunities for residents to speak in front of officials about their needs and priorities. Especially during the first round of grants, grantees described these meetings as being most effective when in smaller group settings, allowing more dialogue between community members and public officials. Grantees often said that their organization partnered with other advocacy groups, coalitions, or task forces, and this was effective at connecting community members to policy makers and planners.

At the core of these effective strategies was the grantee having first built relationships: with public officials, with community members, and with other organizations and coalitions. Effectiveness was also often contingent on grantees educating public agency staff about the appropriate strategies for communicating effectively with and gathering input from the communities that they represent.

What evidence is there that the targeted opportunity was addressed? To what extent were grant goals achieved?

Balcony-level analysis



The majority of grantees reported making a lot of progress towards their goals or achieving the goals they set out for the grant.

This view of the level of success is supported by the community members on whom they focused their efforts, the public agencies with whom they worked, the community observers who saw “big picture” changes in the transit-planning landscape, and the leaders of the CET who worked alongside them. Interviews with these different groups support the grantees’ claims of success, with:

- Community members becoming more engaged and informed about transit and transit planning processes
 - Public agencies becoming more aware of the needs of their communities
 - Community members becoming more actively involved and taking on leadership roles on committees and at decision making tables
 - Public agencies beginning to institutionalize some changes in policy
 - New partnerships forming amongst community-based organizations
 - Lasting relationships built between public agencies and communities/ community-based organizations.
-

Grantee outputs and outcomes

When grantees were asked how much progress they felt they had made on achieving those goals within the given grant periods, 60 percent of the second round grantees who were interviewed said they made a lot of progress towards achieving their goals, a third (33%) said they had accomplished their goals, and only one grantee said they made slight progress on their goals. This is similar to the first round of grantees, where the vast majority said they achieved a lot of progress on their goals, one grantee said they accomplished all their goals, and only one said they made slight progress on their goals.

Large numbers of historically underrepresented community members became better informed and more engaged in transit-related planning issues as a result of the two years of grantees’ work in their communities. With the help of grant funds, grantees engaged thousands of community members in various activities, from more passive engagement like learning about transit via materials distributed by grantees, to more active engagement like attending meetings and participating in leadership training. Figure 1 shows the participation counts that grantees reported.

1. Engagement outcomes

	# of people who became more aware of transit-related activities and issues ^a	# of people who became actively involved/engaged ^b	# of people who increased their capacity for leadership ^c
Round 1 (N=8)	19,693	2,950	93
Round 2 (N=13)	20,700	9,438	166
Total	40,393	12,388	259

Source: Grantee interviews, Round 1 and 2, 2013-2014.

Notes: Does not include the two first round grantees who did not complete interviews or report the numbers in their final grant reports. (a) Includes all those who received information from the grantees in some form (e.g., media, door knocking, events). (b) Includes all those who attended at least one meeting. (c) Includes those who received some type of leadership training or took on a leadership role.

Other community impacts cited by individual participants included:

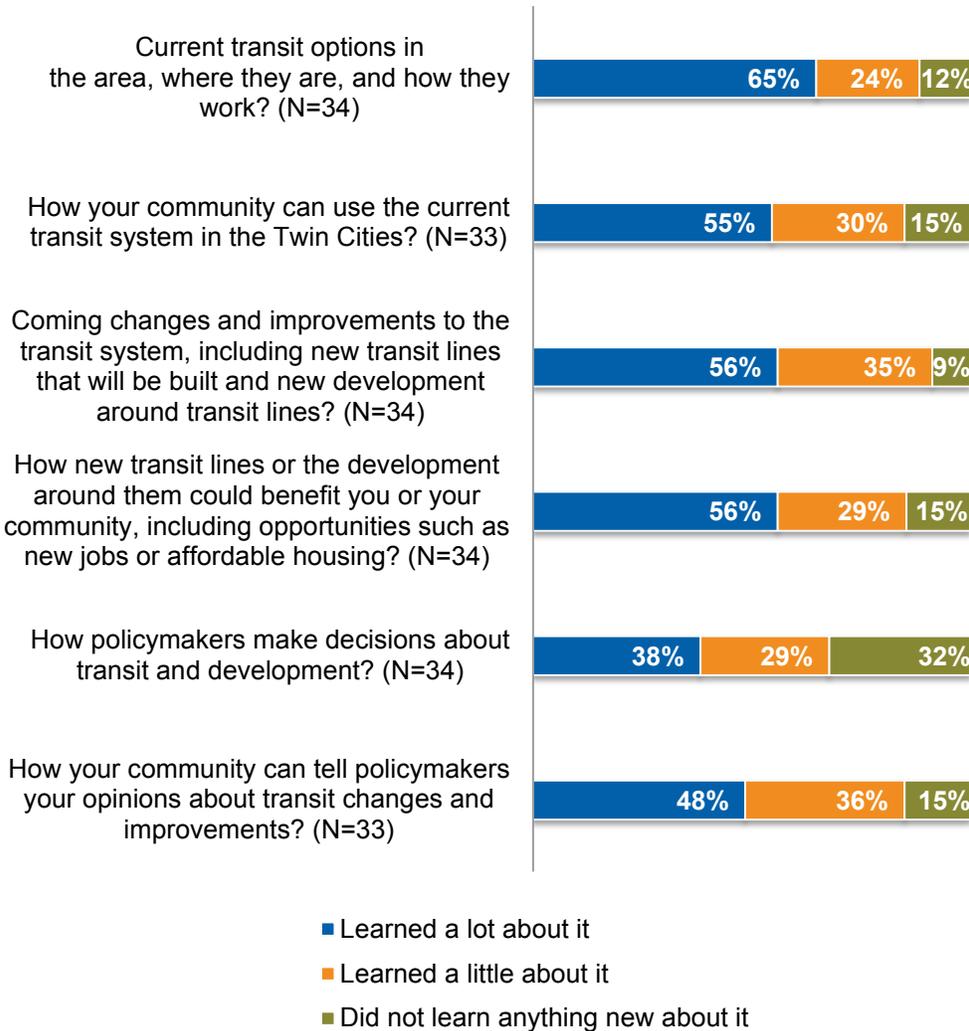
- Becoming better informed about transit as it currently exists and as it is planned, and about the planning process – and for many, forming more positive opinions about each of these
- Becoming more aware of their own community’s needs and priorities related to transit development, and how to communicate those to planners
- Increasing community members’ involvement and leadership in engagement activities
- Strengthening relationships among community members and with public agencies

At the overall community level, grantees felt the increased individual and organizational involvement led to decisions that better reflect the needs of the community and that will be better for communities as well as for the agencies that implement them. Many grants focused on decisions that are yet to be made, and participants in these grants’ activities are more likely to report that these decisions have the potential to lead to more jobs for their community or more opportunities for small business, and better quality of life in the neighborhood.

When asked about the one or two most important things that have happened as a result of their grant work, grantees most often described their community having **increased awareness and knowledge about transit and transit-planning**, as well as being **more invested and engaged with the issue**. This is consistent with their reports of over 40,000 community members becoming more aware of transit-related activities and issues and over 12,000 becoming more actively involved or engaged as a result of the grant work.

Community members themselves also reported learning a great deal about transit and the transit development process; the needs, priorities, and happenings in their communities; and the ways they can make sure their communities' needs and priorities factor into transit development (Figure 2).

2. As a result of [grantee's] activities, how much did you learn about...



Source: Community participant interviews, Rounds 1 and 2, 2013-2014.

For many grantees and their communities, this was their first experience organizing around transit or land use and development issues. With the help of training and technical assistance from the CET and the Community Engagement Steering Committee, they have gained basic knowledge on these issues that will make it easier in the future for them to articulate what they want for their communities, as well as be more skillful in engaging in the process of advocating for it.

Many said they learned about who makes transit-related decisions and how to communicate with them:

I didn't know too much about how those decisions are made, so getting to learn about the committees and how the legislature is involved, generally how the decisions are made from grass roots up to the mayor, even federal funding. People who led the meetings would say, if you have questions to contact this organization or person, who to contact to be heard. (Community member, Round 1)

In addition, several community members said they had learned about their collective power to influence decisions in their communities if they make their voices heard. For some, this felt to them like a radical change in community power dynamics:

Politicians either seek out, draw back, or feel the wind. Informed people can effect change. (Community member, Round 1)

The people who live here would benefit from more transportation, but they are not the ones driving these decisions. But because [grantee] was advocating for the community, we are going to get some of the much needed transportation improvement. If they had not been there, on paper, the [private market] is saying you can't make any money in this community so the changes wouldn't have happened. (Community member, Round 1)

There is power in numbers. You have a voice to speak up for it, you have to speak up and that is how it changes. (Community member, Round 1)

It is worth noting that although the figures reported by community members regarding what they learned from grant activities is similar for most measures, there was a sizeable drop from the first to the second round of grants in the percent of those saying they learned about how policymakers make decisions and how they can tell policymakers their own opinions about transit changes or improvements. However, this drop appears to be due mainly to the fact that many second-round participants were with grantees who had already had first-round grants, and this group did not have a lot more to learn in the second year. Some of the lower rate of learning is also due to the addition of a new category of capacity-building grants in the second year, which focused more on the capacity of the grantee organizations to engage and mobilize residents and less on developing individual residents' knowledge and advocacy skills.

Some grantees described how their work has led to the creation of other coalition groups or projects that will have an even bigger impact moving forward.

Something that I haven't mentioned is the Blue Line Coalition that emerged, organized by Nexus and a few others to have the grantees come together on a regular basis and plan corridor wide initiatives and priorities. That's been really helpful and will continue to live on after the grants. Some of us who have been going to these meetings didn't get round 3 funding, but we feel so invested that we'll continue to go to those, and those are places that I can bring leaders that I'm trying to develop and teach them more about Bottineau line, that's a space they can see other leaders from across the cities to see them organize around these issues. ... I see a lot of great work happening out of that group, which is really exciting. (Grantee, Round 2)

Others described other kinds of new partnerships with other community-based organizations and public agencies/officials:

The other thing is that not only the public agency allies but also the nonprofit allies are engaging with us and partnering with us to make sure the immigrants in the Southwest receive benefits [from the new line]. We keep having more phone calls and meetings with our allies and those who want to join us in our work here. Our capacity is increasing, and our relationships and partnerships are increasing, which helps us to really reach the success that we want to have. (Grantee, Round 2)

A few grantees mentioned direct impacts they were able to have on planning decisions as a result of their grant work. Others described more broadly changing the dialogue and perceptions around community engagement with public officials and policymakers:

I think that this grant has changed the conversations about community engagement at government and policy levels. This brought a catalyst of new thinking and different perception of community engagement at the county and city level. Equity around development is now [regularly addressed where] these issues [are being discussed] at the leadership level. That wouldn't have happened without the grant. (Grantee, Round 2)

There is a more inclusive involvement and awareness that there are multi-ethnic communities who have different approaches and solutions that may benefit the broader community. And there will be added value. (Grantee, Round 2)

Others described more program-specific outcomes, such as small business training, community events, presentations to public officials, learning how to do more effective community engagement and policy-related work, and supporting their organization's capacity to do community engagement work effectively.

Community members' perceptions of improved outcomes for their communities are supported by representatives of the public sector as well. In 2012, the first year of grant-funded engagement, immediate impacts were striking and varied, including:

- Better plans for a city park in Hopkins through the work of the Blake Road Corridor Collaborative

- Better access to the Central Corridor during and after construction for people with disabilities through the work of Advocating Change Together
- Identification of a vacant city-owned building in Eden Prairie as a possible site for a small business incubator for local entrepreneurs through New American Academy's work

Community members, public sector representatives, and developers all recognized that community engagement made it more likely that communities will get better physical spaces built that people want. During the second round of grants in 2013, some examples of immediate impacts of the grantees' work include:

- New American Academy partnered with Twin Cities LISC to create development guidelines for the Southwest Light Rail Transit Town Center Station that were accepted by Eden Prairie City Council.
- New American Academy partnered with Neighborhood Development Center to facilitate entrepreneurial training to prepare their community for business opportunities in the station areas. New American Academy and Neighborhood Development Center have been joined by Metropolitan Economic Development Association and Hennepin County to pilot supporting entrepreneurs locating in three station areas on the Southwest Light Rail Transit.
- Blake Road Corridor Collaborative is working with the city of Hopkins to design bike/walk access to the Blake Road Station and a community park in the station area.
- African Career Education Resource Inc. has partnered with Target Corporation and North Hennepin Community College to design classes to support Brooklyn Park residents to prepare for jobs at the Target Brooklyn Park Campus on the Bottineau Light Rail Transit line.
- Northside Residents Redevelopment Council through the Northside Transportation Network extensively involved North Minneapolis residents in the Bottineau Light Rail Transit Alternatives Analysis and secured a voting seat on the Bottineau Policy Advisory Committee.
- Engage Eastside organized a coalition of organizations of communities of color and four St. Paul District Councils called Fostering East Side Transit Equity Conversations. This coalition is involving East Side St. Paul residents in a comprehensive discussion of the transit planning for Gateway Corridor, St. Paul Street Car Study, and the Rush Line project.

Broader impacts

In 2013, interview results show CoO stakeholders focused their interview responses less on individual project-level impacts, which no longer seemed so eye-opening. Instead, comments focused more on the systems level impacts of engagement and ways in which the expected ways of doing planning had changed.

This evidence echoes the findings from 2012 that showed a variety of organizations besides grantees' public agency counterparts beginning to adjust their outreach and engagement strategies as a result of the community engagement work. These changes continued and intensified in 2013. Examples in 2013 include:

- Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County both hired community outreach and engagement staff, involving representatives of community-based organization in the development of job criteria and the hiring process.
- Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development reached out to the CET for technical assistance and support for their own community engagement strategies, particularly in its partnership with the Northside Funders Group.
- The Community Engagement Steering Committee met with leadership and staff of the Metropolitan Council to assist with drafting the Public Engagement Plan for all Metropolitan Council program activities to replace the Public Participation Plan which was applied to only transportation planning.

The changes in community engagement have been so pervasive that in response to a survey of CoO stakeholders administered by the Living Cities national evaluation, changes in community engagement practices were among the most frequently cited examples of how the initiative as a whole had been most effective. Asked to name the greatest accomplishment of the CoO initiative, respondents named community engagement activity and capacity building as the second most common theme (cited by 13 of the 25 respondents), second only to the creation of regional conversations and vision (named by 16 respondents). Asked how the initiative had influenced outcomes for low-income populations in the region, community engagement and inclusion was the most common response (N=9 of 25). Asked what the region could now do better than before as a result of the Corridors of Opportunity, community engagement was again the most common response (N=9).

What evidence is there that new relationships were built between community members and planning organizations/agencies?



Balcony-level analysis

Relationships developed between community-based organizations and public officials and agencies have the potential to result in more beneficial and equitable decisions, plans, and policies for historically underrepresented communities. The evaluation found that grantee organizations both strengthened existing relationships and created new relationships, with members of their own community, with other community-based organizations, and with public officials and agencies, and that as a result they are better able to: ensure that the voices of their community are relayed to these decision makers; find out about decisions and plans that may affect their community; and find out what tables they and their residents need to be present at in order to ensure their community's needs and priorities are heard. The CET and Steering Committee have been helpful in initiating many of these new relationships on a mutually cooperative footing.

Public officials and agencies also benefit by having better access to the community and getting their input into planning processes, with many public agencies reporting that decisions and plans have been better since they began bringing in communities' perspectives earlier on in the process and with a better contextual understanding of how the planning would affect the community. Furthermore, grantee leaders and some community members now know how to access public officials and what agencies to work with when advocating for their community's needs, with a more thorough understanding of agency processes and language, making them more effective.

All this has resulted in – and has the potential to continue resulting in – more equitable plans and decision making that can have long-term benefits for historically underrepresented communities.

Community members across both rounds of grants described developing new relationships and strengthening existing ones with other members of their community, staff and volunteers of the grantee organizations, staff and volunteers at other CBOs, as well as city, county, and/or Metropolitan Council staff (Figure 3). Overall, community members reported developing relationships with public agency staff less often than with other community members and organizations.

3. Community members' relationships with other community members, CBOs, and public agency staff

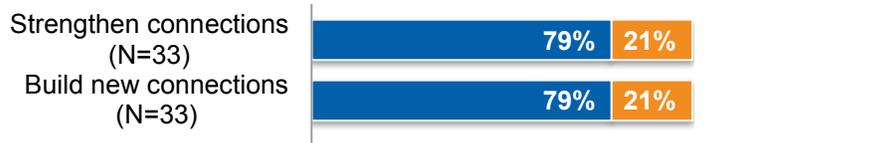
Other members of your community



The staff and volunteers at [Grantee]



The staff and volunteers at other community organizations



City, County, or Met Council staff



Source: Community participant interviews, Rounds 1 and 2, 2013-2014.

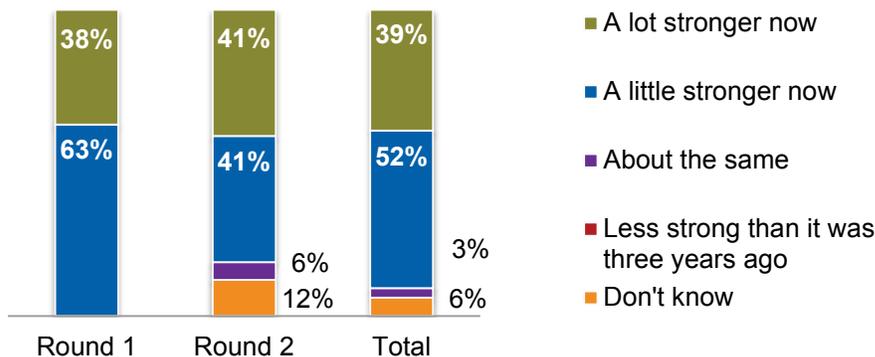
Though community participants gave generally very similar responses in the two rounds of grants, second-round community members reported these new and strengthened relationships less often than did first-round participants. This may reflect already-stronger relationships due to the impact of the previous year of community engagement grants, or grants that had different levels of effectiveness or different purposes (such as the capacity grants that focused more on organizational development).

Community observers' perceptions were remarkably similar. For the first round of grants, all of the community observers said that the relationships that historically under-represented communities now have with public agencies as a result of CET's work and the grants are a little or a lot stronger now than they were before the grants. Similarly, all but one of the community observers from the second round of grants said that the

relationship between historically underrepresented communities and public agencies is “a little” or “a lot stronger now than three years ago” as a result of the CoO engagement activities, with only one indicating that the relationships are about the same (Figure 4).

4. Communities’ relationships with public agencies (N=33)

How would you describe the relationship that historically under-represented communities now have with public agencies as a result of the Community Engagement Team’s work and the grants?



Source: Community observer interviews, Rounds 1 and 2, 2013-2014.

Grantees and agency representatives also reported stronger relationships with each other.

- Nearly all of the community engagement grantees indicated that they have developed new relationships or strengthened existing relationships with public agencies as a result of their grant-related work. Furthermore, nearly all grantees said they think public agencies are now more aware of what is important to their community.
- 13 of the 15 interviewed second round grantees said they are now able to work with public officials better than they could a year ago, with one saying "no" and one saying "not sure."
- For the second round of grants, six of the 15 interviewed public agency counterparts reported that their relationship with the grantees strengthened either a little or a lot from the year prior to the grant work, with the other half indicating that it remained the same. This is important because all of the interviewed public agency counterparts during the first round indicated that their relationships with grantees strengthened either a little or a lot, indicating that relationships overall between public agencies and grantees over the two year grant period generally strengthened.

- Half of the second-round public agency counterparts reported that their agencies had also strengthened their relationships with other (non-grantee) CBOs, compared to the year prior to the grant work. These changes follow reports from all but one of the first-round agency counterparts that their relationships with other CBOs had strengthened. Combining the two years, this is evidence that there were broad improvements in relationships between public agency staff and community-based organizations in general, beyond just the grantee organizations.

Most grantees from both grant rounds reported that they have developed new or strengthened existing relationships with other nonprofit organizations as a result of their work on this grant.

It's been a great support system between us. (Grantee, referring to other grantees and collaborative organizations that they worked with on grant activities)

We met a lot of new organizations through the process and now we have new open doors or connections to these organizations. Even though we didn't work directly together, we have those connections now and feel comfortable reaching out to them. (Grantee, Round 1)

Effective strategies

Most grantees attribute stronger relationships to deliberate and consistent efforts, learning about the policy-making process, and having staff of their organization at decision-making tables alongside public officials.

When community observers were asked what grantee strategies they thought were most effective for building ongoing relationships with public agencies, they most frequently mentioned grantees attending meetings with public officials and maintaining a consistent presence in front of public officials. As one observer summarized:

I think the most effective thing that they've done is that they've become furniture in the room. Maybe that's a bad analogy, furniture doesn't speak, they do. They're always there, they raise their voices, and when something is wrong, they say so. They always push to understand the process. It's [like] the traditional organizers always do a power analysis: who decides, when, how do we influence their decision? I see the CoO groups doing that power analysis every time they come to the table and it makes me smile. (Community observer, Round 2)

By being present, grantees were able to communicate the community's need to policymakers. Community observers frequently mentioned how the grantees play an important role, serving as a bridge between public agencies and communities.

The most effective strategy is to be in their respective communities and bring the discussion to the community and building those relationships that meet the communities where they are at. The grantee organizations have been very effective liaisons, bridges, between the community and agencies. (Community observer, Round 1)

Further, observers also frequently mentioned grantees participating on committees and task forces with public officials. Observers commonly cited the role of the CET in making introductions between the grantees and the public officials as the key for beginning those relationships:

That goes back to the work the CET did to make those connections. It is about the relationship and the on-going connection as the best strategy. The consistency of [CET] personnel and also the access they got through their involvement with the CET and CoO initiative. Having the access and then the knowledge to carry it out. (Community observer, Round 2)

Just being present... There were some sort of "getting to know you" meetings that are hosted by the Community Engagement Team. The grantees showed up. You actually had a chance to meet everybody face-to-face. I think that without something like that you can't move forward. There has to be that personal connection. Even if you don't get to know each other deeply, there has to be that opportunity to get to know each other once and meet face-to-face once so that you know there's someone at the other side of the e-mail that you're sending a notice out to or sending questions or comments, or knowing you can pick up the phone. If you met somebody it's easier feel accountable to your fellow person. (Community observer, Round 2)

These introductions were helpful for grantees to connect and build relationships with public agencies. Other important grantee strategies for building relationships with public agencies, as mentioned by community observers, were building trust, being mutually responsive to one another, two-way effective communication and openness, and inviting public officials to community events:

I think I've seen some good events where there's been families and food introduced. Public leaders and decision makers have been invited to meet community in a non-confrontational setting. Help the policy makers understand how many members of the community are involved and how many are potential voters, which always gets their attention. Those have been very useful. (Community observer, Round 2)

[We are now] somewhat aware [of community perspectives], but now with all the meetings we have had they [other staff at the agency] are all aware that this is a big issue and now it is just a part of how we do business. [Grantee lead], who leads us in this effort, sits at all the light rail meetings and has housed many meetings. Their work with the community and sending out e-mails and making sure that we all know what we need to know about and what we need to do, keeps us all in the loop. Their work has been huge. They have kept us all connected and made sure we get out to everyone and make sure we are getting all the information we need to have, and then we know we need to get it out to the greater community. (Public agency counterpart, Round 1)

Some community observers also said that grantees' ability to solicit the support of others to their cause, provide survey data and reports, and produce good results were important for building effective relationships with public agencies.

I also think putting together surveys and reports by the community groups that are very focused on the needs of the community and help educate public agency and policy makers about the needs and interests of their community.

(Community observer, Round 2)

Value of stronger relationships

Grantees most frequently described the benefits of the new or strengthened relationships with public agencies and nonprofit organizations as helping to keep one another informed and connected about opportunities, meetings, funding opportunities, and other things happening in the community. These relationships also give their cause and efforts a stronger voice by working together and breaking down historical barriers and competition among them.

I think it goes a long way when [grantee organization] can advocate for specific development or land use rights or zoning rights or community benefits, but it won't go far just as one voice. But when we all come together and ground ourselves in common work and advocate for that work together collectively, it shows a united force and united front to policy makers. Because of where we are on the Northside, it's been historically very hard to get people to work together in coalition and have amiable relationships with policymakers because of high level of mistrust. People desperately want good jobs and affordable housing, so tensions rise quickly when things don't go well. But with this work, we've pushed through that and grounded ourselves in common work and been stronger as a result, and show policy folks and foundations that we can work collectively and things we're willing to organize around with this line. (Grantee, Round 2)

Some grantees also described how having strengthened relationships with other CBOs and public agencies helped them to get their message of equity out further into the community and across sectors, and helped reaffirm their positions and efforts related to equitable development. Finally, grantees said it helped them get out information to the community more quickly and broadly and helped connect passionate residents to other opportunities to get involved.

However, some grantees expressed a desire to be seen as a more permanent member in the planning processes and given the space to report back to their communities and provide their input during these decision-making processes. Some felt that they still were not completely understood and accepted by public agencies in that way.

But the challenge for us is that we're always having to remind public officials that we're out here doing this work. And it would be good if we could just become a permanent part of this work plan that they have and that we're partners, and I don't see that. In a community-based group we [the CBO leadership group] don't just get a decision and move forward, we have to go out to the community and our board and then take an official position. I don't think those agencies understand the need to have community buy-in. That's the thing that's always frustrating. (Grantee, Round 1)

Despite some apparent challenges that still need to be addressed, grantees feel they have built some important relationships with public agencies, which they can build upon moving forward into the future.

Across both years of the community engagement grants, there are clear patterns of increased engagement, interaction, and improved relationships between community members and CBOs with public agencies, resulting in more inclusion of the communities' voices in planning decisions that will have long-term impacts on their communities.

To what extent have community members changed their perceptions of the potential threats and/or benefits represented by transit and its related development? Do they feel that plans reflect community needs and values?



Balcony-level analysis

Our understanding of the term “community” varies for each grantee’s work. Some focused on particular cultural or ethnic groups in certain geographic areas, others focused on all residents in certain neighborhoods or geographic areas, and others were collaboratives that focused on a particular issue, rather than a community or group. Thus the impact on “community members” described in this section means different things for each group.

With that in mind, there are some clear impacts that the grantees have had on the communities on which they focused their grant efforts. Participants’ own descriptions of what they gained from their experiences most often fell into the four themes of learning, leadership, relationships, and empowerment.

- Community members reported having increased levels of awareness and knowledge about transit-related issues in their community, as well as more favorable perceptions about transit and its potential impacts on their community.
- This increased level of knowledge was often coupled with leadership and advocacy training that gave the community members the skills and resources to effectively organize their community and take action, often getting in front of policymakers or sitting on local committees.

- This powerful combination of increased knowledge and ability to organize helped to strengthen and build relationships within the community and with public officials
- Some community members reported that the strengthened relationships and advocacy contributed to an increased sense of community identity and desire to work together to address issues, and a sense of empowerment individually and collectively.

The community identity and empowerment may have some of the longest-lasting results for community well-being. Being informed about the issues, trained on how to take action, and having the connections to sit in front of policymakers and decision makers resulted in community members feeling they have a say in public decision-making affecting their communities. This is particularly powerful in communities that have historically been underrepresented in the decision-making process about public investments and planning.

Large numbers of historically underrepresented community members became better informed and more engaged in transit-related planning issues as a result of grantees' work. With the help of grant funds, grantees engaged thousands of community members in various activities, from more passive engagement like learning about transit via materials distributed by grantees, to more active engagement like attending meetings and participating in leadership training. Combined from both grounds, grantees reported the following approximate participation counts:

- Over 40,000 people became aware of transit-related activities and issues – this includes all those who received information from the grantees in some form (e.g., media, door knocking, events)
- Over 12,000 people became actively involved or engaged – this includes all those who attended at least one meeting
- 259 people increased their capacity for leadership – this includes those who received some type of leadership training or took on a leadership role in the activities

Other community impacts cited by individual participants include:

- Becoming better informed about transit as it currently exists and as it is planned, and about the planning process – and for many, forming more positive opinions about each
- Becoming more aware of their own community's needs and priorities related to transit development, and how to communicate those to planners
- Increasing their involvement and leadership in engagement activities
- Strengthening relationships among community members and with public agencies

At the overall community level, grantees felt the increased individual and organizational involvement led to decisions that better reflect the needs of the community and that will be better for communities and the agencies that implement them. Many are decisions that are yet to be made, which community members now feel will lead to more jobs for their community, or more opportunities for small business, or better quality of life in the neighborhood.

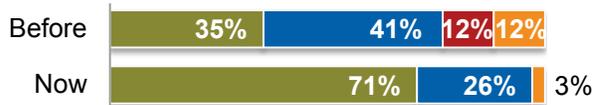
Community members generally describe the transit system and the new transit lines (recently built or proposed) as useful to members of their communities, and their perceived usefulness has increased since grantee activities began, suggesting that increased engagement and community input in the development process have improved community buy-in. The gain in the perceived utility of the transit line was about the same across the two rounds (Figure 5).

5. Community perceptions of transit system’s usefulness (N=34)

How useful do you think the current transit system is for members of your community?



How useful do you think the new transit line will be for your community?



■ Very useful ■ Somewhat useful ■ Not useful ■ Don't know/no opinion

Source: Community participant interviews, Rounds 1 and 2, 2013-2014.

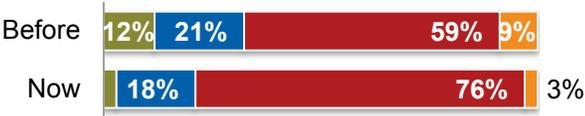
These results indicate that grantee activities and the resulting community member input into transit planning have positively impacted community members’ views of transit and the planning process (Figure 6). These figures remained relatively the same across the two rounds of grants. Community members described this change in their open-ended comments, noting the importance of feeling heard and seeing their input brought to life in real-world decisions:

The [experience of] basically having my voice heard, getting my comments and thoughts and feelings listened to by people who were in a position to send them up the line [was an effective way to get people involved]. (Community member, Round 1)

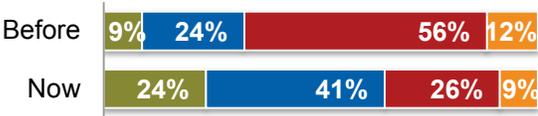
I think we are going to the public transportation [planners] for the [benefit of the] underrepresented population in my community. I don't think some of the more recent changes would have been in the best interest for the people. The end result, specifically in the original plan, the dedicated bus line would have bypassed our neighborhood, but because of the work of the [grantee], they are not going to do that and so more public transportation will be accessible to the people who live in this community. (Community member, Round 1)

6. Community members' perceptions of potential impacts of the new transit line (N=34)

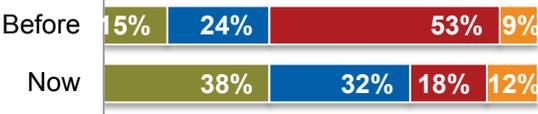
Building the new transit line will be bad for your community



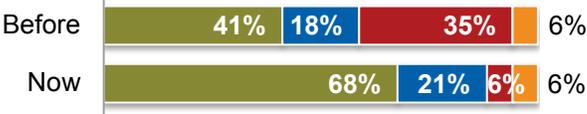
The new line and its related changes will lead to more affordable housing for your community



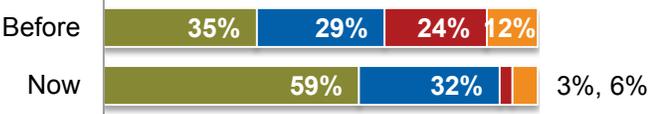
The new line and its related changes are being planned with the needs of your community in mind



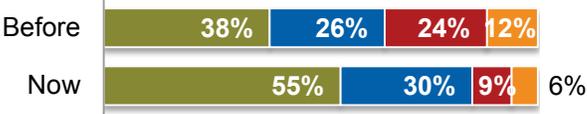
The new line and its related changes will lead to more opportunities for small businesses



The new line will lead to more jobs for your community or help to connect your community to jobs



The new line and its related changes will make your neighborhood a better place to live



■ Yes ■ Maybe ■ No ■ Don't know

Source: Community participant interviews, Rounds 1 and 2, 2013-2014.

When asked about the one or two most important things they and their community gained from their involvement with the grantees, the impacts mentioned by community members fell into four main themes: learning, leadership, relationships, and empowerment. Though each community member tended to mention only one or two of these impacts, the combination of the four impacts across community members leads to communities that, as a group, are:

- More informed about transit, coming transit development, the transit development process and how they can have input in it, and their communities' needs and priorities in transit development
- More equipped with leadership skills and the inspiration to lead and advocate for their communities
- More connected with policymakers, CBOs, and other members of their own community
- More empowered to impact planning and affect change in their communities

While each of these impacts is, in itself, a significant and valuable change, the combination of the four together helps build the power of communities—to change policy, leverage equitable benefits, and influence decision making—in a way that each individual impact cannot.

Community members reported learning a great deal about transit and the transit development process; the potential benefits from transit development for their community; its potential impact on local businesses; the needs, priorities, and happenings in their communities; and the ways they can make sure their communities' needs and priorities factor into transit development. This was particularly the case during the first round of grants.

I am better informed. I have knowledge about transportation and what could be better for the neighborhood. (Community member, Round 1)

I didn't know too much about how those decisions are made, so getting to learn about the committees and how the legislature is involved, generally how the decisions are made from grass roots up to the mayor, even federal funding. People who led the meetings would say, if you have questions to contact this organization or person, who to contact to be heard. (Community member, Round 1)

For me the trainings have been wonderful. The events have taught me to listen to others and understand their needs and problems. I am less timid now. I have learned public speaking, how to facilitate a meeting so I have changed 100%, I also have learned how to organize. (Community member, Round 2)

I learned a lot of leadership skills for listening, and for planning, and for understanding what is going to be most effective. (Community member, Round 2)

There is power in numbers, you have a voice to speak up for it, you have to speak up and that is how it changes. (Community member, Round 1)

Making the connections, especially the local connections within community. Community meetings were great -with the county staff, met council staff and community members and knowing who is concerned with this issue and knowing how to connect with them. (Community member, Round 2)

Know that we do have the right to speak to legislators and call city hall and let them know how we feel. (Community member, Round 1)

Community members who were interviewed also said they had greatly increased their own level of involvement and their capacity to lead their community's involvement.

[My greatest gain from involvement is] vision and purpose as a resident leader to be an advocate for my community. With all the information, the research, you can help yourself and help other people. (Community member, Round 1)

I [learned about] community involvement and how it helps. [Grantee organization] has been very involved in different projects and I've learned we can't just live individually in the community, and [the grantee organization] brings the resources and enhances [community members'] success. That's what I've learned. (Community member, Round 2)

In describing the most important impacts of grant activities on themselves and their communities, many community members also emphasized the importance of their new and strengthened relationships, including relationships among themselves and with public agencies.

By being involved in the training activities, many described having a new sense of leadership and advocacy to help bring their communities' needs and priorities to policy makers.

I have gained perspective on where the community is at and some of the ways in which we have pockets of the community actively involved, and other pockets [not so well heard], regardless of how much we have tried to offer different perspectives. The people who are in power and are coming to the conversations are not representing the overall community. It helped me see how I could use my leadership skills to encourage [renters who don't have a voice] and help them to get involved to advocate for themselves. And the ways in which we need to build stronger infrastructure [i.e. ways of facilitating talking] for our community. I learned a lot of leadership skills for listening, and for planning, and for understanding what is going to be most effective. (Community member, Round 2)

This newfound sense of ability to be informed, lead, and impact planning decisions was very powerful for community members:

It helped me not feel so powerless - feels better to participate than to always just react to decisions people make. I really built a strong network of people that can get things done. My support system is really huge. (Community member, Round 2)

Really just very personally enriching - a platform for the empowerment of my voice and of people like me. It also encouraged me to do as many professional things as I can, so I got involved with many things outside of [grantee organization] that I wouldn't have done if they hadn't encouraged me to apply and to really think of myself as a leader in the community. (Community member, Round 2)

I have learned to be more honest and I have more confidence to invite and talk to people. I have abilities to participate and be part of something. Raising and expressing my voice makes a difference and people do listen to you. (Community participant, Round 2)

A reframing of the way we look at ourselves as a community. For too long the conversation has been social service oriented conversation having to do with Native American community in Minneapolis - what can we utilize. Now we are reframing it to how can we rebuild our community ourselves, build economic development, make them empowering conversations for everyone involved. (Community member, Round 2)

However, a few others mentioned that despite the increased knowledge about transit, they still have not seen any concrete benefits or differences for their communities yet, although they recognize that it is an ongoing process that requires getting people on board over time.

We have not seen a concrete difference yet, it's in the process. We are trying to change the minds of the people and explain to them that they should not be afraid to speak up, sign petitions and fight for their rights. (Community member, Round 2)

Overall, community members' awareness and knowledge about transit and TOD-related issues impacting their communities increased, as well as their leadership and advocacy skills to organize their community and effectively bring their voices to decision makers and planners. Moreover, they described an increased sense of community identity and empowerment, reframing themselves and their community as having the ability to impact public planning decisions that will have long-term impacts on their communities.

What is the CET's model of engagement, and how is it similar to or different from previous work in the region?



Balcony-level analysis

The CET's model is similar to previous community engagement models in its purpose of helping to bring grassroots perspectives into public sector decision-making on issues that affect their communities, resulting in equitable outcomes from public investments. The main elements that are distinctive to the CET's model are:

- Regional work to coordinate many separate efforts through a common approach and focus. This included strategic work to re-shape stakeholders' expectations and provide a set of shared experiences to support a new framework for dialogue about equity and equitable development. This shared work helped "prepare the field" to be more fertile for grantees' efforts and new public agency practices.
- Provision of individualized and group technical and strategic advice to public agencies and community organizations to teach this model of engagement, help facilitate new connections between community-based organizations and public agency representatives, and educate each group (community members and public sector) about the processes that are essential to the other.

- Intentional efforts on the part of the CET leadership to “model the model” of authentic engagement at all times. Among other examples, this meant that in their actions, including the development of the initial community engagement work plan, they sought guidance from grassroots perspectives and community input into the design of processes and information materials. In this way they demonstrated the “democratization of expertise” that recognizes that community members are the true experts on their own needs and perspectives.

Underlying all of the elements of the model is the effort to make planning processes more equitable, inclusive, and transparent for historically underrepresented communities, with the goal of making planning decisions more equitable and inclusive.

Findings show that the following elements and strategies contributed to the work’s effectiveness:

- Vesting of the leadership role with community organizations (the CET) rather than a public agency
- Distribution of funds to CBOs, through a community-driven process
- Formation of the Steering Committee to give ongoing voice and leadership role to CBOs at the regional level as well as the grantee level
- Availability of grant funding which enabled grantee organizations to undertake activities they could not otherwise do
- Work to create a regional, cross-sectoral dialog around equity at the start of the initiative
- CET-facilitated “bridging meetings” to help grantees and public agencies build on the new equity dialog and begin their work together as partners rather than adversaries
- Technical assistance and training, on a variety of topics, for grantees and public agencies
- Help to bring grantees together to support and learn from each other

Findings show that in addition to funding for grantees, the model also requires new skills and understanding on the part of CBOs and public agencies, ongoing relationship-building and two-way communication, and coordination of efforts across the entire initiative. All of this in turn requires resources to support the CET and/or Steering Committee’s technical assistance, capacity-building, and coordination roles.

The CoO community engagement model

The CET coordinates a set of mutually supportive strategies and activities that make up the community engagement model of the Corridors of Opportunity initiative. These can be thought of as occurring at three intersecting levels:



- The regional level, where the CET itself and the Community Engagement Steering Committee have promoted national and local best practices and worked to shape an active and positive local dialogue, bringing diverse stakeholders into a common conversation around equity
- The individual organization level, mainly through grants and technical support to community-based organizations and the local public agencies with whom each typically works to bring grassroots voices to the table to influence the outcomes of transit- and development-related decisions
- The CoO initiative level, where the CET and Community Engagement Steering Committee have provided advice and modeled best practices and helped link stakeholders together to promote engagement beyond the community engagement grant-funded activities, with the help of Metropolitan Council staff as internal liaisons to help with the linkages, education, and outreach

The CET, with the help of the Community Engagement Steering Committee, has coordinated the different levels of activities to assure that each supports and advances the others. The work also retains coherence through the consistent application of a core set of guiding principles that embody the model at all levels.

At a more tactical level, the community engagement model being implemented as part of the Corridors of Opportunity can be described as a set of activities and organizing strategies, all aligned toward the goal of shifting public systems. The goal of systems change toward greater inclusiveness in process is not for its own sake, but as a means to achieve greater equity of results for historically underrepresented communities.

These activities and strategies include:

- Formation of the Community Engagement Team to coordinate the activities
- Distribution of virtually all of the HUD grant funds to CBOs through two rounds of grant funding. Twenty-three grants were given to 19 different organizations, including four who received funds in both rounds (see full list of grants in the appendix)

- Formation of a Grants Review Committee, composed mainly of members of CBOs, to review applications for sub-grant funds and make recommendations to the Policy Board for their award

It was a strategic decision by the CET to use virtually all the HUD grant funds designated for community engagement for sub-grants to CBOs. However, they also felt that the work of the grantees would be more effective in moving the region toward systemic change if it was supported by other activities and strategies. Thus, the full picture of the community engagement model also includes:

- Formation of a Community Engagement Steering Committee representing low-income communities and communities of color to discuss organizing strategies, share experiences and learnings, and advocate for regional reforms to support better community engagement and equitable outcomes along the regional transit system. Their work also includes advising and guiding the work of the CET, ensuring that it is grounded in the needs and priorities of the communities, and extending the engagement to additional opportunities within and beyond the Corridors of Opportunity, thus impacting regional systems and standards.
- The Metropolitan Council's designation of staff members within the planning department who acted as internal liaisons for the community engagement work.
- Work of the CET with the larger community outside of the Corridors of Opportunity to put in place parallel activities and appreciation for the importance of engagement and equitable participation by historically underrepresented communities. This includes a significant body of work with public agencies to inform them about best practices of community engagement, as well as helping to promote "bridging meetings" to foster positive, project-oriented, and durable relationships among agencies and organizations.

Although the list of stakeholders and activities is extensive, the heart of the Corridors of Opportunity community engagement model lies in the set of principles that hold all these elements together. These principles help each group and activity to contribute in an aligned way to the formation of new patterns of participation by historically underrepresented groups. These core principles, as discerned by the evaluators through interviews and document analysis, can be briefly stated as follows:

- Build relationships and trust through time, transparency, and accountability
- Work at more than one level
- Seek and apply new learning to strengthen the model (collect and use feedback to re-shape the work for continuous adaptation and strengthening)

- Respect and promote the “democratization of expertise” and build community capacity to exercise it (for example, recognize that grassroots community members are the experts on community needs and priorities and what is most needed for quality of life)
- Model and teach the approach while doing the work (for example, both with *individual organizations* including grassroots and intermediary organizations and public agencies and through connections among organizations including funders; and also at the level of *communities* including individual neighborhoods and cities and the overall Twin Cities region)
- Work in partnership with the public sector
- Keep in mind the goal of lasting systems change to promote equity
- Seek, deploy, and coordinate needed resources

The full description of these principles is included in the appendix.

Figure 7 shows how these principles are playing out in the Minneapolis-St. Paul region as part of the Corridors of Opportunity.

The outer rectangle in this diagram represents the “field” of community engagement in the Minneapolis-St. Paul region when the CoO began. It is influenced by the history of regional stakeholders’ experiences, assumptions, and relationships (arrow coming down from the top). The HUD Sustainable Communities grant (arrow coming in from the left) introduces the new CoO initiative with a variety of funded projects (represented by the two shaded rectangles on the left side of the field). One of these funded projects is community engagement, represented here by the main organizations that play a part at the regional level: The CET itself, represented by the three intersecting circles, and the Community Engagement Steering Committee and Grants Review Committee.

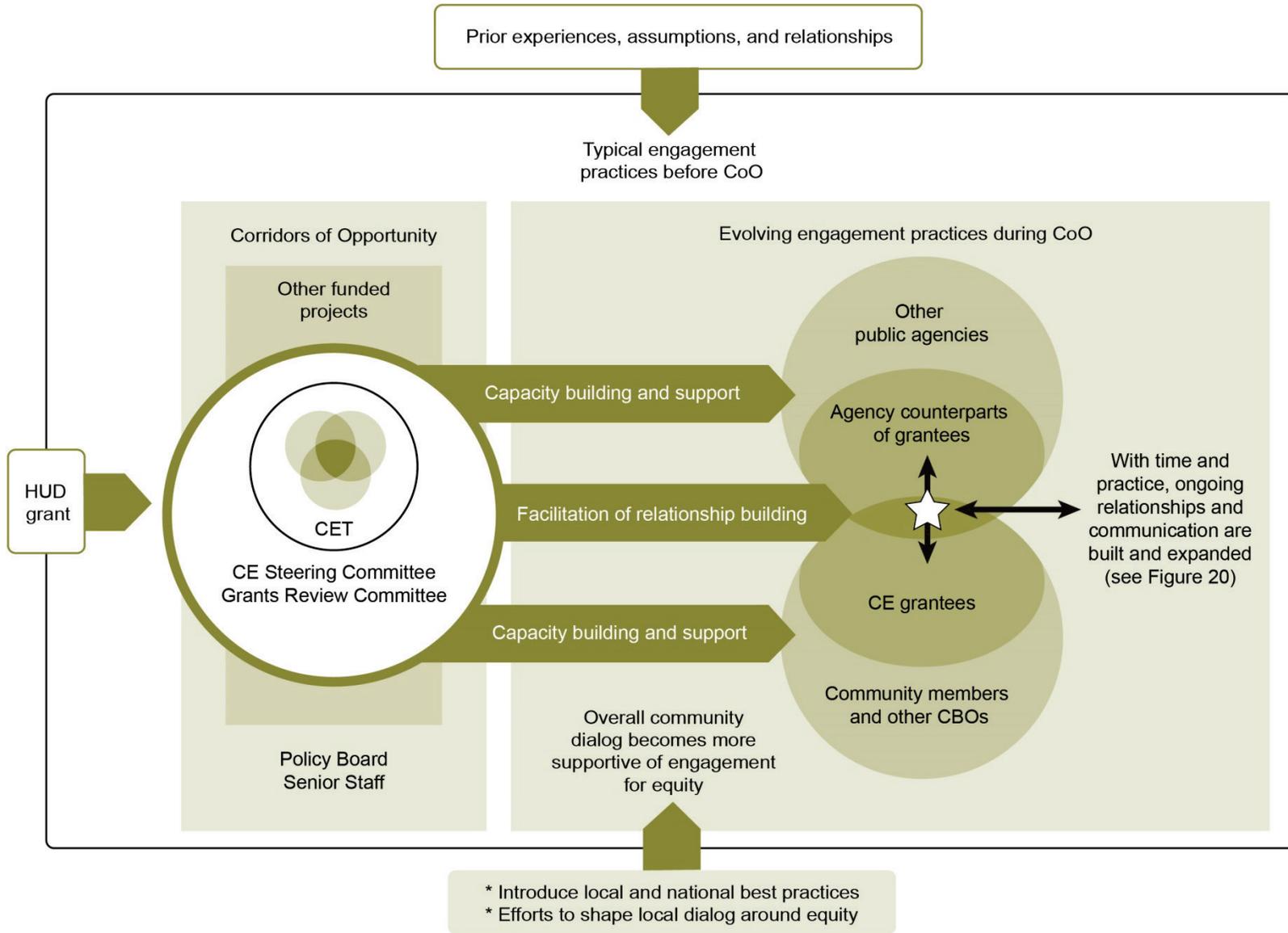
The circles on the right side of the field represent the grants-level stakeholders. However, there is a space between the overall initiative-level components and the grants-level components. Into this space the CET has introduced new influences: exposure to local and national best practices; the community-driven process for developing the CE model itself, and for selecting grant recipients within that model; the organization of a regional delegation to the PolicyLink 2011 national Equity Summit; and other activities to stimulate a dialogue at the regional level around equity and equitable development, assuring that diverse stakeholders would all be brought together for the discussion of these topics. The arrow points to a shaded rectangle within the unshaded overall rectangle. This shaded rectangle represents how this work has changed that field to make it more supportive of engagement for equity.

The community engagement grant-funded work, represented by the circles to the right, takes place within that evolving field. Grants were made to a set of CBOs (the darker oval within the circle representing CBOs in the community), and these CBOs have identified an issue or opportunity to work on that involves one or more public agencies in a CoO corridor (darker oval within the upper circle representing public agencies in the community). The CET and Steering Committee provide capacity-building and support both to the grantee organizations and to their public agency counterparts (upper and lower shaded arrows from the left side to the right). They also help to establish agency-CBO relationships on community-driven, cooperative, and positive terms (center arrow from left to right).

The capacity building and technical support to individual organizations (grantees and agency counterparts) helps each of them approach the new relationship with added understanding of what community engagement should look like and what it can offer, as well as (often) a more accurate set of assumptions about the needs and perspectives of the other organization. In addition, the CET also helped facilitate the relationship-building more directly through their help setting up bridging meetings.

While the grantees' work organizing their community members is an essential part of the work funded by the grant, the intersection between the grantees and public agencies is the point where the greatest energy for transformation of systems occurs. A change in how community engagement is done, at the regional level, pivots on the change in the relationship between CBOs and agencies. As these relationships develop, the model predicts that with time and practice they include more and stronger communications, mutual understanding, and shared goals. This in turn lays the foundation for stable new patterns of interaction able to sustain its new patterns through positive feedback loops.

7. Community engagement strategy for Corridors of Opportunity initiative



With the goal of creating a new model of community engagement in the Twin Cities region, the Community Engagement Team, public agencies, and grantees have all applied strategies during the Corridors of Opportunity initiative that were rare or even unheard of in the engagement environment of the past. Among its many innovative strategies, this new model is characterized by community-driven and community-centered approaches to engagement, personal interactions between community members and policymakers, and a new and pervasive regional dialogue on equity and what it looks like. These strategies are discussed in detail in the following sections.

Model design and grantmaking process

The initial steps to form the CET itself, and the initial design work of the CET to create the community engagement model, were catalytic decisions that created conditions favorable to subsequent success.

The CET's stated purpose was "... to develop and support targeted strategies that engage underrepresented communities in planning, decision-making, and implementation processes on and around transit-oriented corridors." To do so, the CET developed "...strategies that promote social equity, inclusion and access to economic opportunity." Underlying this approach was the initiative's belief that "community engagement should focus not only on equitable process but also on equitable outcomes for underrepresented communities." For this reason, the CET's approach in re-granting the funds to CBOs was to then "...build on existing community assets while supporting innovation and tailored community engagement strategies that secure the inclusion of marginalized communities." The core values, as described in the CET mission and values statement, are as follows:

- *Sustainability means equitable investments in all of our communities and neighborhoods that support residents leading healthy, safe, affordable and productive lives within a clean environment.*
- *In our granting approach, we will:*
- *Ensure that populations traditionally marginalized – low income, new immigrant and communities of color – participate in the long range vision for our region and our regional transitways.*
- *Engage all stakeholders – underrepresented and traditionally marginalized communities – in meaningful decision making roles*
- *Ensure greater transparency and accountability to communities in planning, research and data collection, evaluation, implementation, and investments in our region.*
- *Reduce social and economic disparities in our region.*
- *Respect, value, and support local communities and neighborhoods.*

- *Build inclusive sustainable communities free from discrimination.*
- *Prevent displacement of communities along transitway corridors and mitigate negative impacts of gentrification.*
- *In our commitment to these vision and values, the Community Engagement Team will be accountable and transparent to our partners – populations traditionally marginalized-low income, new immigrant, and communities of color, local communities and public agencies.*

When asked about the CET’s efforts and activities that have been most effective in increasing representation of underrepresented communities and increasing the possibility of equitable outcomes, public agency representatives frequently mentioned the thoughtful design of the team and its role.

The thoughtful design of the community engagement model began with the very existence and composition of the Community Engagement Team. Putting the lead responsibility in the hands of organizations with deep ties to local communities, rather than giving that power to the lead public agency, launched the initiative with a gesture of trust for communities. It signaled from the start the authenticity of the CoO initiative’s desire for new patterns of community participation. The composition of the CET is also an important factor in its effectiveness, with diverse representation and a combination of complementary strengths and existing relationships. The CET has continued to build on those relationships, both among themselves and with an ever-expanding list of CBOs and public agencies. One public agency counterpart noted the strength of the CET’s diversity and thoughtful consideration of representing community needs and interests:

The team is very diverse and has good representation and they are always thinking of who needs to be at the table. They get it and they understand the need to have everyone have a voice at the table. (Public agency counterpart, Round 1)

A few community observers did note, however, that the CET could benefit from greater representation of underrepresented populations and from government leadership.

In describing what made the CET effective, public agency representatives noted two main examples that reflect the model’s design: the grantmaking process and the formation of the Community Engagement Steering Committee.

The grantmaking process began with the CET’s decision to pass all HUD funds to CBOs, rather than using funds for their own operational costs, thereby maximizing the impact of the funds and building credibility and trust among other CBOs. The CET next delegated grant decision-making authority to a review committee composed of representatives from other CBOs, the peers of applicant organizations. This decision gave the process legitimacy in the eyes of community members, while also giving those representatives a new understanding of the difficult decisions that funders must make in allocating grant funds. The announcement of the

grant awards was a powerful moment, in a room packed with community members surrounding a table of policymakers. One CET lead described the announcement, which signaled to community members that their review committee’s decisions were respected and honored:

That moment of having all those folks in one room around a decision like that has never happened. Based on conversations with other Sustainable Communities, it's not happening elsewhere either. (CET lead)

The reasons and values behind their decision to re-grant the funds to CBOs instead of giving all the funds to one or two powerful organizations that claim to represent all communities are essential to understanding their approach.

Finally, community observers noted the CET’s recruitment of and technical assistance for potential grant applicants, which enabled smaller and newer organizations to represent themselves as viable candidates even when they were competing with larger and more established organizations. This was particularly the case for the second round of grants which included some smaller grants set aside for building capacity in small community-based organizations to do this type of engagement work:

The work they do in reaching out to find grantees from different communities and helping them through the grant process is significant. (Community observer, Round 1)

In addition, many respondents acknowledged the critical importance of the grant funds in making this work happen. Several respondents praised the CET’s role in facilitating the community-driven grantmaking process and helping to distribute and align grant funds for maximum impact.

The existence and role of the Community Engagement Steering Committee is another important example of the “democratization of expertise” contained in the CoO community engagement model. The Steering Committee is an opt-in organization with open membership. It allows diverse organizations to guide the CoO community engagement work, helping to make the work authentically and transparently community-led, and providing a concrete example of the respect that is at the heart of the community engagement model. Its formation helped build trust among community members who had often felt marginalized, and encouraged them to risk being part of the initiative. For those who participated in its work, it has helped to create a space for organizations to learn from each other rather than compete against one another.

The Steering Committee also helps expand the scope beyond the CoO and introduce principles of engagement and equitable development to a wider set of regional stakeholders. For instance, in addition to ongoing advising of community engagement efforts in the initiative, this group made policy recommendations to the Metropolitan Council on transitway Community Advisory Committees, establishing regional standards on community

engagement, and forming a permanent Equity/Community Engagement Advisory Committee at the Metropolitan Council. In early 2014 they were also involved in discussions with senior Metropolitan Council staff to rewrite the Public Participation Plan (required by the federal government for transportation planning) into the Public Engagement Plan that will be applied to all Metropolitan Council activities.

CET strategies: bringing equity to the forefront

The CET model explicitly included efforts to shift the regional dialogue around equity, to begin to address and possibly overcome some of the prior history of strained relationships between communities and public agencies, and allow grant-funded activities to start on a basis of greater trust and hopefulness.



An important piece of the CET's work has been to encourage ongoing dialogue about and understanding of equity, establishing a regional culture that supports equity in development.

Part of what we're doing is changing the language, both at the community level and at the systems level ... and creating the space for discourse. (CET lead)

Conditions at the start of the initiative

At the start of the CoO, many communities in the Minneapolis-St. Paul region faced a variety of barriers to participating in decision-making processes. Based on the rationales given by first round grantees in their applications, these barriers included a cycle of disenfranchisement and mistrust, resulting from planning and development decisions made without their participation.

Multiple groups and subgroups exist but there is no community forum that can marshal a true community consensus. As a result there is no coordinated community response to the coming economic changes related to Central Corridor LRT... This fragmentation has many causes: the history of conflict over urban renewal, the cultural and language diversity brought by recent immigrant communities, diverging agendas brought by major institutions within the neighborhood and conflict surrounding the City's Neighborhood Revitalization Program all contribute to the fragmentation. (Grantee, Round 1)

Statements in grant applications show a perception that agencies' previous engagement efforts had generally not offered underrepresented communities meaningful ways to be involved in planning and development. In particular, they lacked opportunities to identify their community's needs and priorities, and feel empowered to help shape decisions to meet those needs. As one grantee described, in proposing efforts to change this negative historic precedent:

The Transit Equity Partnership consists of three organizations controlled by underrepresented communities ... that have been harmed by a century of discriminatory planning decisions that have marginalized and isolated our communities in North Minneapolis. (Grantee, Round 1)

Strategies to shift the dialogue

When asked about the most important work of the CET in increasing the possibility of equitable outcomes, many respondents described this dialogue around equity:

Highlighting and lifting up the issue of equity and creating that platform, the dialogue and room to discuss it. (Community observer, Round 1)

Strategy of keeping equitable development and equity out front and defining what is meant by equity, and reassuring folks that it isn't scary, is a very effective strategy. (Community observer, Round 1)

At the end of the day, Corridors of Opportunity grantees have become partners because they add value to everything we do... We have embraced equity as the superior growth model, and it is the reason that we will align our resources with racially-concentrated areas of poverty. (Public agency counterpart, Round 2)

I also think there's a more sophisticated emphasis on equity and its many interpretations as a key criteria for measuring transit planning success. (CoO leader, 2014)

Others mentioned specific CET-sponsored activities and events related to equity, particularly the Anchoring Equity events in June 2011, their work coordinating a large delegation for the PolicyLink Equity Summit in Detroit, and a new table to promote equity in the region, called Equity Now Twin Cities, whose work extends beyond transit issues and the CoO initiative. The CET describes these events as crucial to the establishment of an environment that supports and reinforces the equity message for public agencies. They target both CBOs and public agencies, offering new opportunities for interaction between the two groups, while also laying a common foundation of knowledge and ideas to encourage the ongoing dialogue.

With these sorts of activities in mind, community observers tended to describe the CET's work that is unrelated to grant activities as at least somewhat effective. Eight first round community observers said the CET's work unrelated to grant activities was somewhat effective, while four said it was very effective. One community observer's comments suggest that their limited effectiveness at the start of the initiative may have been due more to barriers in public agencies than to the CET's work itself:

I am thinking about the work around equity and they have done an excellent job of raising awareness and advancing conversation, but there has been limited action at the policy level that I am aware of. (Community observer, Round 1)

Although not generally highlighted by grantees or community observers, the CET conducted both one-on-one meetings with CBO leaders and presentations to groups in advance of the

first round of grantmaking. These activities were intended to alert underrepresented communities both to the opportunities that a transit line investment could bring them, as well as to the opportunities that the CoO grants could provide to help with organizing around those transit investments.

CET strategies: supporting grantees

Most regional observers and public agency counterparts describe the CET as very effective in supporting grantees' work. The strategies for this support included:

- Technical assistance and training in interacting with government systems
- Modeling positive interactions themselves
- Facilitation for relationship building, both with public agencies and among CBOs

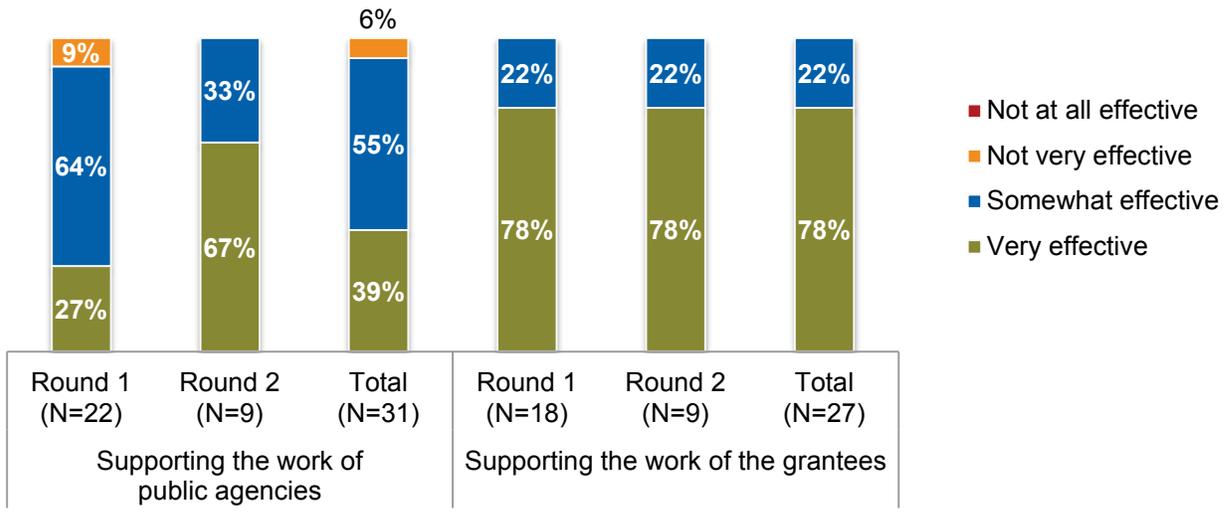
In the second round of interviews, grantees were asked what it was about receiving a grant that led them to do this kind of work that they previously did not do, or not at the same capacity. Nearly all (14 of the 15) cited the additional money as a reason (and 11 of those 14 said it was a “big reason”). The support of the CET was also prominent in what they said made their new efforts possible:

- 12 of the grantees said the relationship-bridging work from the CET was a factor (9 said it was a “big reason” and 3 said it was a “little reason”)
- 9 of the grantees said that a new sense of the importance of community engagement in transit-related planning was a factor (6 said it was a “big reason” and 3 said it was a “little reason”)
- Finally, 9 of the grantees said the technical assistance was a factor (5 said it was a “big reason” and 4 said it was a “little reason”)

Similarly, community observers and public agency counterparts expressed a great deal of praise for the CET's and Steering Committee's work in supporting grantees, providing technical assistance, and building relationships among grantees. Of those that responded,

- All of the first and second round community observers and public agency counterparts said the CET was either somewhat or very effective in supporting the work of the grantees.

8. Community observers: Effectiveness of the CET



Source: Community Observer interviews, Rounds 1 and 2, 2013-2014

- All second round observers also said that the CE Steering Committee was either somewhat or very effective in supporting the work of the grantees.

Providing CBOs with technical assistance and training in interacting with policymakers and government systems is a key role of the CET, modeling for them how to work productively with public agencies whether or not there is complete agreement about the issues. When asked for an example of the CET’s effectiveness in supporting grantees, some respondents emphasized this technical assistance:

The Community Engagement Team has been proactive, making sure [grantees] are connected to the right staff and opportunities for engagement. They’re another set of hands for those grantees. Sometimes it is educating folks on how government works and the best way to participate in a meaningful way. It’s not just telling them about a meeting, but telling them why it is important. (Community observer, Round 1)

When we had some kind of difficulty, the CET and steering committee would talk with us and brainstorm with us and figure out how to bridge that barrier. So far it’s working, it’s working. (Grantee, Round 2)

I think they’ve helped with capacity-building with organizations and connected them to regional policy planning. They’ve given strategy advice, but have been hands off too. (Public agency counterpart, Round 1)

Respondents also emphasized the CET’s role in building relationships, partnerships, and alignment among the grantees, to share learning, pull the work together, and maximize its impact:

The coordination, making sense of the collective work, connecting them to public sector folks, makes this different. (CET lead)

I would have to give a lot of credit to the CET. They did a great job facilitating those relationships within the cohort and keeping us moving ahead in lock step together and providing the forums to come together and share and learn from each other. ... The Corridors of Opportunity program was unique, because with other grants you're usually on your own, but with this it was different where we broke down those silos and intentionally made us work with each other and recognize each other's work. (Grantee, Round 1)

The grantee convening in April 2013 provided an opportunity for grantees to support and learn from one another, to help create a collaborative rather than contentious environment among them. The convening included activities to inform grantees of their cohort's activities, inspire them with the depth and breadth of the community engagement landscape that they were collectively creating, and give them a chance to share ideas and learn from one another. At this convening, grantees discussed the importance of cooperation and trust-building among themselves, as their collaborative engagement work could yield greater results (and greater funds) than individual, isolated, and potentially redundant engagement efforts.

Being at meetings with other grantee directors, I feel comfortable partnering with them or connecting with them as a result. So, just being a cohort with them in this work and sharing in this experience and challenges and successes, we bonded even though we didn't work directly with each other in our work. (Grantee, Round 1)

CET strategies: supporting public agencies

The CET role includes support for public agencies, though fewer study respondents were aware of this role. Among those who were aware, it was seen as somewhat less effective than the support for grantees. Where it was seen to be effective, respondents pointed to the following as factors:

- Lead agencies' positive relationships with both public agencies and communities
- Credible leadership in advancing the understanding of equity
- Provision of best practices, strategic advice, and modeling engagement by example, both to the overall CoO Policy Board and to agencies
- Bridging and "translating" on complex issues
- Bringing cross-sector leaders and stakeholders to the same table

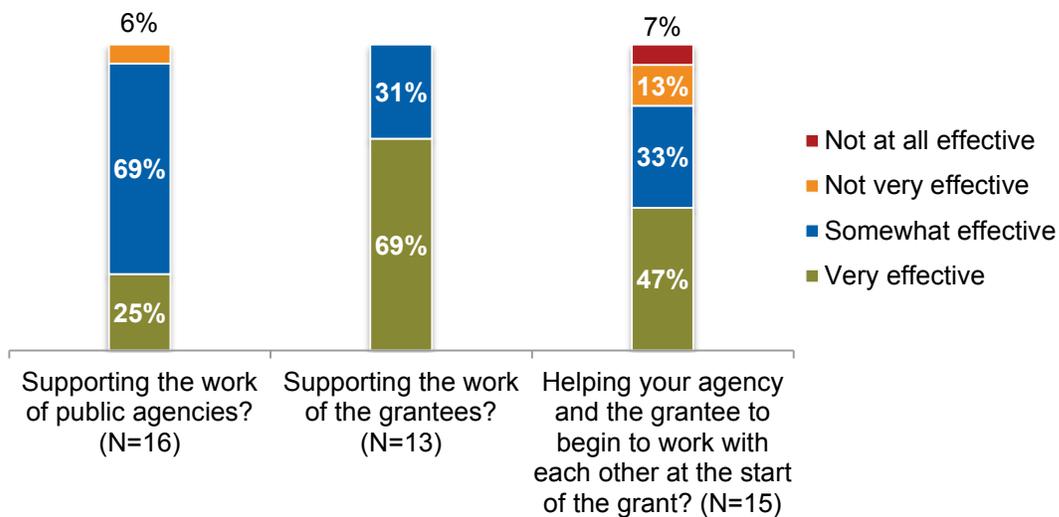
Limits to the efforts and effectiveness were ascribed in part to limited readiness of agencies to receive the support during the first round, and in part to limited capacity of the CET and the Community Engagement Steering Committee. The scale at which they were able to

operate was not enough to serve all the projects of the CoO, or even assure that all project stakeholders were equally aware of them as potential resources.

In their ratings of the CET’s support of public agencies, community observers were somewhat more likely than agency representatives to describe them as “very effective.”

- Four of the 16 public agency counterparts that responded to the question said that the CET has been “very effective” in supporting the work of public agencies, 11 said the CET was “somewhat effective,” and only one said they were “not very effective” (none said “not at all effective”). (Figure 9)
- Among community observers, 16 said the CET was “very effective,” 10 said they were “somewhat effective,” and only one said “not very effective” (none said “not at all effective”).

9. Public agency perceptions of the effectiveness of CET support



Source: Public agency counterpart interviews, Rounds 1 and 2, 2013-2014.

The CET’s effectiveness in supporting public agencies has been a direct result of their trustworthy presence among both public agencies and communities.

The growing respect and confidence in the [CET] by government officials, of the team and work it is doing, including the work in equity...working in a broader-based environment to include credibility with government, is significant. (Community observer, Round 1)

In describing the CET’s role in supporting public agencies, community observers noted the impact of the CET on their understanding of equity:

I think they've also had an important role in helping government to understand issues of equity, some very powerful and nuanced aspects of equity. Where they can help make the example of equity and disparities real for decision-makers, policymakers, people working in government programs, illustrating the raw impact that these things can have on people. Making these people aware. To think at a deeper level, pause, think about how we can do things differently. I feel like the CET has led some very rich discussions and has worked well at both ends of this work (government and community). (Community observer, Round 1)

Agency counterparts noted the important advisory role of the CET, serving as a resource and expert on effective community engagement:

They've been a good conduit for information and a good sounding board in relationship to the things going on. (Public agency counterpart, Round 1)

They help provide the bridge in a very complicated issue; they are the experts to simplify the message. (Public agency counterpart, Round 1)

Some observers mentioned that CET and the Steering Committee consulting with public agencies and policy makers helped agencies to see issues as cross-sector and multifaceted, not just transit issues:

Another strategy is to really try and open up the kind of engagement that the transit agencies and public works agencies want to do to be cross-issue--instead of just focusing on transportation or one transit line, to help agencies understand the need to cross over doing forums or events on health or job creation or education, because I think especially in low income and communities of color, people can't afford to go to four or five meetings on four or five issues. Transit may be important, but safety or education might be more so. (Community observer, Round 2)

In particular, the CET (and the initiative as a whole) helped public agencies to understand how engagement of underrepresented groups must be tailored to group-specific needs. “Maybe we didn’t realize we had to approach these underrepresented groups differently,” said a city planner in a CoO focus group. Public agencies also reported learning about the specific barriers, such as transportation and communication needs, that underrepresented groups often face when asked to participate in community engagement activities.

The understanding that you need to customize your engagement to stakeholders [is a helpful change made by my agency]. We have a stronger palette of methods or strategies or tools. (Why stronger?) There has been capacity building on both sides. We have all learned tremendously through CoO - the agencies, the grantees. They [engagement efforts] are being institutionalized. The County Board is very supportive of CoO. We make sure we are plugged into the CET and are aligned in policy, insuring that we have a representative and are playing a role on subcommittees - that we are monitoring the CET activities. (Public agency counterpart, Round 2)

In their work plan for the HUD grant, the CET was also tasked with advising the CoO Policy Board on best practices in community engagement. In addition, several agency counterparts mentioned appreciation for the CET's assistance as a panelist when their expertise was requested.

During the first round of grants, some observers and public agency counterparts suggested that they had not felt informed about the CET's work, and that an improvement in communication might improve their outlook on the CET's effectiveness. However, during the second round of grants, when asked about the most effective strategies of the CET and/or the Steering Committee for increasing the likelihood of equitable outcomes, the most frequent responses from community observers involved disseminating information broadly, sharing best practices, and the act of grantmaking to community-based organizations and building their capacity. This seems to show an improvement in communications in that regard from the first to the second round of grants.

Challenges of the CET's role supporting diverse organizations

In considering the ability of the CET to support grantees, one community observer suggested that the CET may be too deep in the community to effectively translate their needs to public agencies:

My sense is the Community Engagement Team looked to support authentic community organizations and voices, and at times they missed the opportunity to engage and change public agencies and engagement. They went so far into the community that they missed the intersection of agencies and the community voice. If they had, they would have had more long lasting and sustainable impacts. (Community observer, Round 1)

On the other hand, an agency counterpart, with more firsthand knowledge of the on-the-ground engagement efforts, felt that the CET's limitations in supporting public agencies were due to their inability to fully speak for the community:

They still have not gotten to a place where they can speak for the neighborhood or have really tapped into the neighborhood. There is still some ways to go for creating a mutual respect for how the city does its process. (Public agency counterpart, Round 1)

Conversely, a response from a second round community observer points out that one of the greatest strengths of the CET is its ability to bring the public agencies to the community, thus bridging the divides that the previous two cited community observers from the first round mentioned as one of the CET's limitations:

I think one of the most effective tools is for [public agencies] to be going to people instead of asking them to come to us. (Community observer, Round 2)

Perceptions of the CET's strengths and shortcomings in their role helping to build bridges appear to vary widely based on the respondent's perspective, as well as the changes made

over time throughout the two different rounds of grants. With a model based heavily on supporting other organizations to engage communities and communicate community needs, however, the specific feedback on directly providing community input to public agencies may be less relevant. In describing the CET's role in supporting public agencies, respondents more frequently emphasized the CET's work in defining equity and establishing an ongoing dialogue about equity in regional planning, which was described earlier. The difference in perspectives is related to the CET's role as a bridge-maker, described in the next section.

CET strategies: bridging in two directions

In addition to helping public agencies build relationships with community members and organizations, the CET also helps build relationships among CBOs and serves as a bridge to link grantee organizations with public agencies. This role includes teaching both public and community organizations about what one CET lead calls “the language, ideas, values, and process” of the cooperative model of community engagement. They worked to teach communities and public agencies how to interact with each other, teaching grantees and communities how governments work and how to engage in the process, while teaching public agencies what equity looks like and how to achieve it.



All but three of the public agency counterparts from both rounds described the CET as at least somewhat effective in connecting their agencies to grantees at the start of the grants. Seven of the 15 respondents described the CET as “very effective” in its bridging work between public agencies and grantees, while five others described the CET as “somewhat effective.” Three respondents described the CET as “not very effective” or “not at all effective” in this regard, but only those from the second round of grants, which may indicate a change in the landscape of relations and corridors during this second round of grants that was not present during the first round.

The CoO community engagement model aims to bridge existing gaps between CBOs and public agencies, starting each grant period with deliberate, individualized relationship-building.

This needs to start small so everyone feels comfortable - hold smaller meetings first (and not at city halls) to build relationships and shared understanding. (CET lead)

One public agency counterpart noted the CET's expansive network of existing relationships, which enabled them to promote awareness of one another (when some public agencies were unaware of the existence of the CBOs prior to the initiative) and effectively connect the right organizations to one another:

Their leadership associated with the CET grantees has been very, very fruitful [due to] the organizations that make up CET and their relationships within their field, recognizing important people and important organizations that we should contact. At one meeting, they rolled out a map and pointed out organizations and neighborhoods where they'd initiate early contact. (Public agency counterpart, Round 1)

Furthermore, the CET's understanding of existing dynamics, problematic histories, and individual characteristics and needs enabled them to anticipate challenges and help organizations to manage relationships effectively.

[Sometimes there is a tension or careful balance between a public meeting] and the behind-the-scenes work that was done to make it work. This correlates to the contrast between the art and the science of doing the work, including critical aspects of sequencing and negotiation, which are not usually seen but play a big role in success: things like holding small meetings and one-to-one conversations, choice of words in how to introduce ideas, timing of contacts and ideas. This added layer is especially important for the creation of change. (CET lead)

Similarly, a second round grantee described how the CET and the grantees worked together to build the power of people to be at the table with decision makers:

I think what we've done is that we've got the people who are being effective at the table, and we've empowered them to feel like they can be effective at the table. I'll give you an example. We used to invite people to hearings where there's strict adherence to Robert's Rules, and that can be scary for the community. They don't understand what's happening, and people feel very uncomfortable. We've made it more relaxed, approachable. We've met people where they are. I don't just mean geographically, but we start with issues that matter to them. We don't ask them to jump in with the need we have for input. (Grantee, Round 2)

A community observer mentioned the Equity Summit as a key example of the CET's bridging activities and their impact:

The example around the Equity Summit and bringing a contingent of people, a huge cross-section of people from all sectors, income scales, ethnic/racial/cultural groups. This has been a great mechanism of getting people together who wouldn't normally cross paths, creating a place where people recognize names and faces and have conversations. It's huge! I personally have crossed paths with many people with whom I wouldn't otherwise have crossed paths. I think the bridging has been really important. (Community observer, Round 1)

The CET acknowledged the remaining challenge in connecting these organizations and aligning their goals:

The public sector and communities still have different ideas about what an effective interaction is between these two groups (public agency representatives and community members). (CET lead)

Moreover, as seen in the previous section, it is perhaps inevitable that, as organizations that are working to build communications and relationships between grassroots community

groups and formal government systems, the CET is sometimes vulnerable to being seen by each side as too closely aligned with the other.

What does it take to implement this model? What different capacities are needed with respect to staff skills, resources, time, partners, etc.? What additional funding was secured?

The new community engagement model requires resources beyond those ordinarily available to grassroots organizations, for activities like additional outreach, community education about highly technical issues such as transportation and land use planning, collection of input from community members about their perspectives, organization of meetings with public officials, and, in some cases, more formal leadership development activities. As shown above in the grantees' responses about the factors that made it possible to undertake the new engagement efforts, the more intensive, focused, and technical nature of this work also requires support for the CBOs from intermediary organizations, with adequate funding to allow them to add the needed coordination and technical assistance to their regular activities. The McKnight Foundation found this model valuable and provided an additional year of community engagement grant funding for 2014.

Besides funding for this added capacity, the model requires new skills and understanding on the part of community and public agency representatives. It obliges both CBOs and public agencies to acknowledge any prior mistrust and be open to cooperation. This may be difficult where previous history has included conflict or confrontation. However, the CET organizations have helped to facilitate new beginnings based on common goals within the CoO's overall framework of equity. This was supported by the development and adoption of explicit language for the shared principle of equitable development, as well as a specific operational definition of the term, developed by the Community Engagement Steering Committee.

Another finding is the importance for both CBOs and public agencies to increase their understanding of each other's ways of working. For CBOs, this means helping community members to learn the many different steps involved in planning for transportation and related land uses. For agencies, it involves recognizing that community representatives usually cannot commit on behalf of the overall community to agreement on a new idea or proposal when it is first raised at a meeting, but need time to take the idea back to share and discuss with community members before a decision can be made.

The model requires relationship building. Where grant activities were most successful, we found that they included an on-going relationship between the CBO and the public agency, with regular two-way communication between them. This helps ensure that both parties can keep their stakeholders up to date, and helps avoid the perception that either one alone is

controlling the process. The need to build CBO capacity also requires building relationships between the CET and Community Engagement Steering Committee and the CBOs.

At another level of partnership, the fact that all of the different grants and other CE efforts were coordinated through the CoO added to the effectiveness of each. The shared framework of the initiative's goals and principles helped the CBOs as well as the larger Community Engagement Steering Committee and the CET to support and learn from each other. The common framework similarly facilitated more shared learning among public agencies than if the efforts had been made independently of each other.

Finally, the model requires time. Most public agency representatives report this model of engagement takes more time than the traditional model. However, some advocates among the community observers point out that the public planning process on topics such as transit take so many years anyway that no additional time is required for engagement, provided it is started early enough. Several public agency staff also report that a bit more time up front to assure that communities are fully represented in decision-making can save time later when community members who were left out of the process sometimes hold up decisions to ask for re-consideration.

What evidence is there that the intended results are occurring? Is there evidence that these are different than under the models in previous use?

Are public transit and TOD planning agencies doing their work differently?

Balcony-level analysis

Within the last several years of CET- and community engagement grant-related work, there is ample evidence showing that agencies involved with TOD-related planning and decision making have changed how they do their work. This change, begun in the first round of grants, appears to have further intensified during the second year. Moreover, the evidence suggests that this work has affected how public agencies do their work in several ways.

First, the evidence shows that public agencies now see community engagement as more beneficial for the success of planning outcomes. This is an important impact that has the potential to be lasting, because it increases the likelihood that public agencies will buy into and commit more to community engagement. Second, public agencies' increased enthusiasm for community engagement appears to be combined with an increased level of awareness of the grantees' communities' needs and priorities. Third, public agencies also appear to have made changes in how, how much, and how early they engage with historically underrepresented communities. This includes public agencies not only open to partnering with CBOs to hear their input earlier on in the planning process, but also taking on their own proactive engagement and outreach efforts. Some of these changes, especially in some of the large governmental partners in the CoO, have gone beyond occasional new practices and been institutionalized into new official guidelines, policy, staff positions, and/or funding commitments, with an increase in large public agencies making and

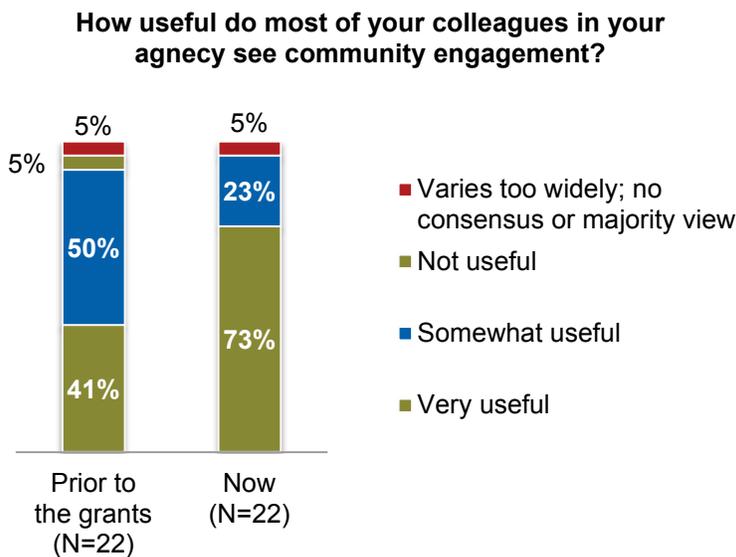
policy-based changes to integrate equity and engagement into their planning processes and guiding principles.

In the theory of change for this model of engagement, these changes are powerful as predictors of larger-scale change and benefits to low-income communities over the longer term. The decision making process related to transit and community development has often been viewed by grantees' communities as one which occurs behind closed doors. To begin to open up the doors to these decision making processes and empower community members to sit at the table with public officials and have their voices heard is not only a major success for communities, but also lays the foundation for this level of involvement and empowerment in other areas of public decision making. This has the potential to shape future public policies and plans that are more equitably beneficial for historically underrepresented communities.

Perceptions of community engagement

Public agency counterparts were asked how colleagues in their agencies viewed the usefulness of community engagement now compared to a year or so ago (i.e., before the CE grant-funded activities). The number of agency respondents who said their colleagues perceived community engagement as "very useful" increased from 41 percent before the grants to 73 percent after the grants. No agency counterparts reported that community engagement was seen as "not useful" after the grants (Figure 10).

10. Public agency perceptions of the usefulness of community engagement

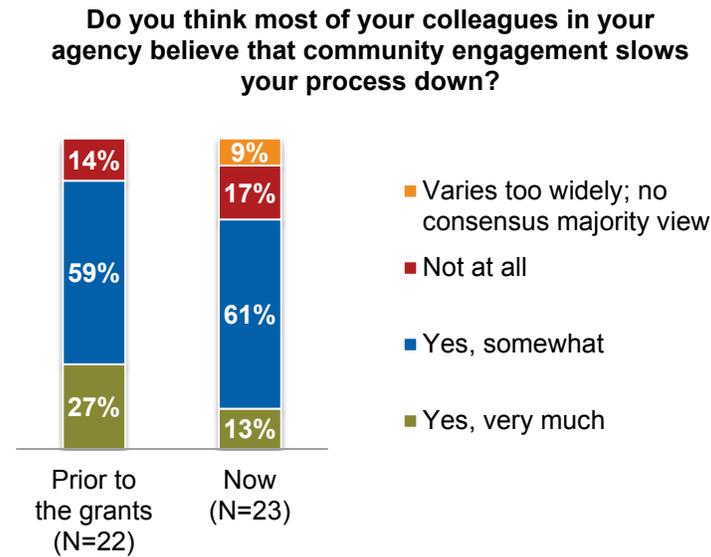


Source: Public agency counterpart interviews, Rounds 1 and 2, 2013-2014.

Similarly, agency counterparts were asked about changes in how much colleagues in their agencies believe that community engagement slows down the process. The number believing it slowed the process down at all decreased slightly from 86 percent to 74 percent, and the

number believing it slowed the process down “very much” was cut in half (from 27% to 13%) (Figure 11).

11. Public agency perceptions of community engagement’s effect on timeliness



Source: Public agency counterpart interviews, Rounds 1 and 2, 2013-2014.

Overall, this shows relatively little change in the reported perception that community engagement slows down their processes. In general, most public agency representatives report that planning processes take more time when communities are engaged.

However, some advocates among the community observers point out that the public planning process on topics such as transit takes so many years anyway that no additional time is required for engagement, provided it is started early enough. Several public agency staff also report that a bit more time up front to assure that communities are fully represented in decision-making can save time later when community members who were left out of the process sometimes hold up decisions to ask for re-consideration. As one public agency counterpart put it:

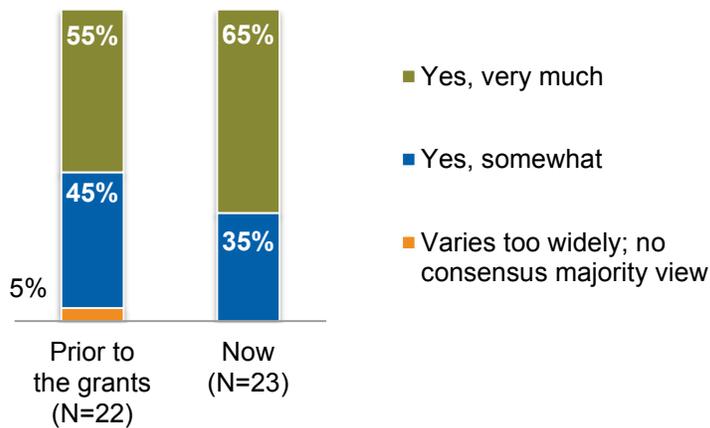
Everyone was in such a hurry that they didn't want to take the time, but they also realized that if they didn't they wouldn't be effective. It is a new way of how we need to do business to take the time to do it. The people on the floor needed to have an "aha!" moment. (Public agency counterpart, Round 1)

Agency counterparts reported that both before and after the grants, their colleagues believed that community engagement improves the quality of their agency's planning. Within this overall

endorsement, however, the number reporting it improved planning quality “very much” increased from 35 percent to 45 percent. (Figure 12).

12. Public agency perceptions of community engagement’s effect on quality of planning

Do you think most of your colleagues in your agency believe that community engagement improves the quality of your agency’s planning?



Source: Public agency counterpart interviews, Rounds 1 and 2, 2013-2014.

Many of the CoO leaders told evaluators that they felt the initiative’s community engagement efforts had had substantial impacts on public agencies’ engagement attitudes and practices. As one foundation representative interviewed for the overall Corridors of Opportunity evaluation described:

I’m surprised at how community engagement from Corridors of Opportunity successfully shifted the seriousness with which governmental participation has changed. I didn’t expect as much of an impact in that. I think that there was a heightened sense that engaging marginalized communities improves planning and development in the region... I think city, regional, and even state governments are much more attuned to those opportunities. (Philanthropic member, CoO stakeholder group, 2014)

Several public agency counterparts—particularly from the second round of grants—described how incorporating community engagement more and earlier in planning processes has led to better results:

In the last few years, we are much more attuned to engagement and communicating with the community. We work with various councils – [that is] becoming standard practice. We get much more involved with council members’ offices at the start of a project to identify groups and partnerships at the beginning to bring in people to design teams. It is not [institutionalized] by funding or policy, but it is driven by successes. Our best projects have had the community involvement. We can be more successful by early engagement. (Public agency counterpart, Round 2)

We've found that more engagement and participation in the planning process and getting those points of view have made projects more successful. Touching base with council members, identifying neighborhood groups before putting pen-to-paper make them feel that they are involved, rather than us doing something and asking people to react to it. (Public agency counterpart, Round 2)

It [having community perspectives earlier in the planning] makes a huge difference—every difference in the world! I can't even tell you how it's jumped out in me when you understand the perspective of different cultures, and it changes the way you do your planning... It's very important when you work in this community to have these voices and perspectives. Better? Yes! Better served? Yes! It's a community influx and it's good. There's so many positive things happening. People are more open to getting everyone's voice at the table. (Public agency counterpart, Round 2)

For me, the lessons have been that transportation planning must be collaborative with multiple sectors. Transportation planning must begin earlier with the community, through community engagement. And I would say also the responsible decision-making organizations in transportation and their partners (housing, economic development, etc.) need to do a more effective job of communicating to the public so the public trusts the decision making process. Transparency would be another word for it. (Public sector representative, 2014 Overall CoO evaluation interviews)

Not only did public agency counterparts report that community input and engagement earlier in the planning process resulted in better plans and results, but agencies also benefited from the coordinated voice of multiple grantees at the table, as well as providing legitimacy to their work in the community:

I also think from the perspective of agencies and especially Met Council, having a broader group of community based organizations was beneficial from a couple of different places. It provided a cross-jurisdictional body that seemed more legitimate... Now they know that there's more legitimacy [because of their] being more than just one group, especially at the local level. And they're organized now. The power of having an organized coalition who presented themselves as being more than 'just a pest' but also having expertise. (CET Focus Group, 2014)

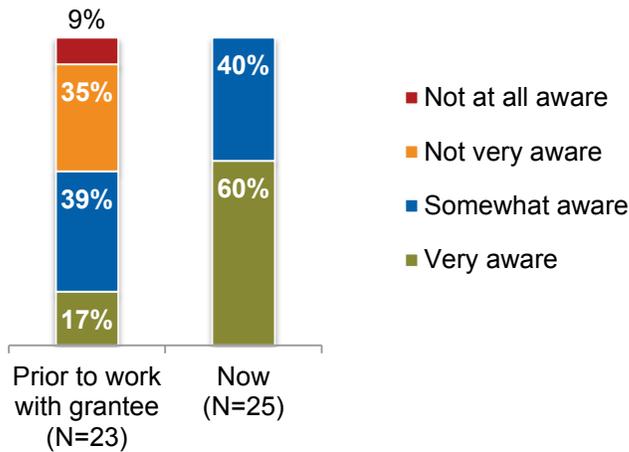
Increased awareness of community issues and priorities

Grant-funded engagement work, and the CET and Steering Committee support for it, greatly increased public agencies' awareness of the perspectives and needs of the historically underrepresented communities who received the grants.

- Over half (56%) of public agency counterparts reported that before the grant-funded activities, they were “not very aware” or “not at all aware” of grantees' communities' issues and priorities, whereas none of them reported that after the grants they were less than “somewhat aware” (Figure 13)
- The percent who were “somewhat aware” or “very aware” increased from 44 percent before the grants to 100 percent after them, and the percent who were “very aware” increased from 9 percent to 40 percent

13. Public agencies' awareness of community perspectives

Public agency counterparts: How aware do you think your agency was/is of the perspectives and needs of the grantee's community regarding transit and transit-oriented development?

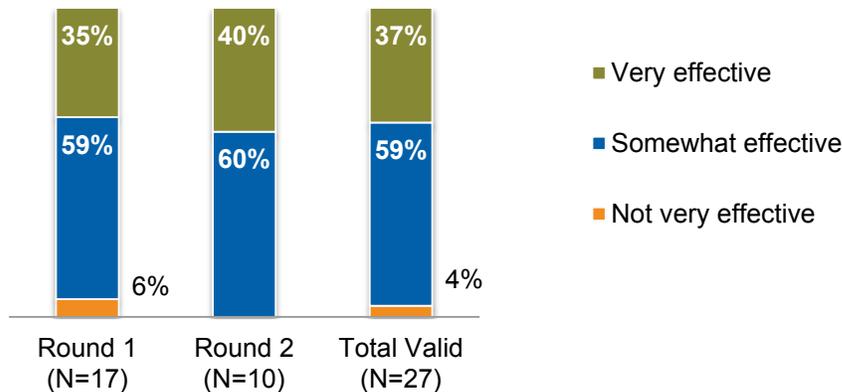


Source: Public agency counterpart interviews, Rounds 1 and 2, 2013-2014.

These changes that were self-reported by agency representatives are ratified by the reports of community observers. Of those who were familiar enough with grant activities to offer an opinion, all but one of the community observers said grantees were either “somewhat effective” or “very effective” at ensuring that public agencies were aware of the perspectives and needs of their communities (Figure 14).

14. Effectiveness of grantees in relaying community needs to public agencies

Community observers: How effective have grantees been in ensuring that public agencies are aware of the perspectives and needs of their communities?



Source: Community observer interviews, Rounds 1 and 2, 2013-2014.

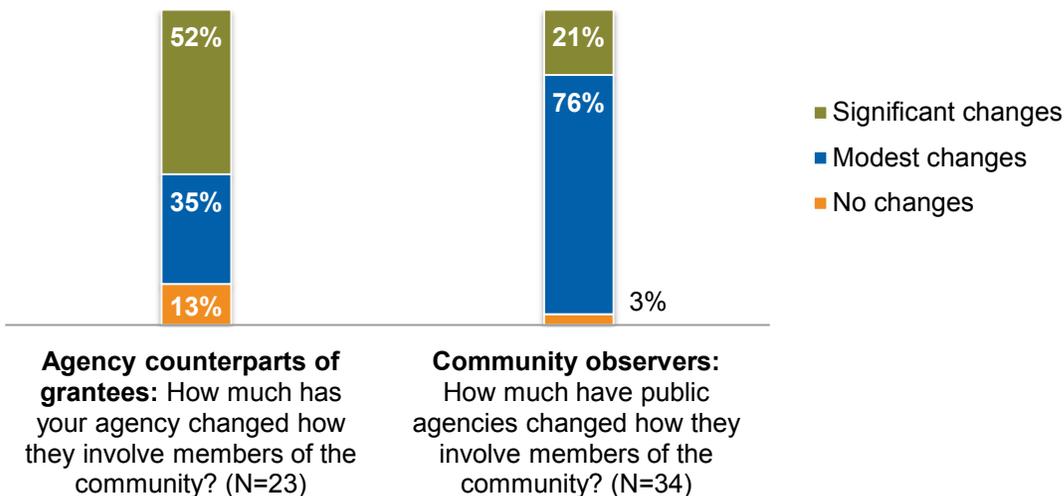
Observers frequently mentioned that this awareness was increased most effectively by having more community members and community organizations represented at decision-making tables. They said that having greater community presence and providing input to public agencies led to increased awareness amongst public agencies about the needs of communities, as well as to some public agencies changing their approach to listening to communities.

Greater involvement of community in planning and decisions

Agency representatives, grantees, and community observers all agree that public agencies have made changes in how and how much they engage community members in planning processes. Not surprisingly, the changes appear to be greater among agencies that worked with grantees, but the changes also appear to be spreading to other agencies in the region (Figure 15).

- 87% of the public agency counterparts said the staff of their agency have made modest or significant changes to how they involve members of the community, and just under half of these report that these changes were institutionalized by a change in funding or policy.
- All but one of the community observers indicated that public agencies made modest or significant changes in how they involve members of the community. Note that this applies to public agencies in general, not only those involved in CE grant-funded activities.

15. Change in public agency engagement practices



Source: Community observer interviews and public agency counterpart interviews, Rounds 1 and 2, 2013-2014.

85% (N=33) of the community observers said they were aware of ways in which public agencies' planning had included the needs or points of view of the grantees' communities.

Agency counterparts were asked about ways in which they have included the viewpoints of community members and how that may benefit them in the long run. Respondents most frequently cited how decision makers are hearing community voices earlier in the process, which gives the community more ability to impact planning, and that they now recognize how increased engagement and community participation results in more success and community buy-in with projects. They also frequently described how they partner with community organizations in order to do better outreach efforts and get more community buy-in, as well as their recognition of the need for more culturally appropriate outreach efforts. The following are examples of how public agency representatives summarized the changes they have made to include the community:

We've empowered people to be at the table and to influence our decision-making. We used to expect people to come to us. Now we go to where the people are because Corridors of Opportunity taught us to do that. There is no point in planning unless we talk to our customers. We've made a commitment to equity as a growth model. You can't have equity unless you have people at the table. I have a saying, 'If you're not at the table, you are the meal'. (Public agency counterpart, Round 2)

[Our agency has changed the way it] includes [underrepresented communities] earlier in the process...Engage the under-represented communities earlier, allow their initial input to help guide the planning, rather than just ask them to react to the outcomes. (City official, CoO stakeholder group, 2014)

According to agency respondents, the following were the most helpful changes made by their agency during the year of grant activities for increasing engagement of historically underrepresented communities in decisions about transit and land use:

- They said they have an **increased awareness about the importance of and need to engage with communities and engage with them earlier on in the process**, and now make concerted efforts to work with underrepresented groups, some even institutionalizing these engagement practices with policies and supporting official documents.
- They talked about **going into the community and meeting the community where they are**, rather than determining the terms of the public forums on their own without consultation.
- They reported they are integrating **culturally appropriate approaches** to inviting community members to events and different outreach efforts, often directly asking community and organizational leaders the best way to do so in each community.
- They also described how the **agencies are recognizing that they reach better policy and planning outcomes when they actively engage and involve the input of the community in the process**, resulting in greater community buy-in and legitimacy, as

well as helping **build the power of the community to know how to influence decision makers and have a seat at the table.**

Anytime we are initiating something and groups like [a community-based organization] can be actively involved, it leads to a richer community outreach process and gives us a greater opportunity for community buy-in as these plans are being developed. (Public agency counterpart, Round 2)

- Some agencies described having already secured or identified additional funding for engagement work, while others said not having funding for it is an ongoing barrier to institutionalizing engagement in their agency.

Community observers described adaptations by public agencies to increase engagement of historically underrepresented communities in decisions affecting their community, such as more public agency officials attending informational sessions and community events, partnering more with the community and community organizations, and being more proactive in seeking the community's input. They also described public agencies being more aware of the need to engage with the community, particularly engaging in a way that is more of an exchange, rather than just telling them the plans. As one community observer (who is also a public agency official) described:

Most important, we now recognize that we need to go to the community, meet with them on their own terms and see the community in which they live. In the past, the government expected them to come to the government; doing land use we need to see life through the eyes of the people who are affected by the decisions that we make. (Community observer, Round 1)

Some observers cited instances of there being more committees/advisory boards with both residents and policymakers and planners at the same table, as well as reallocation of funds to support engagement among historically underrepresented communities.

Grantees also were able to offer numerous examples of what public agencies have done to make them feel their community was heard:

- They described instances where **public agency representatives participated in community events and listening sessions**
- They cited examples of public officials **wanting to engage with communities and bring in community input throughout the planning and decision-making processes**
- They described examples such as **community engagement being written into later RFPs from key agencies**, as well as a **sense that community engagement and the need to be more aware of the community's needs are important**

Some grantees felt that certain **public agencies were more proactive and supportive of their work than before**, by being readily available, willing to partner with the grantees for engagement and outreach events, and willing to frequently participate in community events that they hosted. **Improved communication between grantees and public agencies** also facilitated these **improved relationships** and level of comfort working with one another.

They were very available. We called [public agency] staff quite a bit and they would change their schedules to show up at a meeting, an open house, a light rail tour. Sometimes just showing up and being available to take questions from the community is more valuable than any workshop that you can put on. That's been very helpful and has impressed me more than anything else. Just having a sensitivity to the fact that most of the people we're dealing with live in communities and this is a community, so coming at it from the perspective of ...how [the community] wants to participate in that process ... as opposed to just "announce and defend" perspective. ... So, availability, information, and follow up—that's been very impressive. (Grantee, Round 1)

It's more of a comfort level because we didn't have as many opportunities to work previously with government agencies. It increases that comfort level to work with them and develop those partnerships/relationships. I used to be very intimidated by public agencies and working with policymakers, but now I feel much more at ease reaching out to government agencies and policymakers. I feel like we all are doing similar work and at the same level now. (Grantee, Round 1)

Agency counterparts were asked about any specific ways their agencies' planning included needs or voices of grantees' communities as a result of the grantee activities, and what difference it has made to include those community perspectives, both for the immediate planning outcomes, as well as long-term benefits to the quality of life for the community.

- Respondents frequently described how **decision-makers are hearing the community voices earlier in the planning process**, which is helping to ensure they are capable of influencing the planning.
 - They also described **partnering with community organizations to lead more effective outreach efforts, bringing more voices to the table, and thus getting more buy-in from the community**, which they said ultimately results in more successful projects.
 - They often cited how **agencies now are recognizing the need for culturally appropriate outreach efforts**, and some agencies are **embracing equity and engagement** as an institution.

I think understanding that having to have information in multiple languages, having to have a representative from that group of people be the lead in public outreach instead of city staff who might not be versed in the culture of that population. (City official, CoO leader, 2014)

- Respondents often referred to the Fair Housing Equity Assessment and other project-specific examples for how **engagement efforts are integrated into long-term planning for community prosperity** with these projects.
- Some respondents mentioned that **hearing new perspectives from the community has led to changes in the ways their agencies do planning**, reflecting their desire to have community input in the planning and decision making process, having learned about the importance and benefits of bringing those perspectives into planning and decision making from the grantee's efforts the past two years.

This increased capacity and effectiveness at connecting community members to and having a voice at the table with decision makers from public agencies was further confirmed by public agency counterparts, who:

- Described community members and grantee organizations attending meetings, forums, and open houses with public agencies/decision makers
- Cited community members and CBOs participating in station planning and other related planning committees
- Described how grantees' community visioning documents and plans, draft environmental impact studies, and other community needs studies helped to bring communities' voices to the table and have an influence in planning

We do have broad community input by all community members in the whole corridor, [with opportunities for community members to provide input] specifically in alignment [with] station placement. We set up a community advisory committee [and] supported [it] with larger community meetings as well. Our community members have a deeper understanding of the project, timelines, opportunities and its challenges. (Public agency counterpart, Round 1)

When asked how community participation has been different in the planning for the corridors compared with community engagement efforts for other major infrastructure projects, public agency counterparts often described the community being more actively involved and more informed, sitting at the table with decision makers more than in the past—particularly for historically underrepresented populations.

We see more people involved who are much more savvy than ever before. That is a challenge for a planning organization. People who can't meet their basic needs aren't often at the table. Corridors of Opportunity has helped people understand why they need to be at the table and shape their community. Whether a bus comes is a decision made by the Met Council. Many people didn't know that. Today people know who the decision-makers are and how they can influence that decision. (Public agency counterpart, Round 2)

They also described the overall CoO engagement efforts as being more strategic, more effective, having more capacity, and being better at partnering with public agencies to influence planning decisions. As one public agency counterpart described:

It [the engagement approach] is different. [There's] more capacity to be engaged, and to be engaged throughout. In former processes, people come and go. In this, people stay engaged and have maintained a higher capacity to be involved. And hearing why these investments are important to the communities and why it is important that they are engaged. (Public agency counterpart, Round 2)

One CET leader described the overall shift in public agencies' approach to community engagement by saying:

*Planning for development now involves many more community voices, particularly under-represented communities. And practices in government and public agencies have changed. The Met Council engages people in much different ways when doing development planning, and the counties. The approach is **engagement, as opposed to outreach**. Outreach might be bringing people together to let them know what you are going to do and let them respond to what you are going to do. Engagement is deciding together what you are going to do, how you are going to do it, the process and so forth. (CET lead, CoO interviews, 2014)*

Moving forward

When community observers were asked what they expect to be different about public agencies' engagement practices after the end of CoO, they said that agencies:

- Have a broader perspective or greater awareness about the importance of community engagement, and now have more tools and strategies for engaging and knowledge of who to contact at the community-based organizations in each community
- Learned that community engagement leads to better outcomes and reduced costs in the long run, and that some agencies have embraced engagement and equity moving forward
- Need more funding and resources to ensure long-term change

For a variety of reasons, the Metropolitan Council has made some of the most significant changes in public engagement as a result of the CoO and its engagement component. Reasons include the fact that it designated one of its own staff to be an internal liaison and facilitator for the engagement work, as well as the fact that as the CoO co-lead they were the point of intersection for all of the other activities of the initiative. One CET leader summarized the impacts on the Metropolitan Council:

It [community engagement grant-related work] made the Met Council more porous and open. The overall program and engagement happening at multiple sites, Metro Transit, the corridors [initiative], the community development [department], they're forcing the Met Council to change itself internally so that now people across these systems are talking to each other, and they never talked to each other before. There was deep organizational change within the agency that has been encouraged and brought about by what's happening in the community because of this grant. (CET Focus Group, 2014)

Are community-based organizations and residents using different approaches to engage with government entities?

Balcony-level analysis

The previous sections outlined and highlighted the many different approaches that the grantees and community members used to engage with government entities. Part of the success of these strategies, however, is due to the high level of engagement and involvement of the community members in the grantees' activities. With about half of the interviewed community participants reporting that they participated in grantees' activities weekly and another third reporting doing so monthly, grantees had a core of highly engaged community members to train and engage with public officials. Not only did 82% of the interviewed participants report that they had met with public officials (city, county, Metropolitan Council), but half of those said they attended two or three meetings, and 42 percent said they attended four or more.

This level of involvement speaks volumes to the success of the grantees in connecting public officials to the communities being impacted by the planning, and is an important outcome. Not only have this core of community members been highly engaged, but they also report that they plan on continuing and even increasing their level of engagement moving forward. Thus the grantees' approaches in training community members and helping them meet with public officials has taken on its own sustainability through the community members themselves.

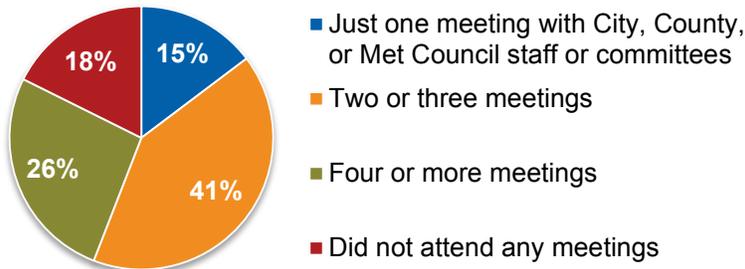


Although the different approaches to engaging with government entities have already been addressed in the previous sections, the amount of time that community members were able to actually meet with representatives of government entities during the year of grant activities is important to highlight:

- 82% of interviewed community participants said they met with city, county, or Metropolitan Council staff or committees through their involvement with the grantees.
- 50% of attendees said they attended two or three meetings, and 32% said they attended four or more meetings with city, county, or Metropolitan Council staff/committees. Only 18% said they attended just one meeting (Figure 16).

16. Community members meeting with public officials (N=34)

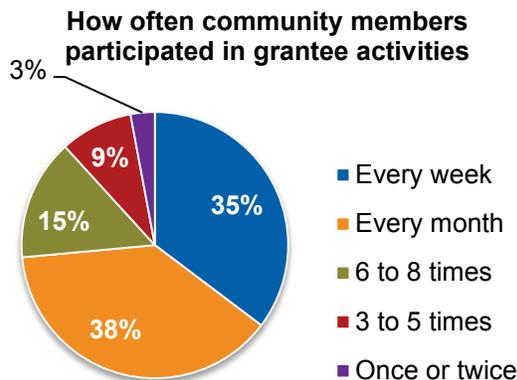
of meetings attended with public officials or committees



Source: Community participant interviews, Rounds 1 and 2, 2013-2014.

In addition to meeting relatively frequently with public officials, community members who were interviewed for this study also reported high levels of involvement in the grantees' activities. Almost half (47%) participated in an activity every week, one-third (33%) participated every month, and 13% participated six to eight times over the year. Only 7 percent said they only participated three to five times over the past year (Figure 17).

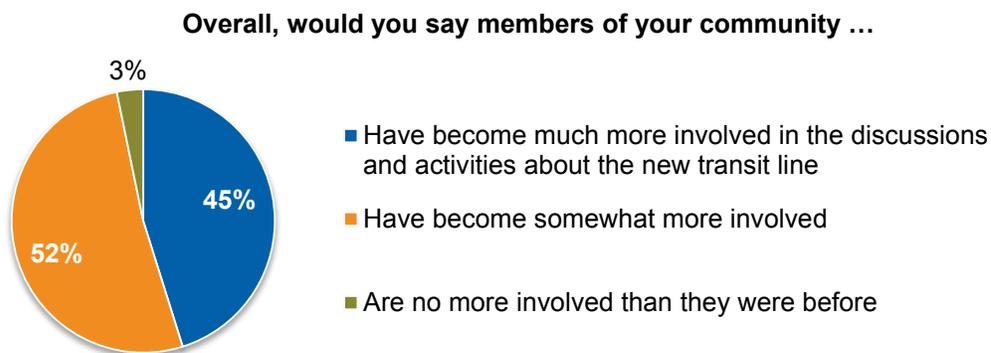
17. Participation in grant activities by interviewed community participants (N=34)



The change in the level of involvement of community residents in activities and discussions around transit is also important to highlight. It must be noted that the participants who were selected for interviews were clearly among the most deeply engaged, and cannot be presumed to represent the average community member reached by grantees. Nevertheless, it is clear that there has been an increase in community members' level of involvement in discussions and activities about the new transit lines since before the grantees' outreach activities began:

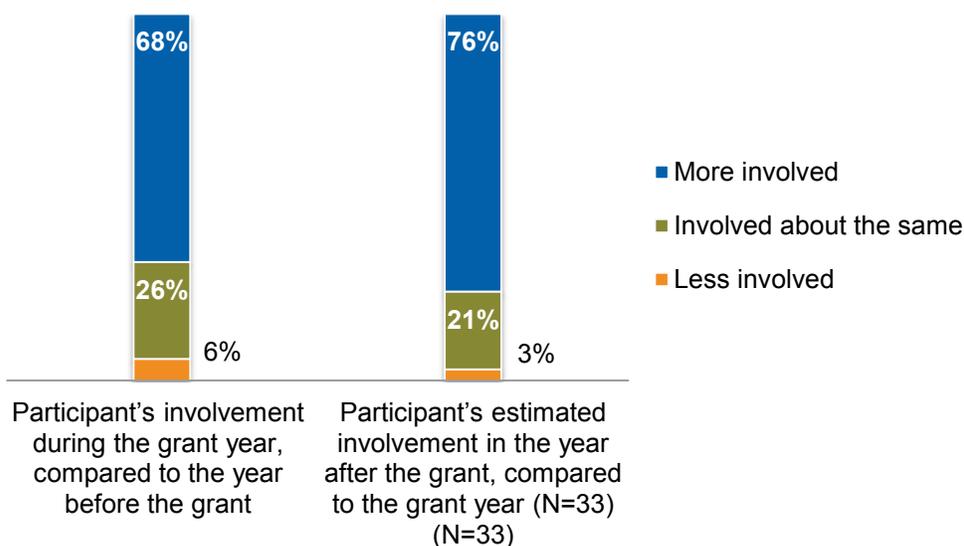
- 97% of interviewed community participants said residents in their community have become somewhat or much more involved in discussions and activities about the new transit line compared to before the grantees' outreach activities (Figure 18).
- 68% of interviewed community participants said their personal level of involvement increased compared to before their involvement with the grantees (Figure 19).
- 76% of interviewed community participants said they plan on being more involved in the next year (after the grant) than they were during the grant, with 21% saying their involvement would remain about the same. Only three percent said they would have less involvement.

18. Participants' estimate of overall community involvement (N=31)



Source: Community participant interviews, Rounds 1 and 2, 2013-2014.

19. Future involvement community participants expect for themselves



Source: Community participant interviews, Rounds 1 and 2, 2013-2014.

Is there any evidence that planning decisions are more beneficial for low-income and other historically underrepresented groups?

Balcony-level analysis

Though this is one of the core long-term goals of the Corridors of Opportunity initiative, the question of whether planning decisions are more beneficial for low-income and historically underrepresented groups cannot be answered definitively after only three years of the CoO initiative. Nonetheless, there is some evidence indicating that some planning decisions already made may have beneficial outcomes for low-income and historically underrepresented groups. Across the different respondents over the two years of interviews, it was clear that community members became more aware of transit planning and related issues, became more engaged, and learned how to advocate for their communities' issues and priorities to policymakers and planners. This change, alongside public agencies' changes in attitudes and practices towards community involvement and input in decision making processes, increases the likelihood that planning decisions will reflect the needs of historically underrepresented communities more than has been done in the past. This also reflects the responses of most grantees saying they either accomplished or made a lot of progress on their stated goals for their grants, which centered on having their communities' issues and priorities heard by decision makers.

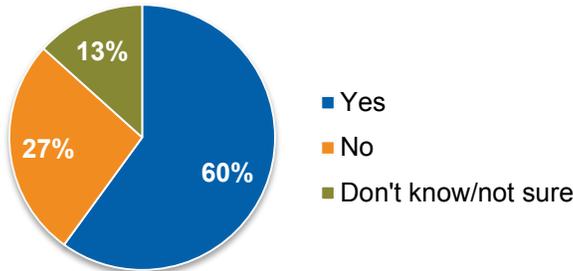
In addition to these changes, there are some examples of actual impacts on planning decisions that could also have long-term benefits, such as helping shape the community's response to the draft environmental impact statement for planning in their community, providing small business training to community members and small business support, working with public agencies to improve affordable housing, participating in the development of the Fair Housing Equity Assessment, and informing the preferred selection of a corridor route being developed that will be more accessible for their community. Some grantees' work has even begun to span beyond transit and into addressing other related community concerns, such as health equity. All these seem to point to some examples of outcomes of this work that could have potential long-term benefits for historically underrepresented communities, but ongoing commitment to equity and community input throughout planning and decision making processes will be necessary to ensure that these long-term benefits to these communities are realized.

Many of the engagement efforts addressed long-term planning decisions, the consequences of which will not be known for many years. However, some long-term benefits can be foreseen. Some have already been mentioned in the section on grantee impacts, such as better light rail access for people with disabilities, entrepreneurial training for immigrants in three communities that are likely to increase access to income and wealth, and the adoption of development guidelines in one grantee's community that address a number of community priorities including affordable housing.

Almost all of the grantees said they think their communities will be better off in the long run as a result of the work they did with the engagement grants. At the end of the second round of grants, 60 percent of community observers said they knew of a public agency plan or decision that used input from historically underrepresented communities that they expect will have a long-term benefit for the quality of life in the community (Figure 20).

20. Plans with long-term community benefits (N=15)

Observers: In the past 3 years, do you know of any public agency plan or decision that has used input from historically underrepresented communities and that you expect to have long-term benefits to the quality of life of the community?



Source: Community observer interviews, Round 2, 2014.

When grantees were asked for examples about what will be different for community members in the long run because of their grant work, they most frequently cited the community's increased awareness, education, and/or knowledge about transit development. They also described how the community is more engaged, and the community members now expect to be involved in planning processes and to be able to impact future planning.

Similarly, grantees frequently described the community as having increased capacity to influence planning and policies. They also described how they have built key relationships and partnerships in the community with other organizations and agencies, and that they will continue to act as a bridge between the community and agencies, providing increased access to decision makers. Finally, some grantees said that community members now have more access to jobs locally, and that their communities as a whole are coming together more and having a greater sense of identity and ownership.

One public agency counterpart and a county official both summarized this amalgamation of benefits, both short- and long-term, for the community as a result of the CoO work and the community engagement efforts, saying:

In my work, what we're trying to promote is a long term benefit around livability, sustainability, prosperity. How do you get there? It is a constellation, a cluster of high value opportunities connected to the community. Viable affordable housing in proximity with good education and living wage jobs - transportation is connecting the dots on those. Prosperity, livability, sustainability. (Public agency counterpart, Round 2)

A huge part of it is...there are different folks in the room that wouldn't be in the room...and so...there are so many more voices allowed to be a part of these planning decisions, and that, by its very nature, fundamentally changes outcomes and those outcomes are destined to reflect ... a greater share of the community. (County official, CoO stakeholder group, 2014)

Challenges and lessons learned

Grantee challenges

Across both rounds of grants, the most common obstacles or challenges faced by grantees were limits due to their funding and organizational capacity.

Money – this work is not just a one-time funding kind of thing, we need way more than that to keep it going. (Grantee, Round 1)

In terms of activities that we were doing, it was very time-intensive because we relied on one-on-one engagement. ... We just didn't have enough staff capacity to engage more, which we wanted to be able to do. We really did the best we could, but we reached our capacity with the staff and resources that we had. It was a lot of time on the ground, and a lot of time coordinating with other community organizations and community meetings. The time we put into the activities was more than we even had for funding, so we put in the time beyond what we were funded to do. (Grantee, Round 1)

A second challenge relates to the technical complexity of many of the issues under consideration. These can be difficult to communicate to community members, especially when there are also language barriers and lack of previous knowledge about these issues.

Another common issue, especially during the second round, was dealing with the timing of public agencies' processes and decisions, which often did not easily fit with grantees' timelines, and sometimes even conflicted with them.

Another challenge is that with this work we have to [coordinate with] the planning and development schedules of the county and city. We can't determine when the comment period will happen, it's beyond our control. So we can train up leaders and gather information and hold sessions about how to comment, but if it gets pushed back six months, we don't have any control over that. (Grantee, Round 2)

One challenge was dealing with the speed at which that work occurs at the city and the county. We had aggressive timelines for the funding we received. With that, we had to learn how to negotiate things that weren't moving as quickly as we needed. We had questions in the process where it wasn't worthwhile to move ahead, if we had concern that the city or county would not let the project proceed. We had to wait, provide the proper feedback, and then move forward. (Grantee, Round 2)

Some grantees mentioned having to overcome and deal with their community's mistrust of public agencies and government officials, and some mentioned struggling to get some public officials and agencies to take them and their work seriously:

The barriers are on a daily basis in this work. Sometimes you talk to someone who doesn't even see the value of this at all because they have their own sets of policies for a long time and know we're a minority in the city, and we can't change their mind. Sometimes they don't take us seriously, and we feel like we waste time and effort on people who aren't going to listen to us. But that doesn't stop us from doing what we're supposed to do for our communities, and we keep pushing it. (Grantee, Round 2)

Another barrier for grantees working in corridors that are farther away from finalized plans and construction was maintaining the energy of the community around transit over time. One grantee shared some guidance to help other grantees make the future rail lines feel real for community members:

The best way to address that barrier was to have them envision the future of light rail and make it as real as possible for them. Even though the rail won't be done for a while, we had them envision themselves at that age and what the light rail development may mean for them in their lives at that point...and grasp that this is a real thing that's happening in the near future and it will affect their lives. ...Where would they go, and what types of jobs could be associated with light rail, what are the types of development that could happen with light rail. And showing them that the other side of it is that we do have examples like the Central line and the Hiawatha line that are already completed, so being able to show that this will be here in their community. That helped to engage community members and youth a bit more and get longer engagement on the topic. (Grantee, Round 1)

Public agency challenges

Public agencies often said their biggest challenges with engaging members of the community in transit planning were getting people to show up at public meetings, as well as communicating complex ideas related to transit development in a way that is easily understandable and informative for the community, especially when communicating across language divides and cultural differences.

Some public agency counterparts also mentioned challenges related to building trust with communities that may have historic mistrust of government agencies or may be uncomfortable talking with public officials. Often, they said that working with the CET and the grantees helped them to overcome some of these outreach, communication, and trust issues. However, it is worth noting that a couple of public agency counterparts mentioned that a grantee's lack of capacity, unrealistic expectations, and lack of knowledge of public agencies' processes were some challenges that they faced in engaging the community. Another echoed some grantees in saying that it was challenging for them to keep the community engaged and energized over the long-haul of transit planning, which takes several years.

A few public agency respondents mentioned that not having dedicated funding of their own for engagement had held them back, but that now they are making changes to their agencies with regards to resources, staffing, and funding for engagement activities.

It [community engagement grant work] provided a lens shift that allowed us [county agency] to pursue a grant resource around an equity-based engagement that was trying to reach out to under-represented communities. Some of those [grant] resources were specifically dedicated to those historically under-represented communities. I like to think we would have been reaching out to everyone anyway, but having the dedicated resources makes a difference... We are [also] starting to look at more dedicated resources for community engagement, like we hired a staff person as part of that grant. Also...on a related, but non-Corridors of Opportunity project, we have more dedicated community engagement staff, so it's a recognition that we need more resources in order to do this deeper connection with communities. (County official, CoO interview, 2014)

We have done a couple of things. One, we added new staff who are devoted to community outreach to communities of color and historically underrepresented communities and we have reoriented existing resources devoted to that. We are about to approve a policy that puts community outreach to communities of color and under-represented communities as a policy matter across all of our operating units. And, we are about to adopt our development guide called Thrive MSP 2040 and one of its five outcomes is equity. That equity principle and equity outcome is new and, like the other outcomes, is intended to influence ...all of our planning work that we do. (Met Council official, CoO interview, 2014)

Sustainability

The multiple levels of community engagement that were undertaken in the CoO were all intended to help shift the patterns of community engagement in the Minneapolis-St. Paul region. In the three years of initiative activities, one would only expect relatively modest and localized changes to be evident. However, the long-term vision is for a new pattern of community engagement to take hold in which it becomes the “new normal” for members of previously underrepresented communities to have a voice in development decisions that affect them, and for public agencies to take affirmative steps to assure that their voices are heard.

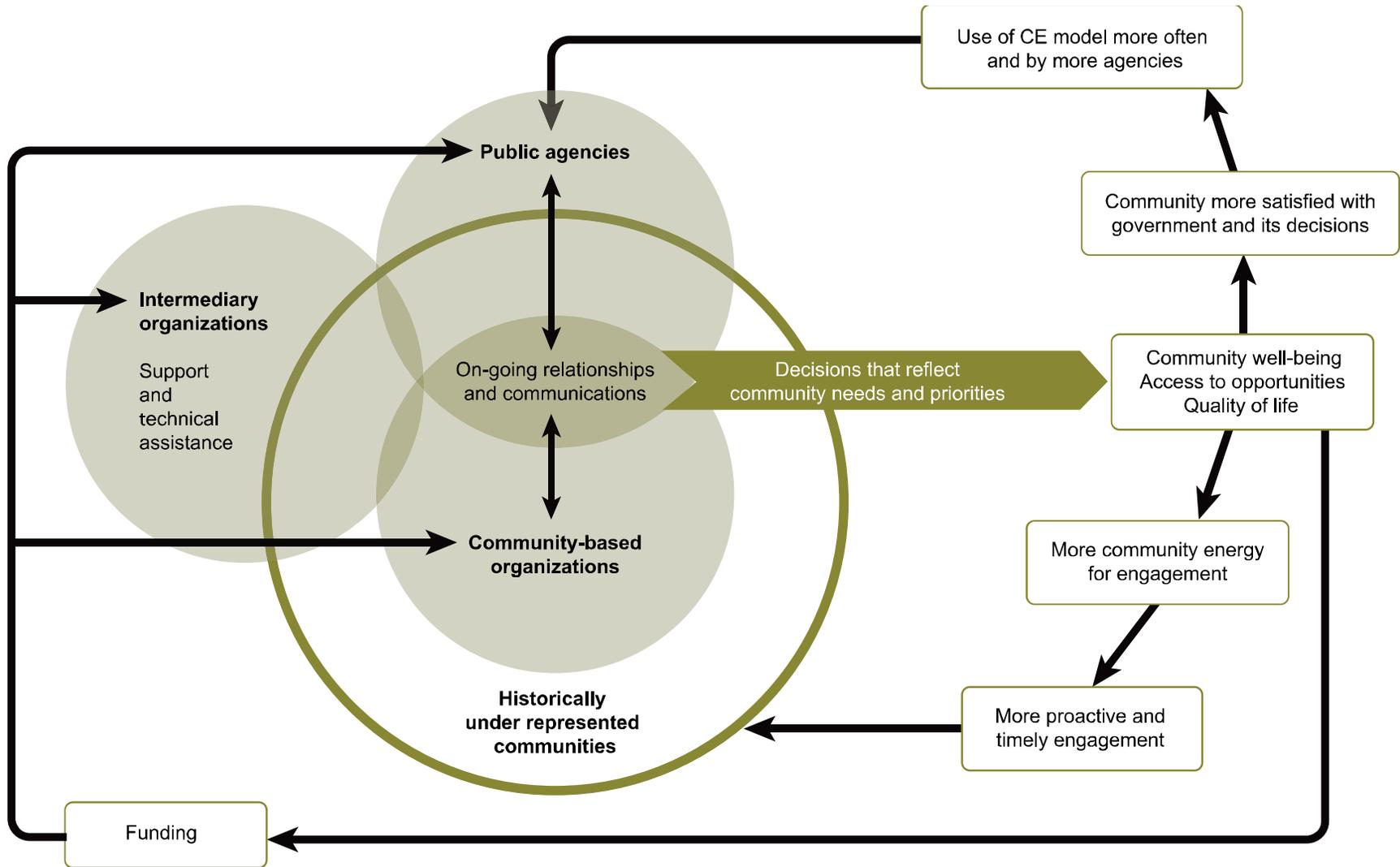
The diagram on the next page (Figure 21) shows in simplified form what such a long-term new state of community engagement might look like. In the vision, public agencies and historically underrepresented communities have on-going relationships and communications, typically but not solely organized by community-based organizations. These relationships and communications result in decisions that generally reflect the needs and priorities of the communities. As a result of these positive decisions, communities are strengthened, members are encouraged to participate more in the decision-making and are more likely to do so positively and proactively, which in turn strengthens both the community and its relationship to the agency. The community’s greater satisfaction with decisions also encourages public agencies to increase their commitment to the engagement model, strengthening the relationship from the agency side as well.

Note that this model envisions a continued role for intermediary organizations that are able to provide technical assistance, facilitation of relationship building, and “translation” of processes (especially technical ones) and cultural understanding. It also anticipates a continued need to

fund the intermediary organizations, the organizing work of the community agencies (which do not typically have funds of their own for this purpose), and the outreach efforts of the public agencies beyond the level at which they are currently funded. This funding is more likely to be made available if the outcomes of the engagement are seen to be beneficial to communities.

The theory of change for the CoO community engagement model posits that if enough parts of the overall system can be shifted during the three years of the CoO initiative through the aligned activities of the CoO partners, including the CET and the CE Steering Committee, the other CoO partner agencies including public agencies, and the grantees, then there is a chance that the way in which community engagement takes place will continue after the initiative, resulting in a new pattern of equitable outcomes, as shown in the diagram.

21. Vision for the longer-term state of community engagement in the Minneapolis-St. Paul region



Sustainability: locally and regionally

The sustainability of the Twin Cities community engagement model needs to be understood on two different levels: locally and regionally. At the local level, we ask whether the new practices put in place through the two rounds of grant funding appear likely to continue beyond the life of the grants, among the grantees and their community members or among the public agencies with whom they worked. At the regional level, we ask whether the larger patterns of community involvement – across multiple agencies and organizations, or among organizations not involved in the community engagement grants – appear to be taking hold in ways that will outlast the three years of the Corridors of Opportunity.



At the level of individual organizations, there is evidence of sustainable knowledge among CBOs and their community participants about public processes and new leadership skills and relationships. These are matched with increased awareness among agency counterparts of community needs and priorities. Similarly, there is a slight increase in agencies' positive attitudes toward engagement, matched by community members' greater awareness of (and more favorable attitudes toward) the new transit lines and related development. These changes have the potential to last beyond the duration of the grants. Almost all of the grantees expected to continue their activities beyond the grants, and about half had already secured additional funding, while the others were seeking it.

Grantees, and their participants, and community observers, all agree that most of the organizations that received community engagement funds will continue to be involved in decision-making processes beyond the end of the CoO initiative. They are in a position to build on their familiarity with the issues and priorities of their community members, especially – but not only – in connection with transit issues. They have also built relationships with public agency staff, know who to talk to, and understand agencies' processes. Some observers mentioned that they think grantees will work more together as a whole, expand their work beyond just transit-related issues, and have a greater sense of focus in their engagement work than before the grants.

Similarly, of those who provided a response, community observers most often said they believe grantee organizations will become more involved in decision-making processes moving forward beyond the Corridors of Opportunity initiative and funding now that they know who to talk to and understand agencies' processes. Most who responded said the likelihood of their continuing and the manner in which it continues is largely dependent on the grantee organizations' ability to find funding for engagement work.

Almost all of the interviewed grantees from both rounds said they plan on continuing their community engagement work after this grant funding ends. Almost all of them also said they plan on using the same or similar approaches as they were during the past year of grant funding, sometimes with modifications to meet the needs of their constituents.

About half of the interviewed grantees had already received additional funding to continue their work, and the other grantees said they were seeking additional funding. All of the grantees that received additional external funding said that they benefitted from being able to leverage their work through the Corridors of Opportunity. As one grantee explained:

We have been able to leverage the opportunity through the Corridors of Opportunity to get more funding and do more activities, like with the healthy living hub, small business training, etc. All that built off of this opportunity to do engagement work with this grant. (Grantee, Round 1)

Similarly, there are many references to how many members of the funded communities have become more aware of planning processes and what public agencies do. This has helped contribute to more effective community engagement because their requests are better aligned with the reality of public agencies' processes and timing constraints. There is also ample evidence that community members have developed more positive attitudes toward engagement and trust that their efforts will be listened to and taken into consideration in ways that will be beneficial to their communities. This sense of empowerment is likely to sustain the kinds of changes described above, if the agencies continue to heed their voices, especially as there is evidence that community members feel more optimistic about the impact of transit development on their communities, which could encourage their continued engagement. Combined with the evidence that more community members have developed leadership skills, and that they expect to continue their engagement at equal or greater levels in at least the coming year, this suggests another durable change at the grantee level, and one with the potential to ripple out from the immediate transit-related issues to other relevant community issues.

We're almost two years removed from when we first started, and the strides we've made from absolutely nothing to where we are now, it took a lot longer than we thought but we're very happy—residents are driving the strategies and implementations of our work and connecting them to decision makers. (Grantee, Round 1)

The youth at one school have used the project to leverage it and continue to do this light rail engagement among fellow students there. One student wanted to even interview me about light rail with work that he's doing with it on his own at his school. So, the students are coming back to me with how they're using the project in this way or that way, so the leadership development has happened and they continue to do the work afterwards. (Grantee, Round 1)

Among public agencies with whom grantees have worked, we see evidence that more staff now perceive community engagement (under the CoO model) as more useful, leading to better outcomes and reduced costs in the long run. Observers and agency representatives agree that agency staff now have more tools and strategies for engaging and knowledge of who to contact at the community-based organizations in their communities. There are several concrete examples of how engagement has led to durable changes in planning and/or programming. There have been several instances throughout the two rounds of interviews where public agency representatives mentioned seeking out new sources of funding to allow the continuation of comparable engagement, because of the value they had perceived in the grant-funded efforts. The existence of on-going sources of funding is one of the strongest possible indications of the likelihood of durable systems change to regular incorporation of the new model of engagement.

Some community observers were less than fully optimistic about the likelihood of these changes being sustained, citing the need for more funding and resources, as well as for having the community in institutionalized decision-making tables.

I am not as hopeful about [public agencies' engagement practices remaining different after the Corridors of Opportunity ends]. (Why not?) I think because we are not going to be meeting. When you are in the room together at the table, you hold each other accountable for things you have committed to or that you each are working on. Without that element of support and the challenges, I am not sure people will just believe in it enough to do it. It is too easy to fall into the regular way of working. (Community observer, Round 2)

I think that they all seem to have made various levels of general commitment to community engagement and their follow-through will depend upon the extent to which they devote internal resources to make that happen. (Community observer, Round 2)

Nonetheless, most observers expressed some kinds of important changes that they hope and/or expect public agencies will make in regards to community engagement moving forward.

I really think that's going to be a function of two steps moving forward: how informed they [CBOs] were, what standing they earned. Ideally, new leaders have been developed and that those communities are going to reach out or if they have institutionalized their voice somehow by being a part of the formal decision-making structure. Some of those more sustainable changes. Not just how you do it but who does it. (Community observer, Round 2)

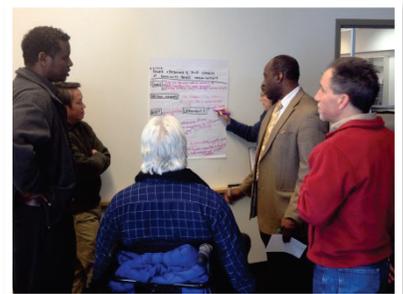
My hope is that public agencies will actually embrace community engagement. My expectations are that some of them will, on an individual basis, I'm not sure that the agencies as a whole will do it, but I think it's a step in the right direction to have individuals be committed to it and push their own agencies to move forward. (Community observer, Round 2)

I think that public agencies have found that doing true public engagement takes time and energy, but the outcomes are so much better that you need to make that part of your process. (Community observer, Round 2)

I think the public agencies have learned an incredible amount in terms of how to improve their work. My hope is that public agencies will take those lessons, want to learn more, and make it a practice of consulting with and compensating for their consultation. ... I think part of that will reflect whether or not there are the resources--staffing and funding--for community agencies to spend that time on the front end to do that outreach. There needs to be continued pressure. ... agencies need to understand how doing this type of outreach and engagement will save money in the long term. (Community observer, Round 2)

There are also several sources of evidence that public agencies have changed practices as well as policies related to engagement. It has been mentioned that Ramsey County has begun integrating community engagement into some of its RFPs, as well as putting forward an equity plan for engagement based on its experiences seeing the Policy Board and Community Engagement grants. Similarly, the Metropolitan Council is in the process of drafting its “Fostering Public Engagement Plan,” which outlines its commitment to and practices around public engagement into all its planning decisions moving forward. This includes ongoing, proactive engagement in communities, partnering with local community-based organizations to most effectively assess community needs and engage with their communities, and commitment to culturally appropriate and community-centered engagement planning. It is important to note here that the Community Engagement Steering Committee and other community members have been a part of the discussions around this document.

At the regional level, we also see evidence of changes that may be durable. These include the bridge-building and support-providing activities of the CET and the Community Engagement Steering Committee, which have not depended on the CoO grant. Given prior histories of tense relationships between some CBOs and public agencies, adoption of the new, more cooperative model of engagement will continue to be challenging. Ultimately the strongest incentive to change will be for CBOs and agencies to observe the new model and see it producing positive results. By the end of the two rounds of grants, multiple such examples were available and were noted by CoO stakeholders and by public agency counterparts. Some of these institutional policy changes include: Metropolitan Council’s drafting of their “Fostering Public Engagement Plan” in partnership with community members and leaders; Hennepin County’s hiring of community engagement staff with community members on the hiring committee; and Ramsey County putting forward an equity plan for engagement. There is also evidence that the model is being picked up and put into practice in venues that are not part of the CoO initiative.



CoO-related activities that appear likely to continue for at least some time include the existence of the Community Engagement Team (which from the start was funded from sources other than the CoO grant) and the Community Engagement Steering Committee (which has become largely self-organizing and also obtains no funding from the Sustainable Communities grant). Both of these serve as a clearinghouse for requests for information, best practices, and technical assistance materials. Both also are sources of support for efforts taking place at the regional level, including technical assistance not only to grantees and grantees' public agency counterparts, but also to other community-based organizations and agencies. Both will also continue to help promote, explain, and model the principles of community engagement and equity that have given life to the model. As one CET leader said, "You don't need to search high and low to find the Steering Committee or the CET. They [public agencies/officials, CBOs, community] can contact them easily now because those structures have a relationship with each other." (CET Focus Group, 2014)

Wider adoption of the community engagement model will likely take time. Some of the community observers interviewed for this evaluation make it clear that many public agencies do not yet fully appreciate the model and have not yet shown signs of adopting it, although these perceptions seemed to decrease more after the second round of grants. Some CBOs do not yet have the capacity to engage in the manner needed, and some have histories of conflict with public agencies that will be challenging to overcome. However, many sources of evidence throughout this evaluation indicate that one of the strongest incentives to change outreach and engagement practices in meaningful ways is the observation of the model of engagement in practice elsewhere that is producing valuable results. Since there are many such examples to be pointed to at this time, it is highly likely other public agencies will see reasons to at least try out the model for themselves.

Conditions needed for sustainability include continuation of existing relationships and processes that result in plans that all parties see as better. Without a doubt, however, the extent of the community engagement work occurring in the Corridors of Opportunity owes to a very significant extent to the availability of grant funds to drive the work, as noted by community observers:

Grants to agencies have made a huge difference in engaging the population and getting that input. If we had set up a task force it wouldn't have worked; there needs to be money behind it, it worked when we said we are going to hire you to do this work. (Community observer, Round 1)

It is important, therefore, to note that the biggest shared concern and factor that grantees, community observers, and public agencies noted as a condition for the sustainability of these community engagement efforts moving forward is **funding**. Funding is necessary for CBOs to continue this work, for public agencies to continue integrating community

engagement into their budgets and practices, and for intermediary organizations to continue (although the Community Engagement Steering Committee is self-sustaining).

Although all of the interviewed grantees either have already received or are currently seeking additional external funding to continue their community engagement work, they also described how they see leaders and volunteers that they trained in the community as sustaining this work:

But I think it's more about continuity than it is reach. If it's a long time with this work, it's important that we're not only able to engage everyone, but also able to keep this work going over such a long period with construction and afterwards. So we need to continue to increase leaders and the knowledge base and that can expand in numbers. (Grantee, Round 1)

Community observers also mentioned the need to assess and learn from the work done so far to improve engagement, as well as the need for both public officials and citizens to hold each other accountable for continuing the work. Finally, observers noted that public agencies need to realize that community engagement reduces long-term costs and improved outcomes, which should be an incentive for them to continue this work.

I think that there has to be a realization among agencies that "early and often" public engagement actually ends up reducing costs, because...when you look at the totality of the process, if the community's been engaged early enough, it's not to say everyone will be happy with decisions because there are always going to be unhappy people, but the likelihood of lawsuits, which cost money, would be reduced, and the process would go smoother and faster for government and government agencies saves money. (Community observer, Round 2)

Fund it. I think if the public agencies have had better experiences, with more meaningful input from community members, then public agencies should find funding to be able to do this. (Community observer, Round 2)

I think we have to hold ourselves accountable to the commitments that we've made with our Corridors of Opportunity partners. And there's something that I've learned: with inequality and inequities, we tend to admire the problem but never take actions to close the gaps. And part of that is that you're always searching for a best practice, but there aren't many out there because inequity is growing, not shrinking. I now am convinced that it's time to stop searching for best practices ... We've got really good ideas around the table ... and we need to dare to fail, and in the process, we will create our own best practices. (Community observer, Round 2)

The community engagement work that has been funded over the past two years appears likely to be sustained not only through some grantees' ability to obtain additional external funding, but also through the community leadership and mobilization that all of the interviewed grantees helped to develop in their own respective communities around transit-related issues.

If sources of funding can also be found to assist community-based organizations to build and maintain the capacity needed to do the organizing, chances are high that the model will be increasingly adopted. The commitment of The McKnight Foundation to provide funding for a third round of grants is a promising step in this direction. As a CET leader summarized about the impact of grants and the CET's work on shifting the landscape around equity in transit development:

The fact there's a third year of community engagement [funding] is because equity was a driver of the conversation at the table. I remember [a public official] saying, 'There's no place in the region that I can have a conversation about TOD and community engagement at this caliber as we do at this table, and this needs to keep going'... And he said, 'I don't come here because of the money, I come here because of equity and regional competitiveness.' That's powerful! (CET Focus group, 2014)

Conclusion

Evidence of durable change

After only three years of community engagement activity through the CoO, much has been accomplished. The work appears to have had an impact on direct policy and planning outcomes that will benefit historically underrepresented communities in the long run. There are also indicators of durable change that have the potential to create a “new normal” for how transit planning and potentially other types of public planning are done moving forward.

As the data show, public agencies’ perception of the value of community engagement for their work is much more positive than it was prior to the grants. Agencies have also increased their overt efforts to include the perspectives of the community earlier in the planning process. These changed perceptions that have impacted actual planning practices are likely to continue having an impact on how public agencies approach engagement moving forward. As one high-ranking city official described:

The outreach to communities, particularly communities of color, I do think that is going to remain. So, in other words, anybody who is doing transit planning in the future...has the model that we've set up here, the process and the approach to engaging folks...early in the process, don't be afraid of diverse voices...there's a whole bunch of elements that I think are really significant that are going to remain in place. (City official, CoO interview, 2014)

As one Hennepin County official said, “We are creating a community engagement plan and that will do a much better job of including people, being more inclusive.” The Partnership for Regional Opportunity, the one-year successor to the Corridors of Opportunity, has incorporated equity into all of its activities and also has, as one of its four working groups, a Regional Equity and Engagement work group to continue to expand and embed the CE work of the CoO. One of its tasks is to develop a toolkit for public agencies and other organizations to help with doing engagement and equity work, with a focus on systems change.

The data also show an increase in community-based organizations’ capacity to do effective engagement work that impacts public planning decisions. This includes increases in knowledge about public agency processes and tools for effectively bringing community voices to the table with decision makers. This increase in capacity appears likely to continue, as supported by grantees feedback. Furthermore, there has also been an increase in partnerships and strengthening of relationships among community-based organizations, which will further empower these organizations to continue this work beyond the grant. It

could also likely result in more coordinated, strategic efforts, as seen by the formation of the Blue Line coalition.

Not only is there evidence to suggest that public agencies and community-based organizations will carry this work forward, but individual community members are now positioned to do so as well, through changes in their perceptions and knowledge about transit development and planning processes, how to advocate for their community's needs and priorities to decision makers, and their perceptions about the potential positive impact that TOD could have on their community. These make the community's commitment and buy-in much more durable over the long-run. Moreover, the increased level of engagement and leadership training amongst the community make it more likely that community members will be able to sustain the organizing, advocacy, and engagement work beyond the grants, as suggested by both the grantees and the community participants. Even more important is the increased sense of power that community members and community-based organizations have described from this experience, knowing that they are able to impact public planning and get public officials to hear their voices and take them seriously. This is an impact that is likely to endure beyond this grant, especially if community-based organizations are able to sustain their focus (and the needed resources to do so).

At the “bigger picture” level, there has been a clear shift in the dialogue around equity and engagement amongst leaders and officials, and this appears likely to not simply die out with the end of the Corridors of Opportunity initiative. There are a few reasons for this. First, equity became embedded into the leadership framework as one of two core outcomes, not just as a hopeful outcome or guiding principle. In fact, one CET leader described how they no longer needed to bring up equity at the Policy Board by the end of the initiative because others at the table had internalized it as an essential part of the work:

I always hold up the fact that one of two outcomes for CoO was equity. Before it was not an outcome, it was a principle. For some, even just a value. But it wasn't a guiding principle... So then to get to equity being one of two outcomes of the work [that was big]. To have someone other than CET bring up equity in Policy Board meetings was a huge outcome. I'm stunned sometimes at the Policy Board table when I never have to say anything about equity because other people are constantly driving the equity issue. That capacity was not there when we first kicked off. And now people will say, 'Wait a minute! Where's the equity piece?' That's capacity at some of the top leaders in our region that are now engaged in equity conversations and they couldn't do that in 2010 and beginning of 2011. (CET Focus Group, 2014)

This change has extended into the greater Corridors of Opportunity vision and activities as evidenced by the development of an increased capacity amongst key organizations, planners, and agencies to embed equity and engagement in planning across sectors. When describing the racial equity assessment toolkit for which Hennepin County and Nexus provided training, one CET member said:

Everybody walked out [of the training] saying how great the conversations and training was, and they've already set up a date for follow-up with what they're going to do with what they learned. That kind of systems receptivity and response would not have happened without the ground work that's been laid around equity. The plan was to bring folks from community training and County together, and many of those in the community training were part of the granting process. So, again, I think the way systems are beginning to be more flexible around this stuff is part of the new environment that's been created. (CET Focus Group, 2014)

Although this shift in dialogue around equity is one important factor contributing to the overall outcome of equity, the work of the CET model also contributed to this outcome by shifting how decisions were being made and the infrastructural underpinnings of CBOs to have the capacity to do this type of grassroots engagement. By providing the grants and technical assistance to grantee organizations, the capacity and infrastructure for CBOs to do this type of effective, community-based grassroots organizing work was made possible. These efforts, alongside the bridging work of the CET connecting CBOs to public agencies and officials, helped to impact the way that decisions are made, bringing community members and CBOs into the decision-making processes earlier and in a more proactive manner. The three broader shifts—alongside other external factors—largely contributed to some of the equitable outcomes of this work.

Not only are equity and engagement more broadly integrated across sectors, but the CoO's community engagement work helped to create cross-sector integration, bringing people together who normally would not have done so, which leads to more leaders and voices involved with the “bigger picture,” coordinated planning across the corridors. This shift in the transit-planning landscape is unlikely to revert because of the many different players involved: 19 different community-based organizations and hundreds (at least) of new community leaders; public agency staff at multiple levels of responsibility in cities and counties across the region; staff in multiple departments and levels of the Metropolitan Council; and other CBOs, developers, nonprofits, and foundations who observed the benefits of the new model and in many cases have also begun to adopt it.

The public agency piece couldn't shift the landscape by itself; community, no matter how passionately informed and committed, couldn't have changed the landscape by itself; philanthropy couldn't have changed it by itself. Slowly but surely, the private sector is now walking up on this thing. [The Chambers of Commerce] has expressed a hunger to bring the for-profit community to this engagement thing. That's different! Things are working in a much more integrated and coordinated way, and that's extremely important. CET's work by itself isn't going to change the landscape. No individual thing alone will change the landscape. The environment that we've helped to create that allows that integration and movement of multiple sectors and creating this common space around equity that they gravitate towards, that's been huge. (CET Focus Group, 2014)

In order to help ensure that this shift in the way things are done becomes embedded into regular practices, the Community Engagement Steering Committee is going to continue its work, taking on new leadership and a new structure (three subcommittees) to help focus its work moving forward, continuing the “democratization of expertise” for historically underrepresented communities in planning. Further, the CET leaders are working on the language for an ongoing partnership between the three different organizations that they represent, integrating shared work between the three organizations beyond the formal existence of the CET.

Not only has the CoO’s community engagement work had an impact within the Corridors of Opportunity initiative, but it has also had ripple effects into the other spheres:

The ripple effect... I’m proud that even though our work was captured in CoO, you could see others learning from the work and figuring out how to practice. Whether it’s Ramsey or Hennepin County or City of Minneapolis, now they’re paying attention. [City leadership] is now locked in on this stuff. The ripple effect is not concentrated and contained, equity has spread. I was worried it would get boxed in and assigned only to a small group of people. But instead we have this big expansive sense of ownership. (CET Focus Group, 2014)

Not only is there evidence of potential durable change beyond the grants, but it also has the potential to be embedded beyond transit-planning, spreading equity into public planning processes and decisions. As one high-ranking city official put it:

You’ve created these avenues for creative engagement, created these avenues for community voice. I think that matters in the long run. You’ve opened some doors that are going to be awfully hard to shut in the future. And by demonstrating that this can work, that this can be positive, that this can add value, it makes it awfully hard to say now, ‘We’re not doing that anymore.’ And, if you look at what the federal government is requiring, in order to be competitive for federal funding, it requires precisely these kinds of things. So, these tools, these strategies will help you more effectively compete. (City official, CoO interviews, 2014)

Not finished yet

Despite all the accomplishments of the CET, the Steering Committee, the grantees, and all the CoO organizational members, there is still work that needs to be done in order to make sure that the accomplishments over the past three years are solidified as the “new normal.” As described earlier, it is important that funders recognize the importance of doing effective community engagement earlier in the planning process, ensuring greater equity in decisions that are more likely to have a positive benefit for historically underrepresented communities. The McKnight Foundation has already shown their commitment to engagement work by funding an additional round of community engagement grants. However, funders, including public agencies themselves, need to

carry the torch by providing the funds, resources, partnerships, and technical assistance needed to implement community engagement efforts, especially amongst community-based organizations.

Although public agencies have made great strides in changing their views and practices with community engagement—and some have made institutional policy changes to reflect those new commitments—there is still a great need to have community engagement and equity institutionalized into agencies’ policies in order to ensure a sustained commitment moving forward. The majority of public agency counterparts that said their public agency has made changes in the way they involve community members in planning processes also said that they were in practice only, not institutionalized by a policy change. Though it is critical that communities and leaders hold public officials and agencies accountable to continuing equity-centered engagement work, it is also important that public agencies institutionalize these practices into their regular policies.

The scope of the grants covered a wide range of communities and corridors. However, as was made evident by these grants, doing the engagement work effectively requires continued capacity building for community-based organizations to do proactive community engagement work on their own. Ongoing capacity building not only includes receiving funds to do this work, but also receiving the technical assistance, expertise, guidance, and relationship-bridging that this cross-sector work requires. This further shows the need for organizations like the CET and the Community Engagement Steering Committee to continue providing such assistance and coordination.

Finally, community-based organizations and public agencies will need to find new ways to keep their communities energized and engaged in these issues over the long term to ensure that decisions are made that are accountable to the communities’ needs and priorities in planning. This is especially the case in corridors where transit is still quite a few years away from breaking ground (e.g., Bottineau and Gateway). Keeping the communities engaged and energized over a long period is a difficult task not only because of the duration but also because it can remain an abstract concept until actual construction begins; hence the important role of community organizations and intermediaries to translate the planning process and transit information into a concretely understandable format.

Moving forward

During the three years of the CoO, a strong foundation has been laid by the CET, the Steering Committee, the grantees, and public agencies to strengthen community engagement practices in the region. From this base, much can still be accomplished to benefit and empower of

historically underrepresented communities and ensure equity is embedded in public planning processes and decisions.

It is important to keep in mind that although much has been accomplished and the energy and foundation has been built to carry equity and engagement into other areas beyond transit and beyond the grants, historical patterns of underrepresentation were not expected to be fully addressed or resolved as a result of this work alone. The resolution of long-standing inequities will likely require broader institutional change and commitment to addressing these issues, which have been adopted as part of the charge to the CoO's successor initiative, the Partnership for Regional Opportunity.

The evaluation finds evidence that the work to date has helped create significant energy and momentum to help sustain the work. The shift in dialogue around and integration of the principles of equity, inclusion, and engagement in planning processes and communities' increased capacity to influence planning have laid the foundation for potentially more equitable and beneficial outcomes for historically underrepresented communities moving forward. Sustained success demands continued institutional commitment, funding, and energy.

Appendix

Community Engagement Team vision, values, and objectives

For more information see <http://engagetc.org/>

The Community Engagement and Outreach Project is a fundamental element in the Sustainable Communities Grant. Its purpose is to ensure that underrepresented communities are engaged and that leadership from these communities is developed. It is also to assure that engagement leads to systematic change in the decision making process beyond the three year time period of the grant. The community engagement work is not intended to fund the traditional public sector outreach and engagement responsibilities for transitways and land use. To accomplish this project, the Corridors of Opportunity established a Community Engagement Team to advise the Corridors of Opportunity policy board on matters of community engagement and on how to use these funds.

The CET's purpose is to develop and support targeted strategies that engage underrepresented communities in planning, decision-making, and implementation processes on and around transit-oriented corridors. The CET will develop strategies that promote social equity, inclusion and access to economic opportunity. Community engagement should focus not only on equitable process but also on equitable outcomes for underrepresented communities.

The CET's approach is to build on existing community assets while supporting innovation and tailored community engagement strategies that secure the inclusion of marginalized communities.

The CET will do this by:

1. Advise the Policy Board on issues of equity and report on the effectiveness of community engagement strategies across the corridors.
2. Develop general guidelines and strategies for outreach and engagement that will guide investments in this area.
3. Develop strategies to engage underrepresented communities in the planning process and ensure their continued participation throughout implementation. Identify core issues and opportunities affecting those communities. Work with participants to develop shared ownership of the process.
4. Reduce potential conflicts and increase trust based relationships.
5. Recommend funding allocations and recipients to the Policy Board.
6. Meet regularly with the corridor project managers and help them develop appropriate community engagement strategies.

7. Facilitate strong alliances across local communities within our region. Partner with public agencies and implementers to ensure a vital community engagement process, bridging gaps between traditionally marginalized communities and the planning processes for public infrastructure investments.

The CET will bring this vision and these values to the work

1. Sustainability means equitable investments in all of our communities and neighborhoods that support residents leading healthy, safe, affordable and productive lives within a clean environment.
2. In our regional planning processes, we will:
 - a. Ensure that populations traditionally marginalized – low income, new immigrant and communities of color – participate in the long range vision for our region and our regional transitways.
 - b. Engage all stakeholders – underrepresented and traditionally marginalized communities – in meaningful decision making roles
 - c. Ensure greater transparency and accountability to communities in planning, research and data collection, evaluation, implementation, and investments in our region.
3. Reduce social and economic disparities in our region.
4. Respect, value, and support local communities and neighborhoods.
5. Build inclusive sustainable communities free from discrimination.
6. Prevent displacement of communities along transitway corridors and mitigate negative impacts of gentrification.

In our commitment to these vision and values, the Community Engagement Team will be accountable and transparent to our partners – populations traditionally marginalized-low income, new immigrant, and communities of color, local communities and public agencies.

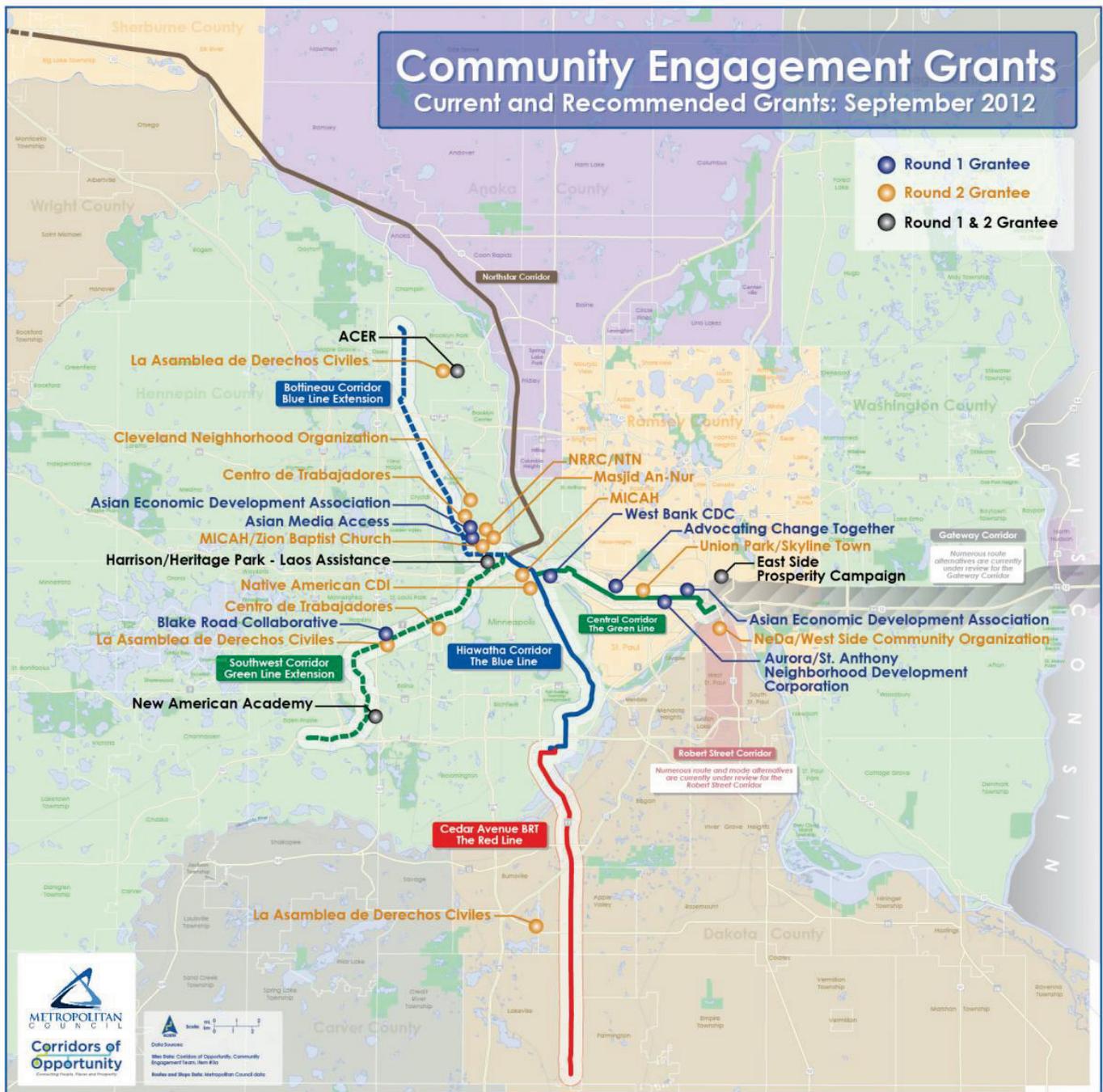
Community Engagement Team Work Plan Objectives:

- Objective 1: Advise the Policy Board on issues of equity and community engagement.
- Objective 2: Develop a community based working group to advise and support the CE Team.
- Objective 3: Design and Implementation of the RFP process.
- Objective 4: Capacity – building with community organizations.
- Objective 5: Support equity in engagement and leadership.
- Objective 6: Capacity building with government agencies.
- Objective 7: On-going and iterative evaluation.

Table of grantees, award amounts, and corridors

	Corridor(s)	Round 1	R1 amount	Round 2	R2 amount	TOTAL
Advocating Change Together (ACT)	Central	Implementation	\$39,700			\$39,700
African Career, Education, and Resource (ACER)	Bottineau	Implementation	\$30,000	Implementation	\$30,000	\$60,000
Asian Economic Development Association (AEDA)	Central, Bottineau	Implementation	\$45,000			\$45,000
Asian Media Access	Bottineau	Implementation	\$30,000			\$30,000
Aurora-St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation (ASANDC) and Just Equity	Central	Implementation	\$60,000			\$60,000
Blake Road Corridor Collaborative	Southwest	Implementation	\$30,000			\$30,000
Eastside Prosperity Campaign	Gateway	Implementation	\$40,000	Implementation	\$25,000	\$65,000
Harrison Neighborhood Association	Bottineau	Implementation	\$45,000	Implementation	\$45,000	\$90,000
New American Academy	Southwest	Implementation	\$30,000	Implementation	\$30,000	\$60,000
West Bank CDC & Somali Action Alliance	Central	Implementation	\$47,086			\$47,086
Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en la Lucha	Interchange, Bottineau, Southwest			Capacity	\$10,000	\$10,000
La Asamblea de Derecho-Civiles	Bottineau, Cedar, Southwest			Capacity	\$10,000	\$10,000
Cleveland Neighborhood Association	Bottineau			Capacity	\$10,000	\$10,000
Masjid an-Nur	Bottineau			Capacity	\$10,000	\$10,000
Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing (MICAH)	Bottineau, Southwest			Implementation	\$30,000	\$30,000
Native American Community Development Institute (NACDI)	Hiawatha			Implementation	\$35,000	\$35,000
Neighborhood Development Alliance	Robert Street			Implementation	\$20,000	\$20,000
Northside Residents Redevelopment Council	Bottineau			Implementation	\$30,000	\$30,000
Union Park District Council	Central			Implementation	\$28,000	\$28,000
Total grant amount awarded			\$282,086		\$313,000	\$670,086

Corridor map of grantees



Community Engagement Steering Committee Policy

Community Engagement Steering Committee BUILDING OFF OF OUR WORK:

January 2012 - Community Engagement Steering Committee purpose:

To ensure underrepresented communities are a powerful voice in creating an equitable regional transit system.

We will work with community stakeholders and policy makers to:

- Set regional standards for community engagement.
- Ensure underrepresented communities can leverage community benefits.
- Secure equitable development from public investments in our regional transitways.
- Provide a space for grassroots groups to learn from and support each other.
- Expand resources to build the capacity of community groups to influence transitway planning.
- Consult and advise Community Engagement Team, policy makers, and Corridors of Opportunity Advisory Board on matters relating to community engagement across corridors.

March 12, 2012 Community engagement steering committee recommendations to Chair Haigh, Metro Transit, and SWLRT project staff – CACs will:

- A. Be a community driven body with staff support.
- B. Be a resource and check point for community engagement by reviewing and approving a corridor project community engagement plan.
- C. Identify issues and assign problem solving teams that include community members and project staff.
- D. Elect a representative member on the transitway corridor policy advisory committee/management committee.
- E. Be formed early in the scoping phase of the transitway corridor planning process.
- F. Membership will be selected by communities they represent.
- G. Elect a chairperson who represents a grassroots community.
- H. Have the ability to set their own agenda, pass motions, and make recommendations to the corridor policy advisory committee/management committee.
- I. Will be combined with Business Advisory Committees ensuring coordinated issues and efforts.
- J. CE Steering committee will support project staff with connections to underrepresented groups i.e.:
- K. Faith communities; Cultural communities; Place based groups; Communities of color ; Small and Ethnic businesses; Community Engagement Steering Committee members; Disability community; New immigrant communities; Low-income communities; Students at high schools, community colleges
- L. Orientation will include a focus on environmental justice, equitable development, and cultural awareness.
- M. Construction Communication Committees set up at least one month in advance of construction, with representatives appointed by community groups.

May 2nd, 2012 Community Engagement Steering Committee recommendations to the Committee of the Whole requested that the Metropolitan Council:

- A. Be a regional leader in setting standards for community engagement.
- B. Include Community Engagement standards as a distinct section in the Thrive MSP 2040 plan.
- C. Form a working group of Community Engagement Steering Committee members and Metropolitan Council staff to create the Community Engagement standards for the Thrive MSP 2040 Plan.

July 18th, 2013 Community Engagement Steering Committee sends a letter to Chair Haigh asking for follow up on their May 2012 recommendations and to meet with the newly formed Equity Working Group at the Metropolitan Council resulting in:

- Meeting with Pat Born, September 2013
- Meeting with Chair Haigh, October 2013

October 2013 - present: Community Engagement Steering Committee and Metropolitan Council senior staff begin meeting monthly to rewrite the Metropolitan Council's Public Participation Plan which is required by the federal government for transportation planning. The new plan is being called the Public Engagement Plan which will now cover all of Metropolitan Council activities. The final draft will go before the Metropolitan Council in June 2014 followed by a community engagement process for feedback on the plan.

November 2013 - present: Community Engagement Steering Committee under the leadership of Southwest LRT communities begin the process of drafting Equitable Development Principles and Scorecard. The leadership group met with Hennepin County Community Works to negotiate inclusion of equitable development into the Southwest Investment Framework.

Grantee organization profiles

Community Engagement Steering Committee Organizational profiles September 2013

The Community Engagement Steering Committee is comprised of grassroots leaders from communities of color and low-income communities along the Gateway Corridor, Central Corridor LRT, Cedar BRT, Southwest LRT, Bottineau Transitway, Northstar, and Robert Street who meet monthly to develop strategies based on our shared experiences and knowledge to strengthen regional policies on community engagement. For more information please visit our [website](#).

***Advocating for Change Together** <http://www.selfadvocacy.org/index.htm>

ACT is a grassroots constituency-driven organization, established in 1979 as a reaction to organizations that were not identifying persons with disabilities as being capable of making decisions about their lives. Their project ACT for Equity bring information, concerns issues and suggestions to the many existing organizations and agencies along the Central Corridor.

***African Economic Development Solutions** <http://aeds-mn.org/>

African Economic Development Solutions (AEDS) works with African immigrants in building wealth within its communities through its economic development activities and link to resources by working with partner neighborhood organizations. AEDS established an economic development model that fits the need and helps build wealth within African immigrant communities. AEDS launched Little Africa as a cultural district along the Central Corridor LRT. AEDS has organized 20 businesses owned by African immigrants to create visibility for those businesses and draw more customers by marketing the area as [Little Africa](#).

***Asian Economic Development Association** <http://www.aeda-mn.org/>

Created by University Avenue Asian business owners in St. Paul, AEDA is a nonprofit grassroots economic development organization that provides access to resources, training, advocacy and community-driven planning. AEDA created a team of culturally competent Community Outreach Ambassadors to organize and engage the Southeast Asian communities along Central Corridor and Bottineau Corridor.

***Asian Media Access** <http://www.amamedia.org/>

Led by Asian Media Access, the Asian Pacific American Community Network (APA ComMNet) coalition has worked together since 2005 to actively challenge the existing cultural and linguistic barriers regarding engagement on state and local initiatives, and access to information and services for health and well-being issues in the Asian American Pacific Islander community. Their project utilized media and technology for engaging communities, institutions, and businesses, especially under-represented Asians along the Bottineau Corridor, in voicing their opinions and needs related to the line and livability in the area, which will improve analyses, plans and designs processes, and fostering economic and civic vitality for marginalized communities.

***African Career, Education, & Resource Inc.**

<http://www.acerinc.org/programs/health-wellness/making-transit-meaningfu/>

African Career, Education and Resource (ACER) is a volunteer-driven, community-based organization in Brooklyn Park founded in 2008 to close the resource and information disparities within Minnesota's communities of African descent and help those communities achieve societal and economic independence. ACER focus their project on engaging business owners, youth and apartment residents from underrepresented groups in the northern and northwestern suburbs along the Bottineau Transitway. ACER's engagement message targets African immigrants and African Americans through a series of community forums, small group meetings and media publications.

***Aurora St. Anthony NDC** <http://www.aurorastanthy.org/>

Aurora St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation (ASANDC) was founded in 1980 to foster positive relationships within and between the neighborhoods we serve and to support their members in effecting the quality of life in their communities. They partnered with JUST Equity, which is a regional network of African-American racial equity proponents who analyze the underpinnings of race/ethnicity and class within development dynamics to organize and advocate an improved quality of life for an African-American constituency historically excluded from development benefits. Their campaign trained low-income and African American resident leaders residing throughout St. Paul's Ward 1 to leverage transit-oriented development projects to further advance a Rondo Renaissance vision that allows for the preservation, enhancement, and restoration and healing of our community's cultural economy and longstanding neighborhood fabric into the future of University Avenue and the surrounding area.

***Blake Road Corridor Collaborative** <http://www.blakeroad.org/index.html>

Blake Road Corridor Collaborative (BRCC) is a partnership of community and governmental organizations that engages with neighborhood residents and local business owners/managers to undertake projects related to improving safety, supporting positive activities for youth, and improving neighborhood infrastructure, all aimed at improving the quality of life in the Blake Road neighborhood in Hopkins. Their project addresses the disconnect in communications between immigrant communities, other residents, and government representatives through the use of discussion circles, community-building projects, shared governance and ties with the Joint Community Police Partnership to provide active participation of their residents in the Southwest LRT project.

***Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en la Luchas** <http://ctul.net/>

Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en la Luchas (CTUL) is a low-wage Latino immigrant-led organization that is organizing for fair wages and working conditions for all workers in the Twin Cities metro area. The key to promoting sustainable, vibrant and healthy communities is ensuring that development leads to good jobs that pay living wages. There are three components of their project: research, education and outreach, and action and engagement. CTUL involve low-income Latino immigrants in planning, decision-making and implementation processes around The Interchange, and proposed connecting lines, to ensure that new jobs created are good jobs. A large percentage of CTUL members live in South Minneapolis and work in the surrounding suburbs, many working

at jobs along the proposed Bottineau and Southwest corridors. CTUL will use project funding to set up structures ensuring the long-term involvement of its constituency in corridor development.

***Cleveland Neighborhood Association** <http://www.clevelandneighborhood.org/>

The Cleveland Neighborhood Association serves the residents in the Cleveland Neighborhood of North Minneapolis. CNA organizes underrepresented residents around transportation equity issues by engaging them in the decision-making process using innovative outreach tools, built in collaboration with partner Works Progress, to build long-term involvement of residents in the Cleveland Neighborhood. CNA engages transit-dependent, low-income, people of color in the Cleveland neighborhood through a “bus shelter workshop toolkit” to inform them about transit development (Bottineau LRT, street cars, bus, etc.) and connect them with the neighborhood organization to empower those residents to have a voice in the decision-making process.

Community Stabilization Project <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Community-Stabilization-Project/163695520364889>

The mission of Community Stabilization Project (CSP) is to "inform, educate, advocate and organize socially and economically disadvantaged tenants and people of color to take action to preserve and increase the supply of affordable housing in the metro area. We fulfill our mission by working with the community to actively pursue policies that promote multiculturalism." CSP is committed to accomplishing its mission through anti-racist community building efforts that put its members in the lead. They are working on organizing tenants, preserving affordable housing and tenant advocacy along Central Corridor LRT to prevent displacement of low income, communities of color.

***Dayton’s Bluff Community Council** <http://www.daytonsbluff.org/>

The Dayton’s Bluff District 4 Community Council is a neighborhood organization designed to encourage participation in and awareness of the Dayton’s Bluff neighborhood. As a key partner in Engage East Side. Dayton’s Bluff community Council has been involved in the development of the Gateway Corridor and other transit plans in these core areas: education, community surveying and data dissemination, transit-related research, community events, and making connections with planners, key stakeholders and elected officials. Their current work brings together a resident leadership group to represent the community to the various transitway decision-makers (Gateway Commission, Washington and Ramsey Counties, the Metropolitan Council/Transit, and City Planning Departments). This project offers ongoing capacity-building efforts (leadership development, organizing training, etc.) to prepare the group for this role. Success for this project is to create an established community platform to involve residents in future development opportunities.

District Councils Collaborative <http://dcc-stpaul-mpls.org/>

The District Councils Collaborative of Saint Paul and Minneapolis (DCC) was formed in 2006 to facilitate neighborhood participation in the development of the Central Corridor Light Rail Transit (CCLRT) and ensure that the needs and interests of residents and businesses are represented. The DCC’s has nine Saint Paul District Councils and five

Minneapolis Neighborhood Associations who are members. DCC's program focus is the Central Corridor LRT line. The DCC provides the necessary civic infrastructure and coordination to its members to address the varied concerns arising from the vast changes brought about by the planning, development, and construction of the CCLRT project. It identifies priority corridor-wide issues, takes positions, and advocates for the best interests of the Central Corridor communities and those residing in them, especially those with high ethnic and economic diversity. The DCC also provides research and education, and works to strengthen the role of district councils and neighborhood associations in the planning and implementation process. Finally, the DCC is a strong and united community voice ensuring that the transit corridor project is a success for the entire community it will serve.

Chicano Latino Affairs Council <http://www.clac.state.mn.us/>

The Chicano Latino Affairs Council (CLAC) is a statewide government agency created by the legislature in 1978. The primary mission of CLAC is to advise the governor and the state legislature on the issues of importance to Minnesota's Chicano Latino community. Their interest in transit infrastructure investments is to increase economic development opportunities for the Latino communities in our region.

***Engage Eastside** <http://eesresidentnetwork.wordpress.com/>

Engage East Side is a coalition of organizations on the East Side of St. Paul, initiated and coordinated by Eastside Prosperity Campaign, that works to engage underrepresented communities in influencing transit planning and decisions. Our goal is to involve communities of color (which are the majority of the East Side's population) in local decision-making for development projects, beginning with a focus on the Gateway Corridor. As of its third year, Engage East Side has conducted a variety of activities to intentionally bring a multiplicity of community voices to discussions about transit development for the East Side by organizing residents, hosting community meetings, holding culturally specific conversations, conducting research, surveying residents, and ensuring that the East Side communities have a voice in the Gateway Corridor project.

***Harrison Neighborhood Association** <http://www.hnampls.org/>

Harrison Neighborhood Association (HNA) is a racially diverse community in North Minneapolis. HNA leads the Transit Equity Partnership, three organizations controlled by underrepresented communities committed to creating a transit system that equitably benefits the diverse racial, cultural, and economic groups that have been harmed by a century of discriminatory planning decisions that have marginalized and isolated our communities in North Minneapolis. The focus of their work is to ensure that the community-developed equity agenda is a priority in neighborhood, local government and area property owner decision-making going forward with the Bottineau Transitway planning process. This is being done in the following ways: (1) By training existing leaders and recently emerged leaders on how to advocate on behalf of the recently developed community position, (2) Forming a Van White Station Stop Stakeholders group (3) training and preparing resident leaders to advocate for their community in upcoming DEIS process in the county-sponsored Health Impact Assessment process, (4)

development of community priorities and positions for Bottineau line between Van White and Penn Avenue, and (5) connecting local leaders to corridor-wide efforts and processes.

***Heritage Park Neighborhood Association**

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Heritage-Park-Neighborhood-Association/327334808416>

The Heritage Park Neighborhood Association (HPNA) is a relatively new neighborhood organization on the Near Northside of Minneapolis, just west of the new Twins Stadium near Highway 94 and Olson Highway. HPNA is a member of the Transit Equity Partnership whose is to ensure that the community-developed equity agenda is a priority in neighborhood, local government and area property owner decision-making going forward. This will be done in the following ways: (1) By training existing leaders and recently emerged leaders on how to advocate on behalf of the recently developed community position, (2) Forming a Van White Station Stop Stakeholders group (3) training and preparing resident leaders to advocate for their community in upcoming DEIS process in the county-sponsored Health Impact Assessment process, (4) development of community priorities and positions for Bottineau line between Van White and Penn Avenue, and (5) connecting local leaders to corridor-wide efforts and processes.

Jewish Community Action <http://jewishcommunityaction.org/>

Jewish Community Action's (JCA) mission is to bring together Jewish people from diverse traditions and perspectives to promote understanding and take action on social and economic justice issues in Minnesota. In 2010, JCA was honored along with other members of the Stops For All Coalition for its work to secure three additional stations along the Central Corridor LRT by the Environmental Protection Agency. JCA continues to work in partnerships with local coalitions, interfaith initiatives, neighborhood groups, and minority and immigrant groups working for social and economic justice in our region. We believe in working collectively and acting as allies, directly addressing the root causes of poverty, racism, and injustice.

***MICAH http://www.micah.org/home/micah_regional_transit_corridor_campaigns**

Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing (MICAH) organizes communities of faith throughout the metropolitan region around the vision that everyone, without exception, has a safe, decent and affordable home. This project brings together the members and resources of four organizations: Zion Baptist Church, Bethesda Missionary Baptist Church, Discussions that Encounter, and MICAH, around the shared goal of engaging residents of North Minneapolis with supporters from communities along the Southwest and Bottineau transitways to engage community members on the Northside to assure that development decisions benefit everyone in the community. Success for this project will be a diverse group of leaders from the neighborhood leading the campaign and winning on policy priorities that will create new and preserve existing affordable housing, protect current homeowners with low incomes from displacement due to increased property taxes, provide well placed transit options for the neighborhood and generate economic opportunities.

***New American Academy**

<http://www.newamericanacademy.org/communityengagement.html>

The New American Academy (NAA) is a nonprofit organization founded in 2008 that provides multiple programs and services to immigrants in the Twin Cities, predominantly Eden Prairie residents. NAA is located in the city of Edina, but serves as the only Somali-led institution operating in the southwest area of the Twin Cities' region including Edina, Eden Prairie, Hopkins, and Saint Louis Park. The organization is dedicated to serving the East African population in this area through a combination of programs including: work in education, citizenship, housing, mentoring and tutoring, employment, civic engagement and citizen participation. After the first year of capacity-building for this project, NAA's next steps for the 2012-2013 second-year grant period focus on implementing specific goals, visioning and long-term strategies will benefit the southwest corridor impacted by this project. Success indicators will involve: (1) provision of equal opportunities and elimination of disparities for the underrepresented beneficiaries, (2) economic growth and competitiveness, (3) convergence and synergy of collaborative partnerships, (4) creation of benefit-earning permanent employment/career opportunities for disenfranchised beneficiaries, and (5) creation of affordable housing development units.

Northside Economic Opportunity Network <https://www.facebook.com/NEON.MN>

The Northside Economic Opportunity Network (NEON) is a North Minneapolis community-based organization established in 2006 whose mission is to expand economic opportunities and build wealth for North Minneapolis residents through the creation, growth and development of small businesses. N.E.O.N.'s vision is to help create a prosperous, sustainable North Minneapolis in collaboration with other public and private efforts with a visible presence of new and expanded businesses along West Broadway and other Northside commercial corridors.

***Northside Residents Redevelopment Council** <http://www.nrrc.org/>

Northside Residents Redevelopment Council (NRRC) is the oldest neighborhood organization in Minneapolis. NRRC has an active transportation committee that focuses on access to public transit for underrepresented populations. To secure tangible community benefits for North Minneapolis residents, NRRC and NTN will facilitate extensive outreach to engage underrepresented communities. The ultimate goal is to create a more unified North Minneapolis resident-lead participation in the Bottineau Transitway planning process, which will lead to clearly identified goals related to leveraging economic development, jobs, affordable housing and access to a metro-wide transit system.

***Northside Transportation Network** <http://northsidetransit.org/>

Northside Transportation Network (NTN) was formed in 2010 out of a joint public meeting organized by Harrison Neighborhood Association and NRRC. Along with neighborhood residents, NTN's core group also includes the participation of these organizations: Harrison Neighborhood Association, Northside Residents Redevelopment Council, West Broadway Business & Area Coalition, City of Lakes Land Trust, MICAH, ISIAH, and Alliance for Metropolitan Stability, MN Center for Environmental Advocacy and Transit for Livable Communities. To secure tangible community benefits

for North Minneapolis residents, NRRC and NTN will facilitate extensive outreach to engage underrepresented communities. The ultimate goal is to create a more unified North Minneapolis resident-lead participation in the Bottineau Transitway planning process, which will lead to clearly identified goals related to leveraging economic development, jobs, affordable housing and access to a metro-wide transit system.

West Bank Community Coalition <http://www.westbankcc.org/>

The West Bank Community Coalition (WBCC) is the official citizen participation group for the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood. Cedar-Riverside also has the city's largest concentrations of affordable housing, as well as a population which is one of the lowest in income and one of the most diverse. WBCC works to ensure that their residents benefit from the Central Corridor LRT through access to a regional transit system, economic development opportunities, and jobs.

West Side Community Organization <http://wsco.org/>

The West Side Community Organization (WSCO) is an action oriented, neighborhood-based organization empowering our residents to participate in and advocate for solutions to West Side community issues. As one of the lead organizations with Neighborhood Development Alliance, they are working to ensure that underrepresented West Side residents participate in Dakota and Ramsey Counties' 2-year planning process: the Robert Street Transitway Alternatives 2 Analysis Study. Project activities include conducting research on past planning studies in the area; outreach to neighbors through individual door knocking; meeting with resident and church groups; establishing an ongoing communication strategy to keep the neighborhood informed on plans, meetings, etc. Success for this project will be that the Alternatives Analysis incorporates the resident's concerns, wants and needs into the plans. Specifically, the project will identify clear-cut recommendations emerging from the study regarding improved east-west connections and improved linkages to the Central Corridor LRT.

Masjid An-Nur <http://masjidannur.org/>

Masjid An-Nur serves the most densely populated area of Minnesota in North Minneapolis. Masjid An-Nur is home to an organization called Al-Maa'uun. This organization focuses its efforts on providing neighborly needs and stands as a vanguard against poverty and injustice. It serves as a catalyst and partner, supporting the human dignity of individuals and families and improving their lives and the communities in which they live and serve. This project is an LRT awareness and education campaign for the North Minneapolis community served by Masjid An-Nur and Al-Maa'uun. By educating the community about issues such as social, environmental and access equality, the project aims to empower individuals from this often overlooked community to become a part of the planning and decision-making process for the Bottineau LRT Corridor. The project has two concise goals: 1) To create an aware and educated North Minneapolis community about issues surrounding the planning, development, and implementation of LRT in North Minneapolis, and 2) to empower individuals who otherwise would not be involved from North Minneapolis to serve as community advocates with LRT leadership, ensuring long-term involvement with the Bottineau Corridor line.