



Building Livable Communities
with Transit

Rail~Volution

*Impacts of the 2013 Conference and
Interest in Between-conference Services*

N O V E M B E R 2 0 1 4

Prepared by:
Ellen Shelton and Matthew Steele

Contents

Summary	1
Introduction.....	5
Impacts of the 2013 conference	7
Most respondents felt the conference positively prepared them to effectively work on issues related to transit, planning, and development	7
Rail~Volution had positive impacts on the professional activities of a large portion of conference attendees.....	8
Quality of work.....	12
Communication with stakeholders.....	15
Connections with other conference attendees after Rail~Volution	17
Changes in how attendees do or think about their work.....	19
Personal or organizational work changes as a result of the conference.....	20
Interest in between-conference supports.....	21
Interest in customized assistance for individual organizations.....	21
Interest in more generic resources	22
Interest in support to build regional capacity.....	23
Use of conference-related resources after the conference	24
Partnership, sponsors, and conference attendance history.....	25
Respondent partnership and sponsor status	25
Conference attendance history.....	26
2014 conference attendance plans	26
Findings for subgroups	29
Managers.....	29
City / County.....	29
Private sector.....	30
Connected	30
Issues to consider	31
Summary of overall findings	31
Summary of conference-specific findings	31
Opportunities to increase between-conference impact	32
Considerations for specific subgroups	32
Opportunities to increase conference impact.....	33
Appendix.....	34
Respondent demographics	34

Figures

1. Growth in leadership, skills, and capabilities as a result of participating in the 2013 Rail~Volution Conference	7
2. Impacts on professional action.....	8
3. How did the conference help you lead or help to lead efforts related to transit, planning, and development issues?.....	9
4. How did the conference help you strengthen or start a partnership?	10
5. What efforts to increase livability, sustainability, or equity has the conference helped you introduce or expand?.....	11
6. Did the conference help improve the quality of your or your organization’s work on transit, planning, and development issues?.....	12
7. If the conference helped you improve the quality of your work, what aspect of your work did it help?	13
8. If the conference did not help you improve the quality of your work, what was the primary issue with the conference that prevented it from helping?.....	13
9. As a result of the 2013 conference, are you more effective communicating about transit or planning issues with stakeholders?.....	15
10. In what ways did the conference help communication with stakeholders?	16
11. As a result of the 2013 conference, have you connected with others you met at Rail~Volution in your work?	17
12. How have connections, made at the conference, made a difference in your work?	17
13. How has the conference influenced changes in how you do or think about your work?.....	19
14. What one or two things are most different about your or your organization's work now as a result of the conference?	20
15. What kinds of assistance could Rail~Volution offer, in addition to the conferences, to help organizations like yours strengthen their capacity to fulfill their mission and vision?.....	21
16. Which of the following types of resources related to transit, planning, and development would help you build or support your organization’s capacity to fulfill its mission and vision? For each of the following possibilities, please rate how likely you think it is that your organization would be interested in using this resource.....	22
17. At the regional level, what could Rail~Volution provide to help you or your organization build capacity to plan and develop transit systems?	23
18. Did you or your organization use any of the following post-conference information from Rail~Volution’s website?.....	24

Figures (continued)

19. Rail~Volution partnership and sponsorship history	25
20. Including the 2013 conference, how many Rail~Volution conferences have you or your organization attended?	26
21. Why people are not planning to attend the 2014 conference	27
22. Why people are planning to attend the 2014 conference	27
A1. Which of the following best describes your occupation?	34
A2. At your work, do you function in one of the following management roles?	35
A3. In what sector do you work?	35
A4. Which of the following best describes the area in which you work in the public sector?	36
A5. Which of the following best describes your role in the private sector?	36
A6. Which of the following best describes your role in the nonprofit or social sector? ..	37
A7. In what regions do you do most of your work?	37
A8. Comparison of conference attendance history between respondents and actual conference attendees	38
A9. Comparison of organizational affiliation between respondents and actual conference attendees	39

Summary

Rail~Volution began in 1989 as a series of advocacy and outreach events to promote a metropolitan light rail system. Since then, Rail~Volution has evolved into a national conference that gathers those with common interest and dedication to transit, development, and planning issues. Going forward, Rail~Volution seeks to empower a movement to build livable communities with transit by inspiring people in communities and regions to make better transit and land use decisions.

In August 2014, Rail~Volution contracted with Wilder Research to conduct an independent evaluation of their annual conference. The evaluation is intended to provide information to Rail~Volution to support organizational planning and program improvement efforts. This report focuses on the October 2013 conference impact as described by conference attendees.

Web survey feedback from attendees: 2013 conference impact

- Most respondents felt the conference **equipped them to better advocate, apply new innovative approaches, contextualize their work, and promote diverse stakeholder involvement** in transit, planning, and development issues.
- A large portion of respondents reported that the 2013 **conference helped them lead, strengthen, or start partnerships, and expand efforts to increase livability, sustainability, or equity** on matters related to transit, planning, and development issues. These improvements came through a variety of conference experiences, especially **opportunities to form professional relationships and learn from case studies**.
- Eighty-five percent of respondents reported that the conference was at least “a little helpful” in **improving the quality of their work through broadening their knowledge and perspectives** on transit, planning, and development issues, and 14 percent said it helped “a lot.”
- Nearly three-quarters of respondents believed that Rail~Volution made them **more effective in communicating with stakeholders**, with most citing opportunities to see **examples of content** or **ways to communicate** with stakeholders.
- About half of the respondents have connected with people they met at Rail~Volution and state that those **connections are making a difference, mainly through exchanging ideas and lessons learned**.

- Seventy percent of respondents mentioned that **greater knowledge or understanding from the conference, especially about policy, have positively influenced the way they think or do work** and forty-five percent reported that **this was the most significant impact of the conference for them or their organization.**

Web survey feedback from attendees: In-between conference support

- Most respondents indicated that they were at least **somewhat likely to use in-between conference assistance** through the form of organizational symposiums, workshops, or trainings tailored to their organization and facilitation or moderator services on conference topics.
- About **80 percent of survey respondents said they were at least somewhat likely to utilize other types of resources offered between conferences.** Respondents most favored the prospect of **utilizing research or publications on best practices.**
- Over half of respondents indicated that they have an **interest in Rail~Volution's help to build regional capacity through local, regional, or national workshops, workshops on content areas of interest, and coordinated regional tours.**

Web survey feedback from attendees by subgroup

Rail~Volution identified four subgroups of respondents that are of high interest for understanding impacts and how they are achieved. These four groups, identified based on their responses to questions in the survey, were: (1) people who function in management positions (director or higher) within any kind of organization; (2) city and county officials (appointed or elected); (3) people who work in the private sector; and (4) people who reported that they made contact with others whom they had met at the conference.

- **Managers and city and county officials valued increased knowledge and understanding of the issues and the opportunity to broaden their perspective on the issues through connecting with peers from other regions.**
- **Private sector representatives share the appreciation for increased knowledge and perspective;** they also **value opportunities to meet people,** less for sharing of case studies and more for the possibility of business contacts.
- Conference attendees who **made connections** with other attendees were a significant proportion of all attendees, **and these connections have benefits for their work in a variety of ways.**

Opportunities to increase conference impact

Rail~Volution should continue to provide a mix of general information on planning, transit, and development issues as well as specific case studies and examples and opportunities for participants to network and share perspectives and knowledge with each other.

- **Maximum impact appears to peak in the second through sixth conferences.**
Rail~Volution should carefully **consider the mix of offerings** to ensure there is a balance of general, fundamental content for those who are less thoroughly grounded to begin with and the most-recent issues.
- **To increase content impact, efforts should also be made to present divergent or critical viewpoints about topics at the conference,** as well as up-to-date information on issues relating to transit, development, and planning.

Rail~Volution should also **consider providing sessions for attendees from less-common situations** such as rural areas and those with least access to transit funding.

Considerations for specific subgroups

The four sub-groups examined in this study singled out different features from the conference that were of greatest value to them, and different kinds of impacts on their work as a result. Given the wide variety of conference participants, this is convincing evidence for the success of the conference organizers in providing a variety of opportunities and topics to meet a wide variety of needs.

- **Both for managers and for city and county officials, it should continue to be a high priority to provide opportunities for connections to peers in other regions,** to help them build knowledge of what is working and what has been learned elsewhere.
- **Private sector representatives will also benefit from opportunities to increase their knowledge and perspective.** It will also be important to **continue to provide opportunities to meet people for developing potential business contacts.**
- **For those who are inclined to make connections with other attendees, continuing to provide opportunities for such connections should continue to be a high priority for Rail~Volution.**

Opportunities to increase between-conference impact

Local or organizational workshops/exchange tours offer an ideal opportunity to support attendees after the annual conference. Given the value a large proportion of attendees placed on peer interaction; learning about transit, development, and planning issues through a regional lens; and their general support for an in-between conference workshop or exchange tour, offering different opportunities for interested stakeholders to convene during the course of the year might be a strategy that could meet most of the capacity-building requests of respondents. With a majority of respondents supportive of all three types of activities suggested, any capacity-building approach chosen would provide value to attendees between conferences.

Introduction

Since 1994, Rail~Volution has gathered professionals and advocates from across the United States and international locations in an annual conference to help foster the growth of livable communities through transit, planning, and development. Rail~Volution recently completed a strategic planning process to evolve from a single focus on the annual conference to an organization that can support the professional, as well as advocacy needs, of attendees year-round. The following report outlines the 2013 conference impact, between-conference resource and support preferences, and professional demographics of the 2013 Rail~Volution attendees and their organizations, as determined by a survey of over 200 people who attended.

Study methods

Wilder Research worked with Rail~Volution staff to develop a web-based survey to collect information about the impact of the October 2013 conference and how Rail~Volution staff can best support the work of attendees and their organizations between conferences. In August 2014, about 1350 conference participants for whom Rail~Volution had email addresses were invited to take the survey, and 204 of them completed it, for a response rate of 15 percent. This rate is fairly typical for such web surveys. Following the survey, data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods in SPSS and Microsoft Excel.

Study subgroups

Four subgroups of interest were identified by Rail~Volution, and the results for each of these subgroups were examined separately. Where the results for a subgroup are different, these are mentioned in the text in bullet points following the overall findings. The groups of interest are:

Managers: People who identified their role at work as a senior leader, director, or manager (N=133, compared to 40 others who do not work in a management role)

City/County: Public sector officials (elected or appointed) who work at the city or county level (N=54, compared to 116 others who work at other levels of government or not in the public sector at all)

Private sector: People who report that their primary work is in the private, for-profit sector (N=44, compared to 127 others who work in the nonprofit or public sector)

Connected: People who reported that they have followed up and made connections since Rail~Volution 2013 with people they met at the conference (N=101, compared to 90 others who did not make follow-up connections with people from the conference)

Where differences occurred between members of one of these subgroups and respondents who were not part of the subgroup, these are noted in the report. Where differences are statistically significant, this is specifically mentioned. However, due to small group sizes, not all differences noted were statistically significant; non-statistically-different differences are mentioned when there is a coherent pattern across items that provides evidence that the differences are not random.

Representativeness of findings

The participants who completed the survey were a good match to the overall conference attendees with respect to the sector in which they work. They slightly over-represent those who have attended seven or more conferences and under-represent those who had attended for the first time; however, an examination of the survey results indicates that this slight skew does not affect the representativeness of the survey findings.

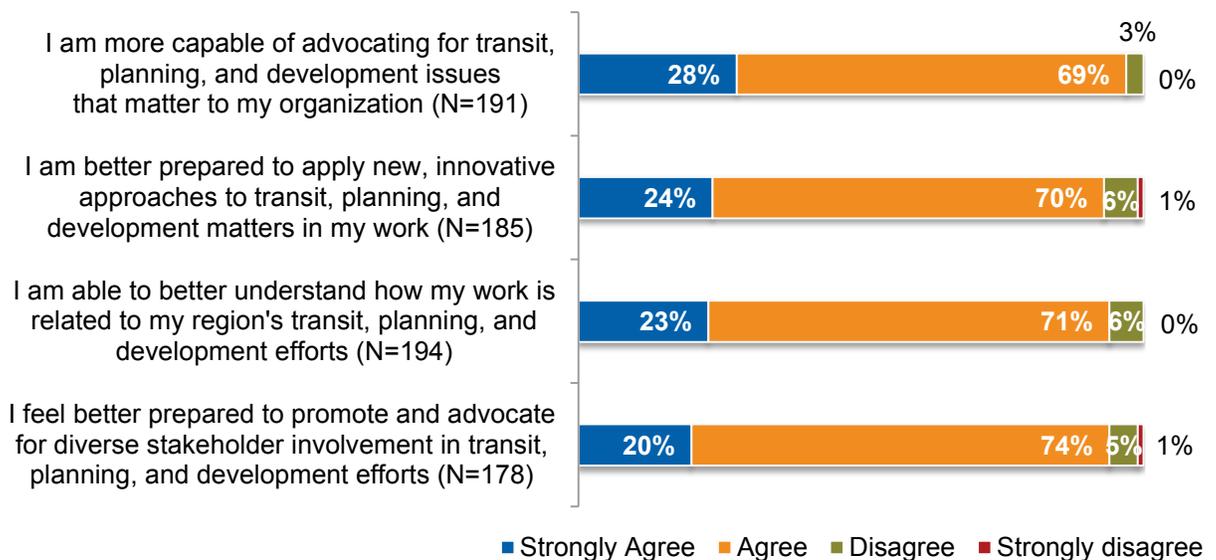
A detailed description of respondent demographics and professional affiliations, and a comparison to overall conference attendees, is included in the Appendix.

Impacts of the 2013 conference

Most respondents felt the conference positively prepared them to effectively work on issues related to transit, planning, and development

In general, when asked about ways they had put conference content and relationships to use in their work, nearly all conference attendees either agreed or strongly agreed that they are better prepared to advocate for issues that matter to their organization (97%), to apply innovative approaches in their work (94%), to understand how their work is related to regional efforts (94%), and to promote and advocate for diverse stakeholder involvement (94%) (Figure 1).

1. Growth in leadership, skills, and capabilities as a result of participating in the 2013 Rail~Volution Conference



Managers: Slightly more strongly agree they are better prepared to advocate for diverse stakeholder involvement

City/County: Tend to agree to all at slightly higher rates

Private sector: Slightly more strongly agree they are better prepared to apply new, innovative approaches

Connected: Slightly stronger agreement to applying new approaches and promoting stakeholder involvement

Rail~Volution had positive impacts on the professional activities of a large portion of conference attendees

While survey respondents reported positive developments regarding their growth in capacity for their work on transit, planning, and development issues, they were mixed on whether attending the conference resulted in actual changes in how they did that work. For example, 87 percent stated that in the year since the conference they or their organization introduced or expanded efforts to increase livability, sustainability, or equity related to transit, planning, and development issues in their communities; however, only 37 percent said the conference helped them with these new or expanded efforts (Figure 2). Eighty-two percent of respondents noted that they or their organization helped strengthen or start a working partnership in their region, with half of those (41%) saying attending the conference helped. Eighty-two percent of respondents said they led or helped to lead efforts related to transit, planning, and development issues. This number includes 43 percent who said attending the conference helped them with this work. In general, between 12 and 18 percent of respondents indicated that their organization did not make efforts in these areas since attending the 2013 conference.

2. Impacts on professional action



- Managers:** No differences
- City/County:** More likely to report the conference helped them lead or help lead efforts related to transit, planning, and development issues
- Private sector:** Slightly less likely to report leading or helping lead efforts, or introducing or expanding efforts to increase livability, sustainability, or equity
- Connected:** Significantly more likely to report the conference helped with all three of these kinds of efforts

New ideas gathered from the conference helped attendees lead on issues regarding transit, development, and planning

Participants who reported the conference helped them lead or help to lead transit, planning, or development efforts were asked to say how the conference helped make this happen. Most of these respondents (46%) cited new ideas they gained from case examples, other attendees, and workshops in general (Figure 3). Thirty-two percent noted that learning new information, such as changes in policy, how to contextualize issues through a local or national lens, ethical developments, and future trends, assisted in their leadership activities at work. Sixteen percent of attendees cited networking opportunities as helping equip them to provide leadership at work.

3. How did the conference help you lead or help to lead efforts related to transit, planning, and development issues?

<i>Open-ended responses, coded into themes N=50</i>	Number	Percent
Acquired new ideas	23	46%
<i>From case examples</i>	12	24%
<i>From people</i>	5	10%
<i>From workshop in general</i>	1	2%
Learned new information	16	32%
Networking	8	16%
Helped internal organization dynamics	3	6%
Other*	5	10%

Total could exceed 100% because respondents could mention more than one theme.

* "Other" includes: identified stakeholder interests, generated publicity, created connections with industry leaders

- Managers:** More likely to attribute effects to networking, less likely to attribute effects to new information
- City/County:** More likely to attribute effects to new ideas (practical, concrete examples), less likely to attribute effects to new information (more general principles)
- Private sector:** More likely to attribute effects to new information
- Connected:** More likely to attribute effects to networking

Attendees who strengthened or started partnerships credited the conference with helping by providing opportunities to form professional relationships and learn from case studies

Participants who reported the conference helped them strengthen or start partnerships were asked for examples of how the conference had helped. A majority of this group mentioned the formation of relationships (41%), including some who specifically cited new connections with other professionals that work in their local area, and some who cited opportunities to meet a variety of stakeholders (Figure 4). Additionally, some respondents (30%) stated that new ideas, primarily engendered from case studies the conference offered, played an influential role in the strengthening or starting of a partnership. To a lesser extent (17%), partnerships were helped by enhanced perspectives, knowledge, or focus regarding specific and general transportation, development, and planning issues and work projects. Examples of such increased perspectives, knowledge, or focus include: focusing efforts on sustainability and economic development aspects of rail transit implementation; greater understanding of a city’s perspectives in zoning; information about permitting, budgeting, and constituent services; and more knowledge about the role of a transit advocate.

4. How did the conference help you strengthen or start a partnership?

<i>Open-ended responses, coded into themes N=54</i>	Number	Percent
Formed professional relationships	22	41%
<i>With different stakeholders</i>	3	6%
<i>Attendees work in my local area</i>	8	15%
New Ideas	16	30%
<i>Ideas from case studies</i>	14	26%
Enhanced perspectives/knowledge/focus	9	17%
Networking	7	13%
Individual and group reflection	4	7%
Workshop	4	7%
Relationships with clients	3	6%
Other*	8	15%

Total could exceed 100% because respondents could mention more than one theme.

** “Other” includes: learned new general information (unspecified), hired staff, and strengthened company*

- Managers:** More likely to report effects due to case studies
- City/County:** More likely to credit enhanced perspectives, knowledge, or focus; less likely to credit professional relationships and networking
- Private sector:** More likely to credit effects to networking and professional relationships
- Connected:** More likely to report effects due to professional relationships

Rail~Volution helped attendees plan or complete livable, sustainable, and equitable work projects

Livable, sustainable, and equitable transit, development, and planning represent fundamental values Rail~Volution strives to imbue through its conferences. Respondents who reported the conference had helped them introduce or expand the application of those values in their work were asked to briefly describe the efforts that had been affected in this way. A majority of this group said that Rail~Volution helped them implement (41%) or plan (26%) a work project related to issues surrounding livability, sustainability, and/or equity (Figure 5). Among those who planned projects, 19 percent specifically commented that the conference helped them plan livable projects. Respondents who implement projects included 19 percent who mentioned equity, 4 percent who mentioned sustainability, and 11 percent who mentioned livability. A smaller portion of respondents (15%) mentioned that they learned more about how to integrate livability, sustainability, or equitability into their work but did not provide specifics about the efforts in which they had applied these values.

5. What efforts to increase livability, sustainability, or equity has the conference helped you introduce or expand?

<i>Open-ended responses, coded into themes N=27</i>	Number	Percent
Implement work project (total)	11	41%
<i>Implement equitable work project</i>	5	19%
<i>Implement sustainable work project</i>	1	4%
<i>Implement livable work project</i>	3	11%
Planned work project (total)	7	26%
<i>Planned livable work project</i>	5	19%
Learned more about how to integrate equitable, sustainable, livable, efforts into work	4	15%
Other	5	19%

Note: Total could exceed 100% because respondents could mention more than one theme.

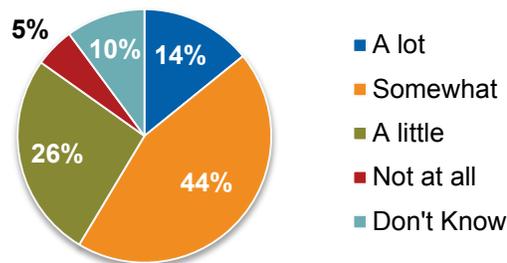
*“Other” includes: learned about others’ work, improved company communication, and used tools and examples from conference

Managers: No differences
City/County: More likely to mention plans for livable projects
Private sector: No differences
Connected: More likely to mention implementing equitable projects; less likely to mention planning or implementing livable projects

Quality of work

A large majority of respondents (85%) reported that the conference was at least a little helpful in improving the quality of their work on transit, planning, and development issues (Figure 6). In fact, only 5 percent of respondents believed that Rail~Volution 2013 did not help at all in improving their quality of work, although 10 percent didn't know if the conference helped improve quality.

6. Did the conference help improve the quality of your or your organization's work on transit, planning, and development issues? (n=190)



Attendees experienced improvement in the quality of their work through broadening their knowledge and perspectives at Rail~Volution

Attendees who reported that the conference helped the quality of their efforts “a lot” or “somewhat” were asked what aspect of their work it impacted. The most common answer was that the conference broadened their knowledge or perspectives about their work (35%) (Figure 7). Types of knowledge and perspectives they mentioned included learning about communication, policy changes, business and community development strategies, and work practices or approaches. Participants also reported that the conference impacted the quality of their work planning (18%) and information sharing with peers at the conference (13%).

7. If the conference helped you improve the quality of your work, what aspect of your work did it help?

<i>Open-ended responses, coded into themes N=55</i>	Number	Percent
Broadened knowledge/perspective about work	19	35%
Work planning	10	18%
Information sharing with peers	7	13%
Project implementation	6	11%
Policy development	4	7%
Other	10	20%

Total could exceed 100% because respondents could mention more than one theme.

**“Other” includes: affirmed current work approaches, more collaborative in work, stakeholder involvement techniques, staff development, strengthened ties to peers’ work, and developed professional relationships.*

Conference material lacking relevancy to attendees posed the largest barrier to improving the quality of their work

The 31 percent of conference attendees who reported the conference improved their work quality “a little” or “not at all” were asked what prevented it from making more of an impact. Of this group, about half cited a lack of relevancy (25%) or a lack of up-to-date material (22%) (Figure 8). Some also articulated a need for more critical views regarding issues highlighted at the conference.

8. If the conference did not help you improve the quality of your work, what was the primary issue with the conference that prevented it from helping?

<i>Open-ended responses, coded into themes N=27</i>	Number	Percent
Material not relevant to my work	8	25%
Material is not new	7	22%
Lack of critical views	5	16%
Not practical/specific/applicable enough	4	13%
Need more time for discussion with attendees	3	9%
Other	8	25%

Total could exceed 100% because respondents could mention more than one theme.

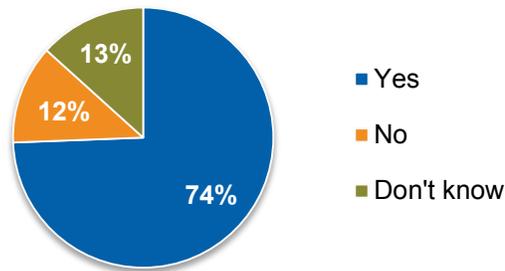
**“Other” includes: Low-quality presentations, session rooms overcrowded (could not hear), reinforced but did not improve quality, follow-through from Rail~Volution after conference, and conferences do not bring about much change due to their short duration.*

- Managers:** No difference in proportion who reported increased quality. Of those who did report it, more credited information sharing with peers; of those who did not report it, more mentioned lack of applicable ideas, critical views, or new ideas
- City/County:** No difference in proportion who reported increased quality; of those who did report it, more credited broadened knowledge or perspective
- Private sector:** No difference in proportion who reported increased quality; of those who did report it, more cited broadened knowledge or perspective or application to work planning; of those who did not report it, more mentioned a lack of new material
- Connected:** More reported the quality of their work had been improved; this group was more likely to credit information sharing with peers and less likely to credit increased knowledge in general; of those who did not report increased quality, slightly more were likely to cite lack of new or critical material

Communication with stakeholders

Seventy-four percent of respondents believed that Rail~Volution made them more effective in communicating about transit and planning issues with stakeholders (Figure 9).

9. As a result of the 2013 conference, are you more effective communicating about transit or planning issues with stakeholders? (n=195)



Respondents' communication skills were most helped by examples of content to communicate as well as the process of communication with stakeholders

When asked how the conference helped them improve their communication with stakeholders, the majority of those who were helped noted that hearing or seeing examples of what to communicate (41%) or examples of how to communicate (28%) were helpful (Figure 10). In the content category, they most often mentioned examples from other elsewhere (i.e. other locations) (29%), persuasive stories or arguments to help make a case (9%), and demographic or development trends (3%) as ways the conference helped them communicate with stakeholders. Those who mentioned learning about the process itself mentioned a variety of elements, including learning how to describe, phrase or frame issues or arguments (7%), how to conduct outreach with the public or other stakeholders and build coalitions (6%), use new or different forms of media (6%), and how to address controversy or conflicting opinions (2%).

Some simply cited their increased knowledge and understanding of facts or issues as how the conference helped them communicate with stakeholders (23%), including a handful who reported that their increased knowledge gave them greater confidence or credibility. Ten percent reported their communication effectiveness was helped by learning or better understanding the perspectives of different stakeholders. Interestingly, a few (5%) reported their communication effectiveness was helped by their bringing key people to the conference to hear and see the material directly.

10. In what ways did the conference help communication with stakeholders?

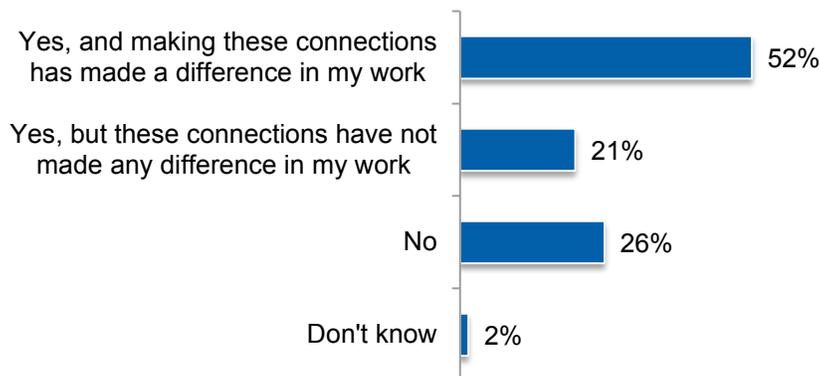
<i>Open-ended responses, coded into themes N=86</i>	Number	Percent
Heard/saw examples of <u>what</u> to communicate	35	41%
<i>Examples of what is being done or learned elsewhere</i>	25	29%
<i>Benefits, success stories, or arguments to help make the case</i>	8	9%
<i>Trends</i>	3	3%
Heard/saw examples of <u>how</u> to communicate	24	28%
How to describe, phrase, or frame issues or arguments	6	7%
How to outreach with public/stakeholders, build coalitions	5	6%
Use of new/different forms of media	5	6%
How to handle/address controversy or conflicting opinions	2	2%
More knowledge or understanding	20	23%
<i>More confidence or authority in communicating based on increased knowledge</i>	3	3%
Learned to (better) understand different perspectives of stakeholders	9	10%
Respondent informed key people by bringing them to the conference	4	5%
Conference offered opportunities to practice communicating issues	4	5%
Networking (not stated how it helped)	1	1%

Managers:	No difference in proportion who reported improved communication; of those who did, higher proportion who credited learning content, especially examples from elsewhere
City/County:	No difference in proportion who reported improved communication; of those who did, a higher proportion credited learning content, especially success stories, and also slightly more mentioned gaining knowledge in general
Private sector:	No difference in proportion who reported improved communication; of those who did, more mentioned opportunities to practice communication, and gaining knowledge in general
Connected:	Slightly more mentioned improved communication; of this group, slightly more mentioned gaining knowledge, learning how to frame issues, and learning methods for outreach and coalition building

Connections with other conference attendees after Rail~Volution

Three-quarters (73%) of respondents indicated that since the conference they had connected with others they met at Rail~Volution in their work (Figure 11). Roughly half of all respondents (52%) stated that the connections they made at Rail~Volution made a difference in their work. A quarter (26%) of respondents reported that they did not connect with anyone from Rail~Volution in work following the conference.

11. As a result of the 2013 conference, have you connected with others you met at Rail~Volution in your work? (n=194)



Connections made at Rail~Volution positively influenced the work of attendees in a variety of ways

Attendees who reported a difference in their professional efforts through connections made at the conference most often specified that it was through sharing ideas or lessons learned with each other (56%) (Figure 12). Some respondents mentioned that conference connections evolved into business contacts or work or sales opportunities (15%), and some reported the connections provided them with new team or collaboration partners (13%). Others said the access to experts (4%) or to specific information or resources (8%) has impacted their work

12. How have connections, made at the conference, made a difference in your work?

<i>Open-ended responses, coded into themes N=53</i>	Number	Percent
Share ideas / lessons learned with peers	30	56%
New business contacts / work or sales opportunities	8	15%
New or potential team or collaboration partner	7	13%
Access to knowledge / information	6	11%
<i>Access to experts</i>	2	4%
<i>Access to specific info or resource</i>	4	8%
Better networks or info sharing, not otherwise specified	5	9%

Managers:	Slightly more mentioned making connections; no difference in what kind of difference it made
City/County:	Slightly fewer mentioned making connections; of those who did, slightly more mentioned sharing ideas and lessons learned with peers
Private sector:	Slightly more mentioned making connections; of those who did, more mentioned increased business opportunities or potential partners, and fewer mentioned sharing ideas and lessons learned with peers
Connected:	No differences

Changes in how attendees do or think about their work

Greater general knowledge or understanding from the conference, especially about policy, have most influenced the way attendees think or do work

For those who shared how the conference affected how they do or think about work, most (70%) credited a general increase in knowledge or understanding, including 32 percent who mentioned knowledge or understanding about policy and 11 percent who mentioned increased knowledge or understanding about work projects (Figure 13). Another 11 percent said the conference increased their enthusiasm for their work.

13. How has the conference influenced changes in how you do or think about your work?

<i>Open-ended responses, coded into themes N=37</i>	Number	Percent
Increased knowledge/understanding	26	70%
About policy	12	32%
About work projects	4	11%
Increased enthusiasm	4	11%
Collaboration	2	5%
Other	6	16%

Total could exceed 100% because respondents could mention more than one theme.

** "Other" includes: professional development opportunities and learning from peers/other professionals*

Managers:	Slightly more mentioned changes; of this group, more mentioned impact on their work projects, and slightly more mentioned increased knowledge
City/County:	Significantly more mentioned changes; of this group, more mentioned impact on their work projects
Private sector:	Significantly fewer mentioned changes
Connected:	No differences

Personal or organizational work changes as a result of the conference

After the series of questions about a variety of specific impacts the conference might have had, respondents were asked to describe in their own words what was most different about their work as a result of the conference.

Greater knowledge or understanding of transit, development, and planning issues and new work projects are what the conference most changed

Close to half of respondents (45%) observed that the most notable change in their personal or organizational work was an increase in their knowledge or understanding of transit, development, and planning issues (Figure 14). A smaller portion of respondents indicated that the conference led to new work or projects (11%) or to expanded or stronger professional networks (10%).

14. What one or two things are most different about your or your organization's work now as a result of the conference?

<i>Open-ended responses, coded into themes N=82</i>	Number	Percent
Increased knowledge/understanding of transit, development, and planning issues	37	45%
Led to new work or projects	9	11%
Expansion/strengthening of professional network	8	10%
Professional development	5	6%
Collaboration	5	6%
Equitable work approach	3	4%
Other*	10	12%
Nothing	8	10%

Total could exceed 100% because respondents could mention more than one theme.

** "Other" includes: reinforcement of beliefs about professional field, outreach, refocuses work, found support for work, and puts work into larger context.*

Managers: More of this group cited increased knowledge or understanding of issues; fewer cited expansion of their professional networks

City/County: More of this group cited "other" differences in their work

Private sector: No differences

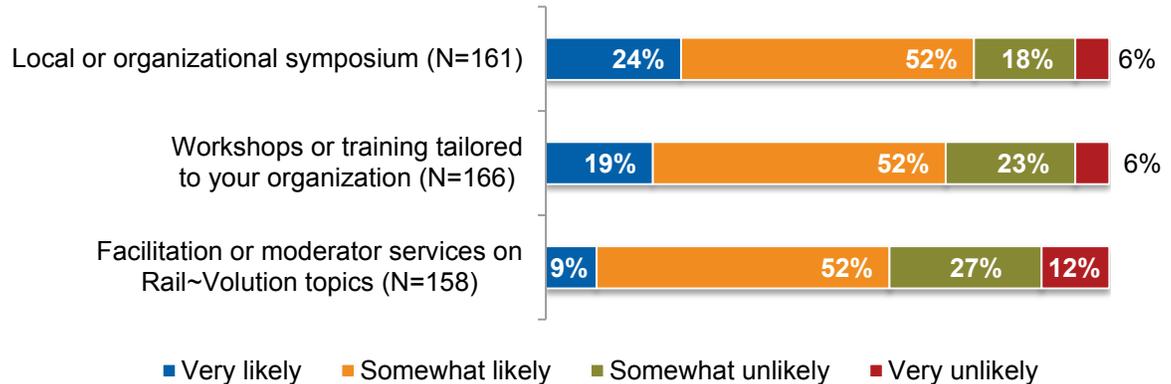
Connected: Fewer of this group cited increased knowledge; otherwise there were no differences

Interest in between-conference supports

Interest in customized assistance for individual organizations

Given a list of possible forms of customized assistance that Rail~Volution staff could offer outside of the conference, most respondents stated that they are at least somewhat likely to make use of local organizational symposiums (76%), workshops or trainings tailored to their organization (71%), and/or facilitation or moderator services on conference topics (61%) (Figure 15).

15. What kinds of assistance could Rail~Volution offer, in addition to the conferences, to help organizations like yours strengthen their capacity to fulfill their mission and vision?



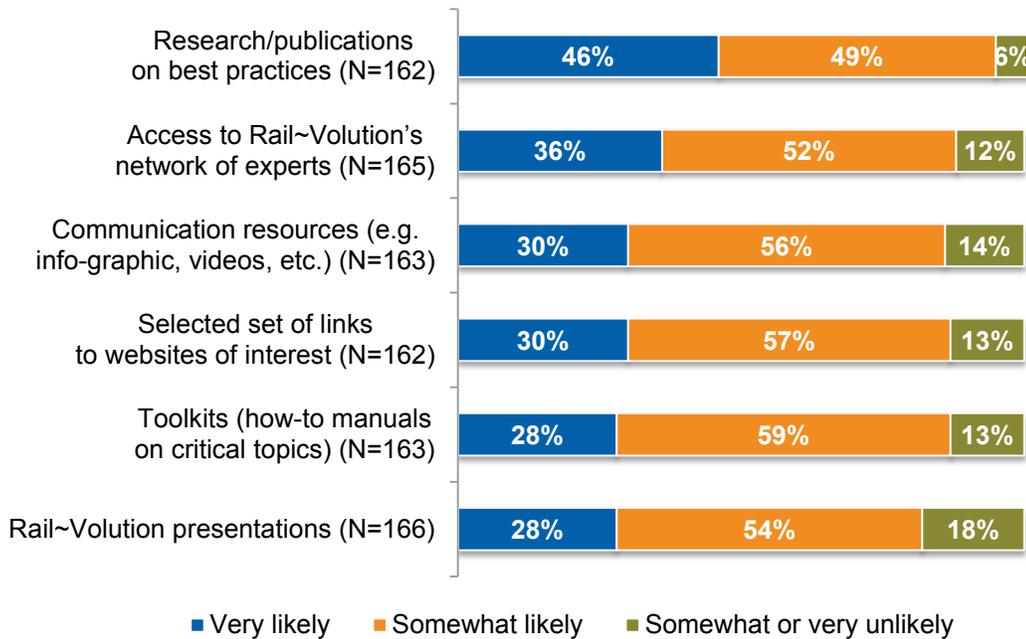
Before actual services are developed, keep in mind that expressions of interest such as those in this survey are highly speculative. However, about one-quarter of respondents reported they would be “very likely” to participate in local organizational symposia, and about one in five thought they would “very likely” be interested in workshops or trainings tailored to their organization.

- Managers:** Expressed less interest in workshops or tailored training
- City/County:** More interest in symposiums and workshops; slightly more interest in facilitator or moderator services
- Private Sector:** No differences
- Connected:** No differences

Interest in more generic resources

Roughly 80 percent of survey respondents said they were at least somewhat likely to utilize other types of resources offered between conferences (Figure 16). Illustrating a theme that is evident throughout the survey results, the top two interests of respondents were in resources to help them access information on best practices and Rail~Volution's network of experts. The highest level of interest was in research or publications on best practices, with 94 percent of respondents at least “somewhat likely” to utilize it if offered, and 46 percent “very likely” to use them. The second highest level of interest was in access to Rail~Volution’s network of experts (88% were at least “somewhat likely” to use this, and 36% were “very likely”). Figure 16 below shows other kinds of resources that respondents were asked about, in descending order of their likelihood of using them.

16. Which of the following types of resources related to transit, planning, and development would help you build or support your organization’s capacity to fulfill its mission and vision? For each of the following possibilities, please rate how likely you think it is that your organization would be interested in using this resource.



Managers: No differences

City/County: More interest in access to experts and communication resources; slightly more interest in website links

Private sector: No differences

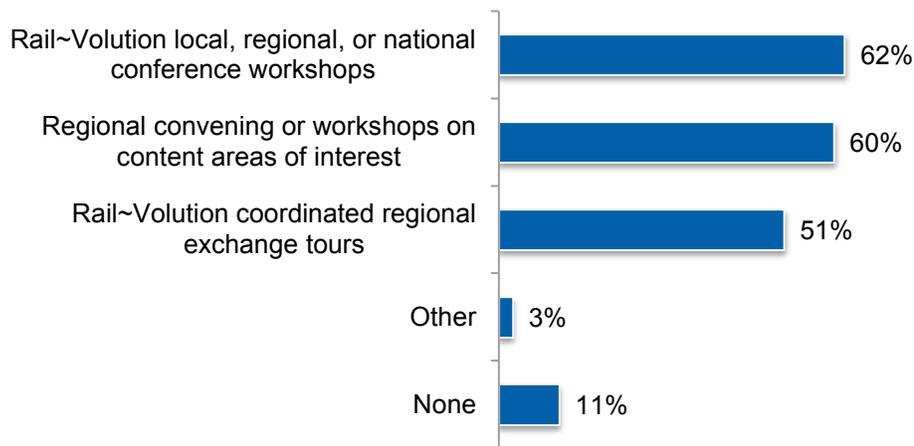
Connected: Slightly more interest in access to experts; slightly less interest in website links

Interest in support to build regional capacity

The survey also asked about interest in potential forms of convening or other assistance that Rail~Volution might offer at a regional level to help organizations work together to build capacity jointly for planning and development of transit and related issues.

A majority of respondents (62%) reported an interest in local, regional, or national conference workshops if provided, 60 percent were interested in regional convenings or workshops on content areas of interest, and just over half (51 percent) were interested in coordinated regional exchange tours (Figure 17).

17. At the regional level, what could Rail~Volution provide to help you or your organization build capacity to plan and develop transit systems? (Check all that apply) (N=157)



Total could exceed 100% because respondents could check more than one option.

“Other” category responses were: webinars; webinar on livable communities with transit; help biking, walking, and transit groups work together and advocate for one another.

Managers: Slightly less interest in regional convenings or workshops

City/County: No differences

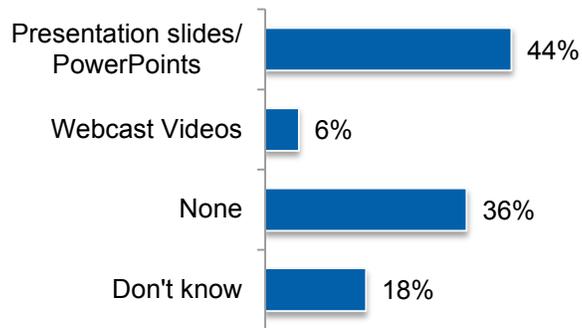
Private sector: Slightly less interest in regional convenings or workshops

Connected: No differences

Use of conference-related resources after the conference

During the 2013-14 year, Rail~Volution already offered some resources throughout the year through posting conference presentation slides or PowerPoints and webcast videos on their website. Slightly under half (44%) of 2013 conference attendees reported that they had used the slides or PowerPoints, and 6 percent had used webcast videos (Figure 18).

18. Did you or your organization use any of the following post-conference information from Rail~Volution's website? (Check all that apply) (N=181)



Managers: Less use of PowerPoints/videos
City/County: Slightly more use of slides/PowerPoints
Private sector: No differences
Connected: No differences

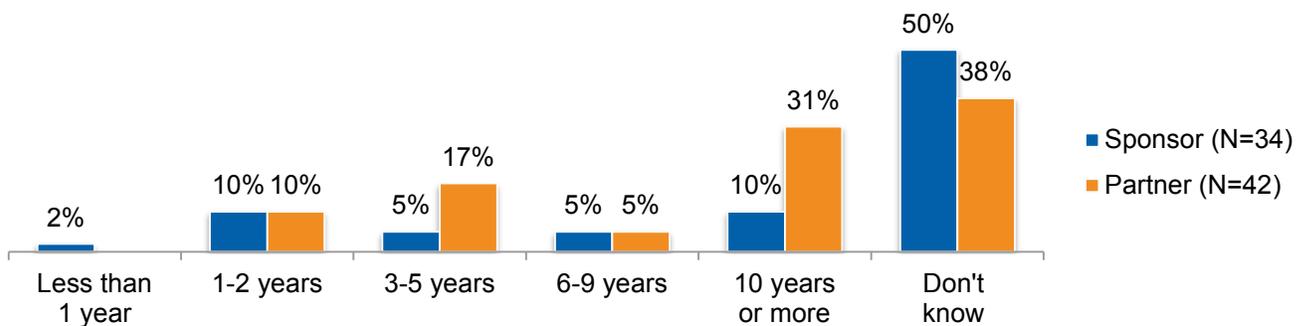
Partnership, sponsors, and conference attendance history

Respondent partnership and sponsor status

Partners and sponsors made up about 36 percent of respondents

Thirty-five percent of respondents reported they were a sponsor (11%), partner (15%), or both (9%) of Rail~Volution. Fifty percent of sponsors and 38 percent of partners stated that they did not know the length of their sponsorship or partnership (Figure 19). Amongst sponsors, 1-2 years and 10 years or more were the most prevalent responses. Within partners, 3-5 years and 10 years or more were the most common durations.

19. Rail~Volution partnership and sponsorship history



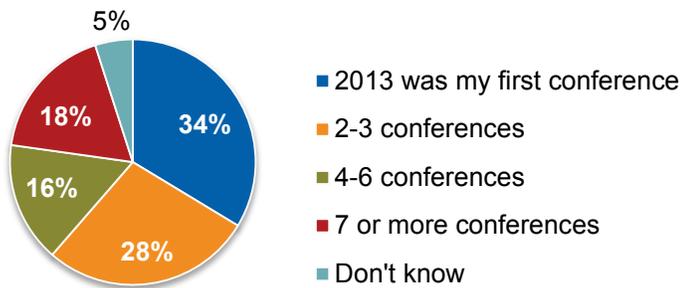
- Managers:** No difference in proportion who are partners, but those who are sponsors are likely to have been so for a shorter time. No difference in proportion who are sponsors.
- City/County:** Slightly less likely to be a sponsor or partner. Those who are partners are more likely to have been so for 3 to 9 years.
- Private sector:** Slightly more likely to be either a partner or a sponsor. Those who are partners are more likely to have been so for 3 to 4 years.
- Connected:** Slightly more likely to be either a partner or a sponsor. No difference in length of time for partners, but sponsors are more likely to have been so for 10 or more years.

Conference attendance history

The majority of respondents have attended Rail~Volution 1-3 times

The largest group of respondents indicated that Rail~Volution 2013 was their first conference (34%) followed by those who have attended the conference 2-3 times (28%) (Figure 20). (Note that according to information about total 2013 Rail~Volution conference attendees, this respondent sample slightly under-represents first-time attendees and slightly over-represents the most frequent attendees.)

20. Including the 2013 conference, how many Rail~Volution conferences have you or your organization attended? (N=171)



Across many of the questions in the survey, participants who were in the second through sixth conferences were more likely to report that the conference had positively affected their work. First-time attendees and those who had attended seven or more conferences were somewhat less likely to report as many impacts.

2014 conference attendance plans

Two-thirds (65%) of respondents reported planning to attend the 2014 conference, and 19 percent reported they did not plan to attend (8 percent were unsure).

Cost of traveling to the conference is the largest barrier to conference 2014 attendance

Close to half (49%) of respondents stated that the cost to travel represented the most significant barrier to conference attendance (Figure 21). Other reasons were work schedule conflicts (17%) and other, non-specified, priorities (17%).

21. Why people are not planning to attend the 2014 conference

<i>Open-ended responses, coded into themes N= 35</i>	Number	Percent
Cost to travel	17	49%
Does not fit in with work schedule	6	17%
Other priorities	6	17%
Does not provide an advantage in work	2	6%
Other*	7	20%

Total could exceed 100% because respondents could mention more than one theme.

**“Other” includes: Conference not close enough, not working in industry, changes in staff, and other staff attending*

The most common reason for attending Rail~Volution 2014 is to learn more about topics offered at the conference

Of those who did plan to attend Rail~Volution 2014, 56 percent shared that the motivating factor was to learn more about the topics that would be offered (Figure 22). Respondents specifically highlighted that learning more about other regions is a motivating factor for conference attendance. Close to half of the respondents (46%) said they would attend the conference for the networking opportunities.

22. Why people are planning to attend the 2014 conference

<i>Open-ended responses, coded into themes N=89</i>	Number	Percent
To learn more about topics at the conference (total)	50	56%
<i>To learn more about other regions</i>	18	20%
Networking	41	46%
Presenting at/involved in putting on conference	16	18%
We live in the area of the conference	9	10%
Improve our work	4	4%
Other	5	5%

Total could exceed 100% because respondents could mention more than one theme.

**“Other” includes: To increase our visibility, continued interest in issues presented at conference, to exchange information, and because of the relevancy of conference topics to work*

- Managers:** Less likely to be first-time attendees. Slightly more likely to plan to attend in 2014; if not, more likely to cite schedule reasons.
- City/County:** More likely to have attended 2 to 6 conferences. Equally likely to plan to attend in 2014; if planning to come, more likely to cite learning about other regions, and, if not, more likely to cite other priorities.
- Private sector:** More likely to have attended 7 or more conferences. Equally likely to plan to attend in 2014; if planning to come, slightly more likely to cite networking and learning about conference topics; if not, more likely to cite travel costs.
- Connected:** Less likely to be first-time attendees. Much more likely to plan to attend in 2014. If yes, less likely to cite learning about other regions; if not, slightly less likely to cite cost or other priorities.

Findings for subgroups

Managers

The 133 managers who completed the survey included 37 who were in senior leadership positions (such as executive director, president, or CEO), 33 who were program or department directors, and 56 who were managers (e.g., project, team, or unit managers).

- Most (60%) were in the public sector, and nearly all the others (29%) were in private for-profit organizations.
- The most common profession for the group was planning (41%), followed by engineering (13%) and appointed public official (9%).
- Only 28 percent were attending their first Rail~Volution conference, compared to 61 percent of non-managers.

In several different questions, managers were more likely than non-managers to cite peer sharing of case studies and examples as something they particularly valued or gained from Rail~Volution, though increased knowledge and understanding of issues is what they report was the biggest difference in how they work as a result.

City / County

The 54 city and county officials who completed the survey included 15 percent who were in senior leadership positions, 17 percent who were directors, 32 percent who were managers, and 30 percent who were not in management roles (also 6% who listed other positions that did not fit any of these categories).

- Most (54%) were planners, and 9 percent were engineers; 11 percent were elected public officials and another 7 percent were appointed public officials.
- Only 10 percent had attended 7 or more conferences, compared to 23 percent of other respondents.

Similarly to managers, city and county staff cited sharing ideas and lessons learned with peers, and learning success stories from elsewhere, as important take-aways from the conference. Those who felt the quality of their work had been improved were more likely than non-city/county staff to report they had broadened their perspective and understanding of the issues. This group was also the most likely of the sub-groups we examined to say

they were likely to be interested in many of the potential between-conference resources that Rail~Volution might offer.

Private sector

The 44 respondents who worked in the private, for-profit sector included 41 percent who were planners, 18 percent who were engineers, and 14 percent who were architects.

- Only 14 percent were not at a management level in their organizations.
- Nearly all (89%) were consultants.
- They were less likely than others to be attending their first conference (22% compared to 41%) and more likely to have attended at least 7 conferences (32% compared to 14%).

Not surprisingly, this group was more likely than others to value the opportunities the conference offered for new work contacts and new business opportunities, and to value knowledge in general more than specific case studies and examples from particular regions. They are generally equally or slightly less likely than those in other sectors to be interested in between-conference resources.

Connected

There were 101 respondents who indicated that they had connected with others they met at Rail~Volution in their work.

- Over half (56%) worked in government, fewer than the 68 percent of those who had not connected since the conference. Seven percent were appointed public officials, and 6 percent were elected officials.
- Thirty-one percent worked in private for-profit organizations.
- Nearly half (46%) were planners, and the other half were widely spread among a wide variety of occupations.

Those who connected with others following the conference were also more likely to report a number of other impacts from the conference. The study does not allow us to determine whether the increased connections helped strengthen the likelihood of the other outcomes, or if the people who gave positive responses about the connection outcome were simply more enthusiastic and likely to give positive responses to a variety of questions. This group cited professional relationships and networking, and sharing of ideas with peers, as values in several other questions, and were less likely than their peers to credit increased general knowledge as the main value they gained from Rail~Volution.

Issues to consider

Summary of overall findings

In general, attendees reported high levels of impact from the conference, especially considering the event was nearly a full year in the past. Of the outcomes measured, the conference most impacted how attendees communicate about transit or planning issues, as well as their capabilities to advocate on behalf of the issues that matter to their organization. In terms of the conference content, respondents indicated that they value a variety of material and perspectives surrounding the issues in focus at Rail~Volution, including different ways of sharing information (e.g., case examples, workshops, peer exchanges and learning about critical viewpoints on transit, planning, and development topics). Attendees expressed that their professional efforts could be supported by Rail~Volution during the rest of the year, between conferences, through access to research and publications on best practices, as well as local or regional symposiums. For those respondents planning to go to Rail~Volution 2014, the driving factors for attending were learning about conference topics, particularly through the lens of different regions, and networking.

Summary of conference-specific findings

Increased knowledge and understanding of transit, planning, and development issues is the overarching impact listed by attendees from the conference that most influenced their work

When asked how the conference changed their thinking about work, improved work quality, and most impacted work in general, respondents cited Rail~Volution's ability to increase or broaden their knowledge or understanding of transit, planning, and development issues. Respondents highlighted the value in general, as well as particular knowledge and understanding that they had derived from the conference. Specifically, attendees noted that knowledge and understanding related to work processes and protocols, communication, and problem-solving were important takeaways. Respondents emphasized that the gains in knowledge and understanding occurred through a variety of methods, including listening to experts, case examples, workshops, and conversations with peers.

Opportunities to increase between-conference impact

Local or organizational workshops/exchange tours offer an ideal opportunity to support attendees after the annual conference

Given the value a large proportion of attendees placed on peer interaction; learning about transit, development, and planning issues through a regional lens; and their general support for an in-between conference workshop or exchange tour, offering different opportunities for interested stakeholders to convene during the course of the year might be a strategy that could meet most of the capacity-building requests of respondents. With a majority of respondents supportive of all three types of activities suggested, any capacity-building approach chosen would provide value to attendees between conferences.

Considerations for specific subgroups

The four sub-groups examined in this study singled out different features from the conference that were of greatest value to them, and different kinds of impacts on their work as a result. Given the wide variety of conference participants, this is convincing evidence for the success of the conference organizers in providing a variety of opportunities and topics to meet a wide variety of needs.

- Both for managers and for city and county officials, it should continue to be a high priority to provide opportunities for connections to peers in other regions, to help them build knowledge of what is working and what has been learned elsewhere. However, both groups also valued increased knowledge and understanding of the issues and the opportunity to broaden their perspective on the issues.
- Private sector representatives share this appreciation for increased knowledge and perspective; they also value opportunities to meet people, less for sharing of case studies and more for the possibility of business contacts.
- Finally, the survey results show that a significant proportion of conference attendees follow up after the conference and make connections with other attendees, and that these connections have benefits for their work. Continuing to provide opportunities for such connections should continue to be a high priority for Rail~Volution.

Opportunities to increase conference impact

Rail~Volution should continue to provide a mix of general information on planning, transit, and development issues as well as specific case studies and examples and opportunities for participants to network and share perspectives and knowledge with each other.

- Maximum impact appears to peak in the second through sixth conferences. Rail~Volution should carefully consider the mix of offerings to ensure there is a balance of general, fundamental content for those who are less thoroughly grounded to begin with and the most-recent issues.
- To increase content impact, efforts should also be made to present divergent or critical viewpoints about topics at the conference, as well as up-to-date information on issues relating to transit, development, and planning.

Rail~Volution should also consider providing sessions for attendees from less-common situations such as rural areas and those with least access to transit funding.

Appendix

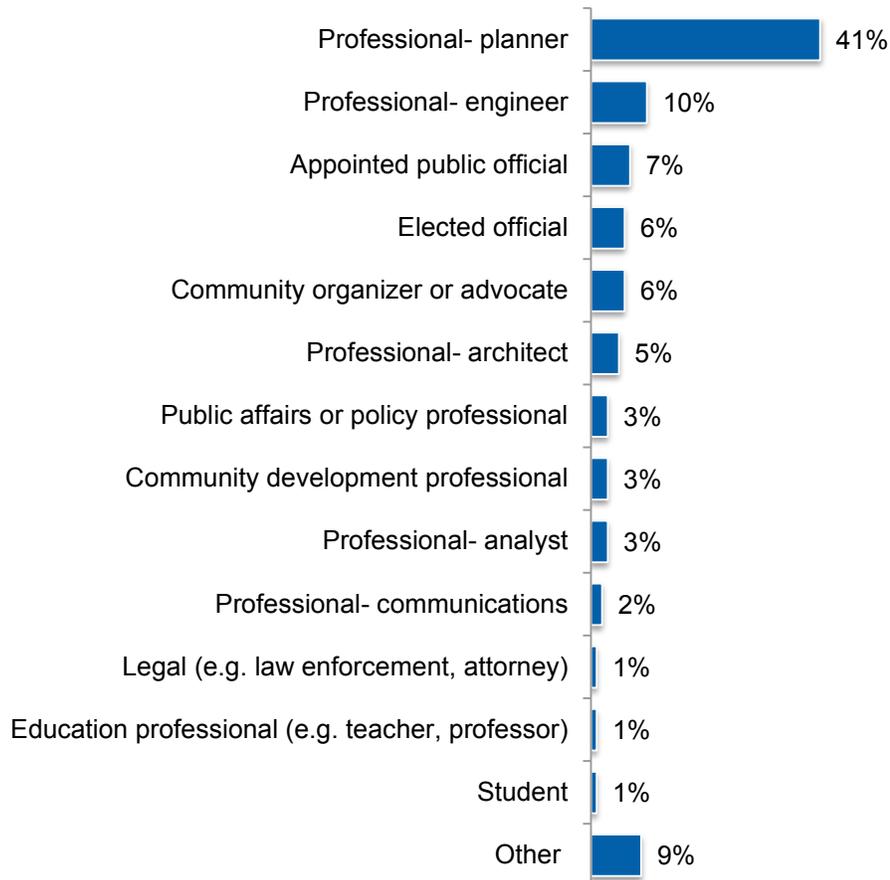
Respondent demographics

Respondent occupational background

The largest respondent group consisted of professional planners.

Respondents were asked which of a list of 14 different occupational backgrounds best described them. The role of planner represented the largest group of respondents at 41 percent, with engineer (10%), appointed public official (7%), elected official (6%), and community organizer or advocate (6%) making up the remainder of the top five (Figure A1).

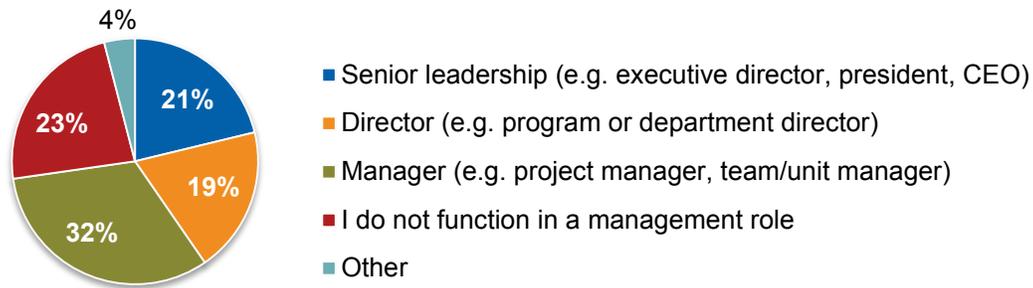
A1. Which of the following best describes your occupation? (n=174)



“Other” category responses were: Federal level planner, downtown redevelopment, professional – TOD public private partnerships, senior consultant and transit market leaders, sales, real estate development, director/administrator, development professional, rail technology provider, equal opportunity consultant, researcher, transit manager, vendor, landscape architect, advocacy and referendum consultant/retired, and finance.

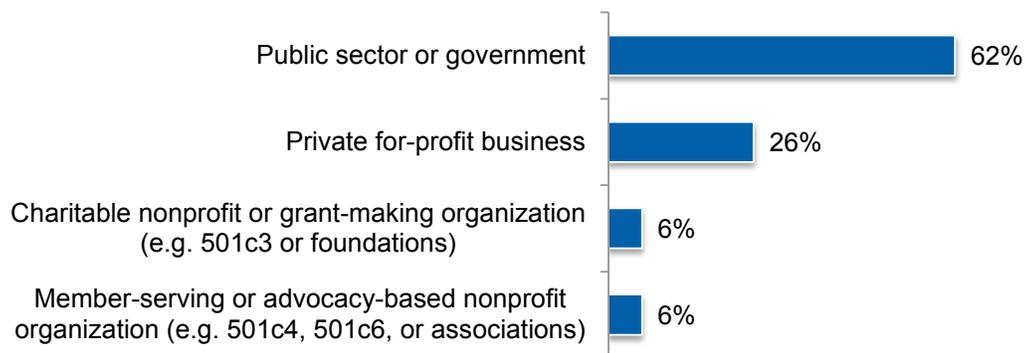
Nearly three-quarters of survey respondents were in high-level decision-making positions. “Manager” represented the largest response category (32%) followed closely by senior leadership (21%), and director (19%) (Figure A2). Twenty-three percent of respondents reported they do not have a management role, and four percent named a variety of other job categories.

A2. At your work, do you function in one of the following management roles? (N=173)



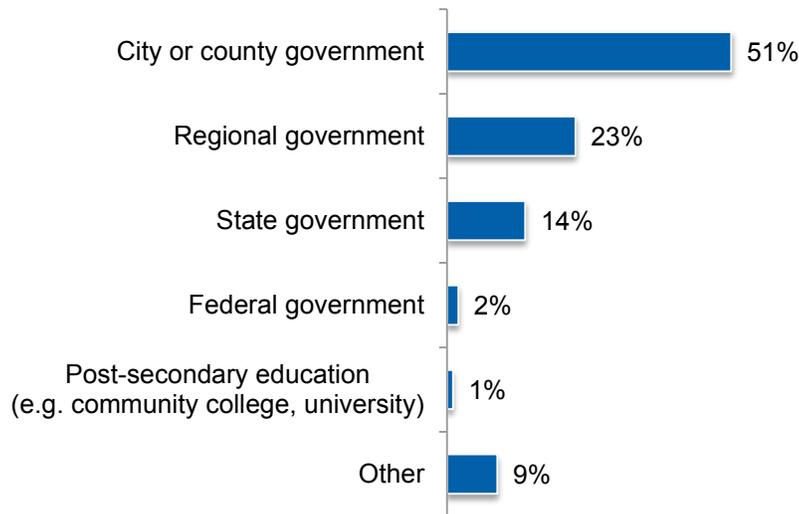
The majority of survey respondents work in the public sector or government (62%) (Figure A3). About one-quarter of respondents indicated that they work in the private for-profit business sector (26%). Charitable nonprofit or grant-making organizations as well as member-serving or advocacy-based nonprofit organizations were least represented with only 6 percent of respondents identifying in each sector.

A3. In what sector do you work? (N=171)



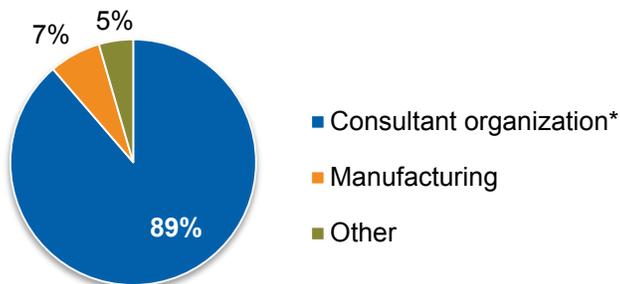
Within the public sector, the majority of respondents worked in city or county government (51%) (Figure A4). Regional and state government followed with 23 percent and 14 percent, respectively.

A4. Which of the following best describes the area in which you work in the public sector? (N=105)



Within the private sector, the vast majority of respondents (89%) stated that they are part of a consultant organization (Figure A5).

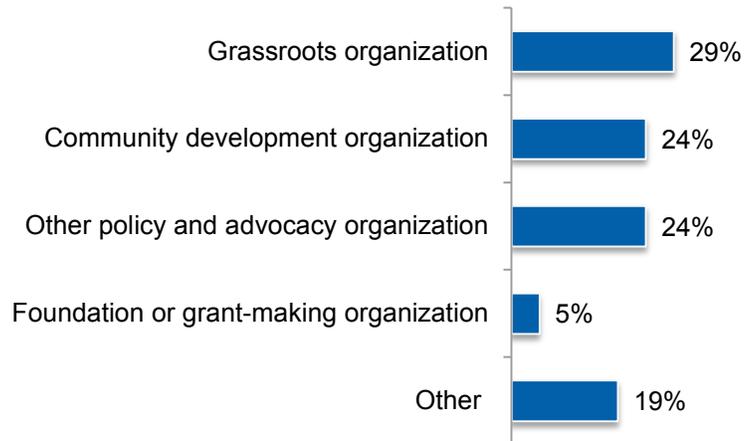
A5. Which of the following best describes your role in the private sector? (N=44)



** An entity that possesses special knowledge or skills and provides that expertise to a client for a fee
"Other" category responses were: Architectural firm and retired.*

Within the nonprofit or social sector, when asked to select only one role that best described them, respondents were much more diverse in their kinds of work. Grassroots organizations represented the most common role in the sector at 29 percent, followed by community development (24%), other policy and advocacy organizations (24%), and foundations or grant-making organizations (5%) (Figure A6). Nearly one-quarter identified other roles not mentioned in the answer options.

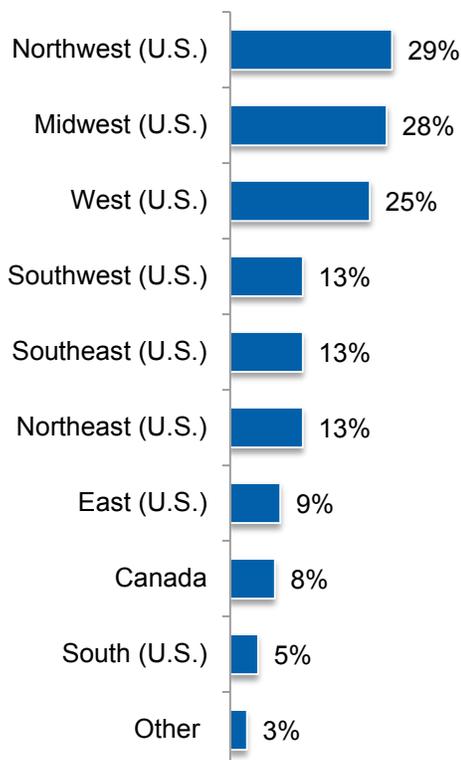
A6. Which of the following best describes your role in the nonprofit or social sector? (N=21)



“Other” category responses were: Community development financial institution, public interest law firm, local chamber of commerce, and transportation

Reflecting the Seattle location for the 2013 conference, respondents mostly worked in the northwest (29%), midwest (28%), and western (25%) regions of the United States. The least represented regions included Canada (8%) and the southern United States (5%).

A7. In what regions do you do most of your work? (n=171)



Total could exceed 100% because respondents could mention more than one region.

Other category responses included: global, national, Hawaii, and Chile.

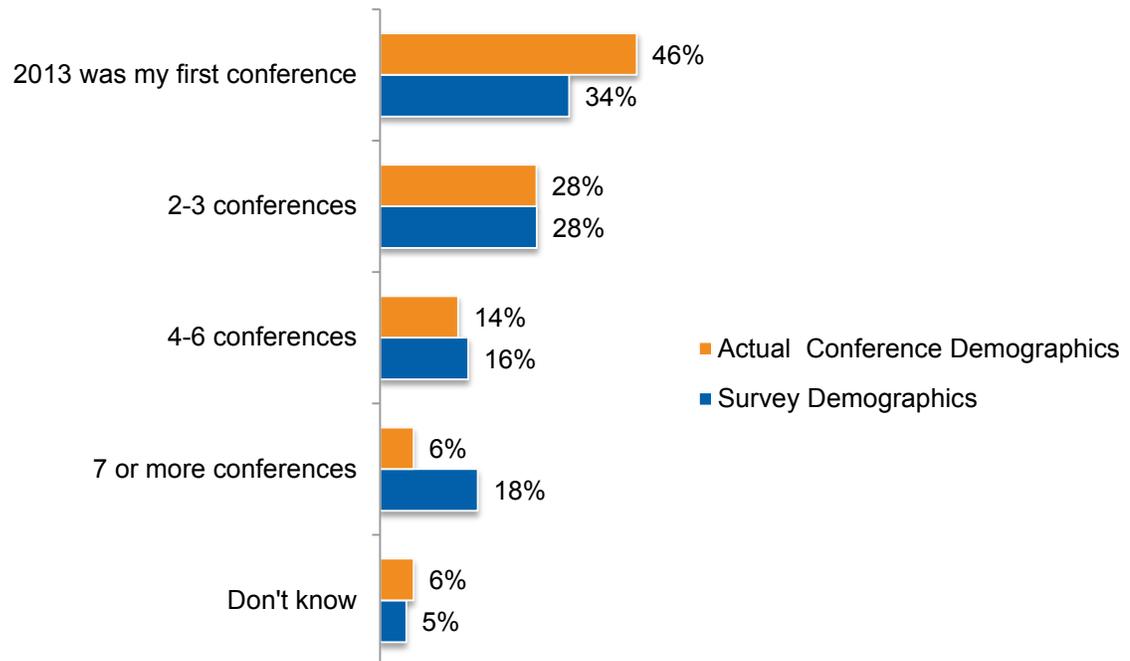
Representativeness of survey sample

Conference attendance and organizational sector affiliation comparison

The survey under-represents those who attended the conference for the first time and over-represents longtime conference attendees. Public sector employees are also slightly over-represented in the survey.

To validate the representativeness of the survey, Wilder Research staff compared actual conference attendance history and organizational sector affiliation of all 2013 Rail~Volution attendees to those who completed the survey. The data in figures A8 and A9 show that the survey generally offers comparable demographics with the exception of slightly under-representing those who attended the conference for the first time and slightly over-representing those who are long-time attendees and those who work in the public sector or government. The differences do not appear to be large enough to prevent using the survey results to form conclusions about the overall conference population.

A8. Comparison of conference attendance history between respondents and actual conference attendees



A9. Comparison of organizational affiliation between respondents and actual conference attendees

