Selecting Board Officers

When electing officers, carefully consider members' skills. The president and vice president should be recognized leaders, but also able to build consensus among the membership. They should be good communicators, facilitators, and well-organized managers who work well with the director and staff.

Because staff typically keeps minutes of meetings and manages the TMA's daily finances, the secretary and treasurer seldom need to handle these tasks. More often, these officers function as overseers or monitors, working with staff to ensure the TMA's legal, organizational, and financial records are properly maintained. These officers must be highly organized, attentive to details, and able to work well with staff.

Board Training

Some people will be serving on a board for the first time. To be effective, they need training and guidance on organization, roles, responsibilities and procedures. If many members are new, they need time to get to know each other and begin to work together, even if they have served on boards of other organizations.

Consider holding a "retreat" or other event soon after the election to orient new members and offer an opportunity for current members to interact informally in a setting where there are no pressing issues. This will also be an opportunity for board members to learn about past activities, as well as ongoing goals and objectives. Before the retreat, prepare and distribute a packet of information about the TMA, the board and its responsibilities, strategic and financial plans, and other materials related to the operation of the TMA.

Recruiting qualified board members is one of many challenges. Another is encouraging active participation in board and TMA activities. Educate members on the "culture" of the TMA as a membership organization that draws its strength and success from collective efforts. Encourage all board members to participate on, and perhaps chair, a committee. Assist them in selecting a committee that needs their particular skills and leadership.

Use board members strategically to accomplish the TMA's goals, but also generate continued interest and enthusiasm for individual efforts. Allow them to show their talents to their best advantage and to receive recognition.

Ensure that the board member understands the assignment and feels comfortable with the time frame and responsibilities associated with the task. If the board member cannot complete the assignment by the deadline, it can cause embarrassment and prevent participation in future projects.

TMA Committees

To extend the resources of the board and staff, many TMAs also maintain one or more standing and ad hoc committees.

Standing committees are permanent in duration. For example, an executive committee, composed of the chair, vice chair, secretary and treasurer would provide staff with frequent (perhaps weekly) input. The board chair generally does not serve on any other committee. Other standing committees might include a nominating committee for the ongoing identification of potential new board members, for which the board vice chair would often serve as committee chair, and the finance committee for which the board treasurer would often serve as chair. Other standing committees might include those for:

- Membership/marketing
- Public relations

- Government relations and legislative monitoring
- ETC recruitment, training and oversight
- Long-range planning
- Evaluation

Ad hoc committees are temporary in duration and are created to address a special issue or accomplish a specific task.

Members of both standing committees and ad hoc committees do not necessarily have to be members of the board or of the TMA, but can include outside experts. However, each committee should include at least one board member, so that committee meetings do not take place without board presence.

The effective use of committees requires respectful consideration of committee members' time and efforts. Committee work is often labor intensive; therefore, board members generally have the time to do an effective job on no more than one committee. The work of a committee should not be trivial but make a clear contribution to achieving the objectives of the TMA's work plan.

Act Upon Committee Recommendations

With few exceptions, it is important that committee recommendations be approved and acted upon by the board. There is nothing more disheartening to members of a competent committee who have conducted thorough research on their task, only to be stymied by the board or have their recommendations dismissed, second-guessed or not acted upon. Committee members should be made to feel empowered in return for their volunteer efforts; otherwise the board will be unable to find committee volunteers in the future.

There are several things that board and staff can do to ensure the effectiveness of committees. Committee work starts with the strategic plan. The strategic planning process, discussed later in this *Handbook*, defines important issues that might be best addressed

Tips for Good Board Relations

- Carefully select members - respected, effective leaders who are committed to work on the board.
- Solidify the board as an effective team for future TMA planning and actions.
- Clearly define roles and responsibilities of the board and the staff and ensure the staff has authority that matches their responsibility.
- Define TMA communications mechanisms and establish strong communication channels. Ensure regular, open communication between staff and board members.
- Utilize the skills and influence of board members strategically.
- Use meeting time efficiently - plan agendas carefully, provide needed background material in advance, and focus meeting time on the key decision-making items.

by separate committees. The objective to be accomplished by a committee should be determined first, then the board chair recruits someone who is interested and capable of serving as chair for that committee and of developing a work plan to accomplish the objective. Staff should also offer facilitation and coordination assistance to help committee members accomplish their tasks. Finally, committee accomplishments should be recognized and rewarded by the board.[3]

Effective Board Meetings

Meetings are one of the most expensive forms of communication. They cost the salaries and time of those in attendance, preparation costs, travel expenses, and the cost of materials, facilities and equipment used during the meeting. The following discussion provides guidelines for conducting an effective board meeting.[4]

Call a meeting only when there is no better, less expensive way to get a job done. If activities of the TMA require the board to meet frequently, such as monthly, then set a regular day to meet, for example, the second Tuesday of the month. This will allow members to plan ahead and reserve the time.

A meeting should be called if the subject is serious, if no one person has all the information, if complex problems need to be solved or if group acceptance of the decision is important to make it work. A meeting should be called if you cannot get the same results from sending a memo or making phone calls or some other form of communication. Call a meeting only if the necessary information is available for the board to act upon and if the board has had sufficient time to prepare.

Define the Meeting Purpose

Once it has been determined that calling a meeting is necessary, it is essential to define the purpose of the meeting and the outcomes desired from the meeting. Possible outcomes might include achieving consensus, voting on a decision, generating ideas for solving a problem, or obtaining commitments to participate.

Prepare an Agenda

Once the purpose and desired meeting outcomes are established, then an agenda should be prepared that will achieve the desired outcomes. Develop a clear agenda on topics that require their decisions or are important for them to discuss. Keep the day-to-day operation details off the agenda. Involve the board only if a problem arises or if a noteworthy event occurs. The agenda should place the highest priority item first. Time estimates should appear on the agenda next to each issue.

Discuss the meeting agenda with the board chair prior to the meeting. Be sure he or she understands all the topics, recommendations, and any questions and conflicts you anticipate.

Invite the Right People

The next step in planning an effective meeting is to make sure the right people are invited. These are the persons with the relevant expertise or information, those who will make

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[3] Ideas selected from Nancy L. Brown, "Board Effectiveness Workshop; 7 Rules for Using Committees Effectively," Designs in Development, Inc., Seminole, FL. 1991; revised 1994.

[4] The discussion is based on notes from "Management and Productivity Skills," David J. Cyra, CYRA ettc. Workshop presented at the Center for Urban Transportation Research, Tampa, FL, December, 2000.

the final decision, representatives who are affected by or will carry out the decision and anyone who might prevent or interfere with implementation of the decision. These may include persons outside the board. If you find that some board members are not needed to accomplish the meeting objective, then review whether the issue to be addressed is really appropriate for a board meeting.

Determine if committee chairs or members are needed at the meeting to present items on the agenda, provide additional background, or answer questions. The board chair should call each committee chair prior to the meeting to learn of motions that may need to be made or issues that require full board discussion. However, do not permit the board meeting to be turned into a committee meeting. Stick to Robert's Rules of Order[5]; it will result in the best use of everyone's time.

An additional consideration in the selection of participants in the meeting is to determine if your organization has an obligation to operate in the "sunshine," as is required in several states. Operating in the sunshine involves ensuring that meetings are open to the public at all times, that public notice is given prior to every meeting, keeping minutes of every meeting and prohibiting board members from having related conversation outside a meeting. State statutes define which entities must operate in this manner. Depending upon the status of government participation in the TMA, nature of contracts and circumstances where the TMA is receiving public funds, sunshine laws might apply. It is recommended that the TMA seek legal advice to clarify any obligation.

Assist in Meeting Preparation

After the agenda has been prepared and the participants selected, the participants should be sent data and information they need along with the meeting agenda, at least ten days prior to the meeting. If you are sending a complicated document or report, provide a one-page executive summary that defines key points the members need to know at the meeting and recommendations for any action that needs to be taken.

Begin the Meeting with a Statement of Objectives

At the start of the meeting in which a quorum is present, the board chair should review the agenda items with the board, state the objectives or what the board should accomplish during the meeting, and state how long the meeting will last. If the chair, with the assistance of the director, can stick to the time commitment, then the board members will be more willing to give their undivided attention during the meeting because they know they can trust that it will end on time.

An effective board chair must exercise good meeting facilitation skills. These include:

- Ensuring everyone has a chance to speak and preventing no one from dominating the discussion
- Keeping the discussion on track by preventing participants from digressing
- Disallowing members from criticizing other's ideas during brainstorming sessions
- Discouraging side conversations

During the meeting, TMA staff assists the chair by pointing out board members who have not been recognized. Staff also presents background information and addresses questions as needed.

[5] General Henry M. Robert. Robert's Rules of Order Revised. Constitution Society, Austin, TX. 1996.

At the close of the meeting, the board chair should provide a summary of what has been accomplished, assignments given, decisions made, and the date of the next meeting, if a follow-up meeting is necessary. As soon as possible after the meeting, staff should distribute minutes that accurately describe decisions, assignments and due dates.

Board members will be more willing to attend meetings if they feel the time is well spent.

Handling Conflicts

Conflicts occasionally occur between staff and the board or between board members. However, a disagreement is not necessarily bad. If you handle conflicts diplomatically and professionally, disagreement can be constructive. It can keep the TMA from becoming too complacent, produce effective and creative solutions, and consolidate support of other members for a position around which they can rally.

Disagreement, however, is damaging when it results in a power struggle between two board members, fragments the board into intractable factions, or ends in personal attacks on one or more members. Recognize when constructive disagreement crosses the line to destructive conflict. Unresolved conflict can paralyze the board and erode the growth and success of the organization. Also recognize, whenever possible, a conflict in the making. If you see a problem on the horizon, quietly prepare key members in advance.

If a conflict occurs during a meeting, delay confronting the antagonizer until later, when you can minimize the possibility of creating an embarrassing situation. Allow everyone to "save face." Then, assess the seriousness of the disagreement. Try to resolve the problem by talking to the members individually and then together, perhaps with the president or someone who could help to arbitrate.

Sometimes conflict, especially when it is repetitive, signals the need for recognition. Try giving the difficult member a task or responsibility that will satisfy his or her need for attention and keep from causing future problems. If the conflict or disruption persists even after private discussion, consider trying one of the following, less subtle, tactics:

- Allow peer pressure from other members to set a tone for more professional behavior.
- Create a credibility gap around the member.
- Use a strong member who has the support of other members to deliver a public defeat.

Although these solutions might seem harsh, they might be necessary to keep conflict and dissension from continuing and causing problems with other members. Finally, if a problem arises, don't let the dissenting member contaminate the relationships among other members or between the board and staff. Keep communication open and cordial and let members know steps are being taken to resolve the conflict in an amicable manner.

Developing and Building TMA Membership

Many TMA directors cite membership development as the toughest part of their job. This is especially true in the first year or two when there isn't a track record of success and the TMA has not yet established name recognition. Later, after the TMA is established and has a positive reputation in the area, it becomes easier to reach new businesses. Developing membership includes:

- Defining your membership base
- Determining potential members' concerns and issues
- Clarifying membership benefits
- Developing promotional materials
- Contacting potential members
- Developing outside marketing and publicity channels
- Hosting periodic membership development events

The above activities are listed roughly in the order in which they might be performed, but there will be overlap between some of the activities. These activities should also be reviewed or conducted anew in conjunction with your previous year's evaluation findings and the current year's strategic work plan development, as described in Section 4.

A Business That Sells Services

Members join the TMA at different times for different reasons. The core members who start the TMA become involved because they see problems they believe it could solve. These members are visionaries and pioneers; they are concept-driven.

A second, usually much larger group of members join when the TMA develops services. These service-driven members join because they perceive potential, tangible benefits for using the TMA's services.

The third "show me" group are sold on membership only after seeing documented results from TMA membership. Although members can be divided into these three broad categories by their primary focus, all are ultimately interested in what the TMA offers them and what it accomplishes or allows them to accomplish.

To be truly successful at membership recruitment, a TMA must think of itself as a business that sells services to satisfy defined needs of member markets. A market-driven TMA identifies who its members and potential members are, and then defines and meets their needs.

Membership Recruitment Stages

Membership recruitment goes through stages. The TMA's first year is often a busy time for building membership. It is likely only a small number of potential members in the area were reached during the exploration stage. Further, the director and core members are energetic, enthusiastic promoters. The pay-off for these efforts can be a solid base of membership support.

After awhile, membership growth might be slowing. Perhaps all the companies first identified have been contacted, and those with the most interest have become members, while others express no interest in joining. As membership renewal time approaches, it may be that current members begin to reassess the value of their membership. Some might begin to question the benefits they receive relative to the dues they pay. Don't be discouraged by these challenges or assume that organizations that did not join earlier won't enlist now.

Recognize, however, that a TMA must continue to evolve to meet the changing and expanding needs of current and new members. Membership development during TMA operation means retaining current members, continually updating the pool of potential members to include new companies arriving in the area, contacting those new companies, and recontacting organizations that were not sold on membership during the initial drive.

Defining Your Membership Base

Most TMAs strive for broad participation and cooperation of many public and private groups throughout their service areas. The members not only provide funding for the TMA, but also serve as important resources in organizational development and service planning.

Private Employers, Developers, Building Managers, and Land Owners:

- Participate as private sector members
- Implement site-specific TDM programs
- Refer potential members

Private Business Organizations (e.g. chambers of commerce):

- Participate as private sector members
- Serve as organizational "host" to TMA
- Facilitate community-based TDM promotion
- Refer potential members

Municipalities, Counties, and Other Government Agencies:

- Participate as employer members
- Participate as associate (non-voting) members
- Provide TMA seed funding
- Provide ongoing support for specific projects
- Serve as organizational "host" to TMA
- Develop and coordinate regional and local TDM programs
- Provide technical assistance to TMA
- Refer potential members

Transportation Service Providers:

- Participate as employer members
- Participate as associate (non-voting) members
- Assist with service planning, development and provision
- Refer potential members

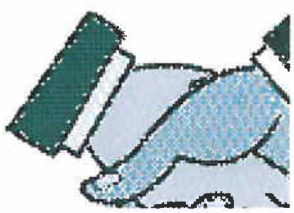
Other Community Groups:

- Facilitate community-based TDM promotion
- Refer potential members

Membership composition varies by the TMA's area and focus. For example, a high percentage of developers and land owners might be represented in a TMA located in a new suburban area where few employers are present.

If there are many multi-tenant buildings or small shopping centers in the area, consider a membership category for multi-tenant developments. The property owner could be the primary member and services can be provided to all tenants of the building for free or a nominal fee. Position membership as a service that building managers can offer to increase the attractiveness to new tenants.

Employer size is often an issue during the membership recruitment process. While it is true that employers with many employees offer the most efficient opportunities for trip reduction, the TMA's impact may be broadened by including smaller sized businesses through building owner and manager members.



Identifying Potential Members

Develop and maintain a current list of employers, developers, municipalities, and other potential members by using many sources. Utilize referrals from the members or other groups. For example, referrals of developers might be received from the city permitting department.

Identify potential member companies through:

- TMA board and member referrals.
- Local and state agencies that administer trip-reduction ordinances.
- Regional ridesharing agencies.
- Chambers of commerce and other local business groups.
- County economic development bureaus.
- Business directories for the area (often in library reference section).
- County building, zoning, and land use planning departments.
- Local business journals.
- Building and property managers' tenant lists.

This section addressed the subject of developing TMA membership and presented a list of typical TMA members. Now, this basic list can be modified to reflect unique characteristics of the service area.

Be open-minded when identifying potential markets. For example, few TMAs target apartment building managers. If, however, the area includes this type of development, working with apartment managers might influence the travel patterns of a group of commuters that might not have been reached otherwise.

Within a traditional membership category, there may be groups that were missed earlier. For example, perhaps retail stores in a shopping mall were not targeted during the TMA's formation. Now, when membership growth among the initial group is stable, seek out new potential members.

Keep the membership list current. Identify and add companies that have relocated to the area. Contact government offices that issue business licenses, agencies that issue building and occupancy permits, local newspaper and business journal notices of corporate relocations, and referrals from members and other groups such as chambers of commerce. If possible, contact potential members even before they move in. There may be an opportunity to assist corporate relocations to the area by orienting new employees to local transportation and commuting options.

Determining Potential Members' Concerns and Issues

Determine potential members' transportation concerns. Prepare background information on the topics businesses are most likely to find relevant to their circumstances and be prepared to describe how the TMA's services can help.

Transportation concerns could include:

- Complying with local, state, or federal transportation or air quality regulations
- Experiencing site-specific transportation problems, such as access, parking or area-wide growth
- Encountering difficulties in recruiting or retaining employees
- Desiring to participate in local transportation planning processes
- Experiencing customer (primarily retail businesses) and supplier access problems

Strategically, a TMA's actions can be classified as one of four types. The TMA may have activities in more than one area.

- Current services for current markets
- New services for current markets
- Current services for new markets
- New services for new markets

Strategic Direction Grid[6]

	Current Services	**New Services**
Current Markets	Market Penetration	Service Development
New Markets	Market Development	Service Diversification

Current Services for Current Markets

The TMA can increase market penetration of existing services to current markets (e.g., conduct a breakfast meeting for businesses on current services). This also includes the important considerations of keeping existing clients happy by always striving to do a better job. It is easier to maintain a business relationship with an existing customer than to find a new customer.

New Services for Current Markets

Expand the TMA's "product line" to satisfy additional needs of the members already being served (e.g., introduce a matching transit subsidy program for TMA members). By developing new services that are valuable to existing members, their interest and enthusiasm in the TMA can be maintained while attracting new members. For example, if the TMA already

[6] The Breen Consortium, Inc. "Air Quality and the Role of the TSM Organization." Sponsored by the New York State Energy Office, Midlothian, VA. January 1992. p.37

sells transit passes, it could also offer transit route assistance as a new service, where the most convenient route on a transit map is highlighted, and a personalized itinerary is prepared. These tangible benefits can make TMA membership more valuable to current and potential members.

Current Services for New Markets

The TMA can seek to enter new markets with current services (e.g., send its monthly transportation alert newsletter to neighborhood community associations). If the TMA currently markets its services only to employers based on some criterion, such as those with 100 or more employees, try marketing services to smaller employers too. It may be necessary to repackage the service to appeal to another market, but the service would essentially be the same.

New Services for New Markets

The TMA can diversify by offering new services to new markets (e.g., develop a School Pool program for secondary schools in its service area). It may be possible to attract retailers as members by offering a shuttle service from residential areas to a commercial district where customer parking is limited. Retailers joining the TMA could be given shuttle tokens to distribute to shoppers who patronize the stores. Free advertising for the retailers could be provided in shuttle schedules. Although other TMA members might not need this service, it could open a new market for membership.

Whatever membership and service development ideas are considered, it is important to match TMA services (existing or new) to specific needs of particular markets.

Sometimes the need and its solution will be obvious, but in most cases, it will be necessary to do some marketing research. A TMA can use techniques borrowed from consumer product marketing and opinion research to define the needs and services that members and potential members may want. Surveys, individual interviews and group interviews are the most common, as discussed in Section 4, Initial Work Plan Development Considerations—Data Collection.

By using such methods, issues of concern to members and potential members can be explored while examining their opinions and attitudes about various solutions to those concerns.

For example, the following questions could be asked of current TMA members:

- What transportation issues particularly concern you?
- How serious is the concern?
- What are the benefits of TMA membership?
- What TMA services have you used and how often?
- Which services are most and least valuable?
- What additional services would interest you?
- What form should new services take?

Research could also target a subset of the market, that is, potential members:

- What transportation issues particularly concern you and how serious is the concern?
- What (if anything) do you know about the TMA and how did you learn about it?

- If you know of the TMA, why have you not joined?
- Which of the TMA services might you use and how often?
- What services not offered would interest you?
- How much would you be willing to pay for general membership or as fees for specific services?

Ongoing Membership Development Tips

- Periodically assess existing members' needs.
- Be open-minded when identifying potential markets.
- Explore needs of non-members through written and telephone surveys and conversations during membership recruitment calls.
- Use both formal and informal periodic surveys to explore members' needs.

Clarifying Membership Benefits

Business leaders join TMAs for a variety of reasons. All must see something of value in joining the TMA. Although being a good corporate citizen will motivate some businesses, most look for economic benefits. The three primary groups targeted by many TMAs are employers, developers/property managers, and local governments.

"What's in it for Employers?"

Benefits to employers include:

- Cost savings by utilizing centralized programs (rideshare matching, vanpool program, transit information, guaranteed ride home)
- Assistance on transportation-related problems such as parking shortages, labor market or customer access, regulatory compliance
- Access to information on transportation topics that affect businesses (air quality regulations, transportation services or programs, land-use or transportation planning activities)
- Access to local governments for input in planning and programs
- Opportunities to share information and work with other employers on group transportation programs
- Advocacy on local or regional transportation issues
- Improved image of the employer in the community
- Opportunity for developing new business contacts

"What's in it for Developers?"

Benefits to developers and property managers include:

- Cost savings by utilizing centralized programs
- Assistance on local transportation-related problems
- Access to information on transportation topics that affect businesses
- Access to local governments for input in planning or programs

- Advocacy on transportation issues
- Opportunity for developing new business contacts
- Mechanism for implementing additional transportation services for existing and prospective tenants

"What's in it for Local Governments?"

Benefits to municipalities and other local governments include:

- Assistance in the development of area-wide TDM programs for local government employees and area businesses and residents
- Access to a cohesive group of businesses to implement municipal transportation programs
- Forum for developing business support for future transportation services, programs, and legislation
- Mechanism to respond to growth management concerns and desires to manage the transportation system more efficiently and meet environmental goals

Developing Promotional Materials

As with other businesses, in order to be effective, services and products of the TMA must be promoted. Develop materials that inform potential members about the TMA and compel them to join. The goal is to deliver a message that strikes a persuasive chord with the target audience.

Select one or a combination of media for outreach and promotion, based upon careful consideration of the best way to reach the particular chosen market. For example, the demographics of the particular commuter market might closely resemble the listening audience of a particular radio station. If the market consists of commuters who drive along a particular corridor, consider a billboard campaign along that highway. Better yet, permanent roadway information signs that list a toll free number might achieve longer lasting promotional results.

Most importantly, do not choose a medium first and then try to figure out how to use it to reach the target market. Instead, first determine the media to which the target market pays attention, then figure out how to use those particular media. Do not feel compelled to use all available media for the sake of reaching everyone. This will only spread resources too thin to gain any results.

Promotional Material Distribution

Also consider the logistics of distributing promotional materials. For example, a letter campaign may seem inexpensive initially, but its success partially depends on the labor that goes into assembling an accurate mailing list. Posters are also initially inexpensive, but the success of posters depends on whether there are available bulletin boards and kiosks that are noticed by the target market. It is usually necessary to get permission to post them, if they are on private property (such as an employment site). If they are not underneath a protective glass case, posters will be written on, ripped, rained upon, blown away by wind or removed within a short period of time. This means they must frequently be replaced, which takes time and labor.

For visual materials, use graphic design and writing professionals early in the development process whenever budget permits. A trained designer/graphic artist creating the overall look, and a writer or editor constructing good copy can provide a professional product. If a member has a graphic designer on staff, ask if he or she can develop materials as an in-kind service.

Written materials should be brief and to the point, written in clear, non-technical language. Tailor written content to appeal to the interests of each different audience: CEOs, middle managers, ETCs, commuters, and others.

Developing a Consistent Image

Developing a consistent image throughout the promotional materials enhances recognition and recall of the TMA. Image includes the logo, color scheme (bright and trendy or more traditional corporate), size and form of the materials, type of paper, and typeface. Each element should contribute to the desired image.

If there is more than one promotional piece, they should be coordinated as part of a family of materials to maximize recognition and recall. Many TMAs prepare a new member packet containing a general information brochure describing the mission and goals, activities, and member services and benefits; a letter of welcome; and a list of other members. Brochures on individual TMA services could also be developed to be used separately or in combination with more general materials.

Some members will join only after they see successful results. These members can be big boosters because they have been won over by proof of success. To persuade them to join, however, the TMA's accomplishments must be documented. This is where efforts in program evaluation pay off. Refer to Section 4, in particular, Communicating Evaluation Findings.

Consider producing an annual report or other collateral materials that provide facts and figures on trips reduced, cost savings to employers, ridesharing matches among employees, number of parking spaces saved, or any other measure of success that appeals to the target audience's needs.

Document successes of individual members and highlight the TMA's role in their accomplishments. Ask members to write testimonial letters. Or even better, ask the members to contact potential members and sell TMA membership.

Contacting Potential Members

Telephone calls and letters are the quickest way to make contact with employers and other organizations. This sales aspect can be frustrating because it often involves cold calling. Use referrals from members or others as much as possible to increase the likelihood that calls will be taken and letters read.

Make a list of the top priority companies, usually the largest employers, and contact them first. However, don't overlook the smaller sized firms. Consider several methods to contact potential members:

- Breakfast or lunch meetings, or other events
- Peer-to-peer contacting
- Letters and calls from the director
- Newsletters sent to non-members
- Referrals from government agencies or others

Always follow up initial phone calls with a letter of thanks, an invitation to a future event, and an information packet. Here are some suggestions for initial contact and follow-up.

Initial Contact

Ask a TMA member who knows another potential member to pave the way for the staff's phone call. Or ask the member to invite the potential member to breakfast or lunch to introduce the TMA. Join them if possible. If there are no TMA member contacts, make the initial call or send an information packet. Target the call or letter to a name, not just a title. (It can be obtained by calling the main phone number and asking for the name of the president, CEO, or head of human relations.)

Follow-up Contact

If letters are sent, follow up a week later with a call to discuss the TMA and to request a visit. Follow up all calls with a letter and information about the TMA. Send a "Thank you for your time" letter to companies reached. Send an "I'm sorry I couldn't reach you... Please let me introduce the TMA" letter to companies that have not responded. Meet with the potential member as soon after the call as possible. Ask a TMA member with similar interests and issues to those of the potential member to accompany you on the visit; a satisfied member can be the most effective salesperson.

Membership Contact Tips

- Encourage referrals from businesses, network groups, and local governments.
- Use testimonials from highly regarded business leaders.
- Anticipate potential questions about, and objections to, participating in the TMA.
- Be persistent, but not bothersome. If you have left two or three unreturned messages with someone, move on to a different person at the company. If you have no success at all, wait six months and try again.

Developing Outside Publicity Channels

Look for opportunities in the community to reach potential members and heighten awareness of the TMA's name and services. These opportunities can include:

Presentations to Business Groups

Contact the president or program chair of local chambers of commerce, trade associations, and other employer and civic groups, and ask to be placed on the program for the next meeting. These groups are always looking for interesting speakers, so take the initiative; don't wait to be invited.

Press Releases and Media Coverage

Contact newspapers, radio and television stations to inform them of events. Introduce staff to reporters and editors of local newspapers and business journals, especially those that cover transportation, local, and business news. Send press releases to a named person, not a title or department. These initial contacts will often lead to coverage of other events, providing the TMA with free publicity.

Articles For Local Publications

Suggest ideas to the reporters for stories on the TMA or important transportation issues. Stories can be both timely (e.g., initiation of new services or programs, business-transportation legislation) and general (e.g., typical congestion issues). Send draft articles to local newspapers, magazines, business or other trade publications, and local newsletters. Ask them to send a copy prior to publication so their edits can be checked.

Hosting Membership Development Events

TMAs often host events to introduce their activities to the business community. They can take place day or night in the form of receptions at local hotels, arts centers, or members' offices, or at breakfast meetings with a few members and potential members. If possible, hold the event during an appropriate time, such as Rideshare Week, or when initiating a new transportation program (e.g., new transit service). Enlist the participation of corporate, political, or government leaders to encourage businesses to attend.

Keep the event short and focused. One hour for a breakfast meeting, and up to two hours for an after-work reception. If a program includes a speaker, begin the program half an hour into the event to allow for late-comers.

Provide name badges to all guests and mark members' badges with a ribbon so potential members will know to whom they can direct questions. Ask members to make special efforts to include guests in conversations and to introduce non-members to members.

Establishing External Relationships

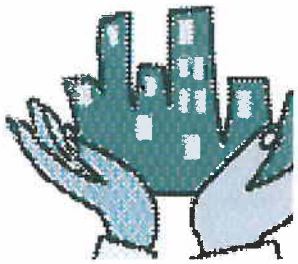
In order to be effective, the TMA must establish sound working relationships with local public agencies and officials and private groups that can support its goals and activities. In any service area, there may be many organizations involved in transportation issues. Determine which groups are involved in transportation issues and establish partnerships that benefit the TMA.

These groups may include:

- State and local governments, such as city, county, and state departments of transportation; planning, zoning, and business development departments; and regional or metropolitan planning organizations
- Transportation and air quality regulators
- Elected officials, such as mayors, city and county council members, state and federal legislators
- Transportation and commute management service providers, such as public and private transit agencies, vanpool providers, regional ridesharing agencies, taxi companies, and others
- Chambers of commerce and other business associations
- Local media, such as newspapers, business and community publications, television and radio stations
- Commute management professional associations/other TMAs
- Network of Employee Transportation Coordinators (ETCs)

Other TMAs

Understand the role that all these organizations play to determine the most beneficial relationships. Identify the most appropriate liaison from each organization, establish effec-



tive communication, attend meetings, and participate in their activities. Also join in activities of peer groups, such as chambers of commerce, commute management associations, regional ridesharing agencies, transit agencies, and ETC and TMA networks.

TMAs offer a variety of services to its members and in many cases, to nonmembers, even in areas with regional rideshare providers. It is essential to clarify service roles between regional programs and TMAs.

Peer groups can provide professional referrals that expand the business community's awareness of the TMA, but also can support the staff and members by sharing ideas. Some TMA networks may also submit joint proposals and win grants from funding agencies to provide services and conduct regional marketing activities. In these cases, it is very useful to draft an agreement that describes how the participating TMAs will coordinate and communicate with each other. This is helpful in easing friction arising from "turf" issues.

Finally, cultivate the media. Good publicity about the TMA and its activities can aid in attracting members, but also increase positive visibility and credibility.

Section 4

TMA Development—Planning and Evaluation

- Section Overview
- Beginning with the End in Mind—TMA Performance Evaluation
- Initial Work Plan Development Considerations—Data Collection
- Survey Planning and Budgeting
- Communicating Evaluation Findings
- Developing a Strategic Work Plan

Section Overview

Each stage of TMA development offers special challenges. In the exploration stage, the founders identify problems and build consensus for solutions. In the formation stage, the staff and board secure funds, create an organization and develop membership.

The operation stage also presents challenges. The TMA must maintain the support and enthusiasm of existing members, attract additional private and public support, provide services, manage daily operations and plan for the TMA's future.

This section starts with a discussion of "beginning with the end in mind."[1] Too often, evaluation of the TMA is an afterthought—left until the year's program is over. As a result, it may be difficult or impossible to evaluate because measures of program effectiveness were not initially established and the necessary data were not collected.

A sound evaluation provides the kind of information that enables the board and staff to steer the program toward success. It provides the feedback necessary to rule out ineffective courses of action and fine tune programs that show potential. Having reliable evaluation results often are required to meet performance criteria outlined in contractual agreements and to secure continuation of funding or win additional funds.

Properly documented program outcomes are also a convincing source of information for retaining existing members, and promoting your organization and services to potential board recruits, new members and the general public.

It is recommended that evaluation methods be established concurrently with work plan development, so that monitoring activities can begin immediately after your program year begins. Starting with the end in mind encourages clarity in the development of goals, objectives and the tasks selected to achieve those objectives. Considering evaluation in the beginning gets a developing work plan off to a good start.

This section includes a description of an evaluation composed of performance criteria developed specifically for TMAs originally developed by CUTR for the Florida Department of Transportation as the TMA Self Evaluation Program. Following the program evaluation method is a discussion of information collection methods, specifically the range of survey types and how to plan, budget and communicate findings of surveys. This information will be useful in documenting existing base line conditions against which future program performance will later be compared. This is not meant to make staff experts in the design and implementation of surveys. This takes specialized training and experience. Rather, the discussion of surveys is intended to help staff learn how to communicate their needs to market research professionals and interpret and use the results of surveys.

Following the discussion of communicating evaluation findings is a section on developing a strategic work plan.

Beginning with the End in Mind—TMA Performance Evaluation

By beginning the TMA work planning with considerations of evaluation, it will be easier to identify what is important to do and how to do it. The example described here is just one way to approach evaluating the TMA that will help ask the kinds of questions that point to ways of improving performance and getting the budget year off on the right start.

Originally developed as the TMA Performance Criteria[2] for the Florida Commuter Assistance Program, the set of seven criteria described below are a basis for assessing a TMA program

[1] Phrase is taken from Stephen R. Covey, "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People," Fireside Publishers, August 1990.

[2] Center for Urban Transportation Research, College of Engineering, University of South Florida, "TMA Evaluation Program," prepared for the Florida Dept. of Transportation. Tampa, FL, February 15, 1995.

and for giving feedback to the TMA. In addition, these criteria offer many important roles in strengthening program effectiveness:

- Designing an evaluation encourages examination of the clarity of TMA objectives, the ease with which they can be measured, and the possibility of achievement
- Redirecting efforts when it is determined that elements of the program have or do not have desired results
- Demonstrating to the public the diligence and effectiveness of the TMA
- Supplying powerful factual information for public relations campaigns
- Helping other TMAs to anticipate problems in implementing similar programs and provide yardsticks against which others may measure their success
- Enhancing the TMAs performance through focusing on dual, results-oriented goals
- Delivering ever-improving value to customers, resulting in positive gains toward achieving program goals
- Improving overall TMA operational performance (e.g., lower cost per person served)

These criteria are:

- Corporate Leadership and Involvement
- Suitability of Goals and Objectives
- Development and Deployment of Strategic Plan
- Financial Management Systems
- Degree of External Visibility
- Effectiveness of Programs
- Measure of Member Satisfaction

An eighth category, "Other," is suggested so that consideration can be given to other important bases for evaluation that are unique to the TMA.

Address each of the criteria as it relates to the TMA's mission, goals and objectives. Keeping in mind all those who will be interested in reviewing the evaluation, such as board members, TMA members, funders, etc., attempt to anticipate reviewer questions. The more complete a picture is provided of methods, measures, implementation and evaluation factors, the more it will encourage meaningful feedback from those reviewing the evaluation.

It helps to understand the difference between measures and indicators. All criteria call for results based upon data using key measures and/or indicators. Measures and indicators both involve measurement related to performance. When the performance can be measured directly, such as number of persons placed into carpools and carpool formation rate, the term "measure" is used. When the overall performance may not be evaluated in terms of one type of measurement, and two or more measurements are used to provide ("indicate") a more complete picture, the term "indicator" is used.

For example, "creativity" is not easily described in terms of a single measurement. Awards for marketing materials and increased awareness provide two indicators of creativity. However, the effectiveness of this creativity on travel behavior would require measuring changes to market share gain from introduction of these creative products or services.

TMA Performance Criteria

TMA Overview

Prior to addressing the seven performance criteria, drafting an overview of the TMA is recommended. This is a summary of the TMA, addressing what is most important to the TMA and the key factors that influence how it operates. This will help reviewers understand why the TMA exists, who is involved, what are the TMA's products and services, and what resources are being brought to bear on the problems. The TMA Overview should describe:

- The nature of the TMA's operation: products and services
- Principal customers (e.g., commuters, employers, etc.) and their special requirements
- A description of the TMA's service area (such as activity center or corridor)
- Key customer requirements (for example, prompt response or accurate information) for products and services. Briefly note significant differences in requirements among customer groups or markets, if any
- The TMA's relationship to other transportation providers (e.g., transit agency) or organizations (e.g., MPO)
- The TMA's staff composition, including: number, type, level of education, etc.
- Major equipment, facilities, and technologies used
- Types and numbers of suppliers of goods and services (e.g., third party vanpool operators, taxi operators for the guaranteed ride home program). Indicate the importance of suppliers, and other TMAs, and any limitations or special relationships that may exist in dealing with such suppliers
- The regulatory environment within which the TMA operates, including non-profit status, contractual arrangements, concurrency requirements, etc.
- Other factors important to the TMA, such as major new directions, major changes taking place in the industry, new alliances, etc.

Corporate Leadership and Involvement

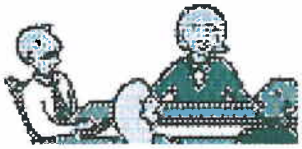
The leadership criterion examines the TMA's board of directors and executive director's personal leadership and involvement in creating and sustaining a customer focus, clear and visible values, and high expectations.

Reinforcement of the values and expectations requires substantial personal commitment and involvement. The leaders must take part in the creation of strategies, systems, and methods for achieving excellence. The systems and methods need to guide all activities and decisions of the TMA. Through their regular personal involvement in visible activities, such as planning, communications, review of TMA performance, and recognizing employees for quality achievement, the board members serve as role models for staff.

Board of Directors and Executive Director Leadership—Review the board of directors' and executive director's roles and responsibilities in developing goals and objectives.

How might these roles be changed to enhance leadership?

- Identify board activities for leading and/or receiving training. What training is needed that could be offered in the future?
- Describe financial and operational performance monitoring systems including types, frequency, content, and use of reviews and who conducts them. Get feedback from the board on how they believe these systems could be improved. How might the progress and financial reports, as provided by the director, be made clearer and



more informative?

- Review the process of identifying and selecting new board members including identifying the skills and characteristics that are important to the TMA and comparing the strengths and weaknesses of the existing board. How can the board recruitment process be improved?
- List all TMA committees including their missions, names of committee members, affiliations, and types (private/public). Are objectives and tasks appropriately allocated to standing or ad hoc committees? How have board members participated? Have the committees effectively executed their work in a timely manner? Are there too many committees, stretching board members too thin or are there tasks that are not currently being addressed by committees?
- Consider how the board evaluates and improves the executive director's effectiveness. Review the board's most recent performance review form used for evaluating the executive director as his or her duties relate to the performance of the TMA. What feedback from the board could help the director improve performance?

Board of Directors' Community Involvement

- Review board interactions with local and business community leaders on TMA issues.
- Consider such communications with national, state, trade associations, other TMAs, and professional organizations.
- Review director interactions with local and business community leaders on TMA issues.
- Are the right community leaders being targeted?
- Are there better or more efficient ways to maximize public contact, given the limited time of board members?

Suitability of Goals and Objectives

This criterion examines the process of setting goals and objectives. Major emphasis is placed on developing an understanding of why the TMA chooses its mission, goals, objectives, and activities.

Scope and Management of Performance Data and Information—Review the types of data and information that are used to measure the TMA's performance in achieving the TMA's goals and objectives. Are there better data sources and types of data available to measure accomplishment of objectives? Are better methods available to collect the data?

Benchmarking—Benchmarking refers to information about other TMAs that can be used for comparison and best practices. There are two major premises underlying benchmarking. First, for their key programs or services, TMAs need to know where they stand relative to other TMAs or commuter assistance programs, and the best practices for similar activities among other TMAs.

Second, comparative benchmarking information provides impetus for significant (sometimes "breakthrough") improvement, and alerts TMAs to new practices. It is anticipated that the existence of benchmark information for many of the TMA programs or services may not be readily available. TMAs may request the assistance from the National Transportation Demand Management and Telework Clearinghouse (see Helpful Resources section in Appendix) in seeking benchmark information.

In the use of benchmarks, it is suggested that the TMA:

- Review its rationale for selecting benchmarks.
- Review the process used for obtaining and using comparative information.

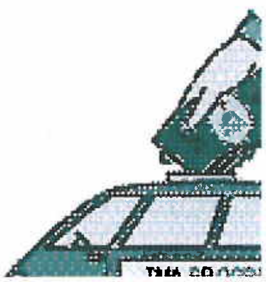
Benchmarks might include:

(1) Information obtained from other organizations

(2) Information obtained from a review of the literature

(3) Evaluation by independent organizations

Consider how this benchmarking information is used to set objectives and improve performance. Are objectives set too high or too low, based on comparable programs of other TMAs?



Analysis and Uses of Data to Develop Goals, Objectives, Products and Services— Management based upon facts is a core concept in the criteria. The criteria call for a wide variety of data, both nonfinancial and financial, to guide a TMA's actions toward beneficial results. Despite their importance, however, individual facts do not usually provide a sound basis for action or priority.

Action depends upon understanding cause and effect and the relationship between processes and results. Process actions may have many resource implications; results may have many cost and revenue implications.

- Consider the key steps in the processes for delivering services and how performance at each step is tracked and maintained. For example, the TMA may re-evaluate how it delivers its guaranteed ride home program. The old method may have required the commuter to pre-register, receive prior approval to use the program from the Employee Transportation Coordinator, pay taxi fare and get reimbursed, and have to wait one hour for the only approved taxi cab provider. After evaluating the customer's experience, the TMA might arrange to have several taxi cab providers accept vouchers for direct payment by the TMA.
- Consider how processes have been or can be improved to achieve better quality, response time, and operational performance. Review how each of the following is used or considered:

  (1) Process simplification (e.g., data entry and mailing sent by same person)

  (2) Benchmarking information (e.g., how long it takes other TMAs to fill requests)

  (3) Research and testing

  (4) Use of alternative technology (e.g., voice mail access to commute information)

  (5) Information from customers, within and outside the TMA
- Consider how the TMA receives and uses planning input from others such as a regional commuter assistance program, MPO, etc. Are there any lost opportunities?
- Consider how new and/or modified products and services are designed and introduced to meet both customer needs and performance requirements. Factors that might need to be reconsidered in design include: cost, privacy concerns, convenience, third-party capabilities and support for Employee Transportation Coordinators.
- Consider how the TMA's products and services are designed and managed so that current customer and member requirements are met and continuously improved (e.g., surveys of employers determined they want real-time access to a transportation advisory system for major reconstruction projects). TMA services also might

include providing information to employers on transportation issues such as parking, bus pass sales, etc.

Development and Deployment of Strategic Plan

The strategic planning criterion examines the TMA's strategic (e.g., 3 years) planning process and how the goals and objectives and annual work plans are integrated into the overall long range plan. Include how this process integrates customer and member requirements and how plans are carried out. Also discuss how progress is shared with key stakeholders such as the MPO and transit agency.

Strategic Plan Development

- Review the process used to examine the TMA's strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities for and threats to the TMA.

Implementation of Strategic Plan

- Review how the budget, staff, and volunteer resources are allocated to carry out the plan, and how the TMA relates the current year work program to the strategic plan.

Coordination with Regional Transportation Organizations

- Consider how the TMA ensures alignment of its plans and activities with area long range transportation plans, and how the TMA communicates its plans and reporting progress to the board, MPO, and other stakeholders.

Local Transportation Service Supplier Quality and Support

- Review how the TMA's quality requirements are defined and communicated to the TMA's suppliers (e.g., taxi cab providers for guaranteed ride home programs) or suppliers to its customers (e.g., third-party vanpool provider).
- Determine whether or not the TMA's quality requirements are met by transportation providers.
- Consider how performance information is fed back to suppliers.

Financial Management Systems

This criterion examines the TMA's financial management systems, and provides information that can supplement an audit. The criterion addresses financial performance via two major avenues: (1) emphasis on improved productivity and lower overall operating costs; and (2) support for TMA strategy development, decisions, and innovation.

Care should be exercised when comparing the financial performance of the TMA with that of another. This is because short-term improvements in efficiency may be affected by factors such as accounting practices. Some TMAs historically have higher measures of efficiency levels than others as a nature of their market. For example, high density, bedroom communities 30 miles from a downtown and partially served by high occupancy vehicle lanes are fertile areas for carpool and vanpool formation. Therefore, vehicle miles of travel reduced could be expected to be significantly higher than a TMA near the center city.

The time interval between quality improvement and overall financial improvement depends upon many factors. This interval is not likely to be the same from one TMA to another. Though improved quality and productivity are likely to improve a TMA's overall effectiveness and efficiency, its financial performance also depends on environmental factors and public policies. Efficiency depends upon many external factors, such as local, national, and international economic conditions and business cycles. Such conditions and cycles do not have the same impact on all types of programs or on individual TMAs.

Budget Preparation and Monitoring—How are budgets prepared and monitored?

- Review how plans consider cash flow requirements.
- What do the income statement, balance sheet, and statement of cash flows indicate about the financial well being of the TMA?
- Review the TMA's internal control procedures.
- Review the audited financial statements and management letter from the auditor. What actions have been taken to correct deficiencies, if any, identified by the auditor?
- Chart trends of membership levels, new member recruitment, retention, and revenue and in-kind contributions from members.
- Review the dues structure and number of members per category.

Degree of External Visibility

The external visibility criterion examines your TMA's advocacy, educational, and outreach efforts and how these relate to enhancing the customer service focus of the organization. Also examined is the potential reach of promotional efforts and their impact upon targeted markets.

Promotional Efforts—Consider the process used to determine how the promotions will fulfill the TMA's goals and objectives. What are the direct costs and in-kind contributions of promotional efforts?

Educational Opportunities—Identify opportunities for professional development, including training and conferences for staff and members of the board.

- Review the variety and types of educational opportunities provided to TMA members and their employees or other customer bases. These may include:

  (1) Employer site visits

  (2) Seminars and workshops offered by the TMA, such as "Effective Cycling"

  (3) Special forums with guest speakers

  (4) Transportation Days
- Is there an education need that is left unfulfilled?
- Consider how the TMA communicates its goals, objectives, mission statement and product offerings to the customers in the TMA's service area. How does the TMA use these opportunities to enhance its image as an advocate of transportation alternatives? These may include:

  (1) News articles written about the TMA

  (2) Presentations at public meetings and\or hearings

  (3) The use of public service announcements and community television channels

  (4) Other outreach activities

Results of External Visibility Efforts—Review how the effects of promotion, educational outreach and advocacy are measured.

- What impacts are measured, and what process was used to determine which effects should be measured? How can the analysis of these impacts be used to refine and enhance promotional, advocacy, educational and outreach efforts?
- Identify local government policies and programs that support the TMA and/or Transportation Demand Management and Transportation System Management strategies. These may include trip reduction ordinances or congestion management plans that include an active role for the TMA.

Effectiveness of Programs

The effectiveness criterion examines the TMA's operational performance. A useful evaluation will help determine one or more of the following: (1) the extent to which the program has achieved its stated objectives (e.g., increases in Average Vehicle Occupancy); (2) the extent to which the accomplishment of the objectives can be attributed to the program (direct and indirect effects); (3) the degree of consistency of program implementation with the plan (relationship of planned activities to actual activities); and, (4) the relationship of different tasks to the effectiveness of the program (productivity).

Evaluation Methods—Review the methods for collecting the data for evaluation purposes. The evaluation method and data collection requirements depend on the measures of effectiveness being used. Some of the most commonly used methods involve employee surveys, program participation documentation (e.g., registrations for preferential parking, applications for subsidies), vehicle counts, and time sheets or activity logs.

Product and Service Results—Note current levels of service provided for all key product and service features (e.g., vanpools in operation, customers served, employee transportation coordinators). Compare current levels with appropriate benchmarks.

Determine cost effectiveness for the key results by allocating the expenditures for the period costs to the measures of effectiveness (e.g., cost per person served, cost per vehicle miles of travel reduced, etc.). Compare measures of effectiveness against objectives and benchmark information.

Measure of Member Satisfaction

The satisfaction criterion examines the TMA's relationships with customers and its knowledge of customer requirements. Also examined are the TMA's thresholds to determine customer satisfaction, current trends and levels of customer satisfaction and retention, and these results relative to other TMAs.

Customer Expectations: Current and Future—Consider how the TMA determines near-term and longer-term requirements and expectations of customers.

- How is the relative importance of specific product and service features determined for different customer groups?
- How are other key information and data such as complaints, gains and losses of customers, and product/service performance used to support the determination?

Commitment to Customers—Review the TMA's commitments to customers regarding its products/services and how these commitments are evaluated and improved. Examples of commitments are product and service guarantees, such as the response time for a guaranteed ride home program or how personal information and confidentiality is maintained.

- Consider how these commitments:

  (1) Address the principal concerns of customers

  (2) Are free from conditions that might weaken customers' trust and confidence

  (3) Are clearly and simply communicated to customers

- Review how the TMA evaluates and improves its commitments, and the customers' and members' understanding of them, to avoid gaps between customer and member expectations and TMA performance. This should include:

  (1) How information/feedback from customers is used

  (2) How product/service performance improvement data are used

Customer Satisfaction—Consider how the TMA determines customer satisfaction and customer intentions to use the TMA's services again.

- Note significant differences, if any, in processes for different customer groups or segments.
- Review how customer satisfaction measurements capture key information that reflects customers' likely future market behavior, such as intentions to use the TMA's services again or positive referrals. The TMA's products and services might be provided via Employee Transportation Coordinators (ETCs). Thus, "customers" should also take into account these ETCs.
- Review customer dissatisfaction indicators, including number and type of complaints received.
- Determine trends in the TMA's customer satisfaction and trends in key indicators of customer dissatisfaction.

Other

In evaluating the TMA, include other important factors, such as major new directions for the TMA or additional qualitative information which is not reflected in the above criteria.

Initial Work Plan Development

Prior to the development of the first work plan for a new TMA or next year's work plan for a mature TMA, it is advantageous to have a general knowledge of the use of data collection techniques in their many forms. In order to develop an effective work plan, the TMA must understand the needs and nature of its market(s). Surveys are a powerful means to identify issues of importance to constituents, obtain in-depth information on opinions, attitudes and customer experiences, and to generate baseline data on travel behavior, as well as follow-up data on changes as a result of a TMA program. Such considerations are vital to programs that rely upon winning funding, documenting TMA program results and fulfilling grant requirements.

This section describes the different types of surveys that can be used. These include a variety of data collection methods, such as focus groups and mail surveys, as well as sampling considerations. This discussion is not meant to prepare the TMA to design and administer a survey. It is recommended that such work be contracted out to market research experts or provided for by the expertise represented on the board. Instead, this discussion is to enable better articulation of needs to professional survey designers, plan for the work to be accomplished, and understand, use and communicate survey results.

The section immediately following will discuss considerations of survey planning needed prior to work plan development, such as survey scheduling and budgeting. Such knowledge will maximize planning options.

Types of Surveys[3]

There are a number of different types of surveys, each of which have unique characteristics and limitations. The choice of survey method is dependent on the objectives involved in doing the project and budget available. The main types of surveys are:

- Focus Groups
- Written/Mail surveys
- Telephone Surveys
- Personal interviews

Focus Groups

Focus groups are an excellent alternative if only a very general feel of public interest or support for a particular subject is required, and the researcher wishes to determine which issues of great impact to the community will surface. Because of the small sample sizes involved, this process will not allow for a quantitative estimate of public support, nor will it determine the relative importance of issues raised or topics discussed. Typically two to four focus groups will be held. Cost will vary from $3,000 to $6,000 per topic, depending on the number of focus groups held, complexity of questions, and other time-related factors.

Written/Mail/E-Mail Surveys

Written and mail surveys are usually the lowest cost alternative available for quantitative estimation. The surveys allow for a relatively large amount of data to be collected from each respondent. However, written surveys are often subject to low response rates and usually take over a month to collect necessary data.

Costs will vary greatly depending on the level of projectability the researcher is attempting to obtain. To provide a single, reliable estimate for an area, a minimum sample size of 250-300 is recommended. In cases where an independent estimate is required for several segments of the population (such as geographic areas, income levels, etc.), required sample sizes can increase greatly. Usually if a "general idea" is required for sub-segments and an accurate estimate for the population as a whole, a sample size of 125-150 per segment is sufficient. The cost for this type of approach can vary from $5,000 to $10,000 and up, depending on sample size and type required.

E-mail surveys have the advantage of being free but may suffer from the same low response rate as mail surveys and are limited to people who have e-mail and who regularly check for messages.

Telephone Surveys

Telephone surveys have the advantage of rapidly providing quantitative estimates and tend to have higher response rates than mail surveys.

The major drawback of telephone surveying is the cost involved. Furthermore, the amount of data and complexity of responses that a respondent can provide is limited—two-hour

[3] This section on survey types, survey planning and budgeting was originally published in "1999 Commuter Assistance Program Evaluation Manual," prepared for the Florida Dept. of Transportation by the Center for Urban Transportation Research, College of Engineering, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida, 1999.

phone interviews are not recommended. Concepts presented need to be fairly simple and straightforward. Sample size guidelines are the same as for written surveys.

The cost for this type of approach can vary from $7,500 to $25,000 and up, depending on sample size and type required, and length of interview.

Personal Interviews

Personal interviews are the best alternative when complicated survey formats are required and detailed information needs to be provided to respondents. Costs for this type of interview tend to be extremely high if a quantitative estimate is required, since the usual purpose of using this type of interview is to present fairly complex information to potential respondents, and to be able to judge the nuances of the response. This requires rather skilled (and relatively expensive) interviewers, and also often involves travel expenses.

A table summarizing each of these approaches is on p.xx.

Issues In Sampling

Many of the issues involved in proper sampling have been touched on in the above sections. This section will deal with each of the issues in more depth. The question of sample sizes will be briefly introduced and covered in detail in the statistics section, directly following this one.

Certain key elements that must be included in any sampling plan:

- Definition of target population
- Issues in proper representation
  1) How to ensure proper representation
  2) Evaluate how well the sample represents the population
- Sampling efficiency
- Sample size
- Sample sources

Definition of Target Population

The hypotheses that are being tested will define the target population, at least in a broad sense. The key is to define the target population in such a way that each respondent provides meaningful information.

Proper Representation

Because most surveys are conducted on a sample of the population rather than the full population, it is vital that the sample selected properly represents the population.

Ensuring proper representation can be done in several ways. The steps should be taken:

- Identify key variables to serve as indicators
- Include measurements of those variables in the surveys
- Devise a random selection process
- In some cases, require that the sample meet *quotas* on indicator variables
- Weighting results

Types of Surveys and Characteristics of Each

	Focus Groups	Written Mail/E-Mail Surveys	Telephone Surveys	Personal Interviews
Description	8-10 people discuss topics of interest to client; led by professional moderator	Pre-designed survey mailed or e-mailed to respondents	Pre-designed survey conducted by professional telephone interviewer	Survey administered by individual professional interviewer
Applicable Uses	Issue generation; in-depth discussion on complex survey results	General surveying of population; medium-long surveys; simpler survey formats	General surveying of population; short-medium length surveys; moderately complicated surveys	Interviews with key individuals; long-very long surveys; complicated survey formats
Usefulness for Projections/Trend Analysis	Virtually None - not projectable	Only if adequate response rates are obtained	Good	Very Good if enough interviews are completed
Turnaround	Very Fast	Slow	Fast/Moderate	Moderate/Slow
Strengths	Gets at issues beneath the surface; low cost; fast turnaround	Large sample sizes can be obtained; longer surveys possible	Reasonably representative; fairly good turnaround	Allows more flexibility in interview format, in-depth probing
Weaknesses	Very dependent on having a good moderator; no project ability	Low Response rates/ unrepresentative samples can occur; slow turnaround	Higher costs; surveys need to be kept fairly short and simple	Very high costs per completed survey; slow turnaround
Costs	Low/Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/High	Very High
Typical Single Project Cost for Complete Project (Design, Analysis, Report)	$3,000 - $6,000, based on complexity of issues and number of groups	$5,000 - $10,000 and up, based on complexity of survey and number of respondents	$7,500 - $25,000 and up, based on complexity of survey and number of respondents	$15,000 - $75,000 and up, based on complexity of survey and number of respondents

Identify Key Variables—The researcher and the research sponsor should identify those variables that will most likely impact attitudes and behaviors being measured. This is done through a combination of historical data sources (if available) and using the expertise of the parties involved to determine the most important variables. Usually one checks on a limited set of variables, say five or six. These typically include age, income, gender, presence of children, and so forth.

It is important that there be an independent source to measure those variables. Usually, when the entire population of an area is being surveyed, census data serves as a good check on major demographic variables. Breakdowns of census data or tables in the U. S. Statistical Abstracts can also serve as good checks when segments of a population are being surveyed. When the target sample is from an extremely specific database (for instance, a ridesharing database), data must either be culled directly from the database or from historical surveys of that database, if available.

Include Measurements of the Indicator Variables—Clearly, if a variable is to be used as an indicator of proper representation, that variable must be included somewhere in the data collection process. Standard demographics are typically part of any surveying effort, since demographics often impact attitudes and behaviors and are therefore extremely useful in extrapolating results gleaned from a survey of the entire population. Any other variables chosen as indicators, such as number of automobiles, type of housing, and so on, should have a specific question in the survey to collect that data item.

Devise a Random Selection Process—The most common way of ensuring a representative sampling of any given target population is through a random sampling process. In telephone-based surveys, this is often accomplished through a technique known as random-digit-dialing. Commercial services will obtain a list of all working phone exchanges, devise a sample of random numbers fitting those exchanges, eliminate exchanges having a high incidence of business/government telephone numbers, and then use the resulting list as a basis for the sample.

When sampling from databases is involved, there are several possible random selection procedures. Ideally, the sample will be totally random. The process of creating a totally random sample involves:

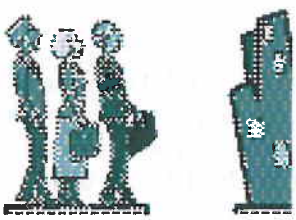
- Determining the sample base necessary
- Determining the ratio of sample needed to total database size
- Using a random number generator to create numbers between 0 and 1, and applying those numbers to each database record
- Selecting as a sample all those whose assigned random number falls below the ratio of sample needed to database size

It should be noted that sample base size, that is, the sample that is drawn to meet the needs of the survey, is usually much larger than the actual required sample size. The reason for this is that there are a large number of non-working phone numbers and/or bad addresses in databases, and that a large percentage of people may not respond to the surveys. A ratio of 10:1 for sample base to desired completed surveys is not uncommon.

Use Quotas on Indicator Variables—Another way of essentially forcing a sample to be representative of the population is to set quotas on some or all indicator variables. This is often used in selecting samples for focus groups, and on variables such as male/female ratio and minimum age (usually 18 or older) for telephone surveys. Using quotas requires that the indicator variables be identified up front in a portion of the survey called a screener. For instance, if a survey were to have quotas set on gender, age, income, and presence of children, where a certain distribution in each of those categories was required, those questions would be the first asked in the survey. Interviewing would take place for each category desired until the quota was filled, and then people meeting the filled-quota description would no longer be interviewed.

Weight Survey Results—Survey results are commonly weighted so that indicator variables will match up with independent source data. For instance, if a returned survey has only a 15% distribution of respondents with three or more cars, and it is known that the target population has 25% (say, from census data), then the survey results can be mathematically re-weighted to match the 25% figure. When this is done, all of the responses from the 3+ car group are re-weighted, not just the indicator variables. All of their opinions and attitudes are made more prominent.

A critical factor in weighting survey results is that there is sufficient sample size within the group being reweighted, particularly when making their opinions more prominent. If there were 5 responses from people with 3 or more cars, weighing them as importantly as 100 responses from other people, would run a severe risk of having unrepresentative results. Confidence in the responses given by the group to be re-weighted should be fairly high. The section on sample size, as well as the section on statistics, will explain the concept of confidence in greater detail. As a rule of thumb, it is probably unwise to re-weight responses from a group with less than 75 respondents.



Evaluating Surveys for Proper Representation

Once the data have been collected, there will be a distribution of responses on the indicator variables, such as percent male and female, percent in various income brackets, and so forth. In some cases, there may be an average (or mean) value as a check (such as mean number of vehicles, mean number of people per household, etc.). Typically, however, indicator variables are evaluated in the form of distributions.

Checking the responses for proper representation essentially involves making statistical tests on the distributions. Consultants will apply the standard t test and chi-square test to ensure proper representation.

Sampling Efficiency

Collecting data from respondents costs money, and the more data collected, the more money it costs. A major cost factor is inefficiency in sampling, where, for example, quotas are set and a large number of people are contacted who don't fit in the quotas. Do everything possible to ensure that the sample base is as efficient as possible.

Sampling efficiency can be achieved in many ways:

- If a sample of working commuters is desired, it would be wise not to send surveys to communities that are largely populated by retirees.
- If a sample of people who live in, Atlanta, Georgia is desired, all phone exchanges known to be wholly in Marietta or Decatur should be eliminated.

Commercial databases sometimes contain demographic data that can be used. For instance, a survey of commuters drawn from a demographic database could be restricted to those aged 18-54, if such data is available.

For efficiency purposes, if the data is not available in advance and a screener must be used, the screening section should clearly be the first part of the survey, so that non-qualifying respondents will not be interviewed.

Sample Sizes

The issue of how many returned surveys are required is fairly complex. The key issue that the TMA director needs to determine is the level of uncertainty that is acceptable in the results.

Survey results are usually presented as a single, specific result, such as "25% of the population has 3 or more cars." To be completely accurate, the result might be presented in the following ways:

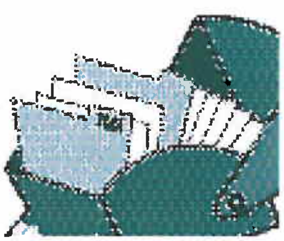
> There is a 95% chance that between 22% and 28% (25% +/- 3%) of the population has 3 or more cars. There is a 90% chance that between 23% and 27% (25% +/- 2%) of the population has 3 or more cars. There is an 80% chance that....and so on.

There are two elements involved in the uncertainty about survey results - one is a range of results that the "true" result falls in (known as the *confidence interval*), and the other is the percent chance that the result falls into that range (known as the *confidence level*). Given a certain sample size that is randomly selected from a population, for any given result - either a percentage or an average - a confidence level and confidence interval can be calculated. The level and the interval are interdependent; that is, the size of the interval depends on the magnitude of the level. For any given result, there is an interval corresponding to an 80% confidence level, a different (and larger) interval corresponding to a 90% confidence level, a third (and still larger) interval corresponding to a 95% confidence level, and so forth.

For the key results coming from the survey, the TMA director needs to decide the size of interval and acceptable confidence level. Usually, the confidence level is determined first (e.g., "I want to be 90% confident that all the results..."), and then the acceptable interval is determined ("... are within 3 percentage points or less of the true values.").

Sample Sources

There are a large number of sources from which to obtain sample addresses or telephone numbers, whose use depends on the objectives of the survey. These include:



- Databases of rideshare club members
- Commercially available databases drawn from magazine subscription lists, sweepstakes entries, telephone directories, etc. These databases can have a surprisingly large number of names matched to addresses and telephone numbers
- Telephone numbers derived from a random-digits process, which is available from a large number of commercial suppliers
- Databases of business addresses and phone numbers are also available from similar sources

For telephone surveys, a TMA would typically contract with a telephone interview vendor, who would in turn select a commercial supplier to provide the database of randomly selected telephone numbers.

The choice of which database to use depends primarily on:

- The objectives of the project and the hypotheses being tested
- The extent to which the database covers the target population defined by the objectives and hypotheses. Beware of using databases that are convenient and close at hand, but may represent a biased sub-sample of your true target population. For instance, a rideshare database clearly does <u>not</u> represent all carpoolers.
- The expected incidence or "hit rate" expected from the database for efficiency purposes, which is important but must not override the cautions noted just above.

Summary

The survey should produce reliable information if all of the above steps are taken, including:

- Properly defined target population
- Random selection process
- Checking for proper representation and re-weighting, if applicable
- Correct sample size drawn
- Correct source chosen for the sample

How useful the information is will depend largely on how well the survey instrument is designed.

Survey Planning and Budgeting

Evaluation results are typically desired for new year planning purposes and year-end evaluations. In order to effectively integrate the results of the evaluations into the planning process, the survey must be conducted reasonably far in advance of the planning period. Suggested advance times to start planning the surveys are:

Type of Survey	Advance Time to Start
Focus Groups	2 Months
E-Mail Surveys	2 Months
Mail Surveys	4 Months
Written, hand-distributed surveys	2 Months
Telephone Surveys	3 Months
Personal Interviews	6-8 Months

This section will focus on how to plan and fund an evaluation. While this sounds simple, many of the considerations discussed below can have a profound impact on survey costs and data reliability.

Survey Timing

Timing can be a key issue in conducting surveys and can have a significant impact on results if not properly controlled. Employee satisfaction studies are usually not conducted immediately after reviews and/or pay increase announcements. Attitudes towards use of commute alternatives can be affected by prevailing weather patterns, such as extreme heat (or in the case of northern areas, extreme cold). Below are some elements of timing to be considered when planning surveys.

Seasonality

Seasonality can be a major issue in an area like Florida, where there is a high influx of seasonal residents with predictable impacts on traffic levels. Studies evaluating the perceived (or actual) level of congestion will be significantly affected by the season in which they are conducted.

It is not always possible to conduct surveys at "ideal" times, nor is it always possible to determine what an "ideal" time may be. The best approach is usually to do as much as possible to ensure that prevailing conditions are similar when a follow-up survey is conducted. For instance, doing an initial "congestion perception" study during low season, implementing some reduction procedures, and then following up during high season would be methodologically poor, and would probably lead to the conclusion that the policies implemented had actually increased, rather than decreased, congestion.

Frequency

Budgets seldom allow for tracking surveys to be conducted more than once a year (if that). In cases where seasonality may be an issue (see above), you may want to consider spreading your interview process throughout the year rather than doing all of the interviews at once. This allows for calculation of a rolling average once you have conducted enough interviews to get a baseline, and may give you fairly up-to-the-minute insight into any new situations that may affect your customers or whoever else you are surveying. However, this approach generally involves more expense, particularly if the surveys are updated every time they are conducted.

Sample Size

The primary decision made when budgeting for a survey is the determination of sample size. The concept of how sample size affects the precision of results has been discussed previously. The question that a research sponsor must answer is, "How much is the extra precision and certainty from the larger sample size worth?".

As a rule of thumb, to get a "quick and dirty" estimate for a population, a sample size of at least 150-200 should be considered. This allows for a wide range of uncertainty, but generally gives a fair idea of the population's attitude.

For a good, solid estimate of the tendencies of a population, sample sizes of 400 respondents should be considered. Often a sample size of 400 or so may be used to establish benchmarks, and then 200 additional interviews are used as follow-ups to gauge whether there has been any change since the initial study was done.

Planning Survey Projects

Probably the single most important step in any research project is the initial planning. The survey must meet the data needs of the evaluation that is to be conducted. If the project is poorly planned in the initial stages, there is virtually no chance that it will result in useful data and meaningful, valuable changes in policy and TMA program operations.

There are five essential elements that a TMA director must have firmly in mind when initially organizing a research project:

- Given the evaluation being conducted, what decisions will be made with the results of the survey? Or alternatively, how will current operations, policies, and resource allocations be changed based on the survey findings?
- Given the decisions that are being made with the research, what is (are) the specific hypothesis (hypotheses) that is (are) being tested by the research?
- What are the pieces of data that need to be determined in order to prove or disprove the hypothesis, and in what form should they be measured? Furthermore, since a sampling process is involved, how confident do we need to be of the results? Is it sufficient for the results to be within 5%, 10%, 50%?
- What are the best sources of information? Do data already exist that answer this question? If not, where is the best place to look for it? If surveying is involved, who are the best people to ask questions of and collect data from?
- How much budget is available to conduct the research?

Each of these areas will be discussed in more detail below.

Step 1: Identify Decisions to be Made

The evaluation selection process should be a key step in identifying the decisions that are to be made. These decisions should be made explicit at the beginning of the project. This step is unfortunately often omitted from the research process. Even if the TMA director has determined that they will conduct a needs assessment, it is easy to get into trouble by setting vague objectives such as wanting to know the demographics of the rideshare database members. This approach often leads to faulty research design.

Often the TMA director assumes that the personnel in charge of actually conducting the research share the same perception of the project's goals, only to find as the data comes back that some elements were left out or misinterpreted. Or, the director will assume a thorough understanding of the process so that the step of specifying the decisions can be skipped, and he/she needs only to ask for specific data elements. This is a serious mistake—the director often discovers new data elements that are needed and could easily have been identified if the planned decisions had been made explicit.

The TMA director should *always* ask for information by specifying the decisions to be made, and *never* merely ask for data. Directors don't want to "know the demographics" just to know them; they want to evaluate specific portions of or processes within their organizations. Perhaps they want to determine which specific actions are required to make programs more effective, such as whether or not new marketing campaigns are needed, or if the entire spectrum of the area's population is being served. If not, they may want to know which ones are underserved and determine if resources should be allocated to target those groups.

It should be noted that in cases where decisions have been made and will not be changed, due to commitments, regulatory requirements, etc., it is wasteful to spend research dollars to determine the decision is right or wrong. The research should be directed towards decisions that have not been made and will be made more effectively with additional information at hand.

The decisions that will be made based on the survey results should be explicitly identified by the TMA director. Will resources be re-allocated and if so, how? If the project is evaluative, how will the evaluation be used to improve operations, policies and procedures, and specifically which operations, policies, and/or procedures are being evaluated? All of this information should be laid out on paper as the first step. Following completion of this effort, the next step is to generate the hypotheses to be tested by the research project.

Step 2: Generate a Hypothesis

A research project is an experiment like any other; it should test and either confirm or reject a specific hypothesis (or multiple hypotheses). The hypothesis should take the form of a direct statement, as in "Carpoolers have a significantly different set of demographics than people who drive alone", or "75% of all rideshare database members have a high level of satisfaction with the ridematching service, 'high' being defined as 8, 9, or 10 on a scale of 1-10." The TMA director should identify the decisions to be made by the evaluation (step 1 above). Then the TMA director and the research project manager should work together on generating the hypotheses that, when tested, will provide the director with information needed for the decisions to be made.

The following elements must be present in any sound hypothesis:

- The *measurement* that is being made and tested (such as a percentage, or an average rating)
- The *scale* that the measurement is being made on (for example, the minimum threshold level where a numerical scale is involved, or the actual statements used in categorical scales)

- The *source*, or *target population*, from which the information will be drawn (such as "rideshare database members" or "all commuters" or "residents of the 5-county area")

If, for example, a re-allocation of resources to target groups that are under-represented in a ridesharing database (compared to the service area's population) is the decision under consideration, one might generate the following hypotheses:

- The demographics of the ridesharing database are significantly different from the commuter population of the area, specifically in terms of income, age, race, gender, presence of children under age 6. (The list might be lengthened, or some elements might be dropped, but the hypothesis should be explicit.)
- Those demographic groups that are under-represented in the database have a certain minimum threshold interest in carpooling. The minimum threshold interest should also be made explicit: e.g., 20% of the commuters in the area who are in these groups say they are "somewhat or very" interested in carpooling at least once per week on a regular basis. Or, one might hypothesize that their interest level is *not* significantly different than the interest level of the demographic groups that are over-represented in the database.

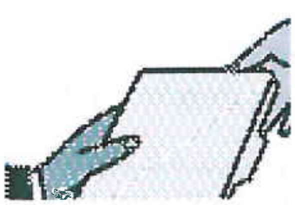
One might also generate a hypothesis about the media that would be most useful to use to reach this population. However, it is also quite possible that few media are available (perhaps just direct mail and newspapers) within the budgets allowed, so that regardless of what the research finds, the same approach will be taken. As mentioned above, it is a waste of time and money to identify and collect data for a decision that has already been made and cannot be changed.

The hypothesis should be specific, and should be a direct statement that will either be confirmed or denied by the research. Vague statements like, "Rideshare database members are satisfied with the service provided to them" are not useful or effective hypotheses, because they leave open to interpretation exactly what "satisfied" means. Does this refer to *every* database member? Does it refer to an *average* level of satisfaction, and if so, how is "satisfaction" defined? A better statement would be, "75% of all rideshare database members will say that they are very satisfied (or will rate their satisfaction at least an 8 on a 10-point scale, if a numerical scale will be used) with the ridematching service provided to them."

Step 3: Identify Data Needed to Prove or Disprove Hypotheses

Identifying Data Needs—When the hypotheses have been generated, identifying the data needed is actually quite straightforward. By reviewing the hypotheses used above as examples, it is clear that respondent demographics and stated intentions or interests will be included on the questionnaire. It is likely that other hypotheses will have been generated in the planning process as well.

When the necessary data have been properly identified, it is usually fairly straightforward for a survey research professional to create the actual survey questions and response scales and/or categories to be used. While it is certainly appropriate for a TMA director (presumably, this person is not an experienced survey research professional) to review and comment on a questionnaire, it is not advisable for a non-professional to formulate the questionnaire. Issues of response bias, question order bias, skip pattern complexity, response choice formatting and design, types and formats of data needed for certain statistical tests and modeling procedures, standard response scaling used in particular types of questions, etc., are all important in questionnaire design but are not issues with which most TMA directors are or need to be familiar.



The Importance of Control Groups—A control group is a population that is exactly (or as close to exactly as reasonably possible) like the group on which you are measuring the effects of the program, except that it *has not been exposed* to the program. The measured behavior (such as percentage of people carpooling) should be measured both for the experimental group and the control group to determine the effectiveness of the program. Many experiments skip the step of having a control group by assuming that a control group would have experienced no change in behavior, and thus *any* measured change in the experimental group is due to the program.

This approach can lead to erroneous conclusions. A major decrease in the price of gasoline, for instance, may *reduce* the number of people carpooling. If the group that was exposed to the program shows a very small increase in carpooling, it may be concluded that the program was ineffective. However, if it was also known that carpooling within a control group actually *dropped* by 15%-20% due to the decrease in gasoline prices, a different conclusion might very well be reached.

Due to cost constraints, it is sometimes impossible to conduct a research project with an appropriate control group. Other data sources, such as census data, may have to serve as a surrogate for data from a true control group. It is extremely important, however, to understand the notion of a control group and how results from the control group may impact conclusions reached from research data.

The Concept of Sampling—Usually, a research project will involve conducting tests on a sample of the population rather than every member of the population. This occurs because few TMAs can afford to sample every member of a target population. When this happens, statistical uncertainty is created in the results, based on whether the sample accurately represents the population. This is not a question of proper sample design procedures; it is a fact of the sampling process.

Statistical procedures exist that identify what the probability is of having made an error in sampling, and how large that error might be. Before an experiment that involves sampling is undertaken, the level of potential error to be tolerated must be determined. This is usually based on the importance and economic ramifications of the decision being made with the research results.

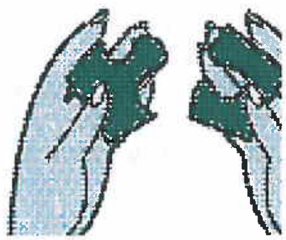
Step 4: Identify Information Sources

There are a number of possible sources for information. To determine demographics, for example, there is a wealth of free data available from the U. S. Census. This includes the standard population and housing surveys. In addition, the Census releases other, more customizable products, such as the Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS), that allow the user to create customized cross-tabulations of any Census long form data from a 1% sample of all Census long forms returned.

Many TMAs have a number of evaluative tools available from their own records. These include match rates, number of vans in service, number of companies contacted, number of commuters in the database, and so forth. Traffic count data, available from local governments and Department of Transportation Offices, can also be useful in evaluations and analysis.

In many cases, however, there will be a particular hypothesis that simply can't be proved or disproved by publicly available information, particularly when subjective evaluations (such as satisfaction ratings, ratings of agency responsiveness, and so on) are required. When that situation arises, survey research can provide the means for answering many of these questions.

In a survey research project, it is crucial to ask the right questions. It is equally important to ask those questions of the right people. Identifying those people is the crucial first step in developing the sampling strategy. Suppose it is determined to estimate the interest level in carpooling among commuters who are not currently in the ridesharing database, as shown in some of the examples above. No matter what questions are asked, good estimates will



not be achieved by interviewing retirees. The goal of the sampling plan should be to identify commuters and interview them and only them.

The hypothesis or hypotheses should always indicate from where to draw the sample. The hypothesis given above specifically mentions "carpoolers" and "rideshare database members." As mentioned earlier, a sound hypothesis should always contain the *source*, or target population, from which the information will come. If the hypothesis is properly constructed, determining the correct population should not be difficult.

Actually obtaining responses from people in those groups and verifying that the respondents belonged to those groups may be more of a challenge. If no available sources exist to pre-identify the people contacted as belonging to the target population, it may be necessary to include an identification question (often called a *screener*) in the survey instrument. The screener is essentially a question that verifies the identity of the respondent in relation to the target population. Many surveys have quotas for males and females, for example. Often a TMA director wishes only to obtain survey responses from adults (18 or older, or 21 or older). If, as in the case above, one only wants to collect data from commuters, a question very early in the survey would ask something like, "Do you commute to work at least three times per week?" to verify that the respondent was in fact in the target population.

Even when a database identifies a person as a member of a target population, it is often a good idea to verify the information through use of a screener. Sometimes databases are out of date or have errors in the entry of data. Using a screener can avoid unnecessary expenditure of usually scarce research dollars on unwanted responses.

Summary

By considering each of the above elements and following steps in the proper sequence, the effectiveness of research dollars available can be maximized. At a minimum, adherence to the standards set forth in this section should maximize the TMA's return on their investments in research.

While a TMA can take every precaution and devise a nearly flawless evaluation methodology, the value is lost if the TMA cannot effectively communicate the results of their efforts. This section will focus on ways in which TMAs can communicate evaluation findings to a variety of audiences.

Market Research Tips

- Keep surveys short and simple; ask only questions that are necessary, organize questions logically, and use familiar language.
- Give your survey a professional look and a cover letter that enhances legitimacy.
- Make it easy for people to complete and return survey forms. Make the survey form a self-mailer, or include a postage-paid envelope.

Getting To Know Your Audience

To develop an effective evaluation report, the TMAs must first understand who their audience is, what information will be of interest to them, and when the information should be available to satisfy the audience's needs.

Who is the audience for a TMA evaluation report and what do they want to know? Although the audiences for a TMA evaluation report will differ by TMA, a number of groups with interest in the TMA can be identified. These include the following:

- Funders
- TMA Staff
- Board of Directors
- Media
- Service Providers
- Politicians
- Clients
- Community Groups
- Other Interested Parties

Each of these audiences has specific needs from an evaluation. It is up to the TMA to identify what those needs are and to ensure that the information of interest is provided in the evaluation report.

Funders

This group will want to ensure that the money provided is being used wisely to achieve identified goals. Prior to beginning an evaluation, the TMA should contact its funders to determine specific expectations of the TMA program, and develop an evaluation that measures how those expectations are being met.

TMA Staff

This is an important audience for TMA evaluation reports because this group is the one that will be most affected by the results. TMA staff can use the evaluation to streamline efforts, to clarify the customer service focus, and to correlate efforts with the achievement of TMA mission and goals. The evaluation should help the director determine if current focus and efforts are achieving desired results. An effective evaluation will help the director refine efforts and target new actions that can help achieve stated goals.

Board of Directors

The evaluation is important to the board because it helps them determine if their guidance and policy directions are effective in meeting program goals. The evaluation will also help determine future board roles.

Media

The media will want two things from an evaluation. They will be interested to see if the TMA is meeting its objectives, and they will want anecdotal information that can be used in developing a story. If anecdotal information is good, the media will develop articles or stories that can be an excellent source of program promotion.

Service Providers

Third party providers, such as taxi companies for guaranteed ride home, can use TMA evaluation results to improve the services provided on behalf of the TMA. Many of these service providers have specific internal customer service and/or satisfaction goals that they want to achieve. The TMA evaluation can help them define their success.

Politicians

The TMA evaluation can help politicians determine if the needs of constituents are being addressed. The evaluation can also serve as an educational/promotional opportunity because it can provide the politician with information about TMA activities and services. Ultimately, the evaluation can serve as a decision-making tool.

Clients

Customers of the TMA are interested in learning about changes in services and how these changes can affect them. They may also be interested in learning how their actions have contributed to the community and/or program success.

Community Groups

Many community groups will be interested in learning what services of the TMA can be beneficial for their success. They may also be looking for ways in which their group and the TMA can work together collectively to achieve common goals. Finally, community groups may view the evaluation in the context of comparing their achievements with that of the TMA. This can be especially true if the TMA is a private non-profit organization competing for funding.

Evaluation Timing

When is the best time to conduct an evaluation? The simple answer to this question is when it will be most useful. The better answer would be whenever the evaluation can be used to improve services and the effectiveness of the TMA. In reality, if an evaluation is to be used by all of the potential audiences listed above, then the TMA would have to continuously evaluate its success. Such an evaluation schedule is impossible, so the TMA should prioritize the most important audiences and complete evaluations to coincide with prioritized needs. Even then, the TMA may need to make some important decisions.

For example, if the purpose of the evaluation is to improve service to justify increased funding, then it stands to reason that the evaluation should be completed to coincide with funding cycles. However, budgets are developed after plans and programs have been determined. This often occurs six months before funding is determined. If the evaluation cannot be used to make improvements to service, or used to determine what services should be offered, then the evaluation may be completed too late to justify increased funding levels that reflect new services.

The following local agencies should be contacted to determine when budget and funding decisions are made, and when the TMA should be prepared to make its pitch for funds.

- Metropolitan Planning Organization
- State Department of Transportation
- City and county governments

Important Considerations In Evaluation

When developing an evaluation for a particular set of audiences, the TMA should keep in mind several important considerations. Morris, Fitz-Gibbon, and Freeman in "How To Evaluate Evaluation Findings,"[4] provide an explanation of these considerations.

Different users want different information—even to answer the same question.

A funding agency may accept only valid and reliable test data to prove that a staff training program has been effective, while the personnel participating in the training program would find anecdotal reports and responses from interviews or questionnaires to be the most valid and believable evidence of program effects. Other audiences might require both kinds of information.

Some users do not know what they need.

In programs where evaluations are mandated by legal requirements, for example, evaluation clients or program staff may see the assessment simply as a trial to be endured, not necessarily as a process that will lead to useful information and enlightened decisions. If the users are not willing to commit to some criteria for measuring success before the evaluation starts, it is highly unlikely that they will accept or use final recommendations. Formative evaluators consistently face the task of helping clients define not only program objectives, but also specific evaluation information needs.

Some users expect the evaluation to support a specific point of view.

Some people have already made up their minds about the strengths and weaknesses of the program, and they expect that the evaluation will only confirm their opinions. The results of the evaluation may very well *not* support their preconceptions. So it is vital that the evaluator identify the opinions early on so that potential controversies can be anticipated and reporting procedures can be designed to take them into account. Alerting users to discrepancies between their assumptions and the findings as they emerge, rather than solely in a final report, will make the users more receptive. In fact, an effective evaluation report will contain no surprises, especially with respect to central issues. All of the major questions will have been discussed with program personnel and decision makers from the very beginning, well before the final reporting stage. If the evaluation does not bring these issues to light early, the evaluator loses credibility.

For some users, the information needs change during the course of the evaluation.

It is not uncommon when a formative evaluation is well under way for the users to identify new information they would like to have. Some trainers, for example, might mention that the computer operators in a pilot training program seem to be learning a new data processing system, but the operators have developed a strong dislike for the system. You might change your evaluation plans to include some attitude measures. Although you cannot constantly alter evaluation plans, try to reserve some small portion of your resources to meet requirements for unexpected information that crops up during program implementation.

As the TMA develops its evaluation, it needs to be aware of these issues and plan accordingly. In most cases, the TMA will have to decide how to best meet the needs of its primary audience, and develop its evaluation program to meet those needs.

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[4] *"How to Communicate Evaluation Findings,"* Lynn Lyons Morris, Carol Taylor Fitz-Gibbon, and Marie E. Freeman, Center for the Study of Evaluation, University of California, Los Angeles, CA, pp. 14-15.

- Transit agencies
- Private foundations

With the exception of private foundations, most of the agencies listed above will be on one of two funding cycles, the fiscal year cycle or calendar year cycle. Many fiscal year cycles run July 1-June 30, although federal programs begin a new fiscal year on October 1. As the name implies, calendar year cycles run January 1-December 31.

For private foundations, the exact timing of funding decisions varies greatly and the same foundation may make funding decisions multiple times during the year. For example, the Energy Foundation meets three times a year to review proposals for funding decisions, and requires that materials and proposals be submitted at least eight weeks in advance.

Regardless of who is providing the funds for the TMA, all funders will probably require an evaluation of efforts. Immediately upon award of the grant, it should be determined when these evaluation results are due, as well as what will be evaluated and how. If an evaluation measure is to be tracked internally (e.g., number of inquiries about TMA services), the monitoring and/or evaluation should be continuous. Continuous monitoring and evaluation can be especially beneficial if funders require quarterly reports of progress. Again, these requirements should be spelled out when the grant is provided.

Documenting Evaluation Findings

Once evaluations are complete, the TMA must decide how best to convey the results of the evaluation. A well-designed and carefully managed evaluation can be wasted if the results are not presented in a clear and understandable format. It is also important to remember the potential audiences for the evaluation results and what reporting format will be most useful to meet their needs.

While most TMAs will disseminate evaluation results in technical reports and/or quarterly progress reports, other forms of communication can also be used. Following is a list of potential communication media for evaluation results.

- Technical report
- Executive summary
- Brochure
- Press release
- Trade journal article
- Memorandum
- Public workshop
- Conference/seminar presentation
- Face-to-face discussion

Among all of the audiences for a TMA evaluation report, the funders, board members, and TMA staff will have the most interest in a full technical report. Since two of these three audiences have other duties beside TMA oversight, the technical report should be clear and concise, as well as technically credible. A well-written technical report will become a reference manual for this audience.

For politicians, the media, community groups, and clients, the preferred written document will be the executive summary. Even funders and staff will use the executive summary for their own needs. Therefore, the executive summary can be the most important document the TMA will write to disseminate evaluation findings. The summary should be brief, highlight the most important findings of the evaluation, and report the major recommendations of the analysis. Supportive graphics that depict the most important results can be beneficial in the executive summary.

Other communications media listed serve specific audience needs. How the TMA chooses to handle the evaluation findings will dictate which of these media will be used and how they will be used. To strengthen these types of reports, the TMA office should try to determine what evaluation findings are the most important to the audience and focus on preparing a report that best meets that need.

The key for most TMA offices is to look at the evaluation and evaluation report as a powerful tool. If the tool is used effectively it can show the diligence of TMA efforts, the impact the TMA has on meeting community goals and service needs, and the importance of the TMA in solving local and regional problems. A properly planned and well-documented evaluation can be an excellent medium for promoting the TMA and increasing awareness of the community on the important role the TMA plays.

Developing a Strategic Work Plan

Planning is the single most important function of the board of directors, for which the TMA staff provides key support. The planning process enables a TMA to take maximum advantage of new opportunities, while devising measures to address present challenges and taking steps to avoid foreseeable problems.

The solution to common organizational problems is to plan realistically and regularly. The results of the planning process are generally written in a work plan that guides TMA activities for a specific time period. At the end of this period the process is repeated, with the benefit of updated information, and a new work plan is created.

Public funders generally require a work plan as part of a seed funding application, but the plan's primary roles are to guide the TMA and be used as a tool against which the TMA can gauge its accomplishments throughout each year. If you represent a new TMA, plan preparation will likely begin during the exploration stage and continue into the formation stage.

During the first year, the plan will focus substantially on TMA development tasks. Although TMA services will be included, they often can be described only generally at this point. In fact, one activity included in the first business plan will be to further define appropriate TMA services and develop a detailed program for service delivery. Work plans for later years will be more service-oriented, as TMA organization tasks will have been completed.

The work plan serves five purposes:

1. Articulates the mission, goals, and objectives
2. Describes activities related to each objective
3. Assigns staff responsibility for activities
4. Establishes an implementation schedule
5. Defines allocation of resources

Planning doesn't stop with the writing of the document. Plans are developed under a set of conditions that exist at a point in time with the understanding that things are constantly changing. A TMA must, therefore, regularly review its progress, note any changes in external conditions, and refine its course when necessary, to remain on track.

Planning is an ongoing process with four basic steps:

1. Assessing where you are today: examining the internal and external environment, past successes, and areas that need improvement, financial and staff resources
2. Determining where you want to be at a particular time in the future: staying on track with the TMA's mission, goals, and objectives
3. Defining the steps you will take to get there: specific action plans, responsibilities, and resources
4. Determining how you will know you have arrived: review and evaluation

It sounds simple, but completing these four steps requires research and preparation, serious discussion about difficult issues, consensus building and group decision-making. Building consensus can lengthen the planning process, but it is necessary. Without agreement on key elements, the plan will not have the support needed to make the goals a reality.

During the TMA exploration phase, basic information about services and programs desired by potential members and their employees was collected. Research might have included interviews with business leaders, employer and employee surveys, and other research designed to assess the transportation needs and problems of these groups. If the TMA has been in existence for a few years, much of the data and information needed can be supplied from last year's monitoring and evaluation activities.

Take stock of the TMA's present status and examine internal and external conditions that could affect the TMA and its progress. The fact that a TMA has been established suggests that changes needed to be made. Examine the internal environment first. This includes:

- Past activities, accomplishments, and difficulties
- Strengths and weaknesses
- Resources and support
- Internal organizational constraints (e.g., bylaws)

The external review should examine outside forces that could affect the TMA, for example:

- Specific transportation-related problems or issues
- Impacts of these issues on various groups
- Programs of other organizations that compete with or complement the TMA
- Government initiatives, such as regulations, programs, and services
- Economic or political conditions

The need for this information cannot be overemphasized. Although most TMAs are non-profit organizations, they are most importantly businesses, selling products to customers. If the TMA offers products and services no one wants, or charges too much for services, it will fail for lack of sales. A TMA's activities must, therefore, be market-driven, rather than service-driven, and must develop services that satisfy market demands.

If members are primarily employers subject to trip-reduction requirements, one marketable service could be assistance in complying with the requirements. On the other hand, if the TMA's area is a new development and members are primarily developers, offering presentations on the TMA's services for new tenants' employees could be a desirable service. If members are concerned about growth and economic development issues, local and regional transportation and land use planning services may be useful. In short, develop desirable, effective services to attract new members and keep existing members.

Some of this information can be assembled prior to the first planning session and provided to members as part of a pre-planning orientation packet. During the planning process, discuss how each of these forces could positively or negatively affect the TMA, and identify those on which the TMA should capitalize and which must be overcome or accommodated.

After you examine the present, project the future. Devote adequate time to answering the following questions that are fundamental to the TMA's mission, goals and objectives:

- What business does the TMA want to be in the future?
- Which of the problems identified earlier should the TMA address?
- For whom does the TMA exist?
- Who benefits from TMA activities and services and might be willing to buy what it is trying to sell?
- What does the TMA hope and intend to achieve?

Define the TMA's Mission

The mission is not a list of activities, but rather a description of why activities will be undertaken. A mission is important because it keeps activities productively focused, directs resources, and communicates a unified concept of the organization. A mission statement should be concise, active and focused. Most are only a few sentences. An effective mission statement will express a vision that is:

- Results-oriented rather than process-oriented
- Forward thinking and problem-solving
- Clear, simple, direct, and realistic
- Flexible enough to accommodate change

An example of a TMA mission statement might be: "To reduce peak period vehicle travel and enhance public mobility and air quality in the TMA area, through implementation of joint public-private transportation management efforts."

Establish Goals

Goals are specific result-oriented achievements that support the mission statement. Some TMA goals might include:

- Reduce trips and congestion, ensuring access to the area
- Enhance transportation options and services
- Establish transportation policies favorable to members
- Provide support to individual members
- Increase membership, funding, or organizational stability
- Increase employer and employee awareness

Objectives are the specific means to accomplish goals. Objectives must be, in some way, measurable and realistic, in order to determine the extent to which goals have been achieved. Often a TMA will have more than one objective per goal.

Although the mission of the organization should not change from one year to the next, goals and objectives often do. That's because they reflect accomplishments from the previous year and must incorporate the changing needs of the market to move the organization forward.

One TMA's goals will not be exactly like those of any other TMA, but some goals are universal. Reducing single occupant vehicle commuting or reducing peak period vehicle travel are common goals among most TMAs. Similarly, nearly all TMAs provide member services and set goals for these activities. Most TMA goals fall into one of five categories:

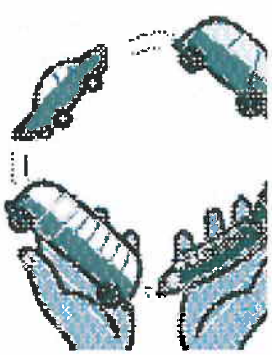
1 Mobility enhancement
2 Member services
3 Information exchange
4 Transportation planning advocacy
5 TMA operation and administration

Mobility Enhancement

The central focus of a TMA's existence is the provision, coordination, and promotion of actions that enhance mobility in the specific service area. Typically, these actions include a variety of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) as well as Transportation Systems Management (TSM) tools. TDM-related actions alter the demand for travel by affecting total traffic volume, travel mode share, or distribution of travel over different times of day. TSM goals relate to the use of low cost improvements to increase the efficiency of roadways and transit services, such as retiming traffic signals or re-designating traffic flow.

Examples of traditional mobility enhancement goals are:

- Reduce traffic congestion along major arterials within the service area
- Minimize peak-hour traffic



While TMAs have traditionally served as the organizational vehicle for implementing TDM, there is nothing that should prevent a TMA from adopting a mission and goals that address transportation issues using methods and actions outside the realm of TDM. TMAs may also choose to focus upon market segments other than commuters to achieve objectives. For example, a TMA may select traffic generated from school or university sites to institute staggered class scheduling or "school pools." A TMA might also focus upon services for visitors where heavy tourism affects mobility.

Member Services

In addition to performing specific TDM activities, which can be offered to both members and the public at large, most TMAs also provide certain services only to members. Examples are assistance on transportation problems, information or program incentives, help with compliance of regulations, or other services unique to the needs of members. Member services goals might be to:

- Assist members with solving site-specific transportation problems
- Assist members in complying with mandated travel-reduction requirements through

a common transportation management program

Information Exchange

TMAs typically provide information on transportation issues, programs and activities to members and potential members. A TMA might consider adopting information exchange goals similar to the following:

- Conduct public information and educational activities about transportation conditions and opportunities
- Increase general awareness of commuting options, TMA services, and transportation issues and programs

Transportation Advocacy

Many TMAs are also interested in encouraging in-house staff and members to participate in local planning for transportation services, facilities and land use. Transportation advocacy goals might be to:

- Advocate and support improvements to local and regional transportation services and facilities
- Participate in the effective planning and implementation of area transit or highway construction and reconstruction projects

TMA Operation and Administration

The final category of goals includes those related to the smooth daily operation of the TMA, and planning for the future. Marketing, planning, and membership development are often included under this general goal, although many TMAs define separate, specific targets for membership in a marketing or membership development plan as a subsection of the business plan. Examples of these general goals are:

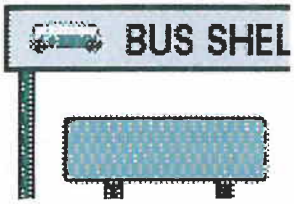
- Establish an effective and continuing TMA organizational structure
- Ensure TMA financial self-sufficiency and ongoing operation

Don't be concerned if the TMA does not have a goal in each of these categories, or if it has several in a single area. The key in defining goals is to tailor them to the organization and ensure they are consistent with local and regional air quality and transportation goals.

Developing Objectives and Choosing Performance Measures

To accomplish each goal, one or more related objectives are drafted. Objectives are more specific statements of how a goal will be reached. Clearly written objectives provide a time frame during which the objective will be accomplished and means of measuring the result, commonly referred to as performance measures.

Properly drafted objectives also incorporate an understanding of baseline conditions in the area to which the objectives will be applied. The baseline provides a reference point from which you can measure change. Information on baseline conditions can be collected during the conduct of a TMA feasibility study, if the TMA is new. Data collected on baseline conditions is also part of the monitoring and evaluation aspects. This is discussed earlier in this section under "Initial Work Plan Development Considerations—Data Collection." For example, if a mobility enhancement goal is, "Reduce traffic congestion along major arterials within the service area," an objective might be to "Alter mode share to reduce single-oc-



cupant vehicle travel by three percent by the end of the program year."

Performance measures for this objective could include:

- Percent mode share in service area for carpool/vanpool
- Percent mode share in service area for public transit
- Percent mode share in service area for bicycling
- Percent mode share in service area for walking
- Percent mode share in service area for telecommuting

Each one of these performance measures suggests different actions to accomplish the objective. For example, an action to increase the percent mode share in the service area for carpooling, vanpooling, public transit, bicycling or walking might be to provide a guaranteed ride home program (discussed as an example later in this section, under TMA Service Delivery). Alternatively, an action to increase telecommuting mode share might be to provide technical assistance to employers whose business could yield productivity gains and save on overhead costs by instituting a telecommuting program.

It is important to select performance measures before selecting actions for the work plan. This is because it is possible to select an action which a performance measure cannot be identified, or for which the performance measure is too expensive or too difficult to collect data. How then can it be demonstrated that a positive outcome resulted from the work plan implementation? In a competitive funding environment, it is important to document TMA program effectiveness and results to increasingly skeptical funding agencies and dues-paying members. It is crucial to develop a work plan and monitoring system that enables convincing measures and documents program results.

In the above example, the objective includes reducing SOV mode share by 3 percent. It is of value to specify in the objective the degree of change that the actions seek to accomplish, in this case, three percent. By reaching a specified target, success is clear. The degree of change specified in the program objectives should be carefully considered, such that it is ambitious but also realistic. If it is set too low, the program will underachieve. If it is set too high, there is a risk of hurting morale by having "failed" to reach the objective.

Benchmarking for Realistic Objectives

Use benchmarking to set realistic objectives. Benchmarking involves finding other programs with similar objectives that have been applied to service areas with comparable characteristics. Based upon other programs' previous experience, there is some sense of what might be realistic to expect. This information can be found by networking with other TMAs or contacting the National TDM Clearinghouse at CUTR for case study information. Benchmarking is not a precision exercise, but provides ballpark comparisons for setting realistic program targets.

Trend of Continual Improvement

TMAs commonly strive to achieve goals and objectives relating to travel behavior change. Because travel behavior changes are difficult to achieve and maintain, it is recommended that the emphasis in measuring performance should be upon a trend of continual improvement. Incorporating a philosophy of demonstrating continual improvement into the development of program objectives will establish a more reasonable tone to the program and help maintain participant morale by recognizing incremental gains.

Work Plan Development

While a TMA's mission, goals, and objectives form the foundation, a work plan is necessary to define the activities and services needed to achieve the objectives. A work plan serves five functions:

1. Documents the TMA's mission, goals, and objectives
2. Describes activities related to each objective
3. Allocates resources to achieve objectives
4. Assigns staff responsibility for each specific step
5. Establishes an implementation schedule

To develop the work plan, it is necessary to decide:

- Activities that will allow the TMA to meet its objectives
- Total resources of money, staff time, in-kind support, and influence that can be devoted to the plan
- Tasks that require participation from other groups, such as transit agencies, local governments, businesses, or commuters

Traditional TMA Activities

TMA activities have traditionally fallen into five categories:

1. Exchanging information
2. Providing transportation services
3. Promoting transportation services
4. Advocating for improved transportation services
5. Offering consulting services to members

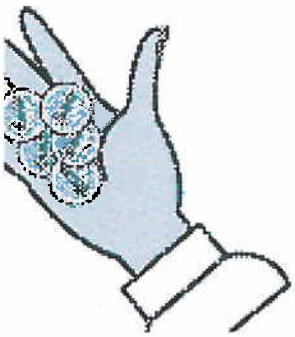
A service package might include some of these services, as well as others unique to members' needs.

Exchanging Information—Many employers join a TMA to receive information about transportation initiatives, services, and activities. They can be the transportation "eyes and ears" of local transportation issues, while learning about new public and private transportation services, local ordinance requirements and other transportation-related topics. TMA information activities might include:

- Publishing periodic newsletters and special bulletins and maintaining a web site
- Sponsoring transportation meetings, seminars, and workshops for members and others
- Serving as a one-stop information center
- Developing and conducting training courses
- Organizing and supporting an information-sharing network using email

Providing Transportation Services—A small but growing number of TMAs directly provide transportation services and tangible incentives to commuters and other markets. For example, in many areas employee commute alternatives are limited. TMAs can provide additional transit, vanpool, and other transportation services or coordinate the planning and provision of these services by several local employers. Services and activities in this category include:

- Offering carpool and vanpool formation assistance, such as advertising empty seats and processing paperwork
- Subsidizing commuting alternatives, such as empty seat subsidies
- Operating vanpool services, express buses, shuttles, and other services
- Developing or coordinating new transit services
- Providing support services, such as guaranteed ride home or transit pass sales
- Facilitating the coordination of TDM services by several employers



Promoting Transportation Services—By providing services at work sites, TMAs can support employers, property owners and developers and tenant managers who implement transportation programs. Some ideas for specific service promotions are:

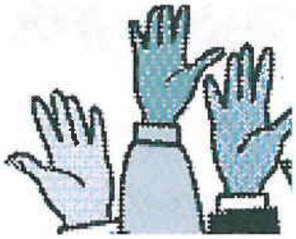
- Organizing and conducting on-site commuter information fairs and other events
- Acting as a transportation coordinator for employers
- Participating in new-hire employee orientation sessions
- Preparing commuter information materials that employers can distribute to employees
- Stocking "take one" displays for commuter information at work sites
- Preparing work site-specific transit maps and individual transit and bicycle routing maps
- Hosting multi-company vanpool formation sessions
- Buying "give away" promotional items in bulk for distribution to members
- Coordinating the purchase and/or distribution of transit passes

Advocating for Improved Transportation Services—Many employers and developers join a TMA to influence transportation service and facility planning and/or influence development of legislation and regulations on commuting issues.

Advocacy can include:

- Working with transit agencies to develop new services, or adjust existing schedules or routes for more effective operation
- Working with local governments to ensure that TDM strategies are incorporated into new transportation projects and air quality objectives
- Monitoring local transportation conditions and advocating needed improvements at bottleneck points and congested locations
- Participating in the transportation and land-use planning processes of city and county planning organizations
- Lobbying local and state governments for transportation policies, legislation, and regulations

Offering Consulting Services to Members—Many TMAs provide transportation consulting services to members, helping them develop and implement employment site



TDM programs, solve site-specific transportation problems, and meet local ordinance requirements. Consulting activities might include:

- Conducting employee surveys and work site analyses
- Analyzing survey and site review results
- Guiding the selection of appropriate TDM strategies
- Developing, reviewing and implementing trip reduction plans
- Guiding the development of new services such as guaranteed ride home programs, vanpool services, shuttles, telecommuting, alternative work hours, parking management, and others

Assign Responsibilities

The work plan must also establish who will be responsible for each activity—the executive director, board of directors, committees or individual members? If a TMA has only one staff member, be particularly careful to share work assignments among the board, committees, and others to avoid staff overload. Since some activities will require the participation of people outside the TMA, such as a transit agency or local government, define who will coordinate the participation of those groups.

Prepare Implementation Schedule

As resources are allocated for each activity, compromises will need to be made based on priority and budget. Decide when each activity should be accomplished. Identify what must be undertaken immediately and what can wait until later. Organize the steps sequentially to identify steps to take first. Define a reasonable time schedule that allows progress in each area, but does not overwhelm personnel resources. For some activities, be specific to the quarter, month and even the day. For activities that cross several months or quarters, define the date to begin the activity, the date it will be finished, and dates of any critical, intermediate milestone activities.

Often the start date of an activity is determined by "backing out" the time the activity will take from the date the activity must be finished. For example, when developing an information brochure needed by mid-August, start the project in early May to allow time to select a graphic artist, produce text for the brochure in mid-June, review the graphic artist's design in mid-July, and send the brochure to the printer by the end of July. These key intermediate activities are the milestones.

The implementation schedule also should note prerequisite activities, such as:

- Making an organizational change (e.g., bylaws change)
- Developing a new organizational relationship (e.g., partnership with transit agency)
- Conducting research or collecting other information (e.g., survey)
- Disseminating information (e.g., notice, announcement, or invitation)

In preparing the schedule, consider how quickly each activity should progress and how the timing will affect progress in other activities. Establish reasonable completion dates for activities. To ensure that activities are occurring on schedule, prepare a master time line or calendar for all activities and review it regularly.

Plan for Contingencies