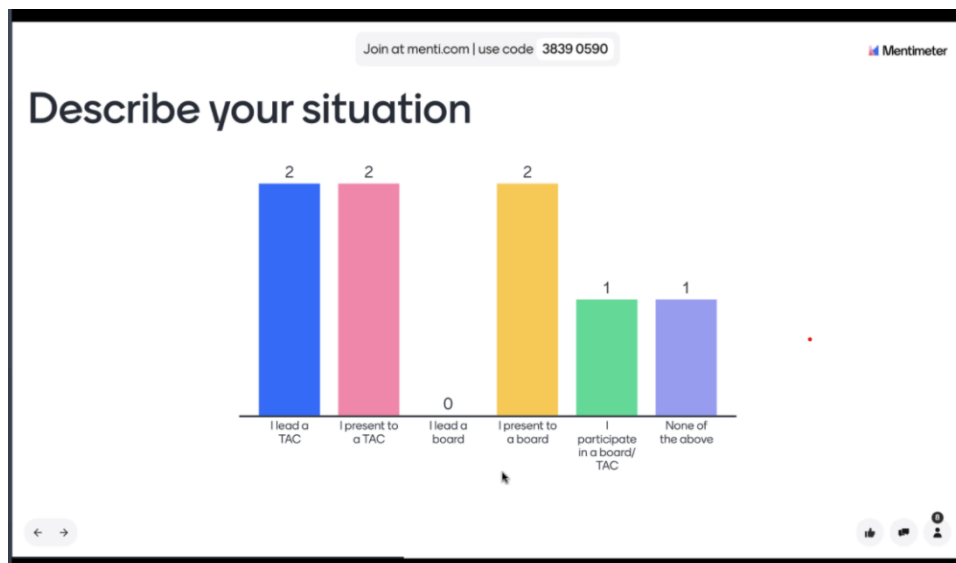


RTAP Peer Roundtable Notes: Communicating to TACs/Boards

1/10/24 10-11:30 am CT

Participation: 13 total, 9 from transit agencies

1. Alan Herrmann, Scott and Carver County SmartLink Transit
2. Barbara Willard, Tri-County Action Program, Inc. / Tri-CAP Public Transit
3. Elizabeth Hensrud, Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, Inc. / Tri-Valley Transportation
4. Jeremy Monahan, Prairie Lakes Transit
5. Kayla Sullivan, Productive Alternatives, Inc. / Transit Alternatives
6. Kirk Kuchera, Cedar Valley Services, Inc. / SMART
7. Rhonda Torgersen, Tri-County Action Program, Inc. / Tri-CAP Public Transit
8. Ron Decker, VINE Faith in Action / TRUE Transit
9. Tracy Borgschatz, Three Rivers Community Action, Inc. / Hiawathaland Transit
10. Cathleen Amick, Transit Project Manager (TPM) MnDOT OTAT
11. Jim Wolter, Transit Project Manager (TPM) MnDOT OTAT
12. Mariah Kathan, RTAP
13. Rae Farley, RTAP



What are the challenges?

- Engaging boards/TACs so that it's more than a presentation
- Effectiveness/success in their objectives as a board
- Informing about transit topics and specific tasks
- Getting to people to show up/coordinating schedules/dealing with low interest
- Getting new members / how do people appoint members
- Not having one/ working with a parent company that doesn't want you to have one

- Turnover
- Changing bylaws to allow for better TACs
- Getting representation from different parts of the community
- Defining your TAC & your goals & purpose: who is on it/what does success look like?

Solutions

Engaging boards/TACs so that it's more than a presentation

- Round robins at the beginning of meetings (especially with new members) sharing what's going on in their world. This does not necessarily need to be transit related.
- Ice breaker questions to get people talking
- "Touch & Feel" parts of the meeting: touring a bus or a van – what does it look like? Ex. Showing a new camera system
- Barbeques once or twice a year
- Set it up as semi-formal
- Ask for someone to be a chairperson (makes it seem like a community TAC); the chairperson helps people feel engaged, giving more ownership to members
- Having a full agenda, overfill vs. underfill the topics, don't let it get dead
- Think about their role & ask a question about how it would impact them? Trying to get more local support? Provide action steps for them during the presentation. Having county officials/city officials on the TACs would help support their boards.

Effectiveness/success in their objectives as a board

- If elected/joint powers board officials are on the board, there are no surprises when it comes to their meeting
- Can help secure funding for expanded services
- Board members are advocates and assist with meeting transit goals
- Hearing from constituents is helpful; makes your case stronger with the officials voting on your topics/support
- Having a mission statement for the TAC (reducing denials, etc.). This can be included in your bylaws
- Establishing a needs group and provider network to enhance mobility options
- Having goals/objectives for the TAC/Board, such as:
 - Decreased denials
 - Increased solutions
 - Enhanced access to services
 - Improved use of resources
 - Livable communities

Informing about transit topics and specific tasks

- Rebranding — engaging them in the topics
- Route structures/service levels
- Explaining funding

Getting to people to show up/COORDINATING SCHEDULES/DEALING WITH LOW INTEREST

- Doing a poll of active TAC members around timing. “Slido” is a tool to try for this.
- It’s difficult for people with long drives to justify going to a relatively short meeting, so consider virtual meetings or making the meeting worth their trip if in person.
- Virtual meetings make it easier for members to attend/improves people showing up
- Have meetings at the same time every time. Be consistent, even if members don’t come

Getting new members / how do people appoint members

- Inviting members from other TACs that you have been on (such as the RDC TAC, hospitals/medical TAC, Center for Independent Living, and other nonprofit and human service TACs); personal engagement and a request for help from the transit director is helpful.
- Have an onboarding process for adding people
- Have an application to be on the TAC
- Recruit city officials, ask partner agencies, like DAC, ProAct, human services to join
- Some agencies have less flexibility with who can add members to a TAC. If you can add members, consider recruiting people by:
 - Word of mouth
 - Engaging people from relevant communities to your transit service

Not having one/ working with a parent company that doesn’t want you to have one

- You could call it something different. Not a TAC but a “needs group.”
- Engage with specific communities and leaders within those communities about their needs
- Reach out to the senior center and large employers to host a “how’s transit going?” meeting to understand what’s missing and where there are gaps.

Turnover

- People leaving agencies without informing TAC members or the transit director is a challenge.
- People coming to meetings who have no interest but are there as a favor to the commissioner is also a challenge.
- Bylaws can prevent effective recruiting of new members.
- No incentive for people to join the TAC (no compensation)

Getting representation from different parts of the community

- Hard to recruit in areas, especially larger service areas
- Reaching out to large employers, ProActs, DACs, mayors, etc. can help
- Consider creating a new TAC in each area you provide service to. Engage all the different aspects of the community in the TAC.
 - Having just one TAC would be hard with a large service area.
 - Having smaller/more local TACs. 8-9 people is ideal (because only 4-5 people show up at anyone meeting), then have one representative from each come to a meeting with your entire service area.
 - This is time consuming, but worth it for community engagement

- If the mayor has no interest in TAC, it's very difficult to get a meeting with anyone in that office

Who are your TAC participants?

- Schools have a lot of connections to the communities and an understanding of the needs — can be good to network with school districts to understand their needs.
- However, it can also backfire – Having a pre-school teacher on the TAC, felt that the bus should just be for kids

Ask a Peer

What to do with disgruntled customers? Do you respond to profanity-laced calls?

- Collective no.
- One transit manager takes unpleasant calls, so her dispatchers don't need to. Says they'll talk to the customer if he doesn't swear.
- If the person is involved with human services and has a caseworker, try reaching out to them.

Next Peer Roundtable: February 14, 2024

- Conducted a Mentimeter survey with the 6 agencies still on the call and will also send the survey out to the wider audience.
- If anyone has topic suggestions, please email Mariah
- Elizabeth Hensrud suggested procurement as a topic
- Jeremy suggested revisiting topics, especially from the first peer roundtables