FTA RESEARCH
FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION

REPORT SUMMARY

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration

LAFLA Public Transportation Public Participation Pilot Program: Final Technical Report

Background

The Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles ("LAFLA") identified the perception among those living in and providing services to low-income communities that transportation planning processes have not been responsive to their needs as compared to more affluent areas. In 2008–2009, with funding provided by a U.S. Department of Transportation grant, LAFLA conducted four workshops in conjunction with community groups representing low-income people in Los Angeles County. The curriculum focused on giving participants the tools and information necessary to effectively participate in transportation decision-making processes.

Objectives

LAFLA sought ways to improve the level of education in low-income communities about how to effectively participate in transportation planning processes. Based on curriculum from LAFLA's Public Participation in Planning and Development workshops, this workshop pilot program was tailored to address transportation planning issues to develop and refine a popular education transportation planning participation curriculum that can serve as a model for and be implemented in similar efforts across the nation. The workshops were intended to improve the ability of low-income communities to effectively communicate their needs to decision-makers.

Findings and Conclusions

Providing training in transportation planning to community organizations is effective for increasing participant involvement in the transportation planning process.

This report evaluates the effectiveness of this pilot program. The workshops trained 80 participants from 11 different organizations to participate more effectively in the transportation planning process. Evaluation methodologies included using pre- and post-workshop surveys, three-month phone follow-up surveys, and observation during workshops.

The workshops were successful in reaching community members who were already interested in transportation issues but had limited experience in participating in the transportation planning process. Three-month follow-up surveys showed an increase in participant involvement in transportation planning process. Almost all of the

participants (91%) said that the workshops prepared them to participate in transportation advocacy. Translated materials, particularly Spanish language materials and interpretation, were important for participants. Suggestions for improvement were mostly focused on workshop methodologies, including integrating more interactive components, extending the one-day workshop to multiple workshops and involving more public agency officials.

Recommendations for replicating this pilot program include working with existing community-based organizations to build upon their existing advocacy efforts, contextualizing the workshop curriculum to relevant local transportation planning issues, translating materials, and providing simultaneous interpretation and incorporating popular education techniques into workshop facilitation.

Benefits

The development of a transportation planning participation curriculum is a model for and can be implemented in similar efforts across the nation. By using this curriculum, materials, and models to educate and train residents of low-income communities about the transportation planning process, local agencies and community-based non-profits can facilitate improved transportation projects that will better meet the needs of communities and avoid unnecessary acrimony and litigation.

Project Information

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This research project was conducted by the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles (LAFLA). For more information, contact Cheryl Hershey, Senior Advisor, FTA Office of Planning and Environment, at (202) 366-6161, Cheryl.hershey@dot.gov. All research reports can be found at **www.fta.dot.gov/research**.