Center for Transportation Excellence

Building Communities Through Public Transportation

A Guide for Successful Transit Initiatives

Public Transportation Partnership for Tomorrow

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Introduction

Public transportation is enjoying a renaissance. Throughout the country, improvements are being made in existing service, while public transportation options are being expanded. These improvements and increased investment have resulted in significantly increasing ridership. Elections in 2004 saw a record number of transit funding ballot initiatives related to funding of public transportation with a huge win rate of 80%. These wins occurred not only in large metropolitan centers, but also in urban and rural communities as well. In the November elections alone, nearly $55 billion worth of investment in transportation including transit was approved. Clearly this is driven by citizen demand for more transportation choices.

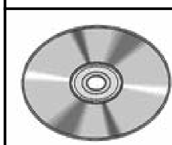
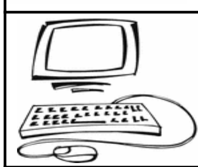
The Center for Transportation Excellence (CFTE), a non-partisan policy research center created to serve the needs of communities and transportation organizations nationwide, provides research materials, strategies and other forms of support on the benefits of public transportation. The CFTE is a clearinghouse for information in support of quality transportation choices. It develops case studies of successful referendum; toolkits on how to organize a transit campaign; media resources, such as sample op-eds and letters to the editor; and a database of ballot initiatives around the country. The CFTE is committed to two main objectives: (1) defending the merits of transit and (2) equipping local leaders with the information they need to be successful with their public transportation initiatives and ballot measures.

The CFTE has designed this guide to provide transit agencies, transit alliances, grass roots organizations, and lay people with the resources for planning and executing a successful transit initiative campaign. The purpose of this guide is to provide the right questions to ask prior to beginning preparation for a transit initiative or referendum and where you will find the answers. Use the advice in this guide in the ways that best suit your individual campaigns.

Throughout the guide you will find brief case studies from actual transit efforts to depict how something worked, or didn't work in a campaign. Included with this guide is a Companion CD that contains reference materials, collateral material, sample documents, and resource materials from campaigns such as print advertisements and television spots.

Guide to Symbols

Throughout the manual, you will find symbols to bring your attention to important points and to let you know what information you can find on the accompanying CD. Here is a key to help you navigate the various symbols.

	Useful information, advice and tips
	Websites where you can find more information
	More Information or links to websites can be found on the accompanying CD
	Listing of resources that were mentioned in each section

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We are also indebted to those people and organizations that answered our questions and provided information about their past initiatives. We would like to thank them for sharing their campaign successes and failures. We would also like to thank the dozens of transportation advocates across the country who helped us collect information.

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Caution:

Please note that the resources and information in this guide are not intended as legal advice. Before embarking on your effort, be sure to consult a variety of legal and other experts in your area.

Section One:
Where and How to Start - Assessing Needs

Before beginning an initiative campaign, you need to understand the needs, interests, and concerns of the community. This section outlines some key factors to consider before setting off down the campaign trail, including:

- Understanding the History of Your Initiative
- The Transportation Planning Process
- Involving the Community
- Decisions to Make Early On

Understanding the History of Your Initiative

These are some questions you need to answer before moving forward:

It is critical to understand the history or context in which voters and the community will consider your initiative before you begin an initiative campaign.

- Is this the first time your community has considered an initiative generally related to transportation or specifically related or transit?
- If yes, are there particular reasons why you might expect the initiative to be successful now (i.e., growth projections, influx of transit-friendly residents, need to meet air quality standards)?
- If you have considered initiatives in the past, were they successful? If they passed, why? If they failed, why?
- What was the structure or nature of the previous initiatives? Were they local or regional? Multimodal? How did this structure contribute to its success or failure?
- How have other non-transportation initiatives fared in recent years? Are there key issues the community seems strongly in support of (or in opposition to)? How can you frame your message in those terms? For example, consider the differences between framing a campaign as a means of beating traffic congestion versus framing a campaign as a means of mitigating air quality concerns.
- How have the demographics of the community changed since the last time an initiative was considered?
- What type of community are you in, geographically? Is it more rural? Urban? Suburban?
- Do citizens have existing public transportation choices? How well is public transportation used? Or do people drive their cars everywhere? If so, will your campaign need to sell both the idea of public transportation, as well as the specific mode?
- If some aspect of your initiative is to promote public transportation, what are the citizens' current perceptions of the service (if it already exists)? Do you need to take steps to boost their overall confidence in the local agency or the service?

Boost Citizens' Perception

Before beginning on an initiative campaign to expand their light rail system, **TriMet, the public transportation provider in Portland, Oregon**, took a number of important steps to improve their image and boost confidence in the accountability of the agency. In an effort to increase services without raising fares or payroll taxes (as well as maintain its 82% public approval rating), TriMet implemented an internal **Productivity Improvement Process** (PIP) campaign. The PIP process built an institutional framework to continually explore areas within the agency where TriMet could capitalize on new technologies and make improvements leading to increased efficiencies and better service.

"We've been able to remove some of the real bottlenecks and frustrations that some of our frontline workers have faced. In fact, I've had employees come up to me who have said that for the past 20-25 years, they've been complaining about something but nobody has been listening to them, and now with the PIP, we have been listening and making changes," says TriMet General Manager, Fred Hansen.

For example, one early PIP effort came from rail maintenance workers—cleaners were having serious problems with new cloth seats. While they were comfortable and looked attractive, they were extremely difficult to clean and maintain. Employees suggested a switch to vinyl; they enlisted help from the marketing department to research what riders thought, proposed it to upper management, and the change was implemented.

The Transportation Planning Process

While this guide is not intended to provide a detailed look at this process, everyone interested in initiatives to promote transportation choices needs to know how communities plan to meet the transportation needs of its citizens. The vast majority of successful initiatives grow out of the existing planning process in the community.

Understanding the transportation planning process gives you a sense of whether your community:

- Is growing or shrinking and what the relative impact on transportation options might be.
- Traditionally looks to new roads as a means of dealing with growth, or has looked to public transportation services such as additional buses or light rail.
- Has unique transportation needs, such as ferry systems or the need to provide access for many individuals to a particular location, such as a university.
- Has identified real, plausible financial resources for developing the transportation choices you support.

For your transportation-related initiative campaign to be successful you should have a thorough grounding in the local transportation planning process.

For a more comprehensive overview of the planning process, look to the U.S. Department of Transportation document The Metropolitan Planning Process: Key Issues at www.planning.dot.gov/documents/BriefingBook/BBook.htm.

Why Plan?

Through transportation planning, a community seeks to express its vision for the future and the transportation choices that should be made available to citizens. A good transportation plan seeks to make links between transportation and societal goals, such as protecting the environment, promoting economic development, safety and health, social equity, and a general increase in quality of life for citizens.

Who Plans?

The transportation planning process is usually performed by the local Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) with input from key stakeholders in the community and citizens. In order to be eligible for funds from state and federal governments, your planning process should include a rigorous public participation process. The goal is to engage as many interested citizens from the community as possible, including business interests, nonprofits, local politicians, and everyday citizens. To find the MPO in your area, check out the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organization site at www.ampo.org/links/mposnet.html

Steps to Planning

The transportation planning process includes a number of steps:

- Monitoring existing conditions.
- Forecasting future population and employment growth.
- Assessing projected land uses in the region and identifying major growth corridors.
- Identifying problems and needs and analyzing, through detailed planning studies, various transportation improvements.
- Developing alternative capital and operating strategies for people and goods.
- Estimating the impact of the transportation system on air quality within the region.
- Developing a financial plan that covers operating costs, maintenance of the system, system preservation costs, and new capital investments.

Outcome of Planning

The planning process results in the development of three key documents, the *Unified Planning Work Program*, the *Long Range Transportation Plan*, and the *Transportation Improvement Program*. Though each document is briefly outlined below, you can gain access to them through your local MPO.

- The *Unified Planning Work Program* (UPWP) lists the transportation studies and tasks to be performed by the MPO, and contains several elements:

    - The planning tasks and studies to be conducted over a one- to two-year period.
    - All federally-funded studies as well as all relevant state and local planning activities conducted without federal funds.
    - Funding sources identified for each project.
    - A schedule of activities.
    - The agency responsible for each task or study.

- *The Long-Range Transportation Plan* (LRTP), or *Metropolitan Transportation Plan* (MTP), is the statement of the ways the region plans to invest in the transportation system.

According to federal law, the plan should include both long- and short-range actions to develop an integrated inter-modal transportation system. Some of these actions include:

- Identify policies, strategies, and projects for the future.
- Determine project demand for transportation services over twenty years.
- Focus at the systems level, including roadways, transit, nonmotorized transportation, and inter-modal connections.
- Articulate regional land use, development, housing, and employment goals and plans.
- Estimate costs and identify reasonably available financial sources for operation, maintenance, and capital investments.
- Determine ways to preserve existing roads and facilities and make efficient use of the existing system.
- Be consistent with the statewide transportation plan.
- Be updated every three or five years in air quality non-attainment and maintenance areas.

- The *Transportation Improvement Program* (TIP) covers critical short-term priorities for transportation projects from the overall plan. It is the region's way of allocating its limited transportation resources among the various capital and operating needs of the area, based on a clear set of short-term transportation priorities.

Where Initiatives Fit In

The vast majority of successful transportation-related initiatives grow out of the existing transportation planning process. This is because the planning process provides the initiative with the legitimacy it needs to garner voter approval. Advocates for more transportation choices in a given community should work to ensure that their preferred options are included in the regional transportation plan.

Success Based on Legitimacy

In **Kansas City**, lone transit activist Clay Chastain gathered enough signatures to independently place a transit initiative on the ballot almost every year for the past six years. In 2003, he had a measure on the ballot for a ½-cent transportation sales tax increase for 12 years to build a system involving light rail, electric buses, streetcars, bike lanes, express buses, and a transit hub at Union Station. At the same time, the **Kansas City Area Transportation Authority** faced a $12 million shortfall-21% of its budget-mainly because of declining tax revenue in Kansas City, and proposed a 3/8-cent increase to the city's current ½-cent transportation sales tax. Chastain's competing initiative was not endorsed by KCATA, and garnered only 37% of the vote, while KCATA's initiative won approval with 69% of the vote. KCATA won because they clearly articulated their need and identified specific projects for funding, and showed how they would benefit the community.

Often transportation agencies or other local authorities look to the initiative process to provide a portion of the funds necessary to meet the needs identified in the transportation plan.

Financing by a Sales and Use Tax

A key element for the financing of **FasTracks, Denver's light rail system**, is a regional sales and use tax. In November 2004, voters approved an increase in the tax of .4% to a total of 1%. This increase is expected to generate an additional $158 million in revenue annually, and is an integral part of the overall $4.7 billion plan. See the FasTracks' financing plan at their website (www.rtd-denver.org/fastracks/documents/Financing_Plan.pdf).

Involving the Community

> It is important to involve the public early and often, before developing the actual initiative proposal.

Successful transportation initiatives are not developed in a vacuum. It is important to involve the public early and often before developing the actual initiative proposal. While every MPO is required to have a comprehensive public participation component of its planning process, anyone involved needs to understand that ultimately initiatives are decided by the voters. Ensuring that the voters have a stake in the process early will do much to provide them with a sense of ownership of the issue, making it more difficult for them to oppose the final product. Some groups to talk to early and often include:

- All transportation leadership in the community, including agency heads, providers of specialized services, transportation-related business leaders
- Local businesses, including the Chamber of Commerce
- Transportation workers' unions
- Local politicians
- Citizens and homeowners in affected communities
- Special interest groups, including local chapters of environmental and health organizations

See Section Three, *Campaign Preparation*, for more details on building coalitions.

Note that "coalition building" and public participation are an important part of the initiative process and are mentioned throughout this guide. Public involvement is an ongoing process: it should never be "checked off the list" as a completed item.

Public Involvement Success Stories

In **Atlanta**, the initial **Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA)** referendum in 1968 failed, but a revised plan in 1971 passed-an event widely attributed to changes in the original plan based on citizen input. MARTA's ultimate plan was upbeat and emphasized its willingness to be flexible and listen to what the community wanted.

In 1980 after three unsuccessful attempts, voters approved a local dedicated revenue source for the **Los Angeles County Transportation Commission**. The winning plan was highly responsive to public demand for balance between improved rail and bus service, and for local control.

A full one-cent sales tax dedicated to public transportation and the creation of a metropolitan transportation authority was approved by 60% of voters in **Austin** in 1983. The success of this effort is widely credited to an aggressive community involvement program designed to provide public input to the region's transit service plan.

After an effective public involvement program, **Portland** voters approved funding for the southern part of the South/North Corridor in 1995.

Unique Citizen Participation in Planning

The citizen process that **Phoenix** used was somewhat unique. The Phoenix Transit team held meetings throughout the city and anyone who attended became part of the **Transit Committee**. Eventually the Transit Committee became known as the "**Committee of 600**" because there were approximately 600 people attending meetings around the city to develop the plan. At these meetings every committee member was given a computerized keypad system to punch in their opinion of what option should be chosen by the city. For example, when they discussed local buses, the question would be, "Arrange your frequencies, what do you think is a reasonable frequency for local buses? Should they come every ten minutes, every fifteen, every twenty, every half hour? You tell us what you think is reasonable by punching A, B, C or D."

The results would immediately be posted. Phoenix was able to get an instant consensus from the Committee of 600. The Phoenix Transit plan was developed that way, by asking about the options: Should we have rail and if we have rail, what kind should it be? Heavy rail? Commuter rail? Light rail? Should we have limited stop service on buses? Should we have express buses and if we have express buses, what kind do you want? What kind of service do you expect to have? Through this process they developed a plan that almost identical to the plan that finally won overwhelmingly in 2000.

From 2003 Transit Initiatives Conference, Jack Tevlin, City of Phoenix

Decisions to Make Early On

Before sitting down to plan an initiative campaign, it is important to think through and decide on the following items. This dramatically impacts your product. Bear in mind that some of these decisions will be made as part of the transportation planning process, as they have a direct impact on the financial projections, as well as the types of projects that may be included in the overall plan.

The items to consider are:

- Type of Initiative
- Scope of Initiative
- Timing of Initiative
- Unique Characteristics of Your Community

Type of Initiative

This manual assumes that your initiative has some sort of revenue-raising component. Most transportation-related initiatives are directly related to raising revenue (such as instituting or increasing a sales tax or establishing a bond for a specific transportation-related purpose). In some cases, the revenue impacts may be somewhat indirect, such as initiatives asking citizens whether they want their community to be part of a regional transportation district (meaning that they will be subject to any sales taxes that accrue to the benefit of that transportation district). In a few cases, the initiatives may be policy oriented and not funding oriented. The following are a few things you should understand or decide about your approach before moving forward.

- **Advisory or Actual**. Are you ready to go to the voters and ask for a specific amount of revenue? Or do you need to get a sense of what voters are thinking? Some communities have had success with "advisory" or straw polls designed to get a better sense of where voters are in terms of their support for transportation choices. When successful, these types of approaches provide leadership in the community with political support for the actual initiative when it is time to go to the ballot.

Effective Advisory Approaches

In 2004, the three-county **Sound Transit Agency** in **Washington** planned for a multi-billion dollar package, but large businesses would not bankroll the campaign after preliminary polling results proved disappointing. Several officials still wanted to move forward with something for November's election and decided to offer two **advisory questions**. The first asked voters whether a transportation package should be developed and presented to voters in 2005. The second, a market basket or multiple-choice question, asked voters how they should pay for it. See below table for voters' response.

Excise Tax on Vehicle Value	26.67%
Increase Local Gas Tax	20.85%
General Sales Tax	20.03%
Flat Tax on Vehicle	16.45%
Tax on Annual Miles Driven	15.99%

In November 2004, **Miami Beach** voters weighed in on a nonbinding question to determine whether **BayLink**, the light-rail trolley system, which would move people around South Beach and connect to downtown Miami, should be built. The measure was approved.

Note that you should be as confident in and as committed to an "advisory" initiative as you would be to an actual request for funds. Just as success can provide you with a strong argument in support of your initiative, failure can provide your opponents and critics with an equally strong argument. In many cases, it makes more sense to go to the ballot with "the real thing" as opposed to a trial run.

- **Extension or New or Additional**. Your current funding situation provides the answer to whether you should consider an extension of an existing tax, a new tax, or an addition to an existing tax. Understanding the differences among and the ramifications of each helps you develop messages that resonate with voters. For example:

    - If this is an extension, how is the service provided by the agency currently perceived? If there are serious problems with the public's support of the agency, address those issues early on.
    - If this is a new tax, how will you justify its need? Will you be providing new services? Have existing revenue sources been depleted? Will an existing source be eliminated once the new tax is in place? Is this a proposal (as in the case of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Authority) to create a long-term stable source of funding? Note that it can be difficult to justify a new tax to provide the exact same level of service.
    - If you are asking for an additional level of taxation to be built on to an existing source, it is imperative that you identify what new services will be provided or what new expenses (such as complying with homeland security requirements) have been identified. It is difficult to sell a "we need more money than we thought we did" argument to the public.

- **Type of Revenue**. While many communities pursue some sort of sales or property tax increase or bonding mechanism, others have identified other creative means of raising revenue.

Creative Revenue

In **Indianapolis**, the **IndyGo** organization's proposal for a 1% tax on restaurant food and beverages will be considered by the state legislature in 2005. The revenues would fund the **Regional Transportation Authority** and help pay for bus expansion and other mass transit in **Lake County**.

In San Francisco, residents of the seven **Bay Area** counties voted in March 2004 to raise bridge tolls by $1 to spend an estimated $125 million a year for transit, planning, and roads. The measure gained majority approval of voters in the seven counties with state-owned toll bridges.

The key here is to identify a type of revenue source that makes sense for the community that is being served. Look at the existing ways in which your community finances public services, as well as what has been rejected in the past. Ask business leaders, local interest groups, and others what makes sense to them in terms of a funding mechanism. Don't assume that a sales tax or something similar is the best way to go simply because it has been successful in other areas.

Scope of Initiative (Statewide, County, City)

The scope of the initiative can have a dramatic impact on the amount of revenue realized, as well as the depth and breadth of the services to be provided and thus is often included as part of the transportation plan. The following are some examples of the various past approaches:

- **Statewide**. In 2003 voters in Rhode Island approved over $66 million in transportation bonds. The funds are used to allow the state's Department of Transportation (DOT) to match federal money and provide direct funding for improvements to highways, roads, and bridges; to repair transportation maintenance facilities; and to buy buses for RIPTA (Rhode Island Public Transit Authority).

- **Multicity / Multicounty**. In the November 2004 election, the San Diego community approved a half-cent sales tax extension that funds TransNet transit and highway projects throughout the region. The extension provides funding through 2028.

- **Individual County**. In one of the strongest showings of 2004, Arlington County, Virginia, voters agreed by 81% to issue $18.5 million in bonds to support the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

- **Individual City.** Kalamazoo, Michigan, city commissioners approved a 1-mill property tax renewal for Metro Transit on the November 2004 general election ballot. The levy is projected to raise $1.56 million.

Timing of Initiative

> A key decision that should be made early in the initiative planning process is when to go to ballot.

Some factors to consider:

- If the initiative is to renew an existing tax, when does the existing tax expire? Should you consider building in additional time to be "unsuccessful" (i.e., going to the voters on an extension early in case your first attempt is rejected)?

- Should you push for the initiative to be part of a general election or ask for a separate vote? If your initiative is going to be part of a general election, should you look to be included on the ballot in a primary election, an "off-year" election, or a presidential election?

Each state has different rules and deadlines. While many initiatives have succeeded by timing the vote as part of a larger election cycle, others have found that "standing out from the crowd" made their campaign more noticeable (in a positive way). The key here is to identify a strategy that works for your community.

Good Timing

Sacramento went to ballot in 2004 for the extension of a tax that didn't expire until 2009- and voters approved the measure by 75%! This approach served two purposes: first, it gave the agency another several years (including a presidential election cycle) to identify voter concerns and address them if the 2004 election was not successful; second, having succeeded in 2004, the agency is now able to move forward on its broader vision for transportation in this fast growing region sooner rather than later.

Unique Characteristics of Your Community

You also want to consider the unique characteristics of your community and situation and how those characteristics impact your campaign, as well as the types of transportation choices you emphasize. Just a few of the factors to keep in mind include:

- **Small or Large Campaign**. Many successful initiative campaigns have been run on a shoestring budget. Others, due to the size of the request and/or the geographic reach of the proposal, are multi-million dollar efforts. This guide seeks to provide information and resources for both types of campaigns. That said, it is important to understand from the beginning which type of campaign to wage.

Small Campaign

In **Lake County, Michigan**, a somewhat “shoe-string” campaign effort resulted in the passing of a tax proposal providing funding for the Yates Dial-A-Ride program that serves all of Lake County. The proposal, which garnered 56% approval, called for a .4 mill over 5 years, and will raise $165,000 annually.

Large Campaign

A larger campaign effort was necessary in the case of **Denver, Colorado**, when in November 2004 residents approved a $4.7 Billion transit expansion plan called **FasTracks**. The plan calls for construction of new light-rail or commuter-rail lines from central Denver to Lakewood/Golden, Arvada, Boulder/ Longmont, north Adams County, and Denver International Airport, as well as along I-225 in Aurora.

- **Modes and Public Perceptions**. In developing your initiative plan, as well as your explanation of transportation benefits that will be realized under the proposal, you should have a strong understanding of what people in your community think about various transportation options. Do most people think that expanding roads is the solution to decreasing congestion? Are the people in your community curious about light rail? Or do they think it is a boondoggle? Are buses seen as a safe and efficient means of transportation or do many people avoid the bus?

- **Community Demographics**. Understanding your community is essential. There are hundreds of things to consider about your community and potential supporters, including:

    - Do you have a high number of disabled or elderly people in your community? They might prefer paratransit or curbside pickup types of services as opposed to a heavy emphasis on fixed routes.

    - Do you have a high percentage of nonnative English speakers? If so, you may need to consider deveoping campaign materials in one or more alternate languages.

    - Do you have a large college or business at the center of your community? Getting workers to and from one central location is key to the transportation options that are developed, as well as the overall approach to the campaign.

    - What is the commuting pattern for your community? Are there "trouble corridors" at certain times of day?

    - What is the political breakdown of your community? Where do Democrats and Republicans tend to live? Are there previous votes you can review to get a sense of who has supported transportation initiatives in the past?

Community-Oriented Approach

Utah Transit Authority (UTA) planners in Salt Lake City recognized the need to include the **University of Utah**—a major source of employment and traffic in the area-into its light rail development plans. The other major traffic generator is the **Downtown** area. The first light rail line built was a 15-mile north-south line linking the southern part of the valley with Downtown. The next extension was to run east-west from the Salt Lake International Airport to the university campus, but funding was not available to do the entire line all at once. The Federal Transit Administration helped fund the first piece that connected the north-south line to the Rice-Eccles Stadium on the university campus. This was completed in December 2001, in time for the 2002 Olympics. The next extension opened in September 2003 and continued the line from the stadium to the University Medical Center.

Additional Resources

Organization	Item	Website
U.S. Department of Transportation	*The Metropolitan Planning Process: Key Issues*	www.planning.dot.gov/documents/BriefingBook/BBook.htm
Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations	State regulatory information	www.ampo.org/links/mposnet.html
Denver Regional Transportation District	FasTracks Financing Plan	www.rtd-denver.org/fastracks/documents/Financing_Plan.pdf

You can link to these resources on the accompanying CD.

Section Two:
Legal Considerations and Campaign Administration

This section focuses on the key legal and administrative issues to consider during the initial planning phase of your transit initiative. Please note that there is a huge disparity between the ways that different states govern the pre-ballot placement process. Some states even prohibit citizen initiatives of any kind. Therefore, when planning your initiative or referendum consider the specific legal requirements of your state. You should rely on expert advice in developing a strategy for this initial phase. In this section we take a look at:

Legal Issues

- Initiative or Referendum
- Ballot Language Development
- Regulatory Considerations for Pre-Ballot Certification
- Signature Gathering
- Ballot Certification and Post-Certification Considerations

Campaign Administration Issues

- Organizational Structure
- Types of Staff
- Types of Consultants

Legal Issues

Initiative or Referendum

While each state or local jurisdiction may have individualized rules and terminology for citizen lawmaking, there are two basic types of measures that allow voters to create laws themselves: initiative and referendum.

The most common is the initiative process, where citizens themselves propose a new law. Some states allow two forms of citizen initiative: constitutional amendments and statutory initiatives. In either case, individuals or groups of citizens draft and propose the law or constitutional amendment directly to the electorate after their proposal has been certified for the ballot.

Less commonly used is the referendum process where the measure begins its life in the state's legislative body and is referred to the voters who have the ability to validate it as law or reject it. Some states, like Oregon, see a greater number of referenda. In other states, these are less common and appear on the ballot only in situations where the issue has broad philosophical support but for some reason (usually fiscal), the legislature is reluctant to pass it directly.

Some Interesting Information About Tax Initiatives in California

DJ Smith, a consultant on many successful transportation initiatives in California, expressed his views on the initiative process in interviews with researchers conducted for purposes of this guide. He expressed the opinion that in **California,** campaigns focused solely on public transit will lose. In order to achieve the required two-thirds vote to pass a tax initiative, initiatives should address other issues or projects such as highways or local roads. Initiatives in California face three challenges:

1. The two-thirds vote requirement.
2. Competition for funds, attention, and voter recognition. California is a huge initiative and referendum state and there are always a number of measures on the ballot.
3. Voter Outreach. The size of the state (and its counties) make voter outreach a real challenge. Targeted direct mail, radio, and TV are indispensable and are highly segmented markets. Since direct mail is expensive, campaigns need to raise more money and run on a much larger scale than in other areas.

Three "legs of the stool" for a California Win

Mr. Smith outlined his three "legs of the stool" for a successful California initiative: (1) Intensity; (2) A solid plan; and (3) Credibility. An initiative's chances of success are high if all these criteria are met, the campaign is well funded, and the opposition is contained
.

1. **Intensity** relates to traffic congestion and maintenance of local roads. The California public does not believe that public transit is better, cleaner, or faster. A successful campaign should play to voter frustration with the current traffic system. The "Rapid Bus" campaign was successful because it used the existing (and not new) highway and made it more efficient. Proposition 13 has really tied up money for local road improvement and maintenance. If the initiative incorporates local roads in its language, it is more likely to pass.
2. **A solid plan that voters can understand**. It is important to target "star projects." In large counties it is necessary to include as many as six different projects for the initiative to fund, complete with taxpayer safeguards as discussed below. An example of a "star project" is "managed lanes," where the cement median on freeways can be moved to help manage traffic flow. Voters should believe that the passage of the initiative is the only way things will improve. Voters want improvements and want to see evidence of it where they live.
3. **Credibility of the people spending money**. Where credibility is lacking, build it up. The proposal language should include taxpayer safeguards that guarantee the money will fund transit, regardless of other areas that might need extra funding in the future. The language should clearly state who would be spending the money and detail exactly how it will be spent. The average voter has "seen it all" and is not to be hoodwinked.

Ballot Language Development

From start to finish, the language provides direction for each member of your campaign, and ultimately is the determinant of your campaign's success or failure. This section provides important steps to consider in developing your ballot language.

If there were one element that serves as the anchor for the rest of your campaign, it would be the ballot language.

Hire or Consult an Attorney Familiar with Initiatives

Hiring an attorney who specializes in the electoral law of the state is wise. If those drafting the ballot language are not experienced with the initiative and referendum process in the state, serious problems can arise later on. Attorneys who are experts in the field of initiative development can help you avoid pitfalls and craft the language to your best advantage. For example, many states have "single-issue requirements" that may dramatically impact what you may include on one ballot initiative. Are you fully aware of the taxing restrictions and caps that may impact your ability to propose a sales or other tax? This is where a knowledgeable attorney can come in handy.

Issue Requirements

When considering the many issues and transportation projects to address with your initiative proposal, the sky is the limit. Well, sort of. Most states have restrictions on what can be addressed with a single ballot initiative. Single-issue requirements dictate that an initiative cannot mitigate more than one discernable issue. What this means to your ballot language can be illustrated with a few examples:

Acceptable Language	Restricted Language	Reason
"Question 1: Special Sales and Use Tax for Traffic Congestion, Safe…"	**"Question 1: Traffic Congestion Relief, Safe Roads, and Clean Water for Town X"**	**Ballot title should be transparent (i.e., stipulate that it is a TAX)**
"Shall Agency X implement rail transit service to promote smart growth, and greater independence from automobiles"	**"Shall Agency X implement a mileage tax to help pay for teachers' pensions and for highway improvements"**	**Ballot question should address a single issue, or a related issue.**

You can find samples of ballot language at the Center For Transportation Excellence (CFTE) website (www.cfte.org/success/language.asp).

Ballot Language Cannot be Slanted

In 2000, a **comprehensive transportation referendum** in **Charleston, South Carolina**, failed by just over 900 votes. In 2002, the same tax flip-flopped and passed by a narrow margin of just 865 votes. But the 2002 vote was overturned by the Supreme Court because it violated certain election laws, many of which stemmed from the fact that the ballot language used was slanted towards approval of the measure. The specific wording instructed voters to vote "Yes" if they supported "traffic congestion relief, safe roads, and clean water" in the form of a tax. The Supreme Court had issues with the wording. While voters may support congestion relief, safe roads, and clean water, they may not support a tax; and that it was not explicitly clear that a tax was involved both in the ballot title and the voter instructions preceding the question. In 2004, Charleston held a successful third election on the issue and gained 59% approval.

Taxing Authority and Restrictions

When considering the funding mechanism for your proposal, in terms of the type of tax to be proposed and the size or percentage of the tax, your campaign should investigate and determine both the legal authority to tax and the relevant tax cap restrictions. Many cities and states have an absolute tax cap that cannot be exceeded without voter or legislative approval.

Multi-Jurisdictional Restrictions

In 2004, the **Roaring Fork Transportation Authority (RFTA)**—which provides public transportation services to **Aspen, Colorado**, and communities throughout the **Roaring Fork Valley**—faced a 50% service cut and decided to go to the voters for increased funding. Due to a multi-jurisdictional tax cap of one cent, RFTA's proposal necessitated four different ballot questions due to two communities that had nearly exceeded their tax cap, and other communities that had lower levels of existing transit service. The measure passed with 77% approval.

Tax caps are not the only restrictions to consider when deciding the funding mechanism for your proposal. Many cities also have restrictions on debt financing for new projects as well as caps for debt maintenance.

California Special Consideration

Consider the situation in California where a two-third's approval vote is required to pass any tax. If you are running an initiative in California this will dramatically impact your language and strategy.

A Note on California Transportation Funding

California communities augment state transportation funding a bit differently than other states:

1. **County-wide**. Most counties in California are "self-help" counties, meaning they tax themselves for additional money to fund transportation projects within the county.
2. **Super-Majority**. Unlike most communities, all tax initiatives in California require a super-majority (66.67%) approval to be implemented.
3. **Expenditure Plan**. It is widely accepted in California that in order to identify with the voter and garner the necessary 66.67% voter approval, transportation tax proposals must have a list of identifiable projects that are multi-modal in nature. Public transit-only proposals do not fare well in California.

Conduct Survey Research Prior to Drafting Language

See the Research portion of Section Three to learn more about selecting a pollster and timing of polls.

It is always wise to conduct survey research prior to beginning the drafting process. Testing variations of the broad issue and asking voters their opinions on possible alternate initiative questions yields valuable data allowing the measure to be drafted in the strongest way possible.

Whenever possible, use actual ballot language proposals in the pre-ballot polling. Better data always results from voters having heard language that is exactly or close to the language that will ultimately appear on the ballot. This may require extra effort and expense from the campaign since it will result in several sets of proposal language to be drafted.

For initiatives that are multi-modal in nature, the relevant questions should be included in the poll(s). Regardless of whether the initiative is proposing an extension of an existing tax or it is an expansion of services, the transit component often attracts criticism from opponents. Therefore, it is necessary to accurately gauge the public's view towards all aspects of the transit component of the package. Agencies and their partners involved in the development of an initiative should poll early and often to ensure success.

Have Language Appeal To A Broad Range Of Voters

"To preserve affordable local public transportation services that allow seniors and people with disabilities to remain independent, take students to and from school, help East Bay residents commute to work and reduce traffic and air pollution by reducing the number of cars on the road, shall the **Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District (AC Transit)** in **California** increase its existing parcel tax by $2 per parcel, per month for ten years with an independent fiscal oversight committee and all money staying local?" The Measure BB to levy a special tax in the amount of $48 per year per parcel of taxable land for ten years gained **72.5% approval**.[1]

Language Should Provide Transparency on the Issue

A basic rule for most ballot measures is the simpler language is better.

Voters may be uneasy with complex, wordy measures. Your goal is to help voters understand how your simple ballot language translates into benefits for the voters. This is achieved through the marketing and outreach plans, and not wordy language on the ballot.

On a more strategic note, if possible make the title and placement of your ballot initiative the first thing that voters see when they walk into the voting booth. Label your campaign "Measure A" or "Proposition 100." Why? Cities and states sometimes have 10-15 ballot questions, most of which are asking for money, you do not want your campaign to be the last one asking for money. Keep in mind this is a competition for funding.

Strategically Label Your Initiative

Confusion is often rampant when there is a great deal of ads asking for no votes. For example, four substantively different but similarly numbered propositions were on the same ballot: Proposition 223 dealt with education funding; Proposition 224 with contracting out of state services; Proposition 226 with union dues; and Proposition with bilingual education. "When you're dealing with three digits and four initiatives are getting heavy play, you get confusion." said Mervin Field, head of the California-based Field Poll.

Broder, *Democracy Derailed: Initiative Campaigns and the Power of Money*[2]

Regulatory Considerations for Pre-Ballot Certification

The administrative and regulatory stage is one of the times that you will face challenges from initiative opponents. There are large bodies of regulations and administrative rules that govern the pre-ballot certification process. All campaigns should recognize the possible pitfalls and problems that can arise during the pre-ballot certification process and plan accordingly; do everything possible to ensure that all rules are painstakingly followed.

The overall strategy for responding to challenges during this process should be part of the campaign plan. While it is never possible to predict all of the potential issues that might arise during this phase of the campaign, some of the areas that may come under attack include:

- The failure to meet legal requirements related to the proposal's content (such as the single-issue requirement noted above).
- Timing requirements.
- Language summaries for the ballot.
- The form or format of the petitions themselves.
- A range of other issues depending on the state.

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1 Smart Voter, "Measure BB, Parcel Tax, Alameda-Contra Costa Transit Special District Area 1," www.smartvoter.org/2004/11/02/ca/alm/meas/BB/.

2 David S. Broder, Democracy Derailed: Initiative Campaigns and the Power of Money (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 2000), 160.

Regulatory Resources

To learn more about regulatory requirements in your state, check the State Board of Elections page of the CFTE website (**www.cfte.org/state/states.asp**). You can access your state's information through the "States" section.

The Ballot Initiative Strategy Center (BISC) maintains a central resource library of ballot initiative information for the progressive community (**www.ballot.org/resources/**).

The resource library area of the National Initiative For Democracy website (**www.ni4d.us/resources.htm**) has links to relevant historical documents and articles on democracy.

To learn more about initiative and referendum in your state see the Research area of the Initiative and Referendum Institute website (**www.iandrinstitute.org/**).

Signature Gathering

The signature gathering effort poses one of the toughest tactical and practical challenges to a transit campaign.

Each state has a minimum required amount of valid signatures and may have other requirements related to geographic distribution of the signatures, or ensuring that the information on the petitions is identical to the information in the voter registration file. Each campaign should become familiar with the requirements and restrictions for its state and maintain a strong understanding of ongoing changes that may impact the signature gathering effort.

Here are some key tips for a successful effort:

- Gather More Signatures Than Needed
- Decide whether to Use Paid or Volunteer Signature Gatherers
- Verify and Validate Signatures

Gather More Signatures Than Needed

Because of the various reasons that signatures may be invalidated, it is always necessary to gather more signatures than the minimum required. As a rule, gather at least a 30% "buffer" above the minium number required.

The More the Better

Of the 65,000 signatures submitted on **Denver's FasTracks Yes! Campaign** only 58,000 were valid. Luckily they collected 46% more signatures then required.

Decide to Use Paid or Volunteer Signature Gatherers

One of the first tactical considerations to undertake is deciding whether to use paid and/or volunteer signature gatherers. Because of the scope involved and the state requirements of signature gathering it may be difficult to run a volunteer effort. These issues and responsibilities include the number of signatures involved; the time limitations imposed on gathering in most states; having to validate the signatures are from registered voters; and properly notarizing the petition forms (in states where notarization is required).

Because of these challenges, campaigns are increasingly turning to professional signature gathering firms. While these firms can help mitigate the problems with volunteer efforts (as noted above), campaigns choosing to employ these firms could face a major budgetary blow. Depending on the complexity of the effort and the proximity of the hiring date to the "turn-in" date mandated for the petitions, signature-gathering firms could charge high fees.

A Successful All Volunteer Effort

The 2004 **Denver FasTracks Yes! Campaign** used an all-volunteer petition drive. The campaign had to gather almost 35,000 signatures to get on the ballot. They strategically decided to invest the time and money to create a volunteer base to demonstrate the widespread support for the campaign. They had over 1,400 petition circulators who gathered 65,000 signatures in 35 days. The all-volunteer petition drive provided the campaign a large amount of people invested in the campaign, which laid the foundation for an extensive field program. **FasTracks Yes! won with 57.9% approval**.

Verify and Validate Signatures

The verification and validation procedures vary from state to state. Every campaign should know the procedures that election authorities take and be prepared to quickly pursue appeals through the administrative process or the courts if it appears that errors were made in the counting process.

Whether using volunteers, paid gatherers, or both, the campaign should carefully review the rules related to validity of signatures and ensure that the rules are communicated to the gatherers. The campaign should also be constantly performing a back-end review of the petition forms to monitor validity and determine the rate of acceptable signatures. Some states allow procedures for the campaign to strike out signatures that it knows to be defective, thereby ensuring that election officials will not count those signatures.

Ballot Certification and Post-Certification Considerations

At the conclusion of the pre-ballot processes, the secretary of state or other election official designated by law determines the sufficiency of the petitions submitted. Certifying the initiative for the ballot marks a significant turning point for the campaign and in many ways marks the official start of the messaging portions of the campaign.

Once the proper election officials have certified the campaign, there are a whole new set of regulations and restrictions that you have to consider. This has several implications for your campaign:

The Supreme Court has upheld, on numerous occasions that no public entity, including transit agencies, shall be allowed to use public money for campaign purposes.

- **Use of Agency Resources**. The transit agency is not allowed to have employees officially working on the campaign after certification. This does not preclude agency employees from taking a voluntary leave of absence, volunteering after work hours, or deducting itemized hours for work related to the campaign.

- **Education vs. Advocacy**. MPOs, as well as other planning agencies, are legally required to inform the public of their long-range transportation plans. Informing the public is also a key component of winning a funding-related ballot initiative. However, there are restrictions on what constitutes education versus advocacy and who can and cannot advocate.

Educating, Not Campaigning in Texas

Months prior to the formation of an official campaign in 2004 and in an effort to gain saliency in the minds of voters to the issues surrounding transportation congestion in the **Austin** metropolitan area, **Capital Metro**, the transit provider paid for television ads that included music legends, Willie Nelson and Marcia Ball. They talked about traffic and air quality, but they said nothing about transit. A delicate balance between education and advocacy, the ads avoided mention of the upcoming initiative, but rather told voters something needed to be done. In November, the measure won approval 62% to 37%.

- **Campaign Lawsuits**. In multi-billion dollar campaigns and campaigns with a rail component, one should anticipate or at least be prepared for the critics of the proposal to pull out all the stops. This includes lawsuits. Regardless of the merit of the lawsuit, the media coverage generated can often be more detrimental to the campaign than the actual lawsuit itself. There is no cookie-cutter way to prepare for this, but here are a few examples of lawsuits filed during recent campaigns:

    - Failure to acquire environmental quality documents for projects on the proposed "wish list."

    - The legality of voting on the same issue twice.

    - The restriction of use of public property to construct and expand a monorail system.

    - Failure to disclose campaign finance records in a timely manner.

    - Direct mailer language that indicates support for a ballot measure.

- **Courts**. The judicial system offers campaigns the only remaining option if they feel that mistakes have been made during the pre-ballot certification process. Even under the best planning and implementation situations, be prepared for the unexpected. For example, if the campaign carefully monitors the signature process and makes an independent determination that a statistical sample procedure that was performed was flawed; it may need to seek relief from the courts to ensure a proper re-count. Recourse to the courts tends to be expensive because of legal fees, expert witness fees, and other expenses. This should be viewed as a last resort and relied upon only when the campaign can obtain relief in no other way.

Campaign Administration Issues

In this section, we look at a few important things to consider in administering your campaign, including:

- Organizational Structure
- Types of Staff
- Types of Consultants

Organizational Structure

Defining the structure of your organization essentially means identifying the lines of communication and responsibilities for each team member. Who reports to whom? When do they report? What do they report? Why do they report? And how do they report? Take the following steps to define your organization:

- Identify Your Staffing Needs
- Define the Staff Positions
- Identify the Consultants
- Put the Pieces Together

Identify Your Staffing Needs

As you begin to develop your campaign plan, your staffing requirements will become clearer. You need to review the budget, the time frame of your campaign, your projected volunteer resources, and your overall strategy. Once you have closely examined each of these areas, you can then begin to decide which the staff positions you need to fill, which ones you would like to fill, when you need to have them filled, and the desired qualities in the person for each position. Answering these questions can also help you identify the salary range and responsibilities for each position.

Define the Staff Positions

Once you have defined your staffing requirements, you can then define the campaign positions and how they fit into your organization. Your staff should function as a team; they will be working long hours together in a high stress, intense environment. As noted throughout this section, your staffing needs will vary depending on your resources, but there are some general guidelines to consider when searching for someone to fill each position. The following are brief descriptions of frequently used staff and consultant positions in an initiative campaign.

- **Campaign Chairman**. The campaign chairman plays an important role in putting a face on the campaign name. Therefore, he or she should be a recognized household name. This is the person that will be able to help secure funds for the campaign and will give the campaign credibility. This person will utilize previous contacts within the community to help build the coalition. Examples include former mayors and CEOs.

- **The Campaign Manager.** This is the person responsible for the development and implementation of the campaign. Although others will assist in developing the campaign plan, the campaign manager is the person responsible for the on-site implementation of the plan. The campaign manager spends about 20% of his or her time working on the budget; 60% interacting with staff, supporters, and consultants; and the other 20% on miscellaneous paperwork. Occasionally a campaign manager writes a speech or a piece of literature, but their time is too limited to undertake such a time-consuming task. In an initiative campaign, the campaign manager plays a very central role. The campaign manager keeps the entire organization focused on the issue and motivates the staff. This person should have strong political instincts; an ability to listen; good management skills (for staff, consultants, and volunteers); and financial and budgeting skills.

- **The Fundraising Director**. The fundraising director plays a pivotal role in any campaign-if there is no money, there is no campaign. The fundraising director is responsible for coordinating events, producing and overseeing direct mail solicitations, monitoring the reporting process, and directing the finance committee. Given the vocal and public role of the fundraising director in an initiative campaign, look for an individual who not only understands how to raise money, but how to ask for and keep track of it.

- **The Communications Director and/or Press Secretary**. The communications director oversees the press, research, and scheduling departments and spends his or her time coordinating the activities between the three departments, as well as acting as a drill sergeant on message delivery. Depending on the size of the staff, the communications director may do all of the above and also act as the press secretary, writing releases and speeches, arranging press events, and talking with reporters on a daily basis. This person should have strong written and oral communications skills; a solid grasp of the issues and the political climate; good political instincts; and honesty.

- **The Field Director**. The field director should have energy, enthusiasm, and an ability to analyze demographics. The field director travels the state meeting people and attempts to get their support. This individual is one of the most visible people on the campaign. The field director keeps track of supporters, noting where they reside, what other campaigns they support, what volunteer tasks (if any) they are willing to perform, and what contacts they have in their community. The field director also keeps track of supporters of the opposition and the critics of public transportation. This person should have good basic math skills and an understanding of demographics; an outgoing personality; good political judgment; and the ability to build coalitions.

- **Opposition Researcher**. The primary responsibility of the opposition researcher is to uncover everything possible about the opposition and the critics of public transportation and about your own campaign. You then use this information to draft polls, refine your message, and develop an earned media strategy. The researcher searches through statistics, testimonials, financial reports, community lists, and other sources, and then makes sense out of the findings and reports back to the campaign. This person should have an eye for detail and a penchant for accuracy; solid writing skills; excellent research skills; an understanding of the political climate; and the tenacity to find the "unfindable."

- **The Office Manager/Administrator**. The administrator is responsible for the smooth operation of the office. This is the person that staff members turn to when equipment needs repair, supplies are needed, or snacks and sodas are needed for volunteer activities. This person should have organizational and planning skills; an ability to work with a host of different personalities; bookkeeping skills and sensitivity to budgetary constraints; and a desire to run the office, not the campaign.

- **The Volunteer Coordinator**. Volunteers are vital to the success of any campaign, especially initiative campaigns. A good volunteer coordinator can recruit and maintain a constant flow of efficient volunteers working at headquarters. This person should have a friendly demeanor; patience; a good sense of humor; strong organizational skills; good phone skills; an ability to assess the skills of others; and an ability to give clear and precise directions.

Identify the Consultants

Your initiative campaign needs consultants and the advice of professionals for certain aspects of the election process, such as budgeting, producing advertisements, and polling. Your budget and political climate help dictate whom you hire and when you hire them. The following are descriptions of the major types of political consultants that initiative campaigns typically hire.

The General Consultant

A general (or management) consultant serves as an objective, seasoned political voice for the campaign. A good general consultant has years of experience in the political arena and can become one of your greatest resources. This person usually writes the campaign plan, develops the budget, and helps oversee the implementation of the campaign plan. Though a general consultant usually works closely with the campaign manager, this person also works with other staff members. A general consultant also serves as a liaison to your other hired consultants and works through strategy with them, saving the campaign manager a great deal of time and stress.

The Pollster

It is important to choose the right person or firm to do your polling. It is difficult to wage a credible campaign without survey research. You need to know the strengths and weaknesses of your initiative, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the opponents to your initiative. Survey research is essential to accurately gauge voter viewpoints and attitudes concerning transit. For example, if you choose to release polling numbers to the press and potential contributors, you need a credible name behind those numbers. This means hiring someone with experience in initiative polling and a good reputation.

The Broadcast Media Consultant

Modern initiative and referenda campaigns are most successful with a significant broadcast media component. For most issue campaigns, broadcast media accounts for the majority of the campaign's expenditures. Radio, television, and print advertising allow you to reach large numbers of people with a controlled message, which is why broadcast media is so crucial to initiative campaigns.

The consultant that you select to produce your advertisements will make a significant difference. Often the only way voters become familiar with your initiative is through television or radio commercials. It is wise to hire a media consultant who specializes in political communications; has an understanding of how to produce effective political messages; and knows how to efficiently and effectively buy the time for the ads.

The Persuasion Mail Consultant

Persuasion mail can be an effective tool, especially in campaigns with well-targeted groups of persuadable voters. Many campaigns try to do their own mail and generally fail to produce compelling, effective messaging-that is why there are seasoned professionals in this area. You need to determine whether hiring a persuasion mail consultant is a wise use of your resources considering the overall political climate surrounding your transit initiative.

Fundraising Consultant

Many campaigns rely on the services of fundraising consultants to direct their finance efforts. Hiring fundraising professionals with long-standing contacts makes sense since an increasing number of initiative campaigns are being primarily funded through a small group of "angels" (individuals or organizations willing to provide large sums of money to finance the campaign).

Signature Gatherer/Consultants

Also be certain to comply with the legal requirements in your state regarding paid signature gathering, as noted in the Legal Issues portion this section.

As noted earlier, Many campaigns turn to outside consultants to gather signatures since the requirements for signature gathering vary state by state and are complex. This field has its controversy and a large portion of the legal wrangling that has taken place concerning the initiative process has revolved around the signature-gathering phase of the process.

If you decide to place an initiative on the ballot using only volunteers, be aware of the state's procedures. Many states have a time limitation on the period within which signatures may be gathered and it can be difficult to coordinate the volunteer resources necessary for successful completion of the project. As such, many campaigns turn to professionals who hire large groups of people to fan out across the state and gather signatures. These professionals are typically paid per-signature gathered, thereby giving them the incentive to aggressively seek out large numbers of voters. There are also costs for printing the petitions; and depending on the complexity of the legal requirements for petition format, this can cost the campaign tens of thousands of dollars for production expenses.

Put the Pieces Together

Once you know your staffing and consultant needs, define the lines of communication and "put the pieces together."

Though each person is a member of the campaign team, each has individual responsibilities and each needs to understand their role and how it fits with the other players. Communication is key to the success of your organization and ultimately your success at the polls. There are several ways to keep the lines of communication open in your campaign:

- Hold weekly or daily staff meetings. Determine a specific, regular time to meet and keep the meeting to a set timeframe and a clear agenda.
- List the responsibilities of each team member in the campaign plan. Ensure each person receives a copy of the roles and responsibilities.
- Create an organizational chart to delineate who reports to whom, as well as provide a visual aid showing how each member of the campaign team is connected.

Additional Resources

Organization	Item	Website
The Center for Transportation Excellence	Sample ballot language	www.cfte.org/success/language.asp
Smart Voter	Archive of Past Elections, Measure BB Parcel Tax	www.smartvoter.org/2004/11/02/ca/alm/meas/BB/
The Center for Transportation Excellence	State regulatory information	www.cfte.org/state/states.asp
The Ballot Initiative Strategy Center	Resource library of ballot initiatives	www.ballot.org
National Initiative For Democracy	Resource library of relevant historical documents	www.ni4d.us/resources.htm
Initiative and Referendum Institute	Resource library of state initiatives and referendums	www.iandrinstitute.org/

You can link to these resources on the accompanying CD.

Section Three:
Campaign Preparation

Section Three focuses on gathering the resources you need to prepare for a successful campaign. This includes a strategic plan, funds, and people.

As such, the components of this section include:

- Research (gathering information)
- Campaign Plans (developing the strategy and drafting a plan)
- Fundraising (gathering the funds)
- Building and Using Coalitions (gathering the people)

The area on developing the campaign plan presents an overview of each segment of the overall plan and is provided as a high-level outline. This guide provides further detailed information on each component segment in the corresponding sections.

Research: Gathering Information

Research is the foundation of any campaign's strategy and is the basis of the case put before the voters. For example, a good poll can give the campaign an overall view of what messages work, where they work, with whom they work, and when they work, as well as the reverse—what messages probably won't work. These are some key considerations in building your research program:

- Basic Questions You Need to Be Able to Answer
- Surveys, Polls, and Focus Groups
- Targeting Voters
- Opposition Research
- Sources of Information

Basic Questions You Need to be Able to Answer

These basic research questions and strategies help you plan and develop your research. These are not all-inclusive; your research needs are determined by your campaign's needs. Add and subtract where appropriate.

- **Investigate the process of ballot initiatives in your state or local area. If the process requires signature gathering:**
    - How many signatures are required and what are the requirements for circulators and signers?
    - Is there a minimum number or share of the signatures required from specific areas (such as counties or local jurisdictions)?

- **If the process is initiated by legislative action:**
    - How many votes are required?
    - How many legislators are on record already?
    - Prepare a list of legislators' positions on the initiative and on the question in general.
    - Who are the major campaign donors to legislators for and against the initiative? Include their phone numbers and addresses.
    - Is there a link between contributions and other issues?
    - Which legislators are best targets for lobbying?

- **Investigate the experience of other initiatives in your area.**

    - How many have been excluded from the ballot and how?
    - Which initiatives have passed?
    - Prepare a list of the vote area by area.
    - What were the key political forces in carrying or defeating initiatives in the past?
    - What are the positions of those forces or coalitions on this initiative?
    - Prepare a list of key individuals and groups, both pro and con, with phone numbers and addresses.
    - Which areas have the largest voter turnout?
    - Prepare a table and map of voter turnout. Which areas tend to vote in "blocks" on this type of question? Prepare a table and map of the key areas.
    - What are the demographics of these areas? Prepare a table of the demographics.

- **Investigate which groups have been key to the passage or defeat of similar initiatives.**

    - What were the main messages of each side?
    - What issues did each side highlight?
    - What issues did the press focus on?
    - Which arguments were most successful? Why?
    - Prepare a clipping file on messages and issues in other campaigns.
    - Prepare a list of key persons and organizations that might serve as resource persons for your campaign.

- **Investigate the history of your issue in this area.**

    - Which groups and individuals have played key roles (pro and con)?
    - Prepare a file on each, including clippings, with address, phone number, information on past activity, links to other individuals and groups, and positions and activity level on this referendum.
    - What issues and arguments have been most typical of each group?

- **Prepare a list of all the media in the referendum area.**

    - Include community, religious, labor, and organized papers and newsletters.
    - For radio and television note all shows which might become, or already are, a forum for discussion of the issues.
    - How fair and complete has each been in coverage of the issue in the past?
    - What has been their editorial position?
    - Which reporters have covered the issue in the past? Have they been fair? If not, what has been their bias, and which messages and issues have swayed them?

For more detailed information on research, including developing a research program; analyzing the research; and developing key materials based on the research see the 2001 Ridder/Braden Manual For Initiative Campaigns, which is available in full on the Companion CD of this guide.

Surveys, Polls, and Focus Groups

Survey research and focus groups provide your campaign with the background information necessary to develop your message and persuade voters to join your transit effort. If you are unsure how to use survey research, consult with someone who does. It can mean the difference between winning and losing.

Survey / Polling Research

In campaigns, three basic types of polls are used: baseline (sometimes called benchmark), trend, and tracking.

- **Baseline**. A baseline survey has a longer than average interview length, has the most respondents and tends to be the most expensive poll conducted during the campaign. The baseline poll provides concrete numbers demonstrating support for the issue and can be used to show initial strength in the campaign, to validate your issue position, or to emphasize the fact that the campaign needs to raise significant funds to mount an effective communications program.

- **Trend**. A trend poll's primary objective is to test trends and changes in the political climate, as well as check the effectiveness of certain campaign tactics and messages. It is particularly useful in testing new data about your opposition and your critics.

- **Tracking**. This type of poll is conducted in the final stages of the campaign when the campaign's media buys are heaviest. Its purpose is to gauge how the campaign's communications efforts are moving voters. It can also indicate whether specific commercials and field operations are working.

Your survey research helps you identify three basic elements of your campaign strategy:

- General Theme
- Most Effective Messages (as well as the most effective messages for your opponents)
- Target Groups

Note that survey research requires a trained, experienced professional who understands how to craft a poll, knows the proper methodology for conducting one, and has the political skills to analyze the results and recommend strategies.

Convincing Survey Language

In **1996, Santa Clara**, California, conducted surveys and formed focus groups to determine the characteristics of a successful initiative. Interestingly, the supporters of the initiative actively invited potential opponents to collaborate on the design of the various surveys. The effect of this was to allow those perceived as "extremists" to have their ideas tested (and ultimately rejected) in polls. Supporters of the measure believe that this action eventually co-opted much of their potential opposition, as well as serving to help make the surveys more convincing. The measure was successful.

Haas, *Why Campaigns for Local Transportation Funding Initiatives Succeed or Fail.* [3]

A Note on Polling

Polling is not the only mechanism available to gauge public opinion, nor should it be the only tool used. In the recent past, not one multi-billion dollar campaign has relied solely on public opinion polling. Most large campaigns begin eighteen months before the vote with public meetings, and lots of them—usually ten per month. While this may seem burdensome, the benefits far outweigh the costs in at least two respects. First, it allows the agencies involved to build coalitions with community and business groups, who can later become spokespersons for the campaign. Second, it allows the agency ample opportunity to tweak the expenditure plan and ballot language to make it "winnable" at the ballot box.

[3] Peter J. Haas, Ph.D., *Why Campaigns for Local Transportation. Funding Initiatives Succeed or Fail: An Analysis of Four Communities and National Data* (Mineta Transportation Institute Report 00-1, June 2000), http://transweb.sjsu.edu/CoalitionFinal.htm.

Focus Groups

Focus groups are usually comprised of eight to twelve people who are randomly selected from a predetermined demographic pool (i.e., gender, common interests, voting patterns, and economic background.) It is important to note that focus group results do not carry the degree of statistical certainty that qualitative research results (like surveys or polls) have. As such, you cannot extrapolate the results of focus groups to the general population the way that you can with polling results.

Targeting Voters

One of the most important purposes of your survey/polling activity is to help identify likely voters. It is vital for your success to determine who your voters are and where they can be found. It can also save the campaign time and resources. Use your baseline poll results, opposition research, past election results, and past voter turnout to accurately predict voter turnout for your election and identify the voters who will support your issue. Research the past performance of like elections to break down the votes into geographic regions. For a citywide initiative, this should be done by precinct. For a statewide campaign, this should be done by county or congressional district. Based on this data, you can project how many votes the campaign needs to win from each area.

Remember, above all, you want to motivate only your base supporters and those who can be persuaded to join with you to vote on Election Day.

The targeting process helps you identify three key groups of voters:

- Your base supporters who need to be motivated to get out and vote.
- Voters to be persuaded to vote in support of your issue. Knowing the locations of these specific voters helps your campaign devote the appropriate resources to persuading them to vote with you on Election Day.
- Your opponents' base supporters. Knowing the locations of these specific voters keeps your campaign from wasting limited resources and inadvertently encouraging increased turnout favoring your opponents.

Though these steps may seem straightforward, an in-depth and accurate analysis of this information is critical. When done correctly, targeting can be an invaluable tool. When done incorrectly, targeting can send the campaign on a wild goose chase.

Research Helpful Hints

To use survey research, you need to be aware of the differences between methodology and content. Pollsters often have their own drafting and targeting styles and these differences can affect the outcome of the poll. To help you identify and analyze some of these differences, here are a few helpful hints to keep in mind as you play the numbers game.

- Look for the Differences in Polling Methodology and Content
- Voters Do Lie
- Ballot Language Can Cause Confusion

Look for the Differences in Polling Methodology and Content

Know how results from two polls seemingly surveying the same issue can be different:

- Are the surveys worded the same way? Initiative ballot language can be long and cumbersome. Pollsters may not want to read the entire ballot language during their surveys. Sometimes the ballot language is abbreviated, paraphrased, or summarized, which can create discrepancies in the language that is actually tested.

- Is the polling universe surveyed the same? Some surveys include "all voters" while others include only "likely voters." The results can be strikingly different between these two groups.

- Is the sample size the same? The larger the sample, the lower the margin of error. The margin of error for a sample of 300 can be as high as +/- 6.5% whereas the margin of error for a sample of 500 can be as low as +/- 4.0%. Analyzing the margin of error can account for the differences between polls.

Acceptable Polling Sample Sizes

Here is a list of common margins of error based on the number of people interviewed.

300 =	5.7%	(use with a vulnerability poll-only to decide whether or not to run)
400 =	4.9%	(the low end of what you should do for strategic purposes-not for publication)
600 =	4%	(the low end of what is acceptable for the press)
800 =	3.5%	(acceptable by the press; good internally if you have several groups to compare)
1000 =	3.1%	(when released to the press, the numbers are usually accepted as bullet proof)

Cohen, "How to Keep Polling Costs Within Your Overall Budget," *Campaigns and Elections* [4]

Voters Do Lie

Voters do occasionally lie to pollsters, but they seem to lie more often on issues of personal morality, like gay and lesbian rights. For example, every pre-election poll in Colorado in 1992 showed that Amendment 2, an anti-gay rights measure, would be defeated. Every poll was wrong. The post-election review of the surveys and election results showed that voters did not want to readily admit their support of Amendment 2. Inaccurate data leads to costly decision-making. Poll data are only a snapshot in time; voters may change their attitudes and opinions about an initiative, based persuasive media. Be on the watch for this trend and ask your pollster how he or she intends to deal with it.

Ballot Language Can Cause Confusion

Expect voters to be confused if the language of the initiative does not make clera the true meaning of a yes or no vote. Work closely with your research team to determine how likely the language of the initiative will confuse voters. The most effective way to defeat an initiative is to point out its vague and confusing language.

To ensure your ballot language is clear review the Ballot Language Development portion of Section Two.

Opposition Research

For more details on opposition research see Responding to Critics of this guide (Section Five).

Know your enemy and know yourself. A well-documented, solid report on the critics of public transportation and your opposition's campaign can greatly assist you in furthering your cause and achieving your goal. But to be truly effective, you should also know your own strengths and weaknesses. Be meticulous and patient in developing your opposition research; it can mean the difference between two days of positive news stories and a week of negative press.

[4] Michael D. Cohen, "How to Keep Polling Costs Within Your Overall Budget," *Campaigns and Elections* (August 2004), www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2519/is_7_25/ai_n6240740.

The Enemy is Us

Opposition research is not just about the opposition.

In fact, you need to put yourself in the mindset of your opponents and consider how your initiative campaign might be attacked from every angle. As the strongest proponent of your position, you should be as familiar with the potential arguments and criticism, real and imagined, that might be leveled in your direction. In order to be fully prepared before the critics go public you should develop a "dossier" on the weaknesses of your own campaign.

Some things to consider include:

- Management problems or concerns at the agency that may be brought to the public eye, including existing or potential labor disputes within the transit system

- Arguments that critics often make in opposing public transportation

- Specific concerns and issues that might arise in your community. For example, will some residents be displaced by the services envisioned in your plan? Why did you select some communities and not others to receive service? What was the rational behind the mode choices selected? Are you targeting a specific high-traffic corridor? Would certain businesses or groups benefit from your proposal? If so, how and why are those benefits appropriate? Is there any potential for people to interpret these benefits as inappropriate? Any one of these areas can become fodder for the critics.

- Concerns and questions about those who are endorsing the initiative and/or providing funds. Although you can't know everything about all your supporters, it is always smart to check them out as much as you can to ensure that there are no "unorthodoxies" in their business methods or oddities in their mission statements. While you want to receive funding and endorsements from as many sources as possible, remember that everyone involved in your campaign will reflect upon it. Do what you can to ensure that is a positive impression.

- Concerns and questions about the leaders of the campaign. Is the campaign staff managing funds appropriately? Are the spokespeople strong supporters personally of the effort: do they take public transportation themselves? If not, why not?

The key here is that opponents to your initiative will often have no qualms in raising arguments—even if those arguments seem somewhat personal and unrelated to the policy issues of your effort. They just need to raise enough questions in the mind of a voter that he or she will be unwilling to risk the investment you're suggesting. As such, you need to be prepared to address these questions before they come up. Hopefully, it goes without saying that your research into your own campaign's weaknesses needs to be kept EXTREMELY secure. The last thing you need is someone tracking down this information and being able to state publicly, "According to documents developed by the initiative supporters 'statement x'." And your most damaging weakness is "statement x."

Sources of Information

Information gathering is a time-consuming process. There are many, many places where you can search for facts, statistics, and background information on your opposition and critics—a few prime sources have been included below. However you will most likely find additional ones. The key in your attempts to locate information is to look in every corner. Even though someone may tell you it doesn't exist, you should have the tenacity to discover that for yourself.

Internet Based

Online research has quickly become the primary tool for virtually all forms of information gathering. Your research team should include at least one person who is extremely proficient in using the Internet (particularly web groups and newsgroups). You should use the Internet as your first source for information. Some good sources on the Internet for public transportation research include:

- American Public Transportation Association (www.apta.com/research/)
- Public Transportation Partnership for Tomorrow (www.publictransportation.org)
- Surface Transportation Policy Project (www.transact.org/)
- The Center for Transportation Excellence (www.cfte.org/news/)
- Ballot Initiative Strategy Center (www.ballot.org/)
- Friends of Transit (www.friendsoftransit.org/links.asp)
- The Transit Alliance (www.transitalliance.org/fr_issues.htm)
- The Transport Policy Yahoo Group (http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/transport-policy/)

Interviews

A good place for information is among those already involved in the campaign. Many activists have their own files or access to files on the issues. These files are extremely valuable because they have been developed in the course of an actual campaign on the issue. These people may have relevant material and can also point you toward other important sources of information.

National organizations are also an extremely valuable resource. They have collected data from many campaigns and recorded the input of activists from across the country. They can often afford full-time staff who specialize in collecting and analyzing the information and experiences surrounding their issues.

Literature Review

Newspapers and magazines are basic source materials. These are available at your local library. Back issues are often on microfilm. Large newspapers may publish annual subject indexes. Many newspapers and magazines are indexed in the Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature.

Local papers, church papers, organization newsletters, labor papers, and other publications-look for these sources on both the pro and con side of your initiative. They may not be indexed, but the publisher or a subscriber may have complete files that are available to researchers.

Clipping Services and Other Ongoing Sources of Information

Many newspapers and magazines are indexed in computer databases such as LexisNexis (**www.lexis.com**) and Dialog (**www.dialog.com**). Costs for service depends on usage. It is often possible to find supporters who subscribe to these services and who will make an in-kind donation of the service. For transportation-related news, try a service like TransitNews.net. You can also conduct our own research on Google (**Google.com**) under the "News" tab.

State, County, and Municipal libraries have special collections that should include the proceedings of the respective legislative bodies and the voting records of the members. Copies of these records are often available from supportive members of the legislative bodies. Political parties often publish summaries of the work of the legislature, as well. These summaries highlight key issues and serve as a guide to the work of the session. Law libraries, especially those at public universities or associated with state supreme or appellate courts, are often official repositories of administrative, legislative, and regulatory documents.

County Clerks, State Boards of Election, and Other Outlets for Public Records are sources for things such as petitions for ballot referenda and financial disclosures for candidates, lobbyists, and other political figures. Supportive elected officials can offer valuable guidance in accessing these records. Every state has some sort of official archival system for official documents, and many have placed large quantities of state documents online.

Beware of Infiltration Leaks

Campaigns have open structures that rely on massive volunteer efforts. As a result, they can easily become a target for infiltration by your opposition. Because so much of your research is highly sensitive, you need to take steps to ensure that as little information as possible is leaked.

As a general rule, your research operation should be one of the more covert aspects of the campaign. However, leaks are common and unavoidable. The best way to combat this is to take the necessary steps to diminish the risk of infiltration and leaks to help safeguard your research:

- Access to completed research should be restricted to those who "need to know." Politically sensitive documents should be kept in a locked filing cabinet in a room with a door that locks.
- Researchers should not discuss their work outside the research team.
- Copies of research, complete or incomplete, should not be distributed in any form outside the campaign structure, especially to the press.
- Researchers, no matter how informed, should not speak with the press unless specifically requested to do so by the communications department.
- Campaign leadership should solve any persistent problems.

Writing the Campaign Plan: Developing the Strategy

The campaign plan serves as a guide or a roadmap for the duration of your campaign and defines your message, how your message is delivered, to whom it is delivered, when it is delivered, and what resources are necessary to deliver it.

A campaign plan is a written document outlining the strategic and tactical elements of the campaign.

Most of the segment components of the campaign plan are explained in more detail throughout this guide, so only a high-level discussion of the different elements is explained here. The overall campaign plan provides a top-level view of the more detailed plans that are developed for each of the components noted below.

Section-by-Section Template

Since this guide is dedicated to explaining and providing suggestions for implementing each aspect of a transit initiative campaign, the following is simply a brief overview of the eleven key components of a campaign plan. Again, these are the basic components and you will undoubtedly add to and subtract from them to suit your organizational, political, and financial needs.

1. Strategy and Tactics
2. Theme and Messages
3. Targeting: Locate 50% + 1 of the Electorate
4. Fundraising
5. Budget
6. Organizational Structure
7. Research
8. Scheduling
9. Earned Media
10. Voter Contact
11. The Calendar

1. Strategy and Tactics

Your campaign strategy is based on two fundamental questions: (1) Who will vote for you? and (2) Why will they vote for you? To define your campaign strategy you have identify why voters support your position. This requires an assessment of the current political climate, as well as an assessment of your strengths and weaknesses and also those of your opponents and critics. Again, much of this information derives from the results of your research. Targeting, projections, opposition research, and baseline polling all help determine who will vote for you and why they will vote for you.

After you define your strategy, you will identify the tactics needed to carry out that strategy. That is the purpose of the remainder of the campaign plan. Your tactics depend largely on your budget. Unfortunately, most initiative campaigns do not have extensive or excessive resources-they have a limited budget and, consequently, every tactical move has to be plotted with utmost care.

2. Theme and Messages

Section Four, Getting the Word Out, provides detailed information on developing your theme.

This portion of the plan is perhaps the most critical to your ultimate success. It explains why a particular theme has been chosen, as well as when and how certain messages will be used. Include a list of ten "hot words" and phrases that best describe why the initiative should be defeated or passed. These should be highly descriptive and often emotional terms that provoke the positive or negative responses that you want from voters. All of your subsequent communications to the public should make liberal use of these "hot words" and phrases. Repetition is a key component of effective messaging.

3. Targeting: Locate 50% + 1 of the Electorate (or More Than Two-Thirds If You're in California!)

The Research portion of this section presents information on targeting voters.

Targeting is the process that helps you identify where you will get the number of votes you need to win on Election Day. To effectively isolate your base of support, your opposition's base of support, and the persuadable voters, you should identify: (1) How many votes it takes to win based on accurate forecasting of the overall turnout to be expected in a given election cycle and (2) Where those votes are, geographically and demographically. The targeting process requires patience and time.

4. Fundraising

Developing and implementing your fundraising activities are discussed more fully in the Fundraising portion of this section

The fundraising plan answers two fundamental questions: (1) Where will the money come from? and (2) how will be it raised? Obviously, the fundraising goals should be realistic and in line with the campaign budget. There is no need to include the entire fundraising plan in the general campaign plan. A summary will suffice, along with some discussion of how the fundraising operation functions with respect to other departments.

5. Budget

The Budgeting portion of Section Three provides information on preparing the campaign budget.

The budget is the backbone of the campaign planning process. The budget defines the parameters for all campaign components, such as when and where to place the media buy, how many tracking polls to put in the field, and the number of literature pieces to be produced. These all filter into the general strategy. Consequently, develop the budget with care, caution, and accuracy. It demands significant time, attention to detail, and specificity. That is why you should produce three budgets: high, target, and low, which allows you to view the campaign's financial situation from the most ideal to the most frighteningly frugal.

6. Organizational Structure

Section Two, Legal Considerations and Campaign Administration, has more details.

It is important that the plan should clearly define the structure of your organization before you are six months into the campaign. This section of the plan should clearly delineate the lines of authority; each person's roles and responsibilities; and the expectations for the consultants, steering committee members, and finance chair. Everyone should understand who reports to whom and when. Because a successful campaign organization demands constant communication among the key members of your team, it is important to note how these various factions should interact. Ideally, you should include an organizational chart so the lines of authority are clear. Above all, this part of the planning process should be viewed as a means to facilitate communication and increase productivity. The more defined the lines of communication and responsibilities, the greater chance for individual and, consequently, organizational success.

7. Research

The Research portion of this section provides detailed information on developing a research plan.

You should develop a research plan and timeline, in consultation with your pollster. This includes timetables for any trend or tracking polls, as well as focus groups. A timetable for your opposition research is also an integral part of your research plan. Be sure to include this information and identify who is responsible for the day-to-day monitoring of your opposition and critics and what that tracking process entails. The development and implementation of an opposition tracking operation is not trivial. The campaign should know what the opposition is doing, when they are doing it, and how they are doing it. The campaign plan is a mechanism to force the campaign to assign responsibility for this critical task.

8. Scheduling

The Field Operations portion of Section Four, Getting the Word Out, provides more information on Scheduling.

Any initiative campaign needs to schedule speakers for forums and important meetings with key members of the community and constituency groups. Depending on the political climate in your region, this may or may not require a full-time scheduler. This section of the plan focuses on the process for deciding where speakers should be scheduled. Often scheduling decisions are made in weekly meetings with the communications director, the field coordinator, and the manager. This part of the campaign plan should also clearly note who is responsible for saying yes or no. Scheduling is based on campaign priorities and is a proactive process. Your targeting efforts help determine which regions and demographic groups need the greatest degree of attention. Once you have made targeting determinations, you can make planning decisions on where and when the campaign needs to have speakers and then find the venues.

9. Earned Media / Press

The Media Operations portion of Section Four, Getting the Word Out, provides detailed information on Earned Media.

Earned Media refers to communications outreach that your campaign undertakes to spread your message without directly paying for the particular media employed. The most common form of earned media is mention in print or broadcast press. The earned media portion of your campaign plan is a high-level overview of the more extensive plan developed by your communications director or press liaison. Your plan should outline and identify which media to use most often, such as print press, live press conferences, and radio talk shows. Connect the earned media plan to the theme and message because the earned media operation deals primarily in delivering the campaign message and blunting the messages of your critics and opposition.

An effective earned media operation also coordinates its activities with the efforts of the paid media operation. Design the earned media outreach to reinforce the message and theme used in paid media efforts in order to increase the repetition of such messages and themes. Your detailed press plan outlines these kinds of activities; however, use examples in this section of the campaign plan to illustrate the type of communications operation you envision.

The press portion of your campaign plan should also identify strategies for working with the press, including editorial boards. Since not all staff members have been trained in message discipline, the press area should clearly define who has authority to speak on behalf of the campaign.

10. Voter Contact

Section Four, Getting the Word Out, provides detailed information on the forms of voter contact/paid media.

This section of the campaign plan should focus on the various forms of field operations for voter contact, including paid media (radio, TV, cable, billboard, print advertising, yard signs), persuasion mail, Internet (web and e mail programs), and field operations. Your field operations cover a lot of ground (no pun intended), including coalition building, field design, door-to-door and phone canvassing, leafleting, and Get Out the Vote (GOTV) efforts. How the campaign plans to use each of these forms of voter contact should be described in some detail.

11. The Calendar

See the Overall Campaign Timeline / Planning Calendar portion of this section for a discussion on the Calendar.

As a final piece to your campaign plan, develop a master calendar of all the planned campaign activities. This provides an immediate visual reference. At a glance you will know when there are likely to be resource strains on your campaign and what has to be done on any given day. Being able to look ahead in the campaign schedule allows for you to make appropriate changes to the plan as changing circumstances warrant.

What's Next in Campaign Preparation?

Now that we've outlined the campaign plan, section by section, we will describe what's next in campaign preparation. The next portions of this section focus on the remaining tasks for preparing for your initiative campaign. This includes gathering the funding and people necessary to be successful. As such, your campaign will build a budget, fundraise, build coalitions, and prepare a campaign calendar. These sections explain each of these tasks and provide guidelines and some examples of each area.

Budgeting

Creating a campaign budget is a fundamental and important part of the campaign planning process. The budget should be clearly defined and committed to writing. As the dynamics of the campaign change and cash flow increases or decreases, the budget will shift accordingly. Each adjustment should take into account the campaign's overall strategy. That is why you should draft the budget with utmost care and review it daily.

The budget does not have to be carved in stone; in fact, the beauty of a well-defined budget is its flexibility.

Components to Include

You can't have a campaign unless you have money. You can't effectively manage that money unless you have a budget. Your budget should include costs related to staff, equipment, resources, time, and travel.

You begin the budget drafting process by reviewing each component cost of the campaign from petty cash for coffee to anticipated long distance phone charges to media production costs. Prioritize the importance of each element and estimate its cost as carefully and accurately as possible. A wrong amount placed in the initial budget, such as underestimated media production costs, can significantly impact strategic and tactical moves later in the campaign. *An example of a budget worksheet that lists all the things you need to consider can be found at the end of this budgeting section. You will also find at the end of the section the budget percentages of an actual successful campaign.*

When developing the campaign budget, it is important to view the campaign from two different perspectives: timeframes and dollar amounts.

Organizing the campaign in terms of time generally involves separating your campaign into three categories: the kick off, the mid game, and the end game. If you organize the campaign in terms of dollar amounts, you give emphasis to accurately estimating dollar amounts and performing a cost-benefit analysis. You need to determine not only how much every item costs in actual expenditures, but also the value of the lost opportunities to complete other tasks and items. This process allows for a financial element to be added to the prioritization process. Some items may be desirable for the campaign but ultimately vetoed because of their even-higher opportunity costs.

Key points for crafting a budget:

- Categorize the budget by month during the early stages of the campaign, and by week during the final six weeks.
- Do not combine multiple items into a single large category. For instance, instead of a line item that reads Office Equipment, specify: Fax, Copier, or Computer.
- Greater detail in the budget leads to greater fiscal accountability.
- As a general guideline broadly allocate the budget as follows:

    60% to media including production and mail
    15% to fundraising expenses
    7% to administration
    8% to staff salaries
    5% to field operations
    5% to research

These guidelines will change depending on the size of the campaign and the media markets in the state. Sometimes the media percentage will be higher; sometimes staff and administration will be higher.

Fundraising vs. Budget

The successful 2004 **LexTran** tax proposal in **Kentucky** had a fundraising goal of $50,000. **Justin Dobbs**, the campaign manager determined what the campaign would need to fundraise based on how much media they expected to buy. They ended up raising $56,000 in a 2 ½-month period. The campaign used $10,000 to produce two commercials. They spent $30,000 on buying media time. Close to $6,000 went to a print shop for campaign literature; $7,000 to salaries; and the rest was spent on small items.

In practice you should assign three ranges of values (high, target, and low) to each budget item. This provides flexibility in the financial management of the campaign. At the low end, estimate the resources needed for the most minimal operation possible. At the high end, estimate resources for a fundraising operation that is maximally successful. The target or practical budget falls somewhere in the middle for most campaigns. By preparing high and low estimates, the campaign management is better able to draft the actual operating budget for the campaign and will also have resources to fall back on if funding comes in at higher or lower than anticipated levels.

The High Budget

Prepare the high budget first. This is the ideal scenario and is based on the premise that the campaign actually raises and spends at the maximum level of productivity for the fundraising department—in other words, if every fundraising event, mailing, Internet solicitation, etc. produces at a maximum level. The high-end budget assumes a heavy media buy, a strong community presence with plenty of voter contact, and an aggressive, professional fundraising operation.

The Target Budget

Formulate the target budget second. This is the realistic budget. When preparing this budget, assume the campaign raises 50-75% of its maximum fundraising targets, then plan accordingly. There are no frills in this budget but there are sufficient funds to reach voters through paid media.

The Low Budget

Prepare this budget last. It is the shoestring scenario. Assume only the bare essentials and try to find a way for the campaign to stay alive with minimal funds—and hope for the best.

Managing Resources

The importance of managing your resources and accurate record keeping cannot be overemphasized. No intelligent campaign decision can be made without knowing where the campaign finances stand relative to its budget. Track what comes in and what is expended and the campaign will know on a daily basis such crucial information as its cash on hand, its budgetary surplus or shortfall in each spending category, and its on-going ability to accomplish its goals.

Always keep receipts.

Financial reporting forms are tedious, time consuming, and detail oriented; however the campaign will have to provide detailed information concerning the who, what, where, when, and how of your expenditures. Accuracy is essential in the record keeping process, especially when it comes to providing the manager with daily cash flow charts. This is perhaps one of the most important components of the record keeping process. An inaccurate budget may force the manager to make strategic and tactical errors.

To ensure that errors in the reporting system do not occur, implement a system for the smooth operation of the budgeting process. The individual in charge of the budget should always be able to render an accurate accounting of the cash on hand, the accounts payable, and the accounts receivable. Break down the accounts payable and cash flow requirements into time frames (e.g., payments due in 5 days, 10 days, and 30 days). Accounts receivable should be based on projected income resulting from frank, open, and ultimately realistic discussions with the fundraising operation. The campaign fundraiser should constantly update the expected revenue figures. A daily cash report should be prepared for the manager and the appropriate consultants.

The campaign's financial situation is only as good as its system to track its finances. Pay attention to detail and don't sacrifice accuracy for expediency.

Big Spending

In 1996 in California alone, initiative campaign spending totaled $141,274,345. That is 33% more than the candidates for the California legislature spent getting elected. Several hundred candidates ran for 80 assembly and 20 state senate seats and spent $105.7 million. In fact, the initiative campaigns in this one state cost just a bit less than the $153 million the taxpayers gave President Clinton, Senator Dole, and Ross Perot for the 1996 presidential campaigns.

Broder, Democracy Derailed: Initiative Campaigns and the Power of Money[5]

Sample Campaign Budget Worksheet

	TOTAL	SPENT TO DATE	% OF BUDGET
STAFF			
Manager			
Communications Director			
Administrative Director			
Scheduler			
Field Operator			
Volunteer Coordinator			
Health Insurance			
FICA/Unemployment			
General Consultant			
SUBTOTAL			
ADMINISTRATIVE			
Rent and Utilities			
Phone			
Deposit			
Installation			
Equipment			
Service			

[5] David S. Broder, Democracy Derailed: Initiative Campaigns and the Power of Money (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 2000), 164.

	TOTAL	SPENT TO DATE	% OF BUDGET
Long Distance			
Cellular Service			
DSL			
Answering Service			
Computers			
Printer			
Hardware			
Software			
Modem			
Supplies			
Maintenance			
Paper			
Fax			
Fax Machine			
Fax Paper			
Broadcast Service			
Copier			
Copier			
Toner			
Paper			
General Expenses			
Volunteer Expenses			
Stationery			
Office Supplies			
Printing			
Postage			
Express Mail			
Furniture			
Licenses and Fees			
Penalties			
Parking			
TV/VCR/AUDIO			
Coffee/Water etc.			
SUBTOTAL			
LEGAL AND ACCOUNTING			
Attorney			
Accountant/CPA			
Legal Compliance			
Petition Fees			
SUBTOTAL			
TRAVEL			
Fundraising			
Staff			

	TOTAL	SPENT TO DATE	% OF BUDGET
Spokesperson			
Other			
SUBTOTAL			
MAIL PROGRAM			
Consultant Fee			
Direct or Persuasion Mail			
Design			
Production			
Printing			
Lists & Labels			
Postage			
Mail House			
Handout/Walk Pieces			
SUBTOTAL			
TV AND RADIO			
Consultant Fee			
Production Expense			
TV			
Radio			
TV Buy			
Radio Buy			
Print Ad Production			
Print Placement			
Photographer			
SUBTOTAL			
RESEARCH			
Consultant Fee			
Pre-Ballot Poll			
Post Certification Baseline Poll			
Trend Poll			
Track Poll			
Focus Group			
Issue Development			
Opposition Consultant Fee			
Opposition Research Expense			
SUBTOTAL			
FUNDRAISING			
Consultant Fee			
Fundraising Mail			
Printing			
Postage			

	TOTAL	SPENT TO DATE	% OF BUDGET
Lists			
Events			
Printing			
Catering			
Other			
Finance Committee Expense			
SUBTOTAL			
FIELD OPERATIONS			
Targeting			
Demographic info			
Visibility			
Yard Signs			
Posters			
Bumper Stickers			
Badges/Buttons			
Production Design Expense			
Phone Banks			
Supervisor			
Lists			
Calling Materials			
Follow-Up			
Phone Bank Vendor			
Volunteer Expenses			
GOTV Expenses			
Walk Program Expenses			
SUBTOTAL			
Equipment			
Clip Service			
Internet Service			
Domain Name			
News Subscriptions			
Conference Calls			
Website Expense			
Press Kit Expense			
SUBTOTAL			

Example of an Actual Budget and Spending Percentages

Category	Actual Spending % by Category	Budget % by Category
Management	7.45%	7.87%
Administration	3.39%	3.24%
Outside Consultants	2.50%	3.31%
Legal	1.11%	1.12%
Petition Drive	5.91%	5.98%
Polling and Focus Groups	2.72%	2.33%
PR, Earned Media, and Research	3.33%	3.29%
Fundraising	3.16%	3.12%
Field Operations	8.16%	8.01%
Minority Outreach	3.08%	2.76%
TV, Radio, and Print	46.69%	41.27%
Direct Mail	11.22%	14.93%
Internet Strategy	1.28%	2.77%
Totals	100%	100%

Fundraising

To wage a competitive, articulate, focused campaign, you should have adequate resources. At its core lies the need to ask as many people and organizations as humanly possible, as many times as possible, for as many dollars as they can or will possibly contribute to the campaign.

Fundraising is the engine that drives the campaign.

This section of the guide offers some insights into fundraising, including:

- Identifying Potential Investors
- Materials Needed to Win Support
- Soliciting Contributions
- Legalities

Identifying Potential Investors

In fundraising, you obviously want to maximize both the quantity and quality of your contributions. One great way to do this is to focus on increasing: (1) the quantity of low-level contributions (i.e., the number of people that contribute smaller amounts) and (2) the quality of high-level contributions (i.e., the amount of money that wealthy investors contribute). These sections provide some ideas on how to achieve both goals.

Seek assistance from people that you know both have money and where their individual interests lay. For example, ask someone knowledgeable about the members of a city's "society" circle to help you identify potential supporters and to make appropriate invitations. Also, recruit someone who has an extensive Rolodex of members in your area's "new economy" wealthy individuals. In the 2000 election cycle, several Internet millionaires single-handedly funded initiative campaigns.

Fundraising Strategy

In a campaign there are a few things that only the mayor or a recognized business leader can do and one of them is be in the fundraising role. The **Phoenix Transit 2000** initiative campaign discovered that the likely large supporters for the transit election were going to be utility companies, banks, and three or four key corporations. **Mayor Skip Rimsza** planned out a fundraising strategy and created tiers of supporters based on level of donation. He went to the largest, most respected and simply asked for money, and used their support to leverage other big and small donations. "These folks are giving you corporate dollars. They're going to their board of directors. They cannot be embarrassed by how the campaign is run or who contributed or how much they contributed and you communicate that back with them." Always keep the large contributors up-to-date about how the campaign is going and who else is contributing.

From 2003 Transit Initiatives Conference, Mayor Skip Rimsza, City of Phoenix

"Angel" Funders

"Angels" are those individuals or organizations who give campaigns large amounts of money.

Increasingly, groups promoting or opposing transportation initiatives and referenda find that they have to rely on one or more "angel" funders to become financially competitive in the race. If your transportation issue requires significant broadcast media buys, it is essential to seek out these angel funders and gain commitments from them before moving forward in the campaign.

Angel Funding for Media Buys

The **Denver FasTracks** campaign credits it 2004 success to a number of things that worked well. One thing they believe was critical was the purchase of early television time that was seen at a time when other campaigns were not yet on the air. The campaign bought TV early, negotiating the price in May and airing the ads in the summer. However, with multiple races—presidential, an open U.S. Senate seat, one open U.S. House seat-along with statewide initiative campaigns, the cost of television advertising began to skyrocket. In August, the television station, from which they had purchased heavily, offered them future spots at the same rate if they could be purchased immediately. At this time the campaign did not have the money needed for this purchase. A local businessman and community activist loaned the campaign the money so they could buy this post-primary time at the original rate. This afforded them the time to raise the money, and also be assured that the ads were bought. The ads ran during the Olympics, so the campaign had a lot of exposure during heavy television viewing.

One way great way to leverage additional funds is to request that your large donors make their donations in the form of challenges to other donors. It can be a great fundraising tool for your campaign to approach several hundred donors who have giving capacity at the $1,000 level, for example, with a match challenge of $50,000 from a single major donor. It allows donors at the lower funding levels to feel that their donations are being leveraged by the campaign in a way that truly maximizes the effect of their individual contributions.

Materials Needed to Win Support

Always keep a supply of materials on hand, especially the three most important handouts: the Prospectus, the One Pager, and the List of Current Funders.

Prospectus

At a minimum, the prospectus packet should include:

- **A copy of the initiative**.
- **A brief history of the initiative**. Describe possible consequences of the initiative, summarize what you know about the opposition's motives, tactics and strategy, and trace the progress of the campaign thus far.
- **A statement of viability**. Include relevant polling information to highlight why your initiative can win. Stress your achievements thus far and reiterate why it is important for this initiative to succeed; this demonstrates your issues' viability.
- **Newspaper articles**. Include copies of articles that give a favorable spin to the campaign or criticize the opposition. Newspapers with wide distribution are usually most impressive.
- **Organization Statement**. Describe the campaign organization and list staff and consultants. Be sure to include name and phone number of the fundraiser.
- **Finance committee**. Include the name of the finance chair and all of the members of the campaign's finance committee.

One Pager

Put together an attractive one pager to convey your message persuasively for the media, investment community, and voters. This information sheet informs potential funders about your initiative by describing/announcing your campaign, how people can support your issue, and how they can get in touch with you.

List of Current Funders

The best source of funds for a campaign is those who have already donated.

Funders committed to the issue have an investment to protect. Maintaining an accurate funder database containing the name, addresses, phone and fax numbers, and e-mail addresses of all the contributors, as well as an accurate record of their giving history. For public consumption, ask funders how they'd like to be listed.

Soliciting Contributions

The essential fundraising activity of any transportation-related initiative campaign is the solicitation of contributions. This can be accomplished in a number of ways, from telemarketing to black tie dinners to intimate breakfast meetings. Regardless of the method, it is essential to identify the goals and objectives of each solicitation before any move is made. This is the only way to ensure that valuable time is not wasted and critical dollars are not lost.

Whether through writing a letter or planning a large event, creativity in fundraising is key. Tact, persistence, and an appropriate thank you are also central to success.

To help you evaluate the most appropriate method(s) of solicitation for your particular campaign, this section outlines primary methods, including:

- Personal Solicitations
- Approaching Organizations

Always include a program for thanking contributors promptly. Any individual who donates to the campaign, whether they give five dollars or five thousand dollars, should receive a formal thank you. The most appropriate "thank you" might be a telephone call, an e-mail, or a letter. Regardless of the method, ensure that it becomes a routine part of the fundraising operation.

Personal Solicitations of Individuals

Direct, face-to-face solicitation is the most effective method for raising significant contributions from large donors. The person most familiar with the prospect is usually the best choice for making the request. Alternatively, if no relationship exists, a professional peer is a good choice. Here are some items to consider in approaching a potential "large donor.

- **Research**. Understanding the prospect's background and history of giving is central to the success of a high-dollar donor program. Sharing portions of the campaign plan and budget with the high-dollar donor prospect can be an effective tool.

- **Materials**. Consider developing a specialized version of the fundraising prospectus that specifically meets the needs of the donor you are approaching. For example, you could describe how the improved transportation that results from the passage of the initiative will benefit the donor's business. However, be sure the donor is solidly on your side before sharing too much information about the campaign and its strategies.

- **Purpose**. After targeting individuals for specific dollar amounts, you may want to identify a specific purpose for their money, such as buying one 30-second television spot on the evening news. This provides the prospect with a tangible product—they can actually see what they are buying.

- **Grow the Pie**. High-dollar donors should themselves be viewed as sources of contacts for additional contributions. These individuals should be asked to solicit their contacts, thus expanding the pool of potential donors.

- **Follow-up**. Once you receive the pledge, it is essential that you follow-up immediately with the donor, whether in a face-to-face meeting, an e-mail, or in a telephone call. Before the close of business on the day the pledge is received, the donor should receive a thank you from the campaign, a personalized thank you from the person(s) who actually conducted the solicitation and means for delivery of the donation (a return envelope, directions how to make the donation by credit card, wiring instructions, etc.). Not immediately following-up dramatically decreases your ability to convert the pledge into a donation. Also, donors tend to like the level of respect that immediate attention shows them and may often result in donations that exceed the pledge amount. At a face-to-face meeting, it is best to leave the meeting with the contribution in hand. If this is not possible, you should agree on a date when the campaign can expect to receive the donation.

Remember, personal solicitations require time and knowledge. Know your prospect, the issue, and the dollar amount needed. Above all, be tactful and persuasive. Personal financial solicitations should be dovetailed with requests for political support. There will be donors that can provide volunteers, equipment, space, etc. Rather than having several staff members make multiple requests of one donor, there should be coordination between the fundraiser, campaign manager, and field director in this effort.

Successful Fundraising

A **Bend, Oregon**, proposal to establish an independent transit district had a moderate fundraising goal, which was achieved by grant assistance and by individual donations. The campaign received a $4,000 grant from the **American Public Transit Association**. The total of $15K was raised and paid for the campaign manager, a PR person, and for direct mail. Radio spots were ready to go, but the City Council ultimately opted against it. Mike Reilly, the campaign chair, made fundraising calls to people likely to donate. Most donations received were between $500 and $2500. Additionally, a member of the city council who was running unopposed sent a letter to his supporters asking them to donate to the initiative rather than his campaign. Even with a great fundraising effort, the proposal failed 53%-41%.

Approaching Organizations

Organizations are an important source of financial support for transportation-related initiative campaigns. Some steps to consider in approaching organizations are outlined below:

- **Like-Minded Groups**. Identify like-minded and sympathetic groups and ask them for either direct contributions or solicit their membership.

- **Pre-Meeting Materials**. Prior to the meeting send a fundraising prospectus to the political director. Ideally, the campaign manager, fundraiser, and finance chair should attend the meeting.

- **Research**. As with individuals, it is essential that you understand something about the organization you are approaching. Know what aspects of the transit initiative are most likely to interest them, particularly in terms of their mission and the interests of their membership. Polling numbers may also play a major role in a group's decision to get involved with an issue. Hence, it is wise to have some survey research completed before approaching them. If the budget does not allow for this, give the organization an estimate as to when some research might be completed (exact dates are not necessary).

- **Follow-Up**. As with individuals, follow-up with organizational funders is crucial to actually receiving a donation. They need to be apprised of changes in polling numbers and any significant changes in financial figures. Treat these groups as you would any other high-dollar donor. They have numerous investment options and need to be persuaded that your initiative is worth their time, effort, and money.

A Note on Tax Exempt Organizations

An increasingly important source of funding for initiative campaigns are groups that have traditionally shied away from the electoral process. Most prominently, nonprofit, tax-exempt organizations are slowly beginning to realize that they can become involved in various ways and at various levels of the funding structure of initiative campaigns without fear of losing their tax-exempt status.

In addition to financially supporting aspects of your campaign, these groups can play an important role in broadly educating the public about your issue and can help set the tone for the debate on the actual initiative.

NOTE: THIS AREA REQUIRES EXTREME DILIGENCE. CONSULTATION WITH EXPERTS IN TAX STATUS AND TAX-EXEMPT ORGANIZATIONS IS ADVISABLE.

Excellent resources in this area are the many publications of the Alliance for Justice (**www.afj.org**) and the Ballot Initiative Strategy Center **(www.ballot.org)**. These groups have taken on the task of convincing nonprofit groups that they can be involved in the issue campaign process and demonstrating to them and their funders the ways to do so and still stay within the law.

Events

No event, whether large or small, should cost more than 15% of its projected income.

Events are a common source of campaign contributions. Preparation of invitation lists, production, mailing, ticket sales, publicity, staff time, follow-up, and the costs of the event itself should be considered in this figure. Events often have objectives beyond raising money, they can also serve to raise the public profile of the issue or generate enthusiasm among supporters.

The reason for fundraising events is to add spendable money to the campaign's voter contact and media budgets. If this is not the goal and outcome of the event, don't do it.

Whenever possible, seek to have others underwrite all of the expenses associated with conducting a fundraising event. Since issue campaigns are not restricted to the contribution limits that most often apply to candidate races, many fundraisers neglect to seek out donors to pay all the costs of the event.

Events generally fall into two broad categories: low dollar and high dollar. Whether a carwash or a champagne and caviar reception, every event should be meticulously planned and executed. Here are some recommendations for creating successful events.

Low-Dollar Events

Creativity is the key to a successful low-dollar event. Though house parties, auctions, raffles, cocktail parties, and coffees are typical low-cost fundraising events, don't be afraid to step into new territory. Carwashes, bake sales, garage sales, and similar opportunities are excellent ways to generate enthusiasm and support. These types of activities are easy to organize and allow campaign supporters to target neighbors, friends, family members, and co-workers for contributions in a fun setting. The low overhead for these events coupled with the ease in which they can be organized makes them a valuable source of campaign funds, provided the amount of paid staff time required is minimal.

Depending on the nature of the event and whether an individual or the campaign actually hosts it, the campaign should prepare an information kit for the host. This kit outlines the process for the host and includes a sample invitation; a brief description of the campaign and its goals; instructions on how to ask for contributions; and the legal requirements (contribution reporting, expenditure and in-kind reporting).

Always remember that the purpose of low-dollar events is different from that of high-dollar ones. Low-dollar events allow supporters to get involved with the campaign without spending large sums of money. For many, this is the best way to pique and maintain their interest.

High-Dollar Events

Black-tie dinners and formal dances are the types of events for attracting medium and high-level donors. Because of the time and expense involved, it is advisable to set up a special committee to host these events. The committee should consist of a chair, usually a finance committee member, and a working group that is committed to selling and/or purchasing a certain number of tickets. An honorary committee of high-profile individuals and elected officials is also frequently used to attract participants.

Provide committee members with names to solicit. They should also use their personal lists. They should make follow-up phone calls to their lists after the invitations have been mailed. An organized follow-up effort significantly increases the success of the event.

In order to draw large numbers of people to a high-dollar event, it is frequently necessary to recruit a "headliner" for the event. Often these are well-known figures from the political or entertainment fields. Many times, you have to pay the costs associated with bringing the headliner to the site of the event. You need to perform a cost-benefit analysis to determine whether the costs associated with getting the headliner for the event are going to result in sufficiently high-ticket interest and sales.

Guidelines for Event Fundraising

To assist in coordinating your events, here are a few general rules:

1. Be creative. People generally attend events to see and be seen. A creative concept, theme, well-known entertainer, or guest speaker will help draw donors to the event.

2. Keep expenses low, including allocation of extremely scarce staff time. An event should not cost more than 15% of its projected income.

3. Set realistic goals for the event. If the goal is reasonable it can usually be achieved.

4. Create a detailed timeline for the event far in advance of the actual date.

5. Set the price according to the giving level of the targeted contributors.

6. Do not distribute tickets before they have been purchased. In other words, have that check in your hand before you put the ticket in theirs!

7. Use numbered tickets to track payment.

8. Ask individuals to donate items such as food, liquor, and advertising costs. Ensure these donations are properly recorded as in-kind contributions.

9. Don't let anyone in without paying. If you let one person in, you will end up letting twenty in without paying. Every dollar counts and every drink costs the campaign. Ensure that all data necessary for legal reporting requirements is obtained for each ticket sold.

10. Have fun!

Direct Mail

Direct mail solicitations can be an effective method of fundraising.

The costs associated with direct mail and the potential benefits should be carefully considered before a program is undertaken. The return percentages for mail solicitation can be quite low. Return percentages rarely rise above 7-10%. A more detailed discussion on the various aspects of direct mail fundraising is described below.

The Mailing List

The single most important factor in a successful direct mail effort is the quality of the mailing lists. The better the list, the greater your likelihood of success. The fundraising list should contain the name, address, phone and fax numbers, and e mail address of every contributor or prospect the campaign can identify. Assembling accurate, inclusive, and current fundraising lists is a time-consuming and tedious process. All members of the team and the finance committee members should all participate in the process in addition to providing their personal solicitation lists. Potential available lists for your initiative campaign might include:

- Proven contributors to candidates supportive of the campaign initiative issue.
- Contributors to and membership lists of supportive groups and organizations.
- Contributors to ideologically compatible groups (i.e., environmental, civil rights, women's, and labor organizations).

Demographically targeted lists can also be rented from companies specializing in fundraising. These can be used for one-time solicitations to build a donor base, but should be used sparingly, if at all, because of the high cost of obtaining these lists. Return rates from "cold lists" like this rarely exceed 1-2%. Once you develop the list of known contributors and prospects, they should be categorized according to potential contribution levels—high, medium, and low.

The Letter

The second most important factor in any direct mail effort is the letter itself.

The letter should contain a strong ideological message, written to appeal to the target audience. It does not necessarily have to be a *letter*—you could use a newsletter or a one pager as a fundraising vehicle. While the message in a solicitation to environmental activists is different than in a mailing that targets the business community, the fundamental principles are the same.

The letter should:

- Look and sound personal.
- Provide a compelling reason for the prospect to support the issue.
- Provide a reason for the prospect to donate and repeatedly ask for a donation.
- Be written with the understanding that it will be skimmed by the prospect.
- Conclude with a postscript that reiterates the appeal.
- Look professional, but needn't be expensively produced in three colors with monogrammed signatures.
- Include a response card and reply envelope. A response card is perhaps the most critical element of the letter and consist of the campaign's telephone number, address, contact person, legal disclaimers, check-writing instructions, and credit card number blanks (or alternate payment methods, like the website address of the campaign's online contribution page). Care should be taken with the design of the response card because it is often all the prospect keeps when deciding whether to contribute.

Test Mailings

If a large mailing (5,000-10,000 or more) is planned, perform a pre-test to gauge whether the return rate is worth the expense. Such a test would involve an initial mailing to between 10-20% of the list. If a 1-3% return is seen on the test run, it is worthwhile to mail to the entire list. Of course, when deciding whether to do a pre-test, time and money are always the initial determinants. You can also use a test to send mailings with two different themes or different graphic layouts to a sample of the larger list to determine the most effective delivery vehicle.

Re-solicitation

The best source of funds for a campaign is those who have already donated. Donors committed to your issue have an investment to protect. An effective re-solicitation requires maintaining an accurate donor database.

While an updated list plays a crucial role in the re-solicitation process, knowing exactly when to re-solicit becomes more important in the art of fundraising. As a general rule, contributors should be re-solicited every three months. In the final six to eight weeks of the campaign, it is not uncommon to ask for donations more frequently. This is a general rule and you should continually assess the political climate, timing of the election, and survey research. A significant change in polling numbers merits a phone call or second letter. Similarly, an acknowledgement that the campaign will hit the airwaves in a week or two also brings in additional dollars. A big sponsor or major endorsement also affects contributors' willingness to donate. Take these factors into account when re-soliciting your donors.

Telemarketing

Telephone solicitation can be an effective fundraising method, if and only if well-trained and highly supervised volunteers do it. Telemarketing can be especially useful in reaching small and medium contributors. A phone bank also sends a message to the your critics and opposition. It demonstrates you have an organization and a strong base of volunteers. A phone bank does require time, patience, an appropriate site, and sensible script. Without these, the effort may prove fruitless. With them, volunteers may become energized and the dollars may start rolling in—at least in small amounts.

Internet Fundraising

The overall goals for your Internet fundraising efforts should be ease and security for the contributor. Since the contributor provides a credit card number or bank transfer authorization under this type of fundraising, it is critical that you demonstrate the highest levels of security and privacy.

More and more campaigns are relying on the Internet to play a major role in fundraising efforts.

Nearly all campaign websites have a page dedicated to fundraising. Most campaigns contract with a private vendor to process credit card and electronic transfers, and the campaign donation page has a blind link to the processing company's site. Strive to make the process as simple and straightforward as possible. If your donation page is too complicated or time-consuming, it will drive away potential donors.

It is also important to let people know that they can contribute online. Include your website address on all of your campaign communications. All fundraising communications should note that contributions can be made online. Online operations are an excellent source of serial contributions. You can make it simple for donors to give a small amount (or hopefully, a not-so-small amount) every month by providing a check-off box allowing the campaign to pull the same amount from the credit card every month. These programs are often publicized in a special way and the donors given some sort of special recognition by agreeing to provide regular financial support.

E-mail solicitations are similar to direct mail appeals, but with added features. High-speed connectivity and sophisticated e mail programs allow you to include photographs, sound, or streaming video recordings within the body of the e-mail solicitation. In this way, you are able to send out "talking" requests for money inexpensively. It is valuable to explore and become aware of the various technological options available to your campaign in terms of e-mail fundraising.

Legalities

The fundraising operation will be dealing with large sums of money. State and federal laws require detailed records for all campaign contributions and expenditures. The rules and regulations regarding solicitation of funds, cash contributions, and reporting requirements vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Additionally, some organization types (e.g., trade associations and trade unions) operate under different sets of laws and rules than do issue-advocacy or political organizations.

It is imperative that the campaign treasurer and/or fundraiser obtain a copy of all applicable laws. These are available from the local or state election authority, which also provides compliance instructions and required forms.

A good resource is the 2002 publication, *The Initiative and Referendum Process in the United Status—a Primer*, from the Initiative and Referendum Institute. The Primer can be found at the IRI's website (www.iandrinstitute.org/) and on this guide's Companion CD.

Design and maintain an accurate record keeping system. Customized computer programs, as well as off-the-shelf financial planning software, are readily available to help manage campaign finances. Obtain services of a volunteer accountant in order to ensure compliance. Any improprieties involving campaign finances can result in both political and legal disaster.

Building Coalitions: Gathering the People

Coalitions represent a range of community interests that are more likely to influence policy makers, attract media attention, and have an impact on funding decisions, particularly for public transportation because transit systems work through an intergovernmental partnership of federal, state, and local support. Because your operation depends on mobilizing and motivating many people to persuade and enlist greater numbers of people to vote for your issue, it is perhaps the most labor intensive and organizationally demanding function of the campaign. Building coalitions and contacting voters one-on-one requires time, patience, and strong leadership. A good reference for building and using coalitions is the Public Transportation Partnership for Tomorrow (PT)2 *Local Coalition Workbook: A Guide to Building Grassroots Support for Public Transportation* (www.apta.com/research/info/online/documents/coalitions.pdf).

Identifying Potential Partners

The key to building a successful coalition is to represent a broad range of interests.

Coalitions are based on groups and organizations that share common goals. Use your developed relationships with organizations that share an interest in public transportation. The CFTE website (www.cfte.org/state/) has a listing of advocacy groups, rail passenger groups, state departments of transportation, and transit agencies for each state. Coalition partners can come from many different areas, such as:

- All transportation leadership in the community, including agency heads, providers of specialized services, transportation-related business leaders.
- Citizen transit groups.
- Transportation workers' unions and interests.
- Local businesses, including the chamber of commerce, real estate agents, and developers.
- Civic and community organizations.
- Local politicians.
- Citizens and homeowners in affected communities.
- Special interest groups, including local chapters of environmental and health organizations.
- Economic development organizations.
- Human service agencies.
- Advocacy organizations for people with disabilities.
- Senior citizens' groups.
- Contractors.
- Financial institutions.

Coalition Support and Outreach

The 2004 **FasTracks** campaign in **Denver** garnered enormous support from many state and local organizations and gathered as many endorsements as possible. One coalition member, **Environment Colorado**, released a timely report in support of the initiative that outlined how the FasTracks proposal would spur both economic and transit-oriented development throughout the Denver metropolitan area. The report, *Creating Livable Communities Through Transit*, is available at the Environment Colorado website (www.environmentcolorado.org/reports/CreatingLivableCommunities.pdf).

In addition, the **FasTracks** campaign developed a **Businesses on Board** plan to encourage businesses to get involved with field activities. They worked hard to gather endorsements from local government leaders and the business community. They had the support of all 31 metro mayors and over 500 businesses and community members. They also had the endorsements of every major newspaper in the region-except one.

If you are looking for ideas on the types of organizations to seek support from for your campaign, look at the complete list of supporters, big and small, for the Denver FasTracks campaign, available on the Companion CD to this guide.

Importance of Diversity

A commitment to building coalitions and working with a variety of diverse groups is critical to the success of any initiative campaign. Attempts to broaden your base of support should be a primary objective when staging any campaign event or activity, whether a press conference or a rally. Use your contacts with the public to increase your base of support.

To do this, always be aware of the political climate and the biases of various organizations and alliances. Your field operation should concentrate its efforts on reaching those who can be persuaded and convincing them that joining your campaign benefits their cause.

Coalitions in Action

Multiple local organizations helped successfully pass the 2004 **LexTran** tax proposal referendum. The strongest and most active was the organization, **Kentuckian's for the Commonwealth**. The University of Kentucky and the **Democratic Party** also assisted the campaign by performing **education outreach**. These groups went to bus stations and talked to people, went door-to-door, and held a rally for the campaign that got nice press coverage. The University held a rally similar to MTV's Rock the Vote, called Ballot Bash, where they had bands and local candidates. The University also sent out a $30,000 mailing piece. The Democratic Party put LexTran door hangers in their information packets and had their volunteers distribute them. A rally set up by Kentuckians for the Commonwealth coincided with the kickoff of the media campaign and it was the top story on several newscasts. Kentuckians for the Commonwealth also put in an estimated 50-75 hours of volunteer time.

Approach Others

It is important to identify organizations most likely to affiliate with your transit initiative. As you begin to build your coalitions, keep in mind that the purpose of developing and maintaining these relationships is to:

- Demonstrate to the public and the press that your position has a broad base of support.
- Expand beyond your "natural" political base.
- Fully develop potential funding sources.
- Emphasize the potential downside for specific groups if they do not get involved.
- Convince voters that it is in their best interest to vote for or against the initiative (depending on your position on the issue).
- Create an identity around the issue so voters can identify with your position.

Know whom you are pursuing and why you are pursuing them.

If your attempts at bringing particular groups to the coalition of supporters do not meet several of these objectives, then perhaps you should reconsider why you are pursuing that organization. Every group and organization you pursue does not necessarily need to meet all the objectives, but having them in your coalition should further your agenda, not deter it.

Using Your Coalition Team

Once you have recruited an organization and it has endorsed your campaign, you should then aggressively seek its direct involvement in the campaign. Participation may range from a small donation to supplying volunteers for a phone bank. Assess the capability of each organization before you ask them to perform any task. A large organization might be willing to do more for your initiative campaign than you initially have predicted. Always ask for the maximum and expect the minimum. Here are a few suggested tasks for coalition members to carry out (note that not every organization will to do each of these projects):

- Send mail and e mail communications to its members endorsing the campaign and provide regular updates on campaign happenings.
- Provide the campaign with a list of members for fundraising purposes.
- Ask its members to volunteer for the campaign.
- Use its name on the campaign's letterhead and in advertising.
- Allow its leadership to speak to members of similar organizations and garner their support. It is much more effective to have a leader of a business organization talk to other business organizations than to have a civil liberties lawyer talk to a business organization.
- Donate money directly or contact the industry or organization's PAC to solicit a donation.
- Initiate a letters to the editor campaign.
- Mobilize its forces to vote on Election Day.

Most Innovative Coalition Building

Miami-Dade reached out to citizens in an intriguing and innovative way with its **Citizens' Independent Transportation Trust** (CITT), a 15-member watchdog body that oversees implementation of the one-half percent transportation surtax to ensure compliance with the **People's Transportation Plan**. The **CITT** ensures that community interests are represented. They have control over and input in the transportation planning process. In 2002, they amended the People's Transportation Plan to authorize the purchase of 12 new Metromover cars. These citizens are true partners in the coalition.

Miami-Dade's outstanding website (**trafficrelief.com**) helps keep this coalition strong with its CITT meeting schedules, agendas, minutes, and member biographies, as well as information on how members are selected. Planned additions to the website will provide an interactive application to allow residents to find out about local transportation projects by clicking on their neighborhood.

Keeping Your Coalition Team Interested

Above all, thank and recognize your coalition members.

One way to maintain the support and interest of your coalition members is to update them regularly. This helps supporters to feel part of the team and ensures that they will not forget about the issue. Keep them informed on the progress and activities of the initiative campaign. Newsletters, update memos, e-mails, and personal contact are all great ways to accomplish this.

Campaigns have a tendency to recruit and then neglect supporters. Don't make this mistake. Issue campaigns are often controversial. Recognize that many of your supporters will feel as though they are putting themselves and their organizational integrity at risk by supporting your issue. They need to know their effort is worth the risk.

If you build a wide and extensive issue coalition, you will dramatically broaden the base from which you can rely for political support and funding. Most importantly, a broad-based coalition validates the legitimacy and popularity of your cause. It reinforces the fact that your issue is "mainstream." Coalitions are the key to your field operation and, to a large degree, your success or failure on Election Day.

Overall Campaign Timeline / Planning Calendar

As a final piece to your campaign plan, develop a master calendar of all the planned campaign activities. This gives you an immediate visual reference. At a glance you will know when there are likely to be resource strains on your campaign and what has to be done on any given day. Being able to look ahead in the campaign schedule allows for you to make appropriate changes to the plan as changing circumstances warrant. Free downloadable calendar templates are available at www.printable-calendar.com.

Campaign Segment

As you plan the campaign activities, separate the campaign into three distinct time periods: the kickoff, mid-game, and endgame. Attach specific goals to each segment.

- **The kickoff period is your start-up time**. It focuses on the beginning of the campaign. Items such as message development, staff recruitment, and database building should all be considered during this time frame.

- **The mid-game is the "build-up" stage.** It includes those activities and programs that you need to accomplish to ensure success in the last few weeks of the campaign, such as putting together a large statewide field operation and solidifying relationships with the press. The mid-game allows you to work out any "kinks" in your operation before the crucial and final eight weeks of the campaign.

- **The endgame generally begins when your paid media efforts begin**. The bulk of your funds are spent during this time. Campaign activity is also most intense in these closing weeks of the campaign.

As you set your goals for each of these segments, be sure to focus on the political, organizational, and financial realities of your campaign. Your successes and failures in the early phases of the campaign will better allow you to "tweak" your plan with more realistic objectives and programs for the later phases of the campaign. This is particularly true with the fundraising and budgeting elements of the plan, which by their very nature, are in constant flux.

Reverse Timeline

A reverse timeline is a helpful technique for beginning your schedule planning process. Look backward from Election Day and ask the question, "What do I absolutely need to have done on Election Day?"

Ask the same question for each preceding day and week of the campaign period. Examine every activity on how it contributes to victory. In this sense, it is both practical and extremely helpful. One effective way to begin this process is to imagine the article you would like to see written about the campaign the day after an election victory. Such an article spells out exactly how you built and executed a winning campaign. To help you focus on the basics, think about the items that would make up such a newspaper article:

- Who voted yes on your initiative? What was the total number of yes votes?
- What were counties where your issue won or lost?
- What messages did both sides of the issue employ?
- Where did each side found its base of support?
- When critical aspects of the campaign were developed?"
- Why did each side pursue the strategy that it did in the campaign?
- How much did the campaign of each side cost?

You will need to have performed targeting and have polling data before you can write the article. Once you have thought about this information, it becomes clearer where you need to focus your time and energy. If you have little chance of winning in County X, but a strong chance of winning in County Y, then you should direct your efforts accordingly.

Denver's Pre-Campaign Planning Timeline

Two to Three Years Before

Formed Transit Advocacy Group, Built Coalition
- Expanded Transit Alliance, added 9 members
- Formed Transit Alliance Action Fund
- Raised $70K for lobbying effort
- Built coalition of 45 groups

Did Transit Planning
- Released first draft of FasTracks Plan in 2001
- Continued corridor planning process

Reformed, Built Agency, and Transit Image

Demonstrated Transit Success
- RTD opened two more LRT lines on time and on budget, exceeding ridership projections

Demonstrated Traffic Crisis
- Denver was the third most congested city in country

One to Two Years Before

Began Finalizing the Transit Plan
- RTD sent FasTracks Plan to MPO for review in November 2003

Established Exploratory/Campaign Committee
- Alliance facilitated convening citizens for FasTracks success, began meeting May 2003

Voter Research to Assess Viability, Issues, Messages

Engaged Stakeholders, Continued Coalition Building

Continued Public Education

Denver's Pre-Campaign Planning Timeline

Two to Three Years Before

One to Two Years Before

Voter Research to Identify Key Message/Issues and Test Package Elements

- Alliance raised $30K for polling
- Showed 78% support for tax increase for transit

Public Education

- Alliance reached over 25,000 people in last two years
- Collected 21,000 postcards in support of transit, identified 300 new potential volunteers
- Held training workshops for activists
- Sent newsletters to community leaders and volunteers
- Website received 2,000 visits each month

Hosted Leadership Forums on Key Transit Issues

From 2003 Transit Initiatives Conference, Kelly Nordini, Transit Alliance, Denver

Additional Resources

Organization	Item	Website
Peter J. Haas, Ph.D. Mineta Transportation Institute	*Why Campaigns for Local Transportation. Funding Initiatives Succeed or Fail*	http://transweb.sjsu.edu/CoalitionFinal.htm
The Center for Transportation Excellence	*Responding to Critics section*	www.cfte.org/critics
Ridder/Braden, Inc.	Ridder/Braden Manual For Initiative Campaigns	Companion CD
American Public Transportation Association	Research	www.apta.com/research/
Public Transportation Partnership for Tomorrow (PT)2	Research	www.publictransportation.org
Surface Transportation Policy Project	Research	www.transact.org/

Additional Resources

Organization	Item	Website
The Center for Transportation Excellence	News	www.cfte.org/news/
Ballot Initiative Strategy Center	Research	www.ballot.org/
Friends of Transit	Links	www.friendsoftransit.org/links.asp
The Transit Alliance	Issues	www.transitalliance.org/fr_issues.htm
Transport Policy Yahoo Group	Group Discussion	http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/transport-policy/
	Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature	
LexisNexis	News Database	www.lexis.com
Dialog	News Database	www.dialog.com
TransitNews.net	Transportation-Related News	www.TransitNews.net
Google	Internet Research	www.google.com under the "News" tab
Alliance for Justice	Tax-Exempt Information	www.afj.org
Initiative and Referendum Institute	*The Initiative and Referendum Process in the United Status--a Primer*	www.iandrinstitute.org/
Public Transportation Partnership for Tomorrow (PT)2	*Local Coalition Workbook: A Guide to Building Grassroots Support for Public Transportation*	www.apta.com/research/info/online/documents/coalitions.pdf
Center for Transportation Excellence	List of groups for each state	www.cfte.org/state/
Environment Colorado	*Creating Livable Communities Through Transit*	www.environmentcolorado.org/reports/CreatingLivableCommunities.pdf
Miami-Dade	CITT Coalition information	trafficrelief.com
Printable-Calendar.com	Free downloadable calendar templates	www.printable-calendar.com

You can link to these resources on the accompanying CD.

Section Four:

Getting the Word Out - Marketing and Media Strategies that Work

Once you have your information, plan, funds and people in place, it is time to start getting the word out. Elections are about contrasts, choices, and change. When voters are deciding whether to vote yes or no on an initiative, they want to know why they should vote that way. They need to be provided with a clear choice and a definite contrast. Without these, the motivation to go out and vote, and to cast a vote for your initiative is greatly lessened.

Your theme governs your campaign. It is the basis for taking your initiative to the public and to the media. Your theme and messages should always work to strengthen your coalition. Before you commit to a theme and messages, analyze your research and consult with your strategic team. Always remember the implementation of a consistent, compelling, straightforward and honest theme requires discipline and repetition. Once is never enough. Get the word out again and again and again. Your marketing plan is the tool used to develop the strategy for working with media, using volunteers and paid staff, and using the Internet to advance your campaign.

This section provides guidelines on:

- Strategy and Tactics
- Creating a Marketing Plan
- Theme and Message Development: Find a Message That Works and Stick to It
- Scheduling
- Working with the Media
- Developing an Internet Strategy
- Field Operations-Reaching Out to the Community

Strategy and Tactics

Your campaign strategy is based on who will vote for you and why will they vote for you. To determine who will likely vote for you requires looking at the reasons why these individuals support your transit initiative. This necessitates developing a cohesive, consistent message. As noted in the previous section on Research, your targeting, projections, opposition research, and baseline polling all provide the basis for defining your message.

Remember, strategy involves answering the "who" and "why" questions, not the "how" and "when" questions. These are the tactical elements of the planning process. The tactics are used to implement the strategy rather than to define it.

After you define your strategy, identify the tactics needed to carry out that strategy. That is the purpose of the remainder of the campaign plan. Your tactics depend largely on your budget. Unfortunately, most initiative campaigns do not have extensive or excessive resources—they have a limited budget and, consequently, every tactical move has to be plotted with utmost care.

Here are a few tips to remember when waging a battle with limited resources:

- Reserve the bulk of your financial resources until the time when voters are making their voting decisions on your issue. Voter decision making takes place late in the process. In states that have mail ballots, voter decision making generally occurs about the time these ballots are first mailed out by the election officer, which is usually about 30 days prior to the election. This is a very short time to communicate with your target voters.

- Dominate one medium. Don't spread your resources around numerous forms of voter contact. In other words, don't do a little of this and a little of that. Use your money to dominate at least one message delivery vehicle.
- Refine your target audience so that it receives frequent communication "hits." It is better to have a small target group of persuadable voters receive three pieces of mail than to have a large group that includes non-persuadable voters receive only one. Repetition is crucial in conveying your campaign message.
- Look for activities that effectively create visibility and press. Don't spend limited resources trying to create press coverage unless you have a legitimate chance of receiving such coverage.
- Define the opposition before they are able to define themselves. This is called "Elephant Hunting." In other words, it is easier to kill an elephant when it is standing still than when it is charging.

Effective Use of Press Conference Location

In 2004, the Austin, Texas, Capitol Metro Authority (CMA) came back with a much better plan for commuter rail after losing a referendum for light rail in 2000. Although light rail was a more popular concept than commuter rail, the commuter project was far better formulated, with specifics regarding exact lines, stops, benefits, and impact. The CMA steering committee held their one major press conference to show the range of support for the project. Polling had shown that the best message was "existing tracks," so the press conference was actually held on existing tracks. TV coverage was shot just the way the campaign wanted, so even if the message had not been stated, it was subliminal. The commuter rail won 62%—higher than last poll.

Creating a Marketing Plan

The marketing plan subsection of your campaign plan defines your theme and messages, how messages will be delivered, to whom messages will be delivered, when messages will be delivered, and what resources will be necessary to deliver the messages.

Components

Components of the marketing plan include theme and message development; a media plan for paid and earned media; field operations; and Internet strategy. Since your theme captures the reason(s) that voters should cast their ballot in your favor, you should first have an accurate idea what those reasons are. The development of your campaign theme and the messages that filter out of it should be done after you have completed a baseline poll and a good portion of your opposition research.

Implementation Strategies

How you present your issue to the public is a crucial part of your strategic agenda. The delivery of your message(s) should be disciplined and repetitious. Repetition is the key to effectively delivering your message and persuade the voters. They want to know why they should vote for your issue. It is up to you to provide them with this information.

Clear every campaign communication through the communications director and the campaign manager. Your message is too important to ignore or leave in the hands of a staff member whose primary focus is not in this area. Every time you send a message to the public, or media, whether in a television ad or through a volunteer phone bank, take the necessary steps to ensure that it reinforces the theme and helps strengthen and build your coalition.

All campaign literature, commercials, or letters should reiterate and reinforce your campaign theme. Tailor the message to your audience. When you decide how, when, and where to deliver your message(s), you need to keep six key factors in mind:

- What you are saying about your initiative.
- What you are saying about your critics.
- What you are saying about the particular issue at hand.
- What your critics say about your campaign initiative.
- What your critics say about the particular issue at hand.
- What the opinion leaders and media will say.

Always take these factors in account before you send any message to the media or to the public, no matter how supportive of your issue they may be. To create a clear, compelling contrast between your position and that of your critics, know what your critics say about the issue and how that fits with their agendas and your agenda.

Proactively Fight Your Critics with Marketing

When an opponent mailed out 125,000 "against" pieces, the 2004 **Capitol Metro Authority** campaign for a commuter rail sprang into action. The small, in-house volunteer phone bank was able to determine the targeted area for the "against" mail pieces and the campaign was able to send their mail pieces to the same targeted voters. Even though the phone banks were not tailored to fight the opposition they were able to provide evidence of support and find out what voters in different neighborhoods thought about the issue.

Theme and Message Development: Find a Message That Works and Stick to It

For your transit initiative to succeed, have a clearly defined theme and an understanding of how, when, and where to use which messages in dealing with the public and the media.

The driving force behind any successful initiative campaign is a clear, concise theme. The theme is the single idea that provides definition and purpose to your issue. It is the single, central idea underlying every aspect of campaign communication and is the overarching, governing rationale why people should vote for your issue. Though some campaign professionals use the term "message" to refer to all campaign communications including the theme, this guide does not use "theme" and "message" interchangeably. The terms are closely related and interdependent and should stem from the campaign theme. They are the ways you frame your position and agenda. The goal of each message is to present a clear, cohesive, and compelling image of your campaign position to the public and media.

Finish the Freeways!

In an effort to divert attention away from the light rail component of their proposal, the Yes on 400 campaign in Phoenix, Arizona, used a campaign slogan geared towards the freeway component of the plan, pictured at the righ.:

Themes and Messages Work

Austin Theme	Choice: The Urban Commuter Rail: New Ways to Connect
Austin Strongest Message	Existing Tracks
FasTracks Theme	Keep the Freeways Moving
Kansas City Theme	Keep K.C. Working!
Kansas City Message	Neighbors Helping Neighbors
Kansas City Message	What if you had no way to get to your job?

The Kansas City Area Transportation Authority did polling in May of the election year and tried all the typical transit themes that everybody likes: "It'll help congestion," "It'll help the environment," "It'll help mobility, economic development." But the only message that resonated with everybody was "jobs, jobs, jobs." Polling showed that if system service was cut, thoughts were that people would lose their jobs.

Miami-Dade Theme	It's all about more choices …
MARTA in Atlanta Theme	Pulling Together
MARTA Message	Pulling Together Employers and Employees
MARTA Message	Pulling Together Sports and Fans
Lansing, Michigan Theme	Serving All Walks of Life
Tulsa Theme	Wherever Life Takes You … We'll Get You There!"

Developing Your Theme

Use both your polling and opposition research to help define your theme and strategize which messages will work, when they will work, and with whom they will work you. A baseline poll will help define both your strengths and weaknesses. It allows you to test possible themes and then determine which one most resonates with voters.

Develop your theme in consultation with your strategic team. Your pollster knows the depth and breadth of the polling results. Your media consultant has to capture your theme in 30-second commercials. Your general consultant deals with the theme's day-to-day implementation. Your persuasion mail consultant has to craft it into a slick piece of paper. You need the input of these team members to create the most solid and compelling theme possible.

Consensus for Action

In 1996, voters in Santa Clara County approved a nine-year, $1 billion sales tax to fund a variety of transportation improvements in the county, including road widening and repair, traffic light synchronization, and public transportation (including light rail). The coalition of elected officials and industry adopted the following approach in developing a consensus for action:

- **95-5**. The coalition believed that consensus did exist among the community on most major issues (the 95%) but that past political dialogue had instead focused on the remaining details where disagreement persisted (the 5%). The coalition leadership strove to focus discussion on those areas where there was broad agreement.

- **Build Ripples**. Coalition leaders consciously attempted to enlarge the movement in support of the measure "from the center out."
- **Replace Dogma with Data**. The coalition leadership agreed on the strategy of relying heavily on survey and other market analysis data. This included allowing potential opponents the opportunity to help design survey instruments.

Haas, *Why Campaigns for Local Transportation Funding Initiatives Succeed or Fail* [6]

Why a Voter Votes Yes

There are several key reasons why a voter connects with an issue:

- The belief that the voter shares common ground with those supporting the issue. Your message leads the voter to believe they share in this common ground.
- The belief that the voter shares the same core values as the other supporters of your issue. The voter may not agree on every message of your campaign, but may believe that there is enough commonality to imply a sense of shared values and commitment to a similar agenda.
- A voter connects with an issue because he or she likes the spokesperson or the high-profile figures associated with the campaign.
- A voter feels the issue will positively impact his or her life or the life of someone he or she knows. Voters should believe the campaign speaks directly to them and people like them.

Scheduling

Scheduling focuses on the process of deciding where speakers should be scheduled, and what forums and important community meetings should be attended. Your research and targeting efforts help determine which regions and demographic groups need the greatest degree of attention. Once you have made targeting determinations and assessed the political climate in your region, you will decide if you need a full-time or a part-time scheduler. The scheduler makes planning decisions on where and when the campaign needs to have speakers and then finds the venues. Scheduling is based on campaign priorities and is a proactive process. Ideally, the campaign will aggressively seek out opportunities to present its position to targeted voters. Do not only rely on invitations from groups and organizations.

Remember, where you are seen correlates with what you want to be saying.

Scheduling requires clearly defined criteria for responding yes or no to an event. Often scheduling decisions are made in weekly meetings with the communications director, the field coordinator, and the manager. This part of the campaign plan should also clearly delineate who is responsible for saying yes or no. If each member of your campaign team believes he or she has the authority to schedule events, you may find yourself participating in any number of ridiculous and potentially harmful events. Thus the scheduler generally reports to the communications director. There should be a constant and open line of communication between the scheduler, the press operation, and the manager.

Many People, Much Outreach

The 2004 **Denver FasTracks** campaign launched an aggressive **Speaker's Bureau** program with 150 individuals trained to give presentations on FasTracks. As a result, the campaign gave over 500 presentations. Their motto was "if there are more than two people meeting in a room, we will come and present the FasTracks plan." This helped win almost 58% approval.

[6] Peter J. Haas, Ph.D., Why Campaigns for Local Transportation. Funding Initiatives Succeed or Fail: An Analysis of Four Communities and National Data (Mineta Transportation Institute Report 00-1, June 2000), http://transweb.sjsu.edu/CoalitionFinal.htm.

Working with the Media

The media plan outlines your strategy for both paid media (i.e., advertising) as well as working with the press (i.e., earned media). The written plan includes timelines and costs for every type of media you are planning to use: production expenses, media buys, print ad placement, and persuasion mail expenses. It also outlines the strategy for each advertisement. The media plan needs to answer these types of questions: How many 60-second radio commercials will be produced? How many 30-second television ads will be produced? How many pieces of persuasion mail will be sent?

This section outlines the following types of media components:

- Paid Media
- Earned Media
- Dealing with the Press

Paid Media

There are four primary types of paid advertising: television, radio, print, and persuasion mail. Examples also include billboards, print advertising, yard signs, etc. Radio, television, and print advertising allow you to reach large numbers of people with a very controlled message, which is why broadcast media is so crucial to initiative campaigns. Paid media can mean the difference between success and failure on Election Day. All too often the only opportunity voters have to connect with a campaign's position is through 30-second television spots or on ad on the radio. Don't leave this crucial contact in inexperienced hands. Hire a media team with experience and a commitment to your campaign and its needs.

Though earned media efforts and field operations still perform vital functions in today's campaigns, most modern initiative campaigns depend on advertising to get their message out to the voters. Producing ads is costly and airing them even more so. A campaign generally spends between 60-70% of its resources on advertising, primarily television, radio, or persuasion mail (and, to a lesser extent, print). Make every dollar count. All too often campaigns will air commercials or run print ads that are visually appealing, but fail the "message test" of reinforcing the theme or persuading voters.

To be effective, coordinate your paid media campaign with your overall strategy and theme. Repeat your message numerous times so it is internalized by voters. Paid media should also strengthen and build your coalition, not divide it from within. Every move the campaign makes, whether on the air or in print, should be designed with these objectives in mind. Otherwise, it will spend a lot of money and persuade few voters. Given this significant financial investment, it is important to learn how to effectively and efficiently use paid media (network television, cable television, persuasion mail, or radio).

Yard Signs

In the 2004 **LexTran** referendum in Kentucky, yard signs tremendously heightened awareness to the issue. The signs went up two to three weeks before the election. **Justin Dobbs**, the campaign manager, thinks "the yard signs gave us the last push at the end, maybe picking up about 5-10% points." The signs made the news—they were everywhere, though less in individuals' yards, and more in obvious locations. Many voters were only aware of the referendum because of the signs. The measure passed 54%-46%.

Television

Television commercials are the most common form of paid media; they allow your campaign to reach a large number of voters with a consistent, controlled message. Television, though costly, is generally viewed as more cost effective than print advertising because it reaches more voters. Cable TV has also become an effective tool for some campaigns because it reaches a broad audience and does not cost as much network television. Television (and radio) ads are effective because people can watch or listen to an ad and not really think about it. Repetition of these ads is therefore crucial to convey the message to voters. To be effective, your paid media messages must be repeated numerous times. A television commercial must air more than once. It should probably be aired dozens of times to reach the number of repetitions per viewer necessary for the message to be fully appreciated by the audience.

Advertising Campaign from
The Public Transportation Partnership for Tomorrow (PT)2

In 2000, public transportation organizations and corporations across the country formed the Public Transportation Partnership for Tomorrow (PT)2 to launch the "Public Transportation: Wherever Life Takes You" advertising campaign for nationwide education and outreach to strengthen support for pubic transportation among the public and local, state, and federal officials. This campaign is educating the public about the many benefits public transportation provides to individuals and communities. The campaign uses several media vehicles, including national cable networks television, national magazines, and major Washington-based print mediums. See the (PT)2 website (www.publictransportation.org/ads/) for the ads and how to get more information.

Radio

Radio, like television, enables the campaign to reach a large number of voters. Depending on the particular media market involved, radio advertisements can be a cost effective and efficient type of paid media. Production costs are lower for radio than for television and purchasing airtime is often significantly cheaper.

Print

Print advertisements are less effective than television and radio, because they generally reach a smaller audience. However, print advertising can be a valuable tool for a campaign that has an isolated audience.

Persuasion Mail

A tried and true effective means of garnering support is to lay out your plan in a persuasion mail effort. Unlike a transit agency, the campaign is able to urge voters to support your measure on Election Day. Depending on the size and other limitations, you can go into great detail about your transit initiative with direct persuasion mailing including: a map of the proposed routes, the financial plan, the environmental and social benefits, your plan's vision, and who will be affected by your plan.

Things to considered when planning your persuasion mail program include:

- How many pieces will be mailed?
- To how many households?
- What is the target for each piece?
- What type of mail piece will be used?
    - Size and/or packaging?
    - Number of colors?
- Drop dates, print dates, and copy-ready deadline.

- Name of copywriter and designer.
- Budget.
- Staff required.
- Person responsible for each part of the mail drop.

Persuasion mail should be visually attractive and sparse on words. Very few people read an entire piece of political mail. The visual images should reflect the message of the piece; this allows recipients to get a sense of the campaign's position without reading the entire piece.

Great Examples of Persuasion Mail

In **Austin**, Texas, there were four different direct mail pieces, each tailored to a targeted group: the under-35 age group; those without a political party identification (a diverse group); the GOP; and the Democrats. Austin spent $142,000 on direct mail. The direct mail pieces are provided as example material on the Companion CD to this Guide.

Persuasion mail is only effective if appropriately and carefully targeted to a specific audience. Don't spend a lot of money sending literature to voters that who you have identified as definitely not supporting your initiative. Your campaign needs to appeal to the undecided voters; they should be the target of any persuasion mail campaign.

Earned Media or "Press"

Earned media refers to communications outreach that your campaign undertakes to spread your message without directly paying for the particular media employed.

The most common form of earned media is mention in print or broadcast press. You need to identify which media to use most often, such as print press, live press conferences, and radio talk shows. An effective earned media operation also coordinates its activities with the efforts of the paid media operation. Design the earned media outreach to reinforce the message and theme used in paid media efforts in order to increase the repetition of such messages and themes. Your detailed press plan outlines these kinds of activities; however, use examples in this section of the campaign plan to illustrate the type of communications operation you envision.

Good Press

The 2004 **LexTran** tax proposal was lacking in support from mainly one group, senior citizens. **Justin Dobbs**, campaign manager for **Citizens Connecting Our Community** in **Lexington, Kentucky**, sought to improve the campaign's standing when he went to an assisted-living community to speak about the initiative. He used his past contacts at WKYT (the leading political television station) to get news coverage. Mr. Dobbs then called other stations to inform them that WKYT would be there and that got the campaign even more coverage. The tax proposal succeeded at the polls 54%-46%.

Dealing with the Press

Without them, your presence in the media becomes only what members of the press and your critics want it to be. You have the tools to better control your message in the press (at least to some degree) and get your message out to the public. Always strive to build your own image and theme in the press, thereby defining your own issue rather than falling victim to having others outside the campaign control the issue dialogue.

Credibility and persistence are key to the success of any campaign's earned media operation and "making a name" for your campaign.

When dealing with the press, there are a few things to keep in mind:

- **Message consistency is absolutely critical**. Sticking to the campaign's message throughout every communication with members of the media will make a significant difference in ensuring that your earned media efforts complement, rather than conflict with, your paid media outreach.

- **Be Persistent**. You will not only have to be persistent in getting reporters to cover your issue, but also in persuading them to report accurately on your issue position. Remember, just because the press asks you a question does not mean you need to answer it—at least not directly. If you stick to your issue positions and message and not allow yourself to be drawn off track into secondary issues, the end result will likely be coverage that better meets your campaign's needs.

Media Tip: Write Your Own Headline

Journalists often have too much to do and not enough time to do it. Figuring out why something is newsworthy before you reach out to a member of the media will help you "sell" your views to reporters. Ask yourself what the headline or sound bite is for the news or commentary you plan to pitch.

(PT)2, *Local Coalition Workbook*[7]

The Rules of the Game

Working with the press can be both exciting and frustrating. A great story makes for a great day at campaign headquarters. But a terrible story or an off-message quote can put the manager in a bad mood, as well as all of your supporters. All too often campaigns and reporters don't see eye to eye on the issues. You have a story that you want written and the press may have an entirely different story they want to write.

In order to minimize "bad press" days and create solid, credible working relationships with the press, your earned media operation should follow some simple, basic steps as listed below.

- Notify the Media About a Press Event
- The Press Conference
- After The Press Conference
- Editorial Boards
- Op-Eds
- Letters to the Editor
- Day-to-Day Press Relations

A Staged Media Event

Opponents of cuts in the bus service in **Indianapolis** launched a symbolic stealth attack on City-County Council Members overnight. The 29 lawmakers found small wooden barricades at the foot of their driveways when they woke up to retrieve the morning paper or walk the dog. The barricades amounted to half of a sawhorse, with a lengthy note attached. City-County Council Member Jim Bradford found his at 5:45 a.m. and said, "It's kind of a creative way to protest." The unsigned note explained that the barricade was meant to represent the obstacles IndyGo riders will face getting to work if the agency goes ahead with plans to cut 37 routes. "That would stop people from getting to work, school, and the doctors," the note read.

Indianapolis Star, February 9, 2004

[7] Public Transportation Partnership for Tomorrow (PT)2, *Local Coalition Workbook: A Guide to Building Grassroots Support for Public Transportation*, (2001), 60, www.apta.com/research/info/online/documents/coalitions.pdf.

Notify the Media About a Press Event

1. Know the reason for your press conference and why it is "NEWS."
2. Know the campaign message. Make sure your news conference reinforces that message.
3. Target the message and the news conference to your audience. If you are trying to appeal to voters aged 18-30, chose a setting that piques their interest.
4. Pick a site for your press conference that reflects the message to some degree.
5. Pick up on the national angle when appropriate. Frame your story within the larger story.
6. Send the press advisory out 1 to 2 days before the event, depending on the nature of the press you are dealing with and the sensitivity of the issue.
7. Be careful not to give away too much of the subject matter of the press conference in the press advisory. The advisory should include the date, time, and location of the event as well as one or two sentences on the basic topic to be addressed. Remember, more often than not, your critics will receive a copy of this.
8. Call the press outlets after you send the advisory to ensure the proper person received it and made a note of it. During busy election cycles, it is easy for political press advisories to get lost in a heap. Ask the reporters and/or assignment editors if they will be attending or sending a reporter. They probably won't give you a definitive answer, but this allows you to make an initial plug for the event.
9. Call the press outlets, especially TV stations, the morning of the event. This allows you to push for coverage and give them more of a "hint" if needed about the topic for the conference.

The Press Conference

1. Ensure both the press liaison and the spokesperson(s) are fully briefed on the topic and any "hot" news of the day. Reporters often use press conferences as a way to ask the campaign about other topics.
2. Ensure the press conference concerns a legitimate topic related to your issue. Gimmicks rarely work and they often make the campaign look foolish. Those pictures may also come back to haunt you.
3. Visual aids, such as graphs and charts, can add both emphasis and credibility. Be certain to choose visuals that are easy to read and easy to comprehend in a 30-second TV report or a small picture in the newspaper. Providing reporters with photocopies of the visual aid can also help ensure that your point is made.
4. Use rhetoric that broadens your coalition. Although you may be targeting a specific group, be certain you are not alienating other key constituencies.
5. Know the key words and phrases related to your campaign message. Create a statement that repeats and reinforces the campaign message. Be sure to include a few crucial sound bites. What do you want to see most in the headline or news lead? What do you want to see most in the article or news report? What don't you want in the story?
6. Make it easy for the press to write the kind of story you want written. Be prepared and assume the reporters will be unprepared. Know the topic. Have available sufficient copies of press releases, background information, and photographs.
7. Allow time for questions, but know that you can limit that time.
8. If you do not have an answer to a question, don't fabricate one. Depending on the question, either indicate that you don't know the answer or spin your answer in a way that taps back into your message.
9. Do not allow your spokesperson(s) to "hang out" with the press. After questions have been fielded, the spokesperson should be accompanied out and any further dialogue should be directed to the press liaison.
10. Take and distribute digital photos of the event.

After The Press Conference

1. Send press releases and pictures as soon as possible to all news outlets that did not attend the press conference.
2. If you have established the capability to record digital or streaming video, place the press conference on your website and notify all reporters who were unable to attend as soon as the conference is "live" on your site.
3. Follow-up with reporters who seemed interested when you sent the advisory, but did not to attend the conference.
4. Follow-up immediately with reporters who attended and requested additional information.
5. Send feed (digital audio or actualities) to radio news departments in the drive time closest to the press event or the drive time that will give you the most airtime without throwing it into the category of "old news."

Editorial Boards

1. Request a list of the Editorial Board meeting attendees in advance of your meeting.
2. Research the bias of each member of the Editorial Board. In other words, know your audience and the arguments that will persuade or dissuade them. Recognize that certain newspapers will likely never editorially support progressive issues. Your goal in these situations should be to minimize the vehemence of the paper's opposition.
3. Prepare a packet for each member of the Editorial Board. This will most likely be the press kit and the campaign prospectus.
4. Ask when a decision will be made and when or if an endorsement will be made public.
5. The campaign manager, press liaison, and possibly a community leader should attend Editorial Board meetings. If the finance chair is a person with influence in the community, he or she should also consider attending.

Op-Eds

1. Timing of op-eds is crucial. If a publication accepts your op-ed, it will only run once and, most likely, you will not have a chance to publish another. An op-ed published eight months before the election is not as helpful as one written and published eight weeks before the election.
2. Before submitting an op-ed, double-check and triple-check it for accuracy. Ask several key supporters familiar with the legal and political ramifications of the issue to review it. Have the facts on hand to use as backup.
3. Once you publish an op-ed, be prepared for your opposition to do the same. By the same token, if the opposition has an op-ed published, you can make a case to that publication to print yours on the principle of "fairness."
4. Be selective in the signatory you choose for the op-ed. It should be a high-profile individual who is well respected in the community. Moreover, it should be someone who is viewed as a "moderate" rather than a "liberal."
5. Once an op-ed is published, it should be used in the press kits and fundraising prospectus.

Letters to the Editor

1. Letters to the Editor provide the campaign with an excellent forum to convey its message and respond to unfair or inaccurate press stories, as well as reinforcing positive press stories. The campaign should prepare talking points for volunteers and supporters who are willing to write letters.
2. The letters should be short, to the point, and include the name, address, and telephone number of the individual.
3. The press department should write the talking points for each letter. The volunteer coordinator and field operation should recruit the writers.

4. Letters should be sent to print publications throughout the state.
5. Coordinate letter-writing campaigns with other communications activities of the campaign, such as press events or printing of an op-ed.
6. Do not allow paid staff to send in letters under their signature, unless it is cleared through the manager and noted in the letter that the individual works for the campaign. Chances of it being published are slim, so it is wise to have a volunteer or supporter send the letter in under their signature.

Day-to-Day Press Relations

1. Never lie to a member of the press.
2. Always be prepared. You do not always have to respond within five minutes. Call and find out the deadline. You may want to have someone else respond.
3. An initiative campaign will need to recruit spokespeople for certain press events. Ensure you know exactly what the spokesperson is going to say before he or she steps in front of the press. Remember that no staff person should speak to the press under any circumstances without specific authority from the campaign manager and/or the communications director. Only the campaign manager and the press secretary are authorized to speak to the press.
4. When talking to reporters, know your agenda. Be clear on your purpose and your plan before talking with reporters.
5. Never discuss any issue with a reporter without being fully briefed.
6. Know the deadlines of every major news outlet. Respect reporters' time limitations.
7. Don't be afraid to let a reporter know he or she was wrong. But before you do, make sure you are right. Have the documented proof at your fingertips and compiled in a way that allows you to quickly fax or mail it to the reporter.
8. Don't allow any member of the campaign team to field questions and/or calls from the press except the press liaison. This will allow the campaign better control of the message and the media. Reporters, however, will occasionally try to take comment from someone other than the official press spokesperson. Don't let this happen. If the press liaison is unavailable, he or she should have an alternate contact person standing by to respond to press inquiries.
9. Remember campaigns are not won with a single statement to the press, but you can definitely lose ground with one. Never step in front of the press unprepared.
10. Above all, work to ensure that any interactions with the press help your campaign, your issue, and your credibility. Always seek ways to increase your ability to control the message even though it is being translated and transported by the press.
11. Always be courteous and respectful, even when the story does not go your way. However, hold the press accountable for fairness and equal time.

Developing an Internet Strategy

Campaigns should view this incredibly powerful communications structure as a great tool for advancing all of the campaign's goals and objectives.

Internet technology is constantly advancing and constantly improving. Creative and compelling use of Internet tools can often provide a dramatic edge for issue campaigns in tight races. Think broader rather than narrower in terms of the possibilities that the Internet provides to the campaigns and its component departments.

One of the greatest strengths of the Internet as a campaign tool is its versatility and nearly limitless potential. Of course, as the campaign continues to add features that it wants to use on its website or in its e-mail program, there will be budgetary consequences. As with all other campaign tools, Internet options should be considered carefully and integrated into the overall campaign strategy within the budgetary constraints of the campaign and in a manner that allows for complete message consistency across all media.

Always keep in mind that the campaign website, e-mail programs, and other Internet outreach are likely be the first place that the opponents' opposition researcher look for information. It is critical that any communications that the campaign sends out using any electronic medium are screened in advance for possible political or strategic problems.

This section looks at the following aspects of an Internet Strategy:

- Using the Internet Effectively
- Using E-mail
- Using the Internet as Paid Media
- Recruiting Volunteers via the Web
- Using Your Website to Fundraise

Using the Internet Effectively

A website provides an opportunity to directly communicate with the public about the initiative. There are a number of strategies you can use to create a website that is compelling, informative, and useful to voters and that provides the campaign with valuable resources like volunteer recruitment, media outreach, and fundraising.

Your website could include the following elements:

- Overview of your proposal or expenditure plan
- Map of proposed transportation and transit improvements
- Financial plan
- Timeline for completion of projects
- List of supporters and coalition members
- Testimonials from relevant officials
- Environmental Impact Statements
- Overview of recent agency achievements
- Myths and facts of your proposal
- Information about opportunities to get involved
- Online campaign donations
- Message boards
- Contact information

Successful Website

The **Yes on 400 campaign website**, which was established to support **Initiative 400** in the **Phoenix**, metropolitan area, did an outstanding job of keeping citizens informed. The site included interactive maps to highlight the various modes of transportation and show where these improvements will be made. The extensive use of these interactive maps on the website graphically depicted how each individual community would directly benefit.

The website also gave voters the ability to identify the supporters in their own communities-a voter to click on a city and read a list of names in support of the campaign. Another level of interaction was the voter toolbox. This toolbox gave voters the ability to become as involved or informed as they wished, from a simple request to keep them informed to requesting an early ballot, registering to vote, and becoming a supporter or volunteer themselves. This website (www.maricopa2020.com) is no longer active.

Here are recommendations on what types of features to build into your site:

- **Make it Simple, Not Dense**. At minimum, the wesite should contain all of the basic thematic points you want to emphasize. Make the site informative, but not dense. It should be direct and yet assertively representational of the campaign's theme and messages.

- **Make it Interactive**. Unlike television, the Internet is an interactive medium. It provides new ways to communicate with voters. The inverse is also true to some extent; the Internet is giving voters control of campaigns. People looking at the website may be interested in an issue and when they want to help, make it easy for them to find out how. Having a website for your initiative and campaign is a crucial tool in on cultivating grassroots involvement and encouraging activists to organize.

- **Include the Language of the Proposal**. For an initiative campaign always include the language of the proposal itself. On the proponent side, it is important to highlight the portions of the language that resonates most strongly with swing voters (as revealed through the campaign's research efforts). As opponents, a campaign can also point out the portions of the language likely to make voters uncomfortable.

- **Make it Pretty**. Make the presentation of information and issue positions interesting to look at. Website developers, whether in-house or part of the consultant team, should be on the lookout for ways to present information that grab viewers' attention. Some common ways to make your issue and information presentation more interactive is to include embedding hyperlinks or hover links in the text so that a person can click on a portion of the text and see more information from the campaign. Also use sound and video images that relate to specific portions of the text.

- **Make it User Friendly**. Provide an easy way for voters to get information about and from your campaign. Design the site so viewers can easily and conveniently find e-mail links, response forms, and donating options. As questions or concerns arise, voters should know that the campaign is eager to respond. While most voters won't actually contact the campaign, the message that the campaign truly cares about their questions and concerns sends a valuable message.

- **Make it Sizzle**. Interactive Maps of the proposed routes, electronic bulletin boards, and web groups are all great ways to capture the attention of users and keep them on the site.

Using E-mail

Your e-mail program should be to aim for 100% rapid response to all e-mail inquires. The difficulty is maintaining both discipline and speed in developing a system, but there are a number of ways that the campaign can automate the process to increase the level of efficiency in getting information to voters requesting it.

Have the communications director pre-prepare concise responses to most typical questions, this allows virtually immediate response to most inquiries. In instances where a voter raises a minor or unique concern or question, the communications director or his or her designee should be given the e-mail and respond as quickly as possible-certainly within 24 hours. The person responsible for reading e-mails and routing them to the appropriate staff person should also maintain a basic log of the items voters are asking about and provide regular updates to the campaign manager. Often, trends undetected by other methods become apparent to the campaign by examining such data.

Using the Internet as Paid Media

It is quite easy to use the Internet as an extension of other paid media efforts and have it serve as an additional outlet for your persuasion efforts. Check with media consultants whether they have the capability of providing the campaign with digital versions of the ads that they produce for the campaign, and if so, what is the cost to obtain the electronic versions of the ads.

Once the campaign's television spots or radio ads (or any other message vehicles designed for viewing by the entire voting population) have begun airing, it is quite possible to also place them on the campaign website. The number of viewings of the spot will be comparatively limited, but if the digital version of the ad already exists at the production facility, the cost of adding it to the site is often minimal.

If the campaign has produced ads that have some sort of unique hook (e.g., humor, a famous spokesperson, such as the Willie Nelson ads used in Austin, mentioned earlier), it is also possible for the campaign to create the ability for voters to e-mail the ad (or a link to the ad) to their friends and family. As such contacts are made, the likelihood of the recipient friend or family member going to the campaign site is increased.

Some persuasion media (mail pieces or radio spots) are intended exclusively for a tightly-defined demographic and are not appropriate message devices for the website or e-mail programs because of the lack of control over the audience. Generally, the only time that campaign print materials should be reproduced for the web or for distribution to an e-mail list is if they have appeared in mass-market print publications or are general use campaign materials (often called "walk pieces").

Recruiting Volunteers via the Web

Use your website and e-mail programs as additional tools to recruit and motivate volunteers.

As always, the campaign should err on the side of caution when deciding the extent of the volunteer information to publish electronically.

Post basic information concerning volunteer opportunities and needs. It is a simple to create an online volunteer information form that prospective volunteers can fill out. Additionally, your website offers avenues for volunteers to feel included in the fabric of the campaign. It is relatively easy to put on the site digital photos of volunteers working, which sends a number of good messages: it makes the volunteers feel happy and appreciated for their efforts and demonstrates the campaign's human side to the public.

Depending on campaign resources and the sophistication of its web efforts, it may also be possible to use the website as a vehicle for the volunteer coordinator to recruit volunteers for specific campaign tasks. Since it is not a good idea to let your opposition and critics know the nature or extent of your activities, such information needs to be placed in a password-protected area of the site with access restricted to proven volunteers. Even under these increased security procedures, it is still possible that the information about the activities will get into the wrong hands, so ensure that no strategically or tactically important information is published.

As people volunteer for the campaign, be sure to get their e-mail address. The volunteer coordinator should maintain an e-mail database of all active volunteers on the campaign and use it to recruit new volunteers from friends and family of existing volunteers (the "tell a friend" program), to solicit volunteer labor for upcoming projects, to provide regular campaign updates as a motivational tool, and to provide timely "thank yous" to volunteers (keeping in mind that a handwritten thank you on behalf of the campaign for the volunteer's overall efforts during the campaign should be sent immediately after Election Day).

Using Your Website to Fundraise

Setting up a fundraising area on your issue campaign's site is good idea, because of the ease with which supporters can log on and make a contribution.

Keep in mind the extremely sensitive nature of the financial information being transmitted (either credit card numbers of bank account information for automated withdrawals). It will be necessary to have a secured server operate the fundraising portion of the site. You entire website need not be housed on a secure server (which tends to be more expensive) as there are numerous vendors whose business is processing financial transactions over the web. When a person opts to make a contribution from your website's fundraising area, this person is automatically redirected to the service vendor's site.

Because of the increased costs involved in providing an online avenue for fundraising, the campaign should commit to fully integrating it into the fundraising plan. If the fundraising staff actively uses web fundraising as an additional avenue for soliciting and receiving funds, it will likely pay off.

See the Fundraising portion of Section Three, Campaign Preparations, for detailed information on how to identify investors and ideas for soliciting contributions.

Web-based fundraising also allows for some unique programs. Subscription donations (those where the donor agrees to give a small amount-or hopefully, a not so small amount-each month) can be automated. Donors can be directed toward "adopting" a campaign tool (like a TV spot) more easily, because the fundraising page can spawn a viewer allowing the donor to view the spot for which they are being asked to contribute.

Online Advocacy and Campaign Related Websites

There are several new quality advocacy and campaign resources on the Internet.

Though still in draft form **www.backspace.com/action/** has an *Introduction to Activism on the Internet*. It contains a lot of good advice on online advocacy, as well as links to various free and not-so-free organizations that can help you put together a great campaign.

Care2 (www.care2.org) has a number of features for a large community of activists. Care2 works with non-profit organizations to provide a full range of marketing and communication services such as Strategic Planning; Developing, Designing, and Implementing Advocacy Campaigns; and Recruiting Activists and Donors.

The **Center For Democracy and Technology**'s Guide to Online Political Advocacy (www.cdt.org/speech/political/guide/) includes detailed information on how to use the Internet effectively to capture the power of constituency.

Republicans and Democrats alike can learn from the techniques behind **Citizen Outreach** (www.citizenoutreach.com). Whether or not you agree with the message (it's being billed as the right wing's answer to moveon.org), take a look at the means used to deliver the message-an e-mail newsletter, webcast interviews, and templates, and other resources for activists.

CitizenSpeak (www.citizenspeak.org) is a free web-based advocacy service that allows grassroots organizations to incorporate e-mail campaigns into their communications strategies. You can use it to set up an online e-mail campaign. In the future they may charge a fee.

CivicSpace Labs (www.civicspacelabs.org) is a grassroots organizing platform that empowers collective action inside communities and cohesively connects remote groups of supporters.

Democracy in Action (www.democracyinaction.org) makes online advocacy tools accessible to all nonprofits. These tools enable people to connect, communicate, take action, and organize. This site also allows you to set up your own campaign site without shelling out a lot of money. You can set up your own site, invite people to participate, send out e-mails—the works.

E-Democracy.org uses the Internet to create a network to develop personal messages and is one of the most effective "cyber-lobbying" techniques around. This site has a useful tutorial on setting up a common area on the web (www.e-democracy.org/do/commons.html).

Want some tips on using the Internet for advocacy? Check out the Virtual Activist 2.0 site from **NetAction** (www.netaction.org/training/index.html) In this virtual classroom, NetAction will teach you how to use e-mail and the Web as effective, inexpensive, and efficient tools for organizing, outreach, and advocacy.

PetitionOnline (www.petitiononline.com) provides free hosting of public petitions for responsible public advocacy. The site also has information on working with other group members.

Field Operations-Reaching Out to the Community

The primary purpose of your field operations is to reach out to the community and you do this by building coalitions and delivering your campaign message through person-to-person communication, whether through hand delivering a piece of literature, talking on the telephone, or knocking on a door and chatting with a voter.

This section looks at the following aspects of Field Operations:

- Field Operations Plan
- Building a Volunteer Base
- Managing Volunteers
- Outreach to the Community: Activities for Volunteers

The Field Operation Plan

To carry out the activities of your field operation you need to consider the following key questions:

- **Targets**. Who will be contacted?

- **Programs**. What will be done? How long will it take? Remember that time is a valuable commodity in a campaign. Can you coordinate or piggyback with other local or statewide campaigns?

- **People**. Who will carry out the operations? What paid staff will be necessary? How many volunteers are needed? Will you require consultants?

- **Organizational Strategy**. How will the program(s) and participants be coordinated?

- **Budgets**. What human and financial resources are available and how will they be allocated? How much money will it cost? What can be done for free?

- **Coalitions**. Who will the campaign recruit and how will they be used? What other organizations will be involved?

For each form of voter contact, your field operation plan should include the following specifics:

- The nature of the voter contact activity.
- The purpose or goal of the activity.
- When you want the activity to be accomplished.
- The steps to be taken to accomplish the activity.
- The target audience for the activity.
- Who is responsible for completing the activity.
- What resources will be necessary and available to accomplish the activity.

Though this appears to be a lot of information, answering these questions saves significant time and anxiety later in the campaign.

Building a Volunteer Base

Volunteers are the heart and soul of any initiative campaign.

Building your volunteer base is an important early item in field operations. People that care passionately about an issue and are willing to sacrifice their time for the cause perform some of the most valuable work of the campaign. Volunteers lend credibility to the campaign in the eyes of the media and the voters. Nothing is more convincing than people stuffing envelopes, gathering petition signatures, handing out flyers, or getting out the vote because they believe in the issue. No one is more persuasive than an individual trying to convince you to support an issue because he or she truly believes it is the right thing to do. A good volunteer organization is well worth the time and effort it takes to build and maintain. In fact, it is a necessity for the success of your campaign.

Initiative campaigns succeed or fail in large part in direct relation to the success of their volunteer efforts. It is essential to recruit and maintain a strong volunteer organization. Individuals who have already expressed an interest in the issue through their support of related causes, campaigns, and organizations can serve as the foundation of your volunteer resources. While you should certainly seek to recruit volunteers who have no prior campaign experience, people with a history of political activism provide an added level of utility to your campaign.

Your website should have a prominent section devoted to recruiting volunteers. Campaign literature and direct mail pieces should contain a request for volunteer support whenever possible. Community events, where a table or booth can be set up, offer another place to recruit volunteers. Advertisements in the local press or in newsletters, especially within tightly defined communities or interest groups, can be an effective recruitment tool.

Supportive organizations or individuals with large e-mail databases may be willing to send out an appeal for volunteers on your behalf. Publications who are supportive of your issue may donate space for a recruitment advertisement. Make available volunteer sign up sheets or cards at every campaign event. Recruiting is a never-ending process.

Manage Your Volunteers

A good volunteer coordinator is a great asset to an issue campaign. This person is responsible for the recruitment and management of the volunteers. While the coordinator is not responsible for the development of the volunteer activities, he or she should have input into the design and implementation of the activities.

The volunteer coordinator should:

- Ensure that a volunteer sign-up sheet or volunteer cards are available at every campaign event.
- Promptly follow up with any person who indicates a willingness to volunteer on the campaign.
- Ensure that there is work for the volunteers to do. A volunteer who takes time out of his or her day to work in a campaign wants to feel needed and useful.
- Provide a comfortable and fun working environment.
- Give each volunteer manageable and clear assignments that fit their capabilities.
- Create and maintain a database or card file of volunteers, including names, addresses, e-mail, phone numbers, legislative and congressional district information, availability and any special skills or experience.
- Provide regular progress reports to the campaign manager.
- Ensure that there are enough volunteers to enable the campaign to run smoothly.
- Train volunteers to the assigned tasks.
- Schedule volunteers.
- Train volunteers to the assigned tasks.
- Schedule volunteers.
- Distribute materials to volunteers.
- Provide light refreshments, such as drinks, pretzels, and pizza, for the volunteers.
- Encourage campaign staff to acknowledge and interact with volunteers.
- Recognize and thank volunteers verbally and in writing.

Once recruited, volunteers should quickly be given an assignment. The volunteer coordinator should call the recruit as soon as possible to introduce him or herself and schedule the first volunteer session.

The surest way to lose an enthusiastic volunteer is by failing to follow-up.

When working with a new volunteer, give as much consideration as possible to what activities he or she expressed interest in. One way to lose a new volunteer is to immediately give them six hours of work on a poorly organized job they don't enjoy.

Effectively working with volunteers becomes as much a question of style, both yours and theirs. Here are some general guidelines for efficiently supervising volunteers:

- Thank your volunteers before they begin the project.
- Assign and train volunteers on specific tasks.
- Give volunteers a time estimate for the project.
- Make sure they have the tools to do the job.
- Review all campaign literature with them.
- Ask if they have any questions before they begin.
- If transportation is needed from headquarters to a site, arrange carpools or even better, provide transit passes. Do your best to provide free parking for volunteers.
- Request that all unused materials, whether literature, buttons, or pens, be returned to headquarters as soon as possible after the project has been completed. These materials are expensive and the campaign needs to get value out of every dollar spent.
- Assure volunteers that it is not a disaster if the project was not completed. Do reinforce, however, the need to be informed of the project's status so it can then be assigned to another volunteer.
- Thank them for all their effort and ask when they can help again.

Volunteer coordinators walk a fine line between making sure the job gets done and over-supervising. It is important that people not feel micromanaged or guilty if they are unable to complete a project. At the same time, the campaign needs to manage its workflow. The volunteer coordinator should develop a standard reporting procedure for every job. Track the hours worked and jobs completed by each volunteer so their efforts can be acknowledged.

Outreach to the Community: Volunteer Activities

Door-to-door canvassing, telephone banks, envelope stuffing, literature drops, event staffing, filing, and other office work are examples of jobs that can be performed well by volunteers. There are many other jobs that could be done by volunteers but probably should not, e.g., campaign bookkeeping or managing the website.

For practical, as well as political reasons, it is important to recruit a diverse group of volunteers. It is also important to vary the tasks assigned to volunteers who donate their time on a regular basis. A variety of activities keep volunteers interested and active.

Door-to-Door Canvassing

Door-to-door canvassing is perhaps the most intimate form of communication on the campaign because it requires volunteers to talk face-to-face with voters. Those who participate in the canvass are frequently referred to as "walkers" because they spend their time walking from house to house, knocking on doors, and delivering the campaign message in a targeted precinct. As they stand on a voter's doorstep, a "walker" listens and responds to the questions and concerns of that individual. This type of operation personalizes the issue and gives voters the impression that there are "real people" behind your initiative.

A door-to-door canvass is the most time consuming and labor intensive of all campaign operations. If done properly, the rewards are well worth the effort. Here are several basic steps to help you plan and carry out your canvass.

- **Plan the Walk**. Map out the targeted area. Determine the best walking routes and outline these for the volunteers on precinct maps. Ensure your walkers feel safe in the neighborhood. Knocking on a stranger's door can be intimidating and frightening. Preparation helps ease some of the tension and also assists in controlling the messages that circulate during the day.

- **Allocate Time and Volunteers**. Canvassing sessions should last no more than four hours. Each walker should contact an average of fifteen homes per hour. This ratio can be expanded by a factor of two if the walker is only leafleting the house. When leafleting, the campaign message is only delivered once, but a larger number of homes can be reached with less personnel.

- **Prepare the Materials**. Ensure you have all the materials needed before the day of your canvass, including these basics:

    - Script
    - Voter List (in walking order)
    - Pens/Pencils/Notebook
    - Forms to record questions from voters and other follow-up items
    - Follow up Materials
    - Precinct Map
    - Campaign Brochures or Leaflets

- **Train the Volunteers**. Plan a one-hour training session before your canvass begins. Training is crucial because it gives your volunteers time to familiarize themselves with the material and voice questions or concerns before they begin interacting with voters. Ensure your walkers are comfortable with the material.

- **Assign Walkers**. Assign walkers to targeted areas. It is valuable to have walkers from the target neighborhood so that they can establish themselves as neighbors. Two walkers can canvas one street, each taking one side. The two walkers should always be able to see one another. As a general rule, a walker should not enter into a stranger's house. This can significantly slow down the canvass, and, more importantly, endanger the volunteer.

- **Establish a Format for the "House Call"**. The walker should knock on the door and ask for the person on the voter list. He or she should then deliver the campaign message, gather information, and ask for the voter's support. The walker should end by handing the voter a campaign brochure or leaflet and then move on. The walker should only mark the voter list after he or she has left the door and not while still at the door. The walker should not argue with the voter or engage in long discussions with them.

- **Identify a Follow up Procedure**. Provide refreshments for your walkers as a group at the end of a canvassing session. They can use this time to share experiences, tally results, and write follow up notes. After a canvass, the walker should write the voter a follow-up note and thank them for their time. You can speed up this process by preparing thank you cards and address labels ahead of time that can be personalized by the canvassers.

Telephoning

Using telephones in field operations is a fast, efficient way to reach large numbers of voters in a short amount of time.

You can easily control the message. The campaign receives immediate, direct feedback. A phone bank is a planned activity that relies on volunteers or paid professionals for its completion, uses a variety of lists, generally last two to eight nights, and uses a written script to deliver a message to voters. Phone banks are also flexible--changes in targets and messages can be made quickly and easily.

Phone banks do have a few drawbacks. Some voters find phone calls to be a nuisance. And volunteers are often unwilling to make phone calls. You need extensive supervisory management to effectively run the operation. If a lot of long distance calls are made, it can be expensive. Despite these issues, phone banks are by and large an excellent way to reach voters. Telephone calls are an ideal medium for field operations for two reasons: (1) they give the campaign 10-15 seconds to deliver a message before the voter can respond or decide to hang up and (2) they are easily quantified. If you understand the drawbacks and work to minimize them, you can run a productive telephone operation.

Additional Resources

Organization	Item	Website
Public Transportation Partnership for Tomorrow (PT)2	Advertising campaign materials	www.publictransportation.org/ads/
Backspace	*Introduction to Activism on the Internet*	www.backspace.com/action/
Care2	Online marketing and communication services	www.care2.org
Center For Democracy and Technology	*Guide to Online Political Advocacy*	www.cdt.org/speech/political/guide/
Citizen Outreach	Activist resources	www.citizenoutreach.com
CitizenSpeak	Web-based advocacy service	www.citizenspeak.org
CivicSpace Labs	A grassroots organizing platform	www.civicspacelabs.org
Democracy in Action	Online advocacy tools	www.democracyinaction.org
E-Democracy.org	Cyber lobbying	www.e-democracy.org/do/commons.html
NetAction	Virtual Activist 2.0 class-room	www.netaction.org/training/index.html
PetitionOnline	Free hosting of public petitions	www.petitiononline.com
Peter J. Haas, Ph.D., Mineta Transportation Institute	*Why Campaigns for Local Transportation. Funding Initiatives Succeed or Fail: An Analysis of Four Communities and National Data*	http://transweb.sjsu.edu/CoalitionFinal.htm

You can link to these resources on the accompanying CD.

Section Five:
Responding to Critics

This section focuses on the key issues to consider when developing a strategy to address the critics of your initiative.

In this section we look at:

- Who are the Typical Critics?
- What are Common Arguments?
- Where Will Their Message be Heard?
- How Can You Counteract That Message (Or Better Yet, Get in Front of It)?

If you are not already familiar with the local players and the critics of public transportation, you most certainly will be when your campaign starts. Whether it is your local anti-tax or libertarian group or someone hires a well-known critic like Wendell Cox to come to town, critics of public transportation are often most vocal when voters are asked to consider funding for public transportation.

In this section, you will be introduced to many of the arguments that critics tend to adapt to a local community. You may find many of the claims to be unfounded and inaccurate. Regardless of what you think or know to be true, it is important to develop a response strategy BEFORE the arguments are made. Unlike a court of law, critics of public transportation need not prove a prima facie case in their favor. They need only cast doubt.

Picking your fights is also a necessary element to your response strategy. Some campaigns have actually had some success in NOT responding to critics, letting the facts about the benefits of public transportation speak for themselves. It is absolutely critical that the campaign be fully and consistently aware of whether the critics are succeeding in their efforts to sway public opinion.

Regardless of the available facts to adequately and truthfully refute the arguments made by the critics, one element you not be able to control is the public's attention span. It would be inappropriate to think that the average voter has the time or desire to understand the complexities of transportation policy. The critics have an easy job—all they have to do is present simple "shock and awe" arguments. Sometimes it may be better for your initiative campaign to "let it go" and remain on point with a positive message. Consistency with your message and having a wide variety of outlets are just two ways to avoid getting stuck in the "numbers game" or otherwise complex refutations.

Remember, this is not a candidate race where there is automatically a winner and loser. This is an issue-specific ballot campaign, where there is merely a yes or no vote. If there is any doubt in the voter's mind, he or she need only cast a no vote, and critics understand this. This is why critics often wait until the last few days of a campaign to make their opinions heard. This also gives your campaign little time to craft a response, so prepare.

This section presents the most common of arguments that critics employ. Remember that there will be many other criticisms specific to your local situation that will likely arise. As with other ballot initiative campaigns, large amounts of money can produce heated debate on both sides of the issue, and even within your own campaign. Plan on identifying and understanding the perspectives of each player involved on both sides of the issue.

The CFTE website maintains a Responding to Critics area at www.cfte.org/critics.

Who are the Typical Critics?

This section outlines the types of organizations and individuals that may be involved in efforts to discredit transit initiative efforts.

Organizations

While it is unlikely that any organization exists solely for the purpose of criticizing public transportation, there are many organizations whose mission is in part to be critical of it. In an effort to better understand the perspectives of these organizations it is best to group them into three general categories: libertarian think tanks; anti-tax groups; and those groups who stand to benefit from increased or sustained investment in roads and highways. Note that in most cases, we have simply used the mission statement or policy statement from the organization's own website in an effort to provide a general statement of their perspectives in their own words.

Libertarian "Think Tanks"

The **American Dream Coalition** was formed after the first Preserving the American Dream conference held in Washington, D.C., in February 2003. Organizers of the conference developed plans for regional mini-conferences on themes of smart growth (which many of the organizers have renamed "smug growth"), planning and public transportation, and, particularly, opposition to light rail. The website includes resources for journalists, an opportunity to become a member of the coalition, and fact sheets on various public policy issues.

The Buckeye Institute is a public policy research and education institute, or think tank. As an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, its purpose is to provide Ohio's leaders and citizens with new ways of thinking about problems facing state and local communities. The Institute's researchers and scholars focus on issues such as education, taxes and spending, economic development, health care, welfare, and the environment.

The **Georgia Public Policy Foundation** is the only private, nonpartisan research and education organization in Georgia that focuses on state policy issues. The Foundation's members are a diverse group of Georgians that share a common belief that the solutions to most problems lie in a strong private sector, not in a big government bureaucracy.

The **Reason Foundation**, founded in 1978 in Los Angeles, is a national research and educational organization that explores and promotes the values of rationality and freedom as the basic underpinnings of a good society. It advocates public policies based on individual liberty and responsibility and a free-market approach, using practical policy research and insightful commentary.

The **Independence Institute** was founded in 1985 as a nonpartisan, nonprofit public policy research organization dedicated to providing timely information to concerned citizens, government officials, and public opinion leaders. The Institute addresses a broad variety of public policy issues from a free-market, pro-freedom perspective.

The **Reason Public Policy Institute** conducts research and crafts policy changes that foster individual responsibility, choice, and competition. RPPI believes that a dynamic world, conducive to discovery and innovation, is essential to prosperity and human progress. RPPI's work involves six main areas: privatization and government reform, environmental policy, transportation, education, child welfare, and land use and economic development.

The Public Purpose is run by the Wendell Cox Consultancy. Its mission is "to facilitate the ideal of government as the servant of the people by identifying and implementing strategies to achieve public purposes at a cost that is no higher than necessary." The Public Purpose focuses on issues of international public policy, demographics, economics, and transport.

The Cato Institute was founded in 1977 and is a nonpartisan public policy research foundation headquartered in Washington, D.C. The Institute is named for Cato's Letters, a series of libertarian pamphlets that helped lay the philosophical foundation for the American Revolution. The Institute strives to achieve greater involvement of the intelligent, concerned lay public in questions of policy and the proper role of government.

The **Cascade Policy Institute** mission is to promote innovative, voluntary, market-oriented solutions to Oregon's policy problems. Cascade combines theory with practical application to develop policy alternatives that strengthen Oregon's economy, support personal responsibility, and secure individual freedom.

The Heritage Foundation, founded in 1973, is a research and educational institute-a think tank-whose mission is to formulate and promote conservative public policies based on the principles of free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional American values, and a strong national defense.

Taxpayer Associations

These organizations exist to offer research and analysis of fiscal policy and are sometimes aligned with libertarian and conservative platforms.

Many of these organizations are well funded and can make front-page headlines. Therefore, it is a good idea to understand, if not engage, the perspective of these organizations. Engaging these groups can sometimes prove beneficial.

Local and state level taxpayer associations usually capitalize on the opportunity to weigh in on transportation tax proposals, but they are neither inherently anti-tax nor anti-transit.

Engage Potential Opponents

In preparation of the November 2004 election, **TransNet** supporters invited the **San Diego Taxpayers Association**, an organization typically opposed to tax increases, to help develop the expenditure plan. At the request of the Association, a citizens' advisory committee was proposed to oversee the spending of funds raised through the TransNet tax. When the voters' pamphlet was developed, opponents of TransNet submitted an argument claiming the advisory committee was "an insider's club" and the TransNet proposal had "no citizen representation." The San Diego Taxpayers Association promptly responded by filing a lawsuit. Read The San Diego Union-Tribune article at: www.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/20040908/news_2m8propa.html

Individuals

It should be of no surprise that critics of public transportation come in all shapes and sizes. Two prominent critics whose names you will likely hear at some point in your campaign are Wendell Cox and Randal O'Toole.

Wendell Cox

A self-employed privatization proponent, Wendell Cox has written criticisms of transit and Amtrak for the Cato Institute, The Heritage Foundation, The American Highway Users Alliance, and others. His work includes the Cato publication False Dreams and Broken Promises: The Wasteful Federal Investment in Mass Transit and numerous op-eds, seminars, and radio and TV appearances in communities considering new transit investments. Mr. Cox has authored reports for the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute and The James Madison Institute in opposition to the proposed Milwaukee light rail system and the Florida Overland Express high-speed rail project. His background as an expert is derived from his appointment to the Los

Angeles County Transportation Commission as a citizen member. He has been employed by various conservative and road building groups over the years and is also known for his website (**www.publicpurpose.com**).

Randal O'Toole

Randal O'Toole is an economist and has been director of the Oregon-based Thoreau Institute (**www.ti.org**) since 1975. He has also been an adjunct scholar at the Cato Institute since 1995. Mr. O'Toole's publications include:

- *ISTEA: A Poisonous Brew for America's Cities*
- *Light Rail Myths and Realities*
- *Great Rail Disasters*
- *The Vanishing Automobile*
- *Light Rail: Yesterday's Technology Tomorrow*

Prior to becoming engaged in issues surrounding Portland's Urban Growth Boundary, he worked mainly on forest issues and against the federal subsidization of logging. He was the primary organizer of the February 2003 conference, Preserving the American Dream.

Critics at Work

In 2004, working with the Colorado-based **Independence Institute, Randal O'Toole** took the lead in authoring reports that were critical of **Denver's FasTracks** transit expansion plan. One titled, *Great Rail Disasters*, attempted to show two things: that investments in rail transit do not provide benefits for any community (including New York City); and that new investment in Denver's light rail system would be a waste of money. In November 2004, the FasTracks campaign won approval from voters 57% to 43%, in part due to the rapid response strategy developed by the campaign and the numerous organizations that weighed in with a response to the *Great Rail Disasters* report.

Other Well-Known Critics

John Semmens is a fellow at Phoenix's **Goldwater Institute**. His major contribution to date is the report *Public Transit: A Worthwhile Investment?* The report was an attempt to derail the Phoenix Transit 2000 initiative, which called for a .4% tax increase to expand bus service and build a light rail line. The ballot measure was approved in March 2000. Semmens' report includes a number of fact sheets, including *A Declining Industry, A Financial Disaster, A Blight on the Economy, and A Failure Everywhere*.

Robert Poole is the founder and president of the **Reason Foundation**. He and others at the Reason Foundation have published detailed criticisms of the Los Angeles MTA's rail projects and on transit investments in general. Mr. Poole came to Phoenix before the 1997 referendum specifically to attack the proposed regional transit system at seminars and on the radio.

John Charles of the **Cascade Policy Institute** in Oregon began as an environmentalist and has evolved into a libertarian who questions the benefits of transit and planned growth. At the Cascade Policy Institute he focuses on environmental, transportation, and land-use policy. His recommendations include "Local transit taxes should be abolished, Oregon's ties to federal government transit funding should be terminated, and publicly-owned transit assets should be auctioned off. Stop any further spending on publicly owned urban rail systems." He also travels to spread the word: the *Phoenix Business Journal* reported that "... Charles was invited to Phoenix by the Goldwater Institute."

Peter Samuel, editor of the self-published **Toll Roads Newsletter**, wrote a piece for the Reason Foundation, which makes the case one can build one's way out of congestion. Mr. Samuel is a libertarian and an advocate of building toll roads and converting existing highways to toll roads as a solution to transportation problems. His past work includes writings for the Cato Institute promoting highway privatization, and he is also associated with the Sutherland Institute. He joined the fray over Salt Lake City's light rail proposal, arguing that the absence of rail has been a reason for growth in the West.

Other main players include **Peter Gordon** and **Harry Richardson** of the University of Southern California, **Charles Lave** of the University of California at Irvine, **Steven Hayward** of the Commonwealth Foundation in Pennsylvania, and others.

Other Potential Sources of Criticism or Support

There are numerous interests in any local community that can serve as either supporters or opponents of your campaign, depending on its structure and the local situation. As you are considering a strategy to deal with critics, analyze the potential criticisms from the following areas and develop a strategy to either combat their arguments or bring them into the fold.

Environmental Groups

It is not unusual to have an environmental group oppose a transportation initiative, especially if it is multimodal in nature. Many times, these groups support public transportation; however, they view road expansion as a detriment to the environment. It is important to gauge how much leverage these groups have in your community and determine a course of action to respond to them, whether it be adjusting your expenditure plan or finding ways to have them remain neutral on the subject.

Business Groups

It is usually your local Chamber of Commerce that will weigh in and, in most cases, support your proposal. However, at times, particular businesses or business groups that have something to gain or lose will independently weigh in on the subject. Again, it is important to identify who will be impacted by your initiative and assess how they will respond.

The Road Lobby

The Road Lobby is also a potential source for support since so many transit initiatives include funding for roads.

The American Highway Users Alliance, founded by General Motors in the 1940s, is the lobbying arm of the automotive and highway industries and works to promote the interest of its members.

The **American Road and Transportation Builders Association** (ARTBA) is the main lobbying arm of asphalt, concrete, steel, and engineering companies. While their members mainly build roads, some also build transit systems, so their rhetoric tends to be more pro-road and less anti-transit. In 1999 they wrote a rebuttal to STPP's *Fix It First* report on road repair and reconstruction, which argues that new roads should be pursued with equal fervor as system preservation. They also issued a response to the Environmental Defense Fund's lawsuit over transportation and air quality conformity issues in the Atlanta region.

The **American Automobile Association** (AAA) is best known for its excellent road service, and is primarily a service provider to its subscribers. In addition, the AAA also has a long history of lobbying for more roads.

Elected Officials

It may seem easy to identify the key political opponents of your initiative, but it is wise to spend some additional resources to identify who they are and what impact they can have on your campaign. Gone are the days when political supporters of public transportation could be based on party lines. Partisan lines begin to gray as the technique of combining all modes of transportation into one package gets used more often. Additionally, with the rising popularity of light rail, and the corresponding use of regional ballot initiatives, the friction between urban and suburban politicos can increase—often to see who can get the most benefit out of the initiative. Again, identify early, assess comprehensively, and respond accordingly. In many cases, local elected officials can provide strong support for your effort.

The **U.S. Conference of Mayors** (www.usmayors.org) is the official nonpartisan organization of the nation's 1183 cities with populations of 30,000 or more-each city is represented by its chief elected official, the mayor. The purpose of the Conference of Mayors is to promote the development of effective national urban/suburban policy; strengthen federal-city relationships; ensure that federal policy meets urban needs; and create a forum to share ideas and information.

The **National League of Cities** (www.nlc.org) is the oldest and largest national organization representing municipal governments throughout the country. Working in partnership with state municipal leagues, the NLC serves as a resource to and an advocate for the more than 18,000 cities, villages, and towns.

The **National Association of Counties** (www.naco.org) is a national organization that represents the nation's 3066 counties, representing over 80 percent of the nation's population. NACo is a full-service organization that provides an extensive line of services including legislative, research, technical, and public affairs assistance, as well as enterprise services to its members.

The **Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations** (www.ampo.org) is the transportation advocate for metropolitan regions and is committed to enhancing MPO's abilities to improve metropolitan transportation systems. The AMPO is a nonprofit, membership organization serving the needs and interests of Metropolitan Planning Organizations nationwide.

What are the Common Arguments?

This section provides some of the most common arguments used during campaigns for public transportation.

- General Anti-Transit Arguments
- Anti-Light Rail Arguments
- Anti-Tax Arguments

Beneath each argument you will find some popular facts refuting them. While this should not be the end all of research conducted to invalidate such claims, it provides a good basis from which to start. Several reports to read about anti-transit myths and the facts to refute them include *Twelve Anti-Transit Myths: A Conservative Critique* by Paul Weyrich and Bill Lind and *A Blueprint for Countering the Claims of Transit Critics* by Sam Zimmerman.

Additional resources can be found at Smart Growth America website (www.smartgrowthamerica.org/responding.html) and at the end of the section. For a database of facts and figures on public transportation relevant to your community, check out the CFTE benefits database and calculator (www.cfte.org/calculator.asp).

General Anti-Transit Argument

Only 2% of Trips are on Light Rail

- This statistic is not an accurate method of determining the success of light rail. It is not a measure of transit or commuter trips. Rather, this figure accounts for all trips in the region, 24 hours a day, including freight trips.
- A more accurate assessment can be made by looking at the percentage of "transit-competitive" trips (trips that are competitive to the automobile) in both time and convenience. Transit-competitive trips are generally between 22-40% in favor of transit. In areas that are not served by transit, the only option is to drive, which in part explains the high percentage of commutes by automobile.
- The U.S. has over 8.2 million lane miles of roads. Only 4.3% of those roads are served by transit. Additionally, transit buses or parallel passenger rail lines run on only 168,603 miles.

Transit Funding Would be Better Spent on Building Highways

- Studies have repeatedly shown that adding lane miles to roads does not significantly relieve congestion. New roadways quickly fill to capacity and show little effect on surrounding arteries. A study by Xeuhao Chu[8], a professor at University of California at Berkeley, states that increasing roadway miles by 1% "would reduce [congestion] by one-eleventh of a percent on freeways." Further, studies show that the investment of time lost in traffic due to the construction and expansion of roads does not have a significant return.[9]

Transportation Funding Should be Spent Proportionally Based on Mode

- Nearly 40 million Americans, almost 20% of the population, use transit on a regular basis.[10] On the federal level, transit receives approximately 20% of available transportation funds.
- Since the completion of the Interstate highway system and passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991, there has been a significant shift in investment priorities. The past forty years has seen a massive investment in road infrastructure, but now the focus is on transit infrastructure and highway maintenance. If market demand is any indicator of where investment should be made, one need only look at the demand for federal New Starts transit funding. By some estimates, based on available federal funds, there is a twenty-year backlog of requests for transit projects. In addition, transit investment leads to transit growth. When transit trips are competitive with the automobile, there are a large percentage of people who will choose transit.
- A 2003 survey by the Surface Transportation Policy Project indicates that 66% of Americans see improving public transportation as the solution to congestion. [11]

Transit Works Only in High-Density Areas

- Critics rarely distinguish between vehicular density and population density. The goal of transit is to reduce vehicular densities on the road.
- Density is becoming less and less important as park-and-ride facilities become more integrated with new and existing systems. Transit can also work as the backbone of a system that connects two suburban hubs of activity. An example would be traveling to a rail station by way of bus or driving to a park-and-ride lot, and upon arriving to the station nearest to one's destination, taking a shuttle, cab, or bus.

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8 Xeuhao Chu, Gordon J. Fielding, and Bruce Lamar, *Measuring Transit Performance Using Data Envelopment Analysis*. (UC-Berkeley, 1990), www.its.uci.edu/its/publications/papers/ITS/UCI-ITS-WP-90-1.pdf.

9 STPP, *Road Work Ahead: Is Construction Worth the Wait?* (1999), www.transact.org/report.asp?id=166.

10 APTA, *Facts on Public Transportation*, www.publictransportation.org/facts/index.asp#Who.

11 STPP and Belden Russonello & Stewart, *Americans' Attitudes Toward Walking and Creating Better Walking Communities*, (April 2003), www.transact.org/report.asp?id=205.

- This is only one way to look at the fact that transportation and development go hand in hand. The opposite is also true. Transit creates development. In an earlier America, towns developed at the crossroads of most road and rail hubs. Due to the permanent nature of rail, such transit lines are likely to cause development.
- Defined broadly, transit can serve as the lifeblood of rural communities by providing, for example:
  - Van pools
  - Rural bus service
  - Commuter Rail

Transit Ridership has Decreased

- Actual ridership numbers collected from transit agencies nationwide by the American Public Transportation Association indicate that transit ridership nearly doubled from 1990 to 2000.
- Indeed transit's share of trips declined from the end World War II, when increased car ownership and new zoning regulations caused a shift in transit habits. However, since 1991, transit has hit a twenty-year high and is on the rise. For five straight years now, transit ridership nationally has grown faster than highway use. Between 1995 to 2003, trips made on public transportation in the U.S. went up almost 22%, while highway use increased only 18.9%. [12]
- The recent increase in ridership is remarkable since Americans have far more access to an automobile than they do transit. The U.S. has over 8.2 million lane miles of roads. Only 4.3% of those roads are served by transit.[13]

Americans Love Their Cars

- Americans love cars as a symbol of freedom and prosperity. As our landscape and our economy changes so do these symbols. Cars no longer set us free if they force us to sit still in traffic and cut us off from the people and places we are going to see. This is increasingly the case in neighborhoods surrounding many cities, not just during rush hours, but during off-peak hours, as well.
- This is an evasive argument, and one that gets used quite often. What should be acknowledged is that light rail and other forms of transit are effective ways to deal with rush hour travel demand.
- Per capita transit ridership increases as a rail transit system expands. For example, rail transit ridership in both San Diego and Portland is growing rapidly as the system expands in those areas. From 2003 to 2004, San Diego had a 12.89% increase and Portland had a 12.83% increase.[14] Experience indicates that North Americans will increase transit ridership in response to incentives, such as transit service improvements, fare discounts, parking cash out, and transit-oriented development.[15]

Transit Agencies Should be Privatized and Operate on Free Market Competition

- This would be great, if there were a free market left in the transportation sector. The fact is the free market did not create the decline in transit ridership or the over dependence on the automobile. Policies and restrictions such as the massive investment in the Interstate Highway System and the mortgage interest deduction on single-family homes are partly to blame. As any free market economist will say, a free market demands a level playing field. To achieve it, **all** subsidies (highways, automobiles, etc.) would need to be relinquished.

12 Statistics from Jeff Neff (Senior Policy Research, American Public Transportation Association), March 2005.

13 STPP, *Transit Growing Faster Than Driving*, (May 29, 2002), www.transact.org/library/decoder/Transit_VMTDecoder.pdf.

14 APTA, *Light Rail Transit Ridership Report Third Quarter 2004*, (December 22, 2004), www.apta.com/research/stats/ridershp/riderep/documents/04q3lr.pdf.

15 Todd Litman, Victoria Transport Policy Institute, *Evaluating Rail Transit Criticism*, (December 4, 2004), www.vtpi.org/railcrit.pdf.

Transit-Oriented Developments are Not Conducive to Retail Establishments

- On the contrary, developers view train stations as prime locations for retail and residential development. Their permanence and proximity to convenient transportation make the decision to develop within walking distance a no-brainer. In Washington D.C., Virginia, St. Louis, San Francisco, and Dallas, rail projects have consistently offered a dollar-for-dollar return on transit investment in the form of residential and retail development.
- The value per square foot of commercial space near Metrorail stations in Northern Virginia has jumped more than 600 percent since the first station opened in 1977.[16]
- In Atlanta, $70 billion in apartments, offices, and other developments have been built near the rapid transit rail lines. Around Washington D.C., 40% of new building space in the 1980s, worth $3 billion, was built within walking distance of a Metro stop.[17]

Anti-Light Rail Arguments

Transit Ridership Forecasts for Proposed Rail Projects Are Exaggerated

- Since 1990 light rail ridership has nearly doubled from 175 million trips to 336 million in 2001. In fact, 11 out of 12 new rail systems built after 1980 in the U.S. have added new lines since their opening due to increased demand.
- In the mid-1980s light rail project ridership estimates were greatly exaggerated; this was to be expected when there was little on which to base estimates. New regulations and oversight by the Federal Transit Administration and experiential data has solved this problem, and in most cases, have caused underestimates of ridership levels. For example, Baltimore's light rail has seen their ridership increase seven-fold since 1992.
- When planned and implemented correctly, projections and estimates can be accurate.

  For example:

  Salt Lake City's light rail system, TRAX, projected initial weekday ridership of 14,000. Actual ridership for first 4 months was 19,000 per weekday. Saturday ridership was higher at 25,000. TRAX also came in a year ahead of schedule and $23 million under budget.

  When **Portland's** MAX system opened in 1998, critics argued the 2005 ridership projections were overly optimistic. MAX surpassed its 2005 projections by its second anniversary, carrying 71,000 riders per day.

Light Rail Cannot Displace the Same or a Greater Number of Automobile Passengers

- This argument inaccurately compares the capacity of highways and rail transit to move passengers. A look at any transportation engineering guide will tell otherwise. According to the *Highway Capacity Manual*[18], highway operations are described as Level of Service (LOS), ranging from LOS A to LOS F. Peak highway capacity is typically regarded as LOS E (2,000 passenger cars per hour per lane). If you multiply that number by average vehicle occupancy (which averages 1.25 persons), you get 2,500 persons per lane per hour on a highway. For transit, a typical 6-car train can carry 750 passengers. Running at 20 trains per hour, per direction, that equates to 30,000 passengers. It would take a 12-lane freeway going in one direction to equate the same amount of capacity of one light rail line.[19]
- Beware; critics like to make inaccurate comparisons between maximum highway capacities and actual light rail ridership numbers.

[16] Virginia Transit Association Online, *Transit Benefits: Did You Know*, www.vatransit.com/benefits/economic.htm.

[17] The Global Development Research Center, *Some Economic Benefits of Sustainable Transportation*. "Encourages High Value Land Use," (2003), www.gdrc.org/uem/sustran/econ-benefits.html.

[18] *Transportation Research Board*, Highway Capacity Manual, (2000), http://gulliver.trb.org/news/blurb_detail.asp?id=1166.

[19] Valley Metro Rail, Light Rail Information, www.valleymetro.org/rail/whatisrail.

Bus is Cheaper than Light Rail

- In fact, buses cost significantly more to operate than rail. The Federal Transit Administration's 2001 National Transit Database[20] shows an average operating cost per passenger mile on light rail of 45¢, compared to 55¢ on buses. Let's look at a few specific examples:

  St. Louis has an operating cost per passenger trip of $1.18 on light rail, compared to $2.31 on buses.

  In **Portland**, operating costs per boarding are $1.40 on light rail, $1.67 on buses.

  In **Los Angeles**, operating costs per passenger mile are 30¢ on light rail, 57¢ on buses.

- About 80% of the cost operating any transit system is labor. Buses produce 100,000 passenger miles for every employee annually. Compare this to 206,329 miles per employee for light rail, 294,008 for subway rail, and 399,778 for commuter rail. Note that when the goal is a mix of transportation modes to meet all needs, buses provide the needed routing flexibility.
- To be fair, it should also be noted that capital costs are significantly higher for light rail than for buses. Capital costs for an initial bus system range from $1-8 million per mile compared to light rail at $10-30 million per mile.[21] Also, buses do not offer the same benefits of light rail in terms of increased economic development, reduced air pollution, and higher passenger attraction.

Anti-Tax Arguments

Transit Funding is Highly Subsidized

All transportation is subsidized. "Funding" for roads subsidizes the ability to conveniently drive an automobile (roughly 80% of all federal funding goes roads). Only 20% of federal funding gets allocated towards transit. According to the Office of Technology Assessment the annual cost for automobile users ranges from $2.1 trillion to $2.9 trillion. User fees cover between $1.7 trillion and $1.9 trillion. This means highways receive an annual subsidy of somewhere between $439 billion and $1 trillion. According to the American Public Transportation Association, taxpayers contributed roughly $17 billion annually (year 2000 dollars) to transit.[22]

We Shouldn't Tax Everyone: Transit is for Wealthy Downtown Commuters

- In actuality, according to the American Public Transportation Association, 83% of people who take transit make less than $50,000 annually.[23]
- Initial start-ups for light rail generally focus on the downtown corridors primarily because the downtown is where there is the greatest demand. As service expands, suburb-to-suburb service emerges.
- Finally, it is important to note that transit benefits everyone, even those who don't use it. As Paul Weyrich and Bill Lind note, transit can reduce the need to purchase a second vehicle, transit can aid in conservation, transit can benefit non-riders by reducing traffic congestion, and rail transit raises property values.[24]

[20] Federal Transit Administration, *National Transit Database*, (1999), www.ntdprogram.com/NTD/NTDData.nsf/DataTableInformation?OpenForm&2001.
[21] International Energy Agency, *Bus Systems For The Future*, (2001), www.iea.org/textbase/publications/newfreedetail2.asp?F_PUBS_ID=472.
[22] APTA, 2000 *Public Transportation Fact Book*, www.apta.com/research/stats/.
[23] APTA, *Americans In Transit*, www.apta.com/research/stats/ridershp/income.cfm.
[24] Paul Weyrich and Bill Lind, Free Congress Foundation, *How Transit Benefits People Who Do Not Ride It: A Conservative Inquiry*, (2003), www.apta.com/research/info/online/how_transit_benefits.cfm.

Where Will Their Message be Heard?

Your opponents may wait until the last few remaining weeks of your campaign to make their presence known. Not like with your campaign, your opponents need not submit financial records until they have officially organized. What this means is that they can coordinate fundraising efforts weeks and months before they actually receive any money, and, in rapid succession, officially organize and conduct a media blitz. Be prepared.

Expect the unexpected.

> **Responding to Critics**
>
> Critics to transit initiative campaigns invariably will suggest you really don't have a plan-that you haven't thought it out and you are not really serious about what your plan. They will also suggest your proposal is just a way to give the politicians a bunch of money. In the 2000 election, the **City of Phoenix** faced these challenges with their **Transit 2000** initiative and responded in a unique and powerful way. For the first time in a U.S. election, the maps of the transit plan and the timeline in delivering the system, of the bus improvements and bus transit improvements were put in the voting booth so people could see exactly what they were voting on. There was no question when the opposition attacked about what the plan was. They addressed the opposition every step of the way and won two to one.
>
> From 2003 Transit Initiatives Conference, Mayor Skip Rimsza, City of Phoenix

Media

Remember, a well-organized opposition has just as many resources as your campaign to get their message out. A simple look at your opposition's financial records will clue you in as to how much paid media they will acquire. It is no longer uncommon to see opponents of transportation initiatives produce one or several television ads, especially if it is a large funding initiative.

Your opponents will not stop with just paid media. If your metropolitan area has a right-leaning newspaper, you can expect your opposition to be lobbying their editorial board. This is where your pro-active strategy helps you. By meeting with every editorial board in your community early in your campaign, you can identify those editors that may come out against you and develop a response strategy.

Internet

A key strategy these opposition groups have adopted to multiply their effectiveness is the aggressive use of information technology. These groups have made their reports, draft op-eds, fact sheets, and other resources easily available on the Internet for reading, printing, or downloading. These techniques, including sophisticated Internet sites, toll-free numbers, and fax-on-demand services, have been widely adopted by many conservative think tanks as a way to spread the word about right-wing causes. Having a broad coalition of your own to multiply your message is a good technique for countering the opposition.

Events

Many times your opposition will host a rally or publicity event in your community, and many times this will be advertised. These events may involve politicos that have opposed your initiative or "hired guns" that are flown in to decry the benefits of transit. If at all possible, try to stage a counter-event at the same time or at least contact the local transportation reporters for your newspaper to offer a response.

How Can You Counteract That Message (Or Better Yet, Get in Front of It?)

A well thought-out campaign plan has a pro-active strategy to address the critics. It is a good idea to develop this strategy as early as possible for several reasons. First, while every campaign inherently has some unexpected surprises, the last thing your proposal needs is an unexpected critique and insufficient resources to rebut that criticism.

There is an old adage that states "It's easier to hunt a standing elephant than a stampeding one."

Your strategy should incorporate identification of your critics and a concise plan to address them. Additionally, you want to pick your fights. Don't let the critics bog you down with arguments that are not salient to your voters. You want to ensure that your responses do not detract from your "message." Oftentimes, the most effective way to refute these arguments is to stay on message and be consistent. Your efforts to counteract the critics' messages will be a key component of your marketing plan (discussed in Section 4).

Following is a general overview of techniques related specifically to critics.

- Establish Your Credibility
- Use Coalitions and Other Groups to Relay Your Message
- Work with Editorial Boards
- Arrange Independent Reports
- Use Hired Guns
- Maintain Websites

Establish Your Credibility

Letting the public know that your relevant agencies are good stewards of taxpayer dollars is a lengthy process.

This process begins months, if not years, before your campaign begins.The techniques used to establish your credibility can take many forms, including:

- Annual internal audits of the agency or agencies that are made widely available.
- Formal and informal events to showcase recent improvements.
- Pitching occasional stories to newspaper editors.
- Customer appreciation events or discounts.
- Attending and participating at public meetings.

Improve Your Image Through Improvement

TriMet in Portland took a number of important steps to improve their image and boost voter confidence before starting an initiative campaign to expand their light rail system. In an effort to increase services without raising fares or payroll taxes (as well as maintain its 82% public approval rating), TriMet implemented an internal **Productivity Improvement Process** campaign. The PIP process built an institutional framework to continually explore areas within the agency where TriMet could capitalize on new technologies and make improvements leading to increased efficiencies and better service. This included feedback from riders.

Use Coalitions and Other Groups to Relay Your Message

Why should your campaign or agency do all the work? Not only does using your coalition save time and money, but it also shows the public that there is widespread support for your initiative. Additionally, the redundancy of your messages amongst your coalition members gives your campaign consistency, which is hard to refute.

Work with Editorial Boards

Regardless of your newspaper(s) political ilk, it is wise to sit down with the editorial board to discuss the importance of your proposal. Even if they do not support it, you may be able to convince them to stay neutral.

Reach Voters through Editorial Boards

Experience has shown that when voters are unfamiliar with initiative issues, newspaper endorsements carry a much greater weight than they do in candidate elections. So the [proponents] went after the editorial boards with a carefully chosen set of arguments and advocates.

Broder, *Democracy Derailed: Initiative Campaigns and the Power of Money*[25]

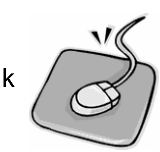
Arrange Independent Reports

Your campaign has an immediate and identifiable benefit to be gained from voter approval of your initiative, and this can sometimes reduce the credibility of reports that are written by those close to the initiative. Having an independent supportive organization author a review of your proposal can increase your initiative's credibility.

Use Hired Guns

There are numerous people who are available and willing to speak about the merits of your proposal.

The CFTE maintains a speaker's bureau of professionals (www.cfte.org/news/speakers.asp) who are familiar with the complexities of public transportation issues and are available to speak about your campaign.



Maintain Websites

See the Internet Strategy portion of Section Four for more information regarding using websites.

There is really no other resource available that can accommodate a concerned citizen seeking information about your campaign—24 hours a day, 7 days a week—than the Internet. Most campaigns have at least one website that clearly and effectively lays out the intricacies of your proposal.

[25] David S. Broder, *Democracy Derailed: Initiative Campaigns and the Power of Money* (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 2000), 120.

Additional Resources

Organization	Item	Website
The Center for Transportation Excellence	Responding to Critics section	www.cfte.org/critics
Wendell Cox Consultancy	Critic's website	www.publicpurpose.com
Thoreau Institute	Critic's website	www.ti.org
U.S. Conference of Mayors	Elected official website	www.usmayors.org
National League of Cities	Elected official website	www.nlc.org
National Association of Counties	Elected official website	www.naco.org
Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations	Elected official website	www.ampo.org
Paul Weyrich and Bill Lind, Free Congress Foundation	*Twelve Anti-Transit Myths: A Conservative Critique*	www.apta.com/research/info/online/documents/weyrich3.pdf
Sam Zimmerman	*A Blueprint for Countering the Claims of Transit Critics*	www.smartgrowthamerica.org/critics_blueprint.html
Smart Growth America	List of publications on Responding to the Critics	www.smartgrowthamerica.org/responding.html
Center for Transportation Excellence	Public Transportation Database and Calculator	www.cfte.org/calculator.asp
Center for Transportation Excellence	Speaker's Bureau of Professionals	www.cfte.org/news/speakers.asp
Parsons Brinckerhoff Quade & Douglas, Inc.	*Responding to Wendell Cox: A Report by G.B. Arrington*	www.cfte.org/images/response_cox.pdf
Xeuhao Chu, Gordon J. Fielding, and Bruce Lamar. UC-Berkeley	*Measuring Transit Performance Using Data Envelopment Analysis*	www.its.uci.edu/its/publications/papers/ITS/UCI-ITS-WP-90-1.pdf
Surface Transportation Policy Project	*Road Work Ahead: Is Construction Worth the Wait?*	www.transact.org/report.asp?id=166
American Public Transportation Association	Facts on public transportation	www.publictransportation.org/facts/index.asp#Who
Surface Transportation Policy Project and Belden Russonello & Stewart	*Americans' Attitudes Toward Walking and Creating Better Walking Communities*	www.transact.org/report.asp?id=205

Organization	Item	Website
American Public Transportation Association	Statistics	www.apta.org
Surface Transportation Policy Project	*Transit Growing Faster Than Driving, 2002*	www.transact.org/library/decoder/Transit_VMTDecoder.pdf
American Public Transportation Association	*Light Rail Transit Ridership Report, Third Quarter 2004*	www.apta.com/research/stats/ridershp/riderep/documents/04q3lr.pdf
Todd Litman. Victoria Transport Policy Institute	*Evaluating Rail Transit Criticism*	www.vtpi.org/railcrit.pdf
Virginia Transit Association Online	*Transit Benefits. Did You Know*	www.vatransit.com/benefits/economic.htm
The Global Development Research Center	*Some Economic Benefits of Sustainable Transportation*	www.gdrc.org/uem/sustran/econ-benefits.html
Transportation Research Board	*2000 Highway Capacity Manual*	http://gulliver.trb.org/news/blurb_detail.asp?id=1166
Valley Metro Rail	*Light Rail information*	www.valleymetro.org/rail/whatisrail
Federal Transit Administration	*National Transit Database*	www.ntdprogram.com/NTD/NTDData.nsf/DataTableInformation?OpenForm&2001
International Energy Agency	Bus Systems For The Future	www.iea.org/textbase/publications/newfreedetail2.asp?F_PUBS_ID=472
American Public Transportation Association	*2000 Public Transportation Fact Book*	www.apta.com/research/stats/
American Public Transportation Association	*Americans In Transit*	www.apta.com/research/stats/ridershp/income.cfm
Paul Weyrich and Bill Lind, Free Congress Foundation	*How Transit Benefits People Who Do Not Ride It: A Conservative Inquiry, 2003*	www.apta.com/research/info/online/how_transit_benefits.cfm

You can link to these resources on the accompanying CD.

Section Six:
Election Day Activities (and Beyond!)

This section focuses on your activities for Election Day and after. Develop a strategy for Election Day and post-election activities well before Election Day. This strategy should identify activities to be performed and the specific roles and responsibilities of each campaign member. Also include GOTV activities that can be performed days or weeks before the election.

In this section we look at:

- Planning the Get Out the Vote (GOTV) Campaign
- After the Polls Close
- Celebrating Your Victory
- Delivering on Your Promise

Planning the Get Out the Vote (GOTV) Campaign

Determine what needs to be done, when it needs to be done, and who is going to do it. Do you need to produce flyers, banners, brochures, etc? Identify who will be producing these and when the flyers need to be ready. Who will distribute them and how? These are the kind of questions that you need to incorporate into your GOTV preparations. Keep in mind that the agency will not be able to get directly involved in urging voters to go to the polls in support. This is why a strong campaign and extensive coalition building is critical to your success.

Election Day Has Become "Just the Last Day to Vote"

Depending on when and where your campaign takes place, the election process takes many forms. Throughout the U.S., the election process is undergoing a major face-lift, one that now allows nearly three quarters of the country's voters to cast their ballots before Election Day. The number of states allowing some form of early voting without the excuse of travel, illness, or age has tripled since 1996. Your strategy should incorporate this emerging trend and plan for activities well in advance of Election Day.

Needs Assessment - Why Aren't More People Voting?

More importantly, why haven't YOUR people voted in previous elections? Regardless of the size of your campaign, there is information available that shows voting behavior on the precinct level. This information often presents ethnicity, number of registered voters, average household income levels, and previous voting results. Use this information to prioritize your efforts.

The most common reasons why more people don't vote are:

- Not enough information (about how to vote, about the issue)
- Too busy
- Lack of transportation
- Not registered

Aside from a "too busy" excuse, your campaign can alleviate all these problems with your GOTV activities.

Use Your Coalition

Financial support is not the only activity you should require of your coalition.

In-kind services can be best utilized during the last few weeks of the campaign. Early in your campaign identify what volunteer activities your supporters are willing to undertake. An example might include a bakery that offers a free doughnut to those who voted.

Specific GOTV Activities

Reminders. There are a number of ways that you and your coalition can remind your constituents to vote on Election Day. You need not send actual letters through snail-mail, especially in today's electronic age. An effective way to remind people is through e-mail.

Phone calls. If your budget allows for it, an effective way to reiterate your message is through a simple scripted phone call message to voters. This is another great opportunity to utilize in-kind services from your coalition—have them call potential voters from their own phone systems or consider an automated dialing system.

Door-to-door campaigns. While this technique requires a lot of person-power, it is also one of the most effective means of conveying your message. This also requires training to ensure your message is consistent among volunteers, but the training is rather simple and straightforward, and you can utilize your coalition for these activities.

Postcard mailings highlighting key issues of local interest. A tried-and-true effective means of getting support is to lay out your plan in a direct-mailing brochure. Most campaigns budget to allow for the costs associated with this technique. Depending on the size and other limitations, you can go into great detail about your initiative on your direct-mailing brochure including: a map of the proposed routes, the financial plan, the environmental and social benefits, your plan's vision, and who is affected by your plan. Unlike brochures that are personally handed out, mailings should attempt to be "flashy."

Voter registration drive (if it's not too late). While not exactly an Election Day activity, it does fall under GOTV activities. Your campaign should coordinate with other organizations and others within your coalition that have similar voter registration drives. This helps alleviate duplication of efforts. Be sure to understand and build into your plan all local deadlines for registration.

Voter information brochures highlighting candidates and issues. These materials can be similar to your direct mailings, or not. Remember, it need not be glossy and colorful to be effective. It should, however, incorporate as much information as possible and be just as appealing.

Carpooling service. One of the most common reasons for not voting is a lack of transportation. Those who use lack of transportation as an excuse for not voting will use your service, should your transit initiative be successful at the ballot box. If possible, your campaign should organize vanpools or carpools to get this core constituency to the polls. Initial target research should also identify who needs transportation on Election Day. If your initiative is during a campaign cycle, there is a great progressive online resource to coordinate vanpools (www.drivingvotes.org).

Walking escort service to polls. While a much more labor-intensive exercise, a group walk to the polling booth gives you one more opportunity to deliver your message to registered voters. Remember, you can only walk with them up to 100 feet of the polling location, as all states prohibit campaigning within 100 feet of polling locations. You cannot exchange money or other currency to encourage people to vote.

Map of polling sites. Include a map of the polling sites in any direct mailing or voter information brochures that your campaign produces.

Mock polls to help voters become comfortable with the process. This exercise can be extremely useful for those who have never voted before. Investigate to see if there are opportunities to collaborate efforts with other organizations interested in this technique.

www.HelpingAmericansVote.org. This is a nonpartisan service that associations and corporations can offer their employees or members to increase participation in the election. This service helps voters take advantage of mail-in voting (absentee ballot) and early voting. The service also provides voter registration information using the new national voter registration mail-in process.

After The Polls Close

Tracking the Vote

Most city or county board of elections posts the election results on their respective websites, which you can generally find through a search engine like Google. It is generally a good idea to check these periodically on Election Day. In some cases, you will not have to wait until the final vote is counted to determine whether your initiative succeeded or failed. However, with the increased usage of mail-in and absentee ballots, don't be surprised if it takes a few days or weeks to reach a final conclusion.

Counting Absentee Ballots

Such was the case in **2004** in **San Diego**. Their initiative, **TransNet** had a close race and it took over two weeks to count the nearly 300,000 provisional and absentee ballots and conclude with a victory.

Whether you win or lose, it is important to know exactly how your constituents voted. Find out how the affected counties and precincts voted. These results help you identify what adjustments to your plan you need to make when you present your initiative again.

What To Do When You Lose

Many public transportation initiatives go to the voters two or three times before they succeed, especially if there is a rail component involved.

OK. So your initiative did not fair well at the ballot box. Don't worry. Remember that what you and your coalition do now is crucial. In order to ready for the next campaign you need to:

- Identify
- Assess
- Respond

Identify

Here is where tracking the vote is critical. Knowing exactly why your voters did not approve your initiative aids you in determining what components of your plan need to be changed. You will have already known which groups and organizations opposed your initiative, and why they opposed it prior to the vote. You can also identify particular groups of voters by doing exit polls, and analyzing the final votes on the precinct level. You can generally expect that the suburban precincts will have lower approval ratings.

However, don't immediately assume that your plan needs drastic changing. There are many anomalous reasons why people vote a particular way. A particular influential group within your community may have had problems with the timing of the initiative. Or an organization that felt excluded from the process may have opposed it purely for political payback. Including this group with the next round of campaign preparations may be all that is required.

Assess

After you have identified those groups that opposed your initiative, you should decide how influential they were in the outcome of the vote. Were they purely an anomaly and therefore not expected to return for the next campaign? Or are they a mainstay, and can be expected to return? What elements of your plan did they oppose, and can a compromise be reached?

Respond

One of the most important things to determine is what part of your plan needs to be changed to create the right mix of supporters to succeed next time? Don't try to please everyone, but also don't keep your doors closed. The more time you wait to respond to these groups, the less sincere your approach will seem.

Plan on at least meeting with each of these groups in the weeks and months directly following your unsuccessful campaign. Your goal here is to identify their priorities, and gauge their level of commitment to become involved with the process. Additionally, you want to find out what their political vulnerabilities are and how your coalition can capitalize on it.

The activities that you undertake during this "regrouping" phase are unlimited. And since the activities are not bound by campaign regulations, the agency can spend its own money to host the activities. Some of the activities that you can invite your stakeholders to might include:

- Open house for comments at a local café
- Guided tour of particular bottlenecks within the region
- Tour of another city with similar investments
- Guided tour of internal operations of relevant agencies
- Online forums to discuss particular facets of the proposal

Assess After a Failure

While the 2004 proposal in **Bend, Oregon**, was not successful, **Mike Reilly**, the campaign chair, says that before another attempt is made, the city has to create a clear plan for the transit district and its leadership. "Transit would need to really be a priority, and the necessary background work must be done."

A primary reason the initiative failed was a lack of organization and identifiable leadership. The initiative would have set up a transit district and a funding mechanism for that district-meaning taxpayers would be giving money to an unidentified leadership. The transit district was not clearly defined, thus taxpayers could not determine whether the project was worthwhile. One lesson here is to keep initiatives simple and clear.

Celebrating Your Victory

Congratulations. You won. However, the countless number of hours and achievements that you have contributed should not be overshadowed by the achievements of your coalition. The methods by which you thank them can be as formal or informal as you like, just make sure they know that their hard work is appreciated. There will undoubtedly be a time when you need to use them again.

As with those campaigns that were not as successful as yours, it is still a good idea to address the concerns of your opponents. Whether it is a simple letter that lets them know that you recognize their concerns or an ongoing open-door policy, you should welcome their suggestions and concerns. Again, as a public agency, you are "always on target" and should always look to the future.

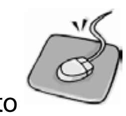
Delivering Your Promise(s)

So, the public just agreed to tax themselves and give you a huge chunk of money. How do you convey to them that you are, and will continue to be, good stewards of their tax dollars? How do you let them know that their dollars are being spent on the projects that were promised during your campaign? You do that by keeping them informed.

Website

There is perhaps no other low cost, effective medium than providing an informative website that keeps viewers informed on the progress of your initiative. The site can include information like an overview of the initiative, completion dates, maps of expanded routes, descriptions of the funding mechanisms and tax amounts that have been collected, relevant agencies involved, listing of coalition members, and additional contact information.

Minneapolis/St. Paul Metro Transit Website



The **Minneapolis/St. Paul Metro Transit** website (**www.metrotransit.org**) provides an excellent example of a post-win information resource. It provides is up to date information on newly opened stations; resources on how to use the bus and rail systems; an interactive map of the regional system; and information on improvements.

Citizen Oversight Committee

The creation of a citizen oversight committee may be legally required depending on how your proposal was written. Certainly, in the interest of passing the initiative, the popularity of this technique has grown in recent years. Should such a committee exist, show the public that it is a contributing member of the overall decision-making processes. Post the activities of this committee on the agency's website or pitch a story about them to the media are just two examples.

Citizens' Independent Transit Trust

In 2002 **Miami-Dade** County created a **Citizens' Independent Transit Trust** (CITT) to oversee the **People's Transportation Plan**. This independent transit trust is a very powerful citizens' committee that reviews and approves every part of the transit program before it goes to the county commission and has certain powers over the use and expenditure of proceeds of the county transit system surtax. The CITT has 15 members are residents of Miami-Dade County and possess outstanding reputations for civic involvement, integrity, responsibility, and business and/or professional ability and experience or interest in the fields of transportation mobility improvements or operations, or land use planning.

Earned Media

Sometimes, your web presence will not be enough to adequately convey your post election messages. This is where earned media can help you. When trying to figure out what story to pitch to reporters, try to center your pitch on a particular activity. Such activities can include groundbreaking ceremonies, implementation of a new route, recent ridership increases, or some type of human related story.

Public Meetings

This is an opportunity to cater to the elected officials that helped you pass your initiative. This is also where you remain relevant in their minds. These meetings can include neighborhood get-togethers, city council meetings, state DOT meetings, industry conferences, and county fairs.

Annual Audit

This may also be legally required depending on how your proposal was written. At any rate, annual audits are not uncommon to most public agencies. If your audit reveals internal efficiencies and other cost saving initiatives, it is not a bad idea to pitch this to the public.

Additional Resources

Organization	Item	Website
DrivingVotes.org	Carpooling Service	www.drivingvotes.org
HelpingAmericansVote.org	Increase voter participation service	www.HelpingAmericansVote.org
Google	Search engine	www.google.com
Minneapolis/St. Paul Metro Transit	Website example	www.metrotransit.org

You can link to these resources on the accompanying CD.