

# Kris Nelson Community-Based Research Program

*...a program of the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA)*

## Transit, More Than a Ride—Improving Rider Experience

**Prepared in partnership with**  
The District Councils Collaborative of St. Paul and Minneapolis

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2012, the District Councils Collaborative of Saint Paul and Minneapolis (DCC) partnered with Metro Transit in the *Transit, More than a Ride—Trusted Advocate Pilot Project*. The project sought to engage underrepresented communities in Metro Transit’s Central Corridor Transit Service Study, which focused on integrating existing bus service to the new light rail service. The project brought up a variety of issues with the bus system in the Twin Cities that went beyond the scope of the project. As a result of the Trusted Advocate Project, the DCC is further investigating these issues in their project, *Transit, More than a Ride—Improving Rider Experience Project*.

Bus networks are a key feature of public transit systems across the United States; however, these networks do not necessarily offer the best possible experience for all riders. Public transportation ridership in the United States and in the Twin Cities is on the rise, despite service cuts and fare increases. For a wide range of reasons, people are using public transportation more and more and will continue to use it, so engaging the community and making the bus riding experience as positive as possible is key.

This report looks into some of the more persistent issues of rider experience in the Twin Cities and attempts to provide examples, through case studies, of how other transit agencies and communities across the United States have tackled similar issues. In the Twin Cities, and across much of the United States, the most persistent problems associated with rider experience fall into three categories: safety, communication, and reliability and frequency. As the Trusted Advocates and outside research implied, safety and communication were multi-faceted problems. These issues, however, are fixable, as

the case studies point out. The four selected case studies attempt to provide readers with a variety of different methods for community engagement and rider experience improvement. Ranging from local to national initiatives that are run by non-profits and transit agencies, the case studies all show the importance of open communication, a willingness to listen, and a commitment to changing people's mind about the bus. As the case studies indicate, positive changes occur when community members are actively engaged in the decision-making process and transit agencies are willing to listen to rider complaints. Along with opening the lines of communication, other steps could also be taken in the Twin Cities to improve rider experience. These steps include adding additional lights and benches to bus stops, expanding the already existing Adopt-A-Shelter program, creating how-to materials for riders, and improving signage at stops and on the bus.

## INTRODUCTION

In 2012 the District Councils Collaborative of Saint Paul and Minneapolis (DCC), an organization that works to facilitate community involvement and engage underserved populations in the Central Corridor, partnered with Metro Transit to launch the *Transit, More than a Ride—Trusted Advocate Pilot Project*. The project was aimed at engaging the underrepresented communities in Metro Transit’s Central Corridor Transit Service Study. While Metro Transit’s study was focused on integrating existing bus service to the new light rail service, other important issues concerning rider experience were brought forward by community members

A variety of issues exist in public transit associated with the experience of riders. Three issues that were frequently mentioned by residents in the Trusted Advocate Project were safety, communication, and frequency and reliability. While getting from point A to point B should be a simple and relatively seamless part of someone’s day, issues associated with safety, communication, and frequency and reliability can cause extreme stress and can hinder the ability of a person to ride public transit at all. The District Councils Collaborative, through their study *Transit, More than a Ride—Improving Rider Experience*, is interested in both understanding these issues and finding solutions. The DCC is focused on the community perspective and determining what communities themselves can do to initiate change.

This report attempts to elucidate issues of rider experience, explain why they are important, and finally, provide examples of how they have been handled in localities across the United States. The paper begins with an explanation of the most pressing

issues of rider experience as indicated by the Trusted Advocate project and outside research. It then moves on to discuss why rider experience is important to focus on. The next section includes a series of four short case studies, which show different strategies that can be employed to improve bus riders experience on public transit. Finally, the paper concludes with a look towards the future and next steps that communities and Metro Transit could take to make rider experience as positive as possible for as many riders as possible.

## **OUTLINE OF THE PROBLEM**

Buses suffer from a bad image. Over the years, they have been stigmatized in a hugely detrimental way. Traveling on the bus can be “slow, unreliable, inconvenient, hot, uncomfortable, and confusing,” and while it also has the potential to be relaxing, money saving, and good for the environment, a large portion of the public only sees the bad qualities (Hess, 2012). Buses are seen as the transportation option for the urban core and have thus suffered from a lack of investment. The majority of riders on the bus are those who are low-income, as exemplified in a study by Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority, which indicated that the median household income for bus riders was \$14,423 in 2012, while for other transit options (trains, light rail) was \$26,250 (Berg, 2012). Choice riders, who are often commuters, generally like the hipper forms of public transportation like the streetcar and light rail. The stigmatization of the bus system has caused buses to become the forgotten form of public transit, the black sheep of the family who is continually overshadowed by its shiny siblings, the streetcar and light rail. This leaves bus riders underserved and disrespected.

Buses need a facelift in order to be attractive to both choice, those riders who ride public transit despite not having to, and transit-dependent riders, those who have to use public transit to get around. While on one level the mark of a *good* transit system is one that attracts riders who already own a car, on another level the mark of a *good* system is one that manages to make non-choice riders happy, happy enough with the experience that they actually would choose to ride transit if they had the option.

No public transportation system is ever going to be perfect for every passenger on every ride, however, some persistent issues can be fixed that would improve the overall rider experience. The DCC Trusted Advocate Project brought up several issues that related to rider experience, sentiments that were repeated in literature on transit systems across the country. These issues, as the Trusted Advocate Project proved, are deterring people, and sometimes, entire communities, from riding the bus in the Twin Cities. By and large, the problems associated with rider experience can be broken into three categories: personal safety, communication, and reliability and frequency.

### *PERSONAL SAFETY*

Personal Safety, in terms of rider experience, is affected by two main categories: perceived personal safety and perceived safety of the physical environment. Both types play a role in determining a passenger's entire bus riding experience, beginning when they leave their home at the start of their journey and lasting until they reach their final destination. A trip in which a rider is not in fear of his or her personal safety or the safety of those surrounding them is key in making riding public transit a positive experience. Although riders are not necessarily in danger waiting for or riding the bus, the negative



perceptions coupled with stops that lack adequate lighting and harmful interactions with other passengers has led to the widespread notion that riding the bus is not safe, particularly for women and particularly at night. These feelings and fears were highlighted in the Trusted Advocate interviews and in an array of literature and news articles. Based on the Trusted Advocate documentation, riders felt that the bus stops were unsafe. Common complaints were, lack of adequate lighting, lack of space for people to wait, and a lack of shelters. This had a great affect on riders' perceptions of the safety of the physical environment.



*The Stop at 7<sup>th</sup> and Nicollet. While there is a designated waiting area, there is not adequate lighting or benches.*

As a Streets MN article points out, one of the busiest stops in Minneapolis, located at 7<sup>th</sup> Street and the Nicollet Mall lacks most amenities, such as shelters and seating and lighting. While the lack of lighting does have an affect on the perceived physical safety of a place, the lack of shelters and adequate seating gives the impression that people should not be loitering at the stop, indicating that it may not be the safest place to be all of the time (Hicks, 2012).

The Trusted Advocates also reported that passengers experienced other riders being aggressive and threatening. Riders used foul language and were excessively loud on the buses, which put other passengers personal safety in jeopardy. These sentiments were echoed in the 2011 Minn Post article “Miller Times: “Metro Transit Needs to Work

on ‘Rider Experience.’” Miller writes, about a ride he took in downtown Minneapolis on New Years Eve,

“my initial bus ride wasn’t the most pleasant. A group of teenagers piled up in the back and spent the ride shouting profanity, belting R&B songs and taunting the bus driver. Several other passengers yelled into their phones. The bus driver never once acknowledged the behavior. It made for an uncomfortable experience...”

Especially concerning is the fact that the drivers do not intervene when passengers begin to harass and act aggressively towards other riders. This makes not only for an uncomfortable ride, as Miller stated, but a ride that does truly threaten the safety of everyone on the bus. While the loud passengers may be harmless and the lack of adequate lighting at bus stops does not necessarily mean a dangerous locality, these factors do have an affect and can make riders feel extraordinarily uncomfortable and unsafe.

### *COMMUNICATION*

Communication is also multifaceted, encompassing both signage at bus stops and on the buses, the way transit agencies disseminate pertinent information and communicate with riders, and the way bus drivers communicate with the passengers. Riding the bus can be stressful, especially if you do not know the way well. Unclear and missing signage can magnify the stress, particularly when language barriers are involved. A lack of written and verbal announcements by the transit agency and to the rider about delays, service changes, and any other relevant information can create confusion and deter ridership. The Trusted Advocates reported that community members found that the signage at bus stops was difficult to understand. While not all stops have timetables, the timetables that were posted were tricky to read and understand. Stops also lack clear signage indicating which direction the bus is headed and which stops are still coming up.

This makes it difficult to find your way unless you have a strong working knowledge of the routes.

The Trusted Advocates also reported that some community members had experienced negative interactions with bus drivers. Drivers tended to lack understanding and patience and were not able to effectively communicate with the passengers they were talking to. Rather they would either ignore the passengers asking for help or speak to them in a rude manner.

Community members also shared with the trusted advocates that they felt Metro Transit could communicate with them more effectively. Generally, riders are happier if they are communicated with, bad news is taken better if the transit agency is honest and upfront. A little bit of effective communication can go a long way, in terms of both rider experience and ridership levels. A 2012 research report indicated that in Chicago, real-time bus information "...attracted a significant... amount of new riders to the city's bus system" (Jaffe, 2012). Real-time data is an excellent example of positive communication between riders and the transit agency. While the information may not always be the most positive or pleasing for the rider, at least they are receiving accurate data.

### *FREQUENCY AND RELIABILITY*

While frequency and reliability were handled in Metro Transit's Transit Service Study, both frequency and reliability have an effect on rider experience. Inadequate bus service can make riding the bus inconvenient and frustrating. The Trusted Advocates repeatedly reported that riders felt that they spent too much time waiting for buses and that certain routes often came late. Riders want buses that come on time and come on a

frequent basis, not every 30 or 40 minutes. A University of California Berkley study determined that for riders “the most important determinant of user satisfaction with a transit stop or station is frequent, reliable service...” (Taylor, Iseki, Miller, Smart, 2009, p. 16). The study also stated, “service frequency, schedule adherence, and schedule information affect both actual and perceived waiting time” (Taylor, et al., 2009, p. 9). For those passengers who depend on transit to get from home to work, to school, and to any other destination they need to go, frequent and reliable service is more than just necessary, but s the difference between making it to class or work on time or 20 minutes late. Furthermore, frequent and reliable service makes transferring within the bus system considerably easier. When there are several buses each hour, missing a transfer may not mean being late, however if a bus only comes every 40 minutes, missing a connection could spell disaster.

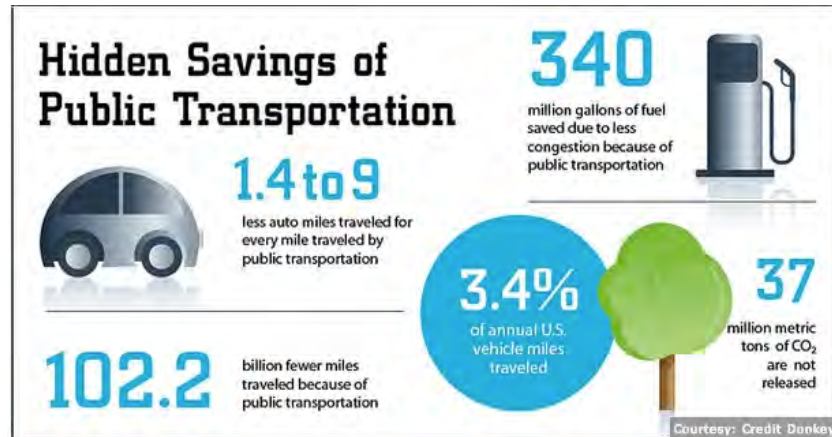
## **IMPORTANCE OF IMPROVING RIDER EXPERIENCE**

Improving the experience of bus riders is integral for both maintaining ridership levels and attracting new riders. While investments in new forms of public transit are important and help attract choice riders, buses are a key feature of transit networks and need to be treated as such. Buses are not glamorous. They aren’t charming, like the streetcar. But, they are flexible and relatively inexpensive to maintain, especially compared to the amount of money necessary to build and maintain light rail and streetcar lines (Levinson, 2012). A lack of investment in the buses and bus riders only reinforces their stigmatization and discrimination. Addressing the issues of safety, communication, and reliability and flexibility are necessary to make the bus system better for all riders.

The United States as a whole has seen an upward trend in transit ridership over the past several years, with systems across the country being responsible for 10.5 billion riders in 2012 alone (American Public Transportation Association, 2013). This was the second highest year

of ridership in the States since 1957 (American Public Transportation Association, 2013).

This trend of increasing ridership



*Transit ridership has increased because of its positive effects on riders' wallets and the environment.*

has been echoed in the Twin Cities. In 2012, public transit ridership reached 81 million passenger trips (Melo, 2013). Many factors account for this increase, such as rising gas prices and the environmental benefits of public transit; however, few investments have been made to bus networks themselves. Rather, as many as 80% of transit agencies have either cut service, raised fares, or both (Copeland, 2013). Small investments could make a difference; considering a lack of investment has not prevented major ridership increases in recent years. While outside forces, such as gas prices and the reemergence of the green movement did influence ridership levels, ridership in most places is only going to continue to rise and it is time to improve the systems.

## CASE STUDIES

Issues encountered by Metro Transit riders are not unique, rather transit agencies across the country experience similar problems with personal safety, communication and

reliability and frequency. The four case studies presented in this section have been selected because they provide examples of how community organizations, the government, and transit agencies have worked to improve the experience of public transportation riders through a variety of methods. These case studies work particularly to illustrate the different ways in which riders have been given a voice in the public transportation system, which has led to positive changes in passenger experience.

#### *CAPITAL METRO'S COMMUNITY SATISFACTION ADVISORY COMMITTEE*

For Capital Metro, Austin, Texas's public transit agency, public involvement is key to its success. The agency is always aiming to “meaningfully engage [its] community in... projects, programs, and services (Capital Metro, 2013). While, with an estimated 2012 population of 842,592 citizens, it is challenging for Capital Metro to fully connect with every single rider, the agency employs several strategies to help them engage with and include as many different communities as possible in their decision making process (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). One such strategy is the Community Satisfaction Advisory Committee. Established in 2000, the committee was formed so as to give Capital Metro “constant representatives of the community [and] riders and present the agency with quality feedback and recommendations...” (J. Wah, Personal Communication, July 12, 2013). The committee is made up of nine community members who regularly use transit and are appointed to their position by the Capital Metro Board of Directors. Using the Systematic Development of Informed Consent<sup>1</sup> method of community engagement, the

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<sup>1</sup> Created by Dr. Hans Bleiker and his wife Annemarie, the Systematic Development of Informed Consent (SDIC) is a method of public involvement for major organizations. Through the use of strategic outreach, the method works to make public outreach as clean and easy as possible. SDIC aims to “establish the public agency's legitimate role by casting its program as one aimed at problem solving... and to communicate to the public the serious nature of the problem the agency is attempting to address...” (Institute for Participatory Management and Planning, *SDIC*).

committee is able to provide feedback on matters of public transportation, including service and route changes, marketing, and new website design (J. Wah, Personal Communication, July 12, 2013). The committee is key in providing Capital Metro with sound feedback on their future plans, programs, and activities. In terms of success, the committee has influenced Capital Metro's decisions on a variety of projects and initiatives.

### *KING COUNTY METRO'S BUS SHELTER MURAL PROGRAM*

Cities across the country have embraced public art. Not only is public art a “cost-effective way of driving economic revitalization,” they also serve as a way to build community and enact change (Green, 2011). At bus stops, public art can be a huge advantage. Bus stops that incorporate art in some way serve not only to make the bus stop a more interesting place to wait, but they also serve to make the stop safer and a more integrated part of the community. As one article states, “the [Federal Transit Administration]... believes the visual quality of the nation's public transit systems has a profound impact on transit customers and communities at large” (“Why We Invest in Public Art in Transit, 2010). Metro areas across the world have infused public art into their bus stop design. A city in Japan built bus shelters shaped like giant fruit in 1990 for a travel expo, however the whimsical designs were so popular that they have remained in place (Zimmerman, 2012). An artist in Italy, for an installation he called “Antistress For Free” hung sheets of bubble wrap at bus stops in Milan for waiting passengers to pop (Metcalf, 2012). In the United States, many different transit authorities have enacted programs that allow citizens, students, and artists to design and create artwork for bus

stops and bus stop shelters. One such program is King County Metro’s Bus Shelter Mural Program.

Beginning in 1989, the King County Bus Shelter Mural Program serves as a way to involve the general public in the design of bus shelters in Seattle. Since the program began more than 20 years ago, community members have created more than 700 murals. These murals, like most public art, serve multiple purposes. By involving the public, the murals serve as a source of community pride and a gateway to the neighborhoods they are located in (King County Metro Transit, 2013). With people invested in the area’s infrastructure, the locality becomes safer; the citizenry cares more and take more pride in



*A shelter in Seattle depicting the multiculturalism in the Rainier Valley. The Mural was created by Ron Hilber-Coy, a member of a Native American tribe in the area.*

their home. Furthermore, the painted shelters are less likely to be vandalized, for individuals tend to take better care

of more attractive spaces (“Why We Invest in Public Art in Transit,” 2010). According to King County Metro, the program improves the appearance of making them appear welcoming and safe (King County Metro, 2013). While public art at transit centers and



bus stops is not an automatic fix-all, it does serve to improve the appearance and quality of bus stops. This improvement changes peoples attitudes and, if nothing else, can alter people's perceptions of safety and security in the area.

### *TRANSIT ADVOCACY GROUPS*

Across the United States, cities have established a variety of non-profit organizations whose sole purpose is transit advocacy. While they range in size, scope, and form, these groups work with transit riders, politicians, and other organizations to ensure that transit is equitable and fair for all riders. The organizations generally focus on grassroots campaigns that aim to make sweeping changes in transit systems and neighborhoods. Since the mid 1990s, these groups have been a major voice in public transit policy and change.

In 1992 the Bus Riders Union, a project of the Labor/ Community Strategy Center in Los Angeles began the first of many advocacy organizations to fight discrimination in public transit policy. This landmark organization has had great success organizing constituents and changing

### LA Bus Riders Union Lawsuit, 1994



In 1994, the LA Bus Riders Union, in partnership with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Korean Immigrant Workers Advocates and under representation of the NAACP, sued Los Angeles' Metropolitan Transit Authority for violating the Civil Rights Act of 1964. According to the suit, the MTA had created a separate and unequal transit system in which a disproportionate amount of Federal funds were relegated towards the wealthier, suburban- oriented rail service. In 1996, after a major campaign, Los Angeles MTA signed a consent decree, which was aimed at ending transit-racism in LA.

laws. It serves as an example to the many different riders' alliances. Today similar unions exist in many major cities across the country, including Boston, Atlanta, Seattle, Portland, and New York. In New York City, the Rider's Alliance was established in 2012 and has several campaigns that seek to improve the transit experience for those who are underserved by the subway and bus systems in the city.

Riders Alliances and Unions serve as an example of how grass root organizations, when well organized, can make great change and serve to improve the quality of the ride for all individuals. While obviously no two transit advocacy organizations are exactly the same, they all have some similarities. For example, they are generally grassroots organizations whose goals encompass improving all riders' experience on public transit and fighting for fair and equitable transit systems. The alliances, like most non-profit organizations have a staff and an advisory committee or board, and then several community partners and individuals who all work together to help them reach their goals. Many of the rider's unions are housed in larger, more established organizations. The Bus Riders Union in Los Angeles is part of the Labor/ Community Strategy Center and the T Riders Union in Boston is part of Alternatives for Community and Environment, a public-interest group. Furthermore, these groups are similar in how they achieve their goals. They perform significant public outreach, holding events and rallies for community members. These groups work to be voices for the community and attempt to make their voices heard. Funding for these groups comes from a variety of sources, including member dues, donations, and grants. The Riders Alliance in New York, for example, is funded "approximately 1/3 through foundation funds, 1/3 from membership

dues and small grassroots donations, and 1/3 from larger donations...” (J. Raskin, Personal Communication, July 29, 2013).

Transit rides alliances and unions have done a considerable amount of work and achieved some major successes. The work of these organizations has led to court cases and government action, all of which serve those who ride public transportation. Although new, New York’s Transit Riders Alliance has already had a major impact. In July 2013, New York’s Metro Transit Authority released a review of the G line. MTA undertook the report because of the Alliance’s G Train Campaign and many of the report’s recommendations fell in line with the campaign’s key goals. The Los Angeles Bus Riders Union, since its federal court fight, has been involved in a variety of campaigns. While the union has not always had legal success, it has done an excellent job of campaigning and bringing the community together and getting them involved in politics that matter for their daily lives. As grassroots organizations, these alliances and unions serve as an integral link between transit riders and government agencies and politicians, and while their campaigns may not end in the desired result, they are successful engaging citizens, which is a major step in the right direction.

#### *EASTER SEALS PROJECT ACTION*

Commissioned in 1988 by the United States Congress, the Easter Seals Project ACTION is a “federally funded training and technical assistance center cooperative agreement between Easter Seals and the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration (Easter Seals Project ACTION, 2013). Project ACTION works with partner organizations and transit agencies across the United States in order to make

public transit fair and accessible to individuals with disabilities. The Project puts on training sessions to teach individuals how to “strengthen accessible transportation within their own community,” provides technical assistance and support to individuals and communities who are making efforts to change transportation systems, and performs and funds research projects (Easter Seals Project ACTION, 2013). Easter Seals Project ACTION serves as an incalculable resource for individuals, organizations and transit agencies as they work to make transit across the nation more accessible and equitable for individuals with disabilities. Its programs have resulted in the training of thousands of individuals and technical assistance and support for just as many. In 2010 alone, “4,102 people were trained at 38 events” and “1,955 people received targeted technical assistance” (“Being Able to Live a Spontaneous Life,” 2010). Funding, support, and aid from the Easter Seals Project ACTION have meant thousands of people have improved access to public transit. One of the Easter Seals Project ACTION’S most effective initiatives is the Accessible Transportation Coalition Initiative (ATCI), a yearlong program for ten communities who want to improve the accessibility of their transportation systems and require the Easter Seals’ help. In order to effectively aid the organizations, the Easter Seals Project ACTION facilitates a two-day conference in each of the selected cities, so that the transit agencies can distinguish and create solutions to their biggest transportation problems (Miller, 2010).

In 2010, King County, in Seattle, Washington, was selected as an ATCI team. One of King County’s major goals was to “improve the mobility of several underserved groups...” through “... promoting the understanding of how to use the community’s extensive transportation network...” (Easter Seals Project ACTION, 2013). As a direct

result of its year as an ATCI city, the King County Mobility Coalition, in 2011, launched the Immigrant and Refugee Elders Transportation Project aimed to increase the availability of ethnically and culturally appropriate transportation resources and information and immigrants and refugees, focusing on the Burmese, Bhutanese, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Somali, Ukrainian, and Russian communities in the area. The King County Mobility Coalition worked with the Washington State Refugee Elders Grant Project and Hopelink, a community action agency, to establish relationships with the older populations of the major refugee and immigrant groups in Seattle. The project used a multi-faceted approach. Focus groups with the immigrant and refugee elders were carried out, a “Transportation Summit” for stakeholder organizations was held, and new, more effective marketing tools were developed, including a three part transportation how-to video series, which were made in eight languages (National Center on Senior Transportation, 2011).

The project was quite successful. It improved the relationships between King County Metro Transit and the minority communities and made the elderly immigrants and refugees more confident about riding public transportation (National Center on Senior Transportation, 2011). The videos created during the project have been so successful that they have now been produced in five more languages, Arabic, Korean, Vietnamese, Mandarin, and Cantonese, and expanded to include “verbiage on Fare Inspectors,” transit employees who board buses to check rider’s tickets to ensure that every passenger is paying the proper fare (C. Zwart, Personal Communication, July 19, 2013). The expansion of the videos was paid for by King County Metro Transit and Sound Transit, which speaks to the success of the project. Despite positive feedback and

continued work in the area, no formal evaluation process for the project occurred. Perhaps the greatest lasting impact of the project was that it proved that the community and transit agencies can effectively work together in order to create solutions that will work for everyone. As Cindy Zwart, Director of the Senior Services Program in Seattle and an integral member of the project team, stated in an email, “both Sound Transit and King County Metro learned the value of small focus groups/ community conversations and have used the same model to conduct other outreach...” (C. Zwart, Personal Communication, July 19, 2013). If nothing else can be learned from this case study, it should be the importance of teamwork and listening. The success of the Immigrant and Refugee Elders Transportation Project was directly linked to the community focus groups.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS**

The case studies aim to show the different options available to individuals, organizations, and government agencies interested in improving the experience for riders on public transportation. While a wide variety of techniques are employed throughout the case studies, some themes are constant. To gain success requires open communication and trust between all parties. Initiatives are successful when citizens, organizations, and public agencies are willing to work together to achieve a common goal. Involving the public, whether it is through focus groups or advisory boards or community art projects, allows citizens from all walks of life to feel involved and included in decisions. For people to truly care about something, they must have a stake in it. Rider experience is hugely important, and while no transportation system is perfect, steps can be taken to

make sure that those people who ride the bus everyday, once a week, or even once a year have a pleasant and easy ride.

While Metro Transit does have initiatives in place in order to make the passenger experience a positive one, more steps could be taken in order to more fully address rider experience. As the case studies show, perhaps, the most important step to take to improve rider experience is to go out into the community and foster the relationships with the riders that transit agencies and the government already have. When both sides feel that they can participate in productive conversations and everyone's views are being heard and understood, positive changes can be made. Furthermore, creating accessible information, like the videos created in King County about how to ride the bus, is key to making rider experience better. Metro Transit does provide workshops on how to ride the bus, however more information about this service and a wider variety of ways to educate riders could be beneficial. Other steps could include drawing up plans to ensure that all stops have at least a light and a timetable and creating clear signage at stops that indicates direction and the following stops, like the signage at the light rail stations. Taking these steps would improve both perceived personal safety and communication. Personal safety could also be improved by expanding the already existing "Adopt-a-Shelter" program. The program, which is somewhat similar to the mural program in King County, allows individuals, community members, schools, and business to adopt a shelter and requires the commitment that the adopter will keep the shelter "safe and clean" (Metro Transit, 2013). With added eyes on the shelter, the likelihood of it becoming dilapidated is lower, which improves rider's perception of the safety of the environment (Metro Transit, 2013).

In the end, what is important is to take strides to make the bus a positive experience for all the riders. In order to do so means making changes to the entire system, but more importantly, it means changing people's attitudes about the bus. To truly improve rider experience requires a commitment to making the bus more than just a way of shuttling people, but an integral part of the transportation system. To do so means taking the bus off the back burner and making it a star rather than a supporting actor.



**APPENDIX A:**  
**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Nationwide Resources:

**1. Transportation for America**

a. Transportation for America is a nationwide coalition that campaigns for a smarter, safer, and cleaner transportation system in the United States. The coalition works at the local, state, and national level to change the way the government and American public look at and talk about transportation and works to reform how federal transportation dollars are spent.

b. Website: <http://t4america.org/>

**2. American Public Transportation Association (APTA)**

a. The American Public Transportation Association is a national organization that aims to “strengthen and improve public transportation. The organization, along with its members, work to ensure fair and accessible public transit service across the U.S. for all citizens. The website provides significant information on public transportation in the United States as well as a wide range of reports and resources.

b. Website: <http://www.apta.com/Pages/default.aspx>

**3. National Alliance for Public Transportation Advocates (NAPTA)**

a. The National Alliance for Public Transportation Advocates is a national organization that represents grassroots transit advocacy groups that support increased investment in public transit. The organization serves as a resource and connector for grassroots transit organizations across the United States

b. <http://www.publictransportation.org/napta/Pages/default.aspx>

Minnesota Specific Resources:

**1. Metro Transit**

a. Metro Transit is the Twin Cities Public Transit Authority, which runs the regional bus, light rail, and commuter rail system. Metro Transit works to plan and run the public transportation in the Twin Cities. Metro Transit has a variety of resources available to riders that aim to make riding a better experience for all.

b. Website: <http://www.metrotransit.org/>

**2. Transit for Livable Communities (TLC)**

a. Transit for Livable Communities is a nonprofit transit advocacy group in the Twin Cities. TLC works to change the transit systems in order to strengthen the community and improve health and opportunity for all of Minnesota’s citizens. The organization works through a variety of campaigns, advocacy work, research, and community organizing to improve the transportation system in the state.

b. Website: <http://www.tlcmnnesota.org/index.php>

## **APPENDIX B:**

### **TRANSIT, MORE THAN A RIDE—TRUSTED ADVOCATE PILOT PROJECT OVERVIEW**

In 2012, Metro Transit conducted a transit service study to better integrate the light rail and bus service and to ensure the maximum efficiency and effectiveness of the transit system in the Central Corridor. Understanding the importance of this study and the affect the study would have on improving transit access for all those living, working, and traveling on the Central Corridor, The District Council’s Collaborative of Saint Paul and Minneapolis (DCC) approached Metro Transit to determine ways that the organization could aid with the community engagement process. Metro Transit hoped to receive input from as many community members as possible, however, getting sound feedback from a wide variety of community members proved a difficult task. The DCC suggested using the Trusted Advocate community engagement model, an approach that ensured that citizens had a stronger, more sustained voice.

For the Pilot Project, the Trusted Advocates were members of different ethnic, racial, cultural, or any other under represent groups in the Central Corridor who were transit literate and able to serve as the link between the community and Metro Transit. Nine Trusted Advocates were chosen and they served as voices for the community during the Metro Transit survey process. The Trusted Advocates spoke at community meetings, community commonplaces (spaces of worship, community centers) and met with community members in casual settings. The Project and the work of the Trusted Advocates brought a variety of different issues to light and served to create lasting relationships between Metro Transit and the Community at large.

For more information on the Trust Advocate Pilot Project please visit the District Councils Collaborative website, <http://dcc-stpaul-mpls.org/>.

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