

TransitPlanning4All

Improving Community Transit Through Inclusive Planning

**Home and Community Based Services Conference
Baltimore, MD
August 28, 2019**



Project Background

- Research and Demonstration Program to Improve Coordinated Transportation Systems
- To ensure that persons with disabilities and older adults can participate in the design of transportation systems

Project Background

- Sponsored by the new Administration for Community Living
- Outgrowth of their work on the Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility

What is Inclusive Planning

- A process in which stakeholders, including participants (people with disabilities and older adults), partner organizations, and coordinated transportation partners are actively and meaningfully involved in transportation planning.

Project Goal

- Support communities across the country to adopt proven, sustainable, and replicable models that lead to participation of persons with disabilities, older adults, and caregivers in the design and implementation of coordinated transportation systems that are responsive to their needs.

Project Elements

- Environmental Scan
- Knowledge Sharing Network
- Small Grant Demonstration Projects
- Dissemination
- Evaluation

Project Objectives

1. Facilitate meaningful consumer involvement.
2. Increase consumers' participation and satisfaction.
3. Demonstrate responsiveness to participant needs.
4. Enhance awareness and increase knowledge.

Possible Benefits of Inclusive Planning

- Builds ownership of the service
- Ensures credibility
- Increases range of perspectives
- Brings reality checks to the process
- Enfranchises the disenfranchised
- Reflects the mission of Community Transportation groups

Possible Disadvantages of Inclusive Planning

- Takes longer
- Disagreement among participants
- Need to do a lot of education
- Getting the right people to the table
- Patience and commitment

Inclusive Transit Planning Toolkit

- Start
- Design
- Implement
- Evaluate
- Sustain
- Toolkit <http://www.acltoolkit.com/>

For More Information

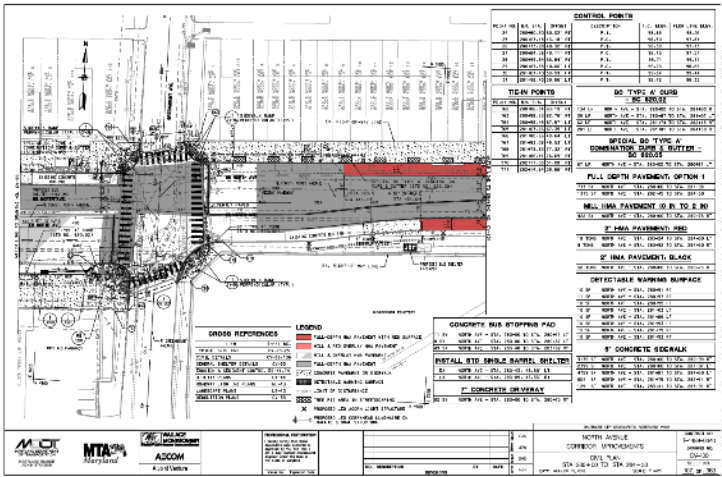
- www.transitplanning4all.org

Inclusive Transportation Planning

Typical project development process

- Come up with an idea
- Hire a consultant
- Host a few public meetings
- Hope people show up and aren't too mean
- Send to engineering

Project development in action





What if we flipped the model?



Inclusive Transportation Planning

- Open to new ideas
- Open to new partners
- Open to a bit of risk



Project background

- \$105,000 grant support from Community Transportation Association of America
 - \$35,000 Round One
 - \$70,000 Round Two
- Steering Committee partners include other state-level agencies, advocates, and Centers for Independent Living
- Approximately 18-month time period

Project background

- Unusual to pursue such a small grant
- Grant opportunity identified by partners at Maryland Department of Disabilities
- Chose to proceed because of the chance for some out-of-the-box thinking

Getting started



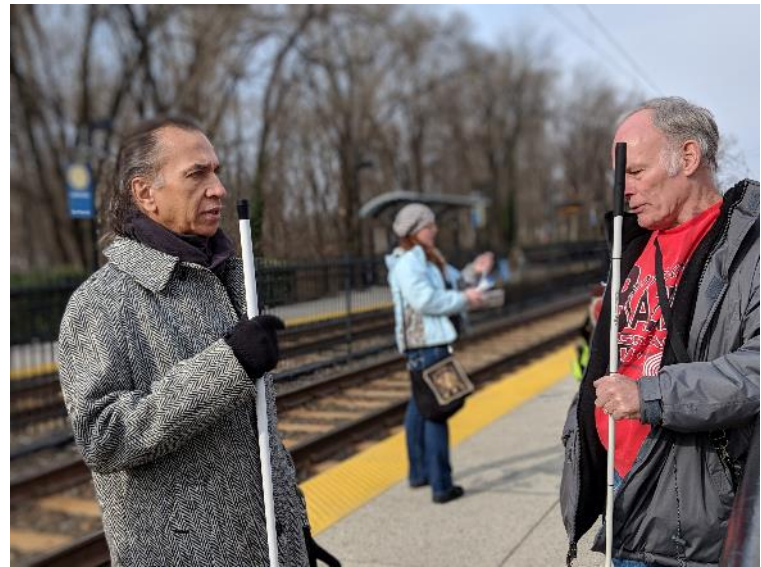
Getting out of the office



Gaining new perspective



Talking with each other



Inclusive project development process

- RESEARCH the transit experience from the customer's perspective
- DEVELOP ideas with participants
- TEST prototype solutions with participants

Insight #1

Many information displays are not located at eye-level for people using mobility devices



Prototype #1



Insight #2

Elevator directions are difficult to find and understand



Prototype #2

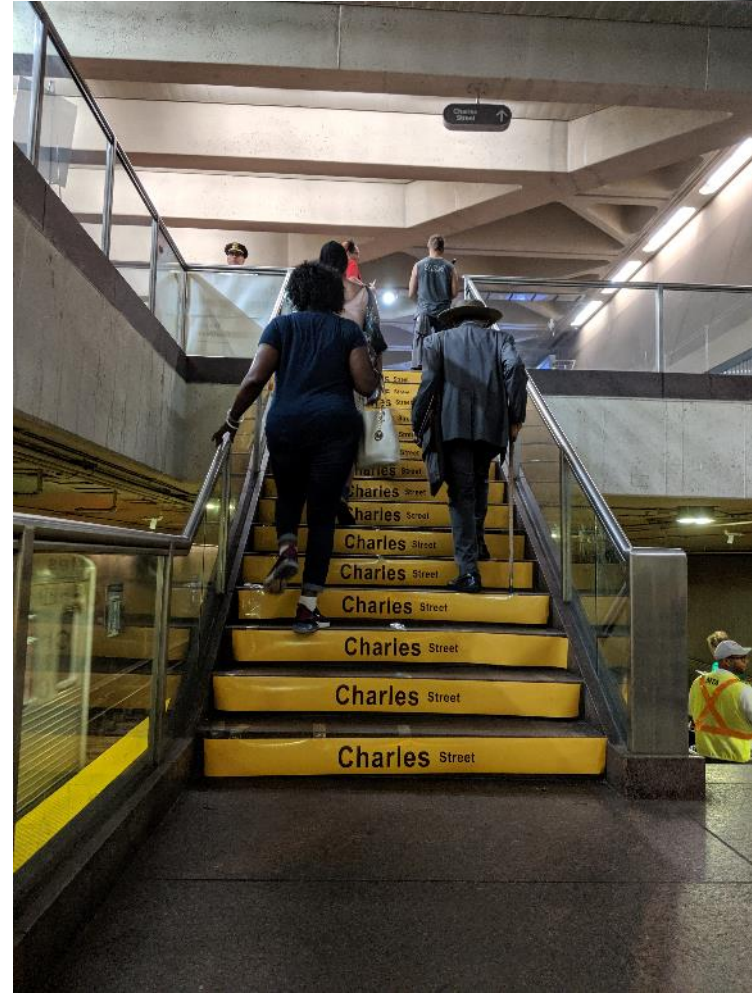
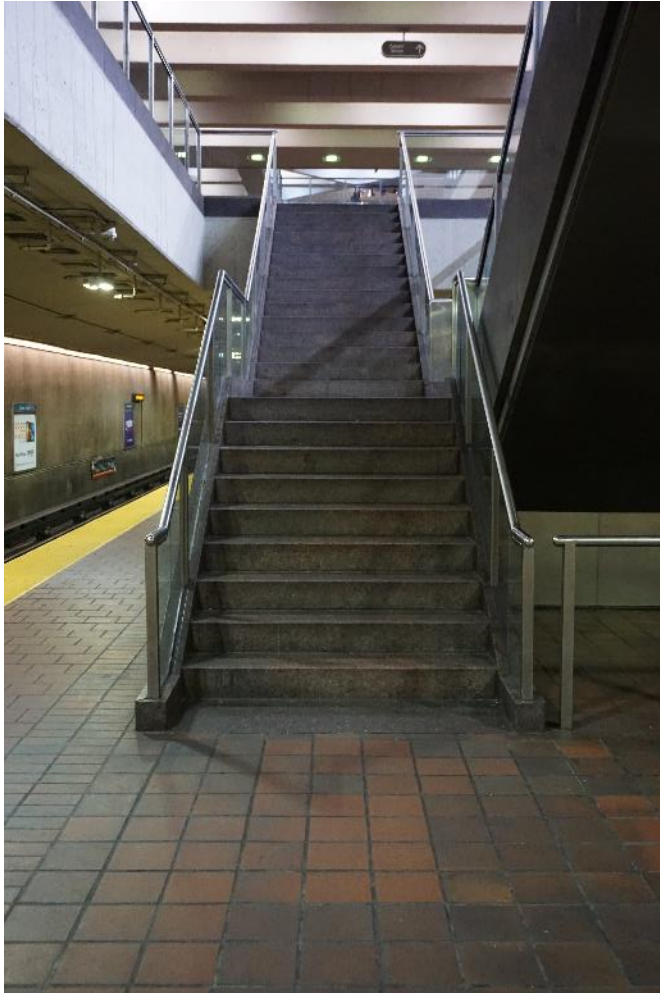


Insight #3

Directions to specific streets are not easily found at the train level



Prototype #3



Insight #4

There are no indications on the train platform where the train doors open

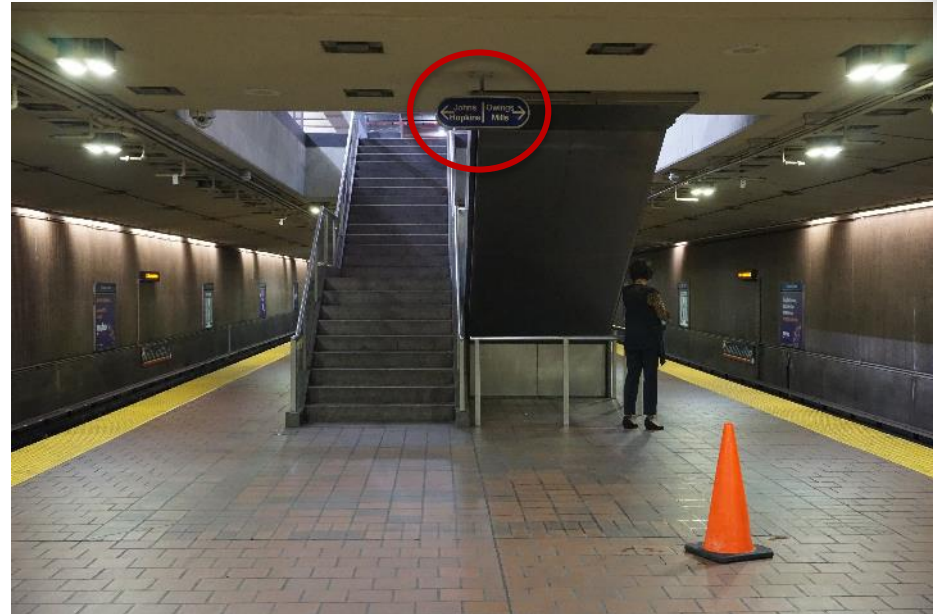


Prototype #4

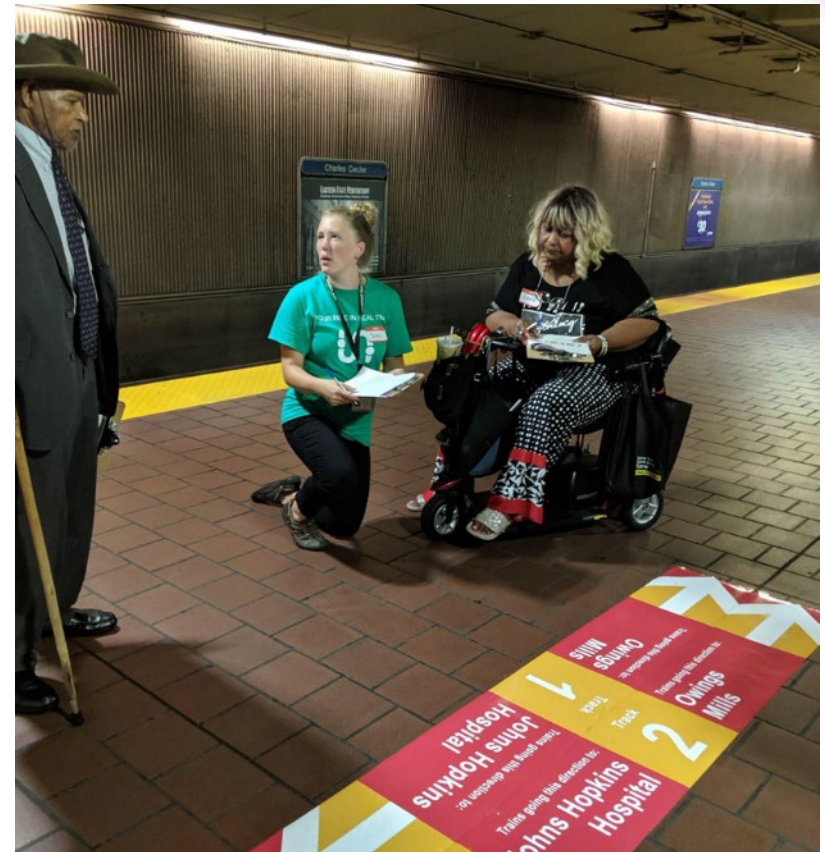
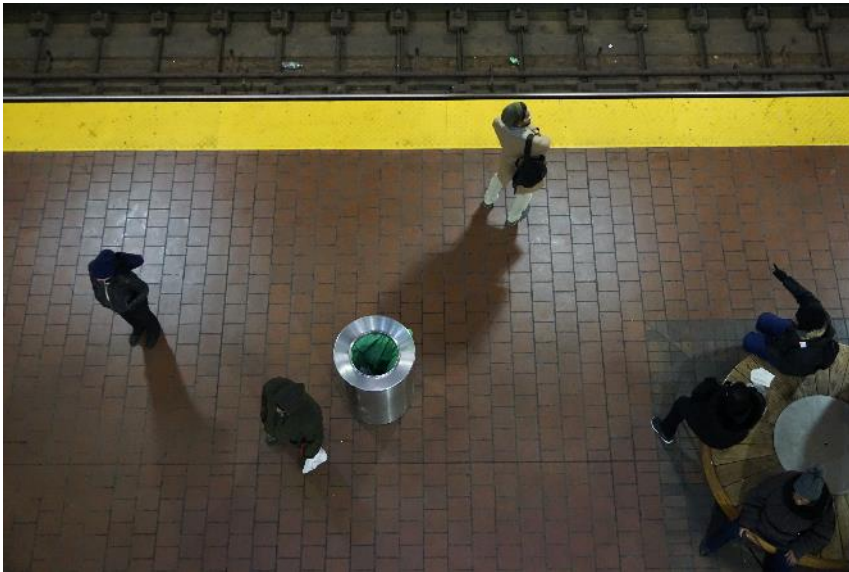


Insight #5

It is confusing to tell the direction of a train when it is on an alternate track



Prototype #5



Inclusive wayfinding principles

- Place signs at a variety of HEIGHT levels
- Reduce the DISTANCE between signs and customers
- Use COLORS to improve visibility
- Present visual icons and text in a large SIZE
- Provide visual CUES for orientation

Results so far

- 400+ observations on MDOT MTA transit experience
- 300+ older adults and people with disabilities directly engaged
- 10+ participant-led outreach events
- 5+ station wayfinding prototypes in development
- 8 steering committee meetings, including a final presentation to the MDOT MTA Administrator and MDOD Secretary.

Next steps: Wayfinding

Hosted a second workshop at Charles Center Station with new and revised prototypes



Next steps: Steering Committee

Expanded Steering Committee to include members from the deaf community



Next steps: Braille flip books

Developing distribution plan for braille flip books designed with partners at National Federation of the Blind



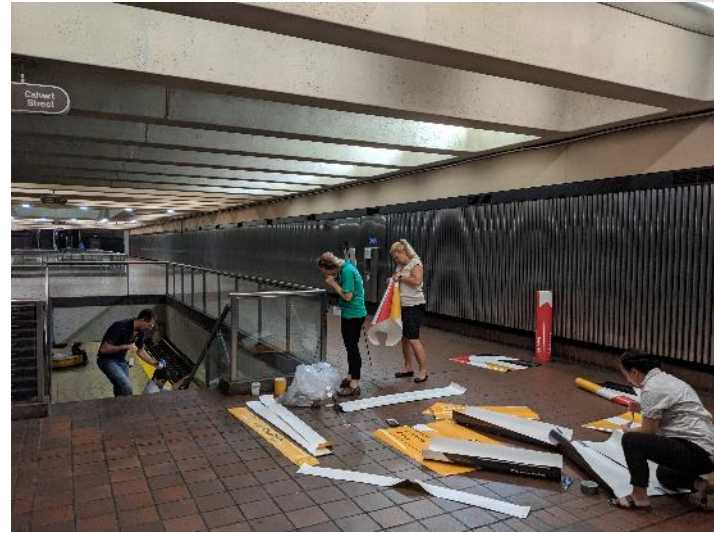
Questions still to answer

- How can we apply these lessons to future projects?
- How can a large agency like MDOT MTA best pursue and execute smaller grants like these in the future?
- How can we continue to identify meaningful collaborations across agencies and eliminate silos?

Lessons learned

- It helps to work both WITH and THROUGH partners
- Get out of your comfort zone
- Move out of plan-view

Thanks to the MTA Team!



Reach out!

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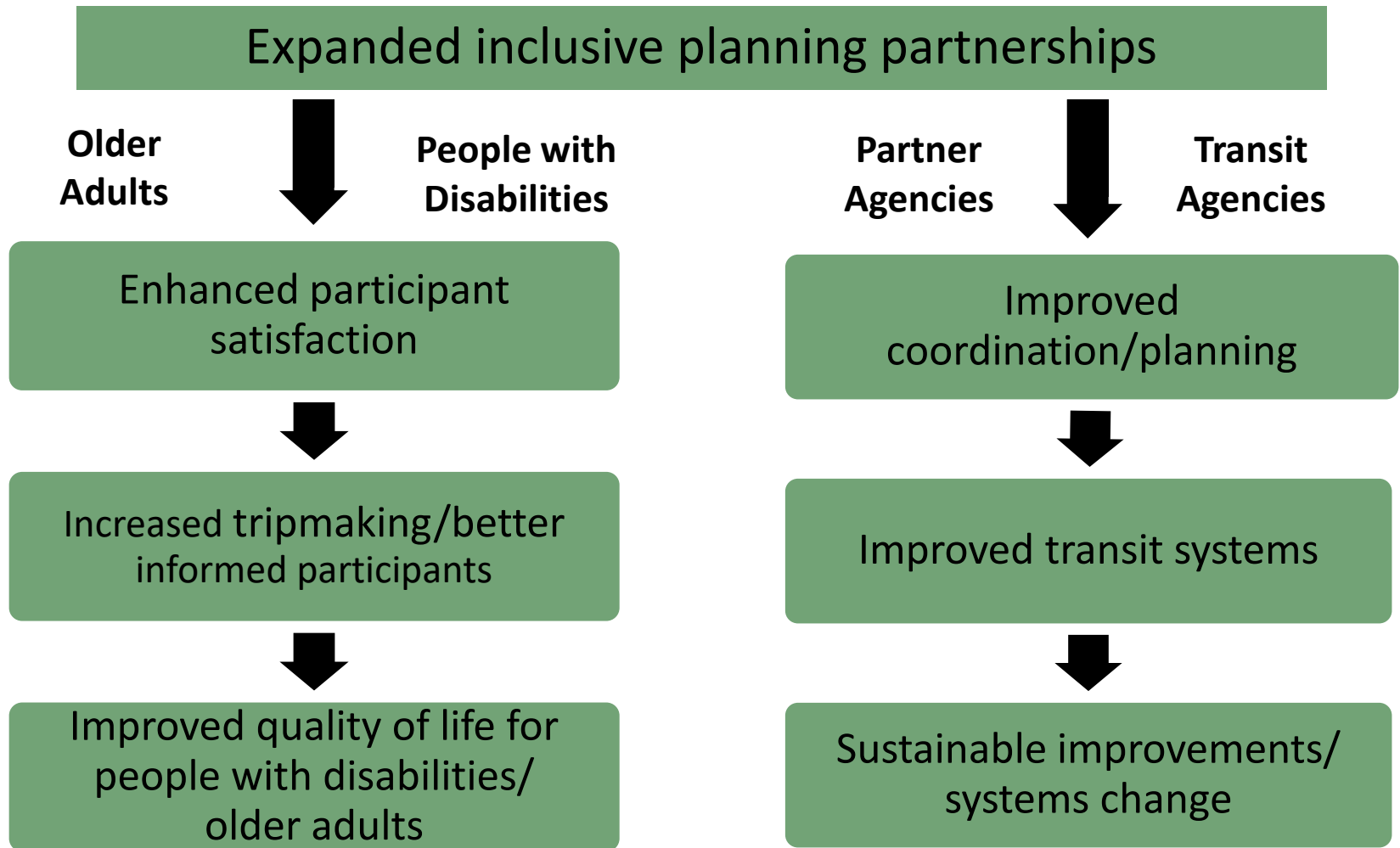
MDOT MTA Office of Planning

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Lessons Learned



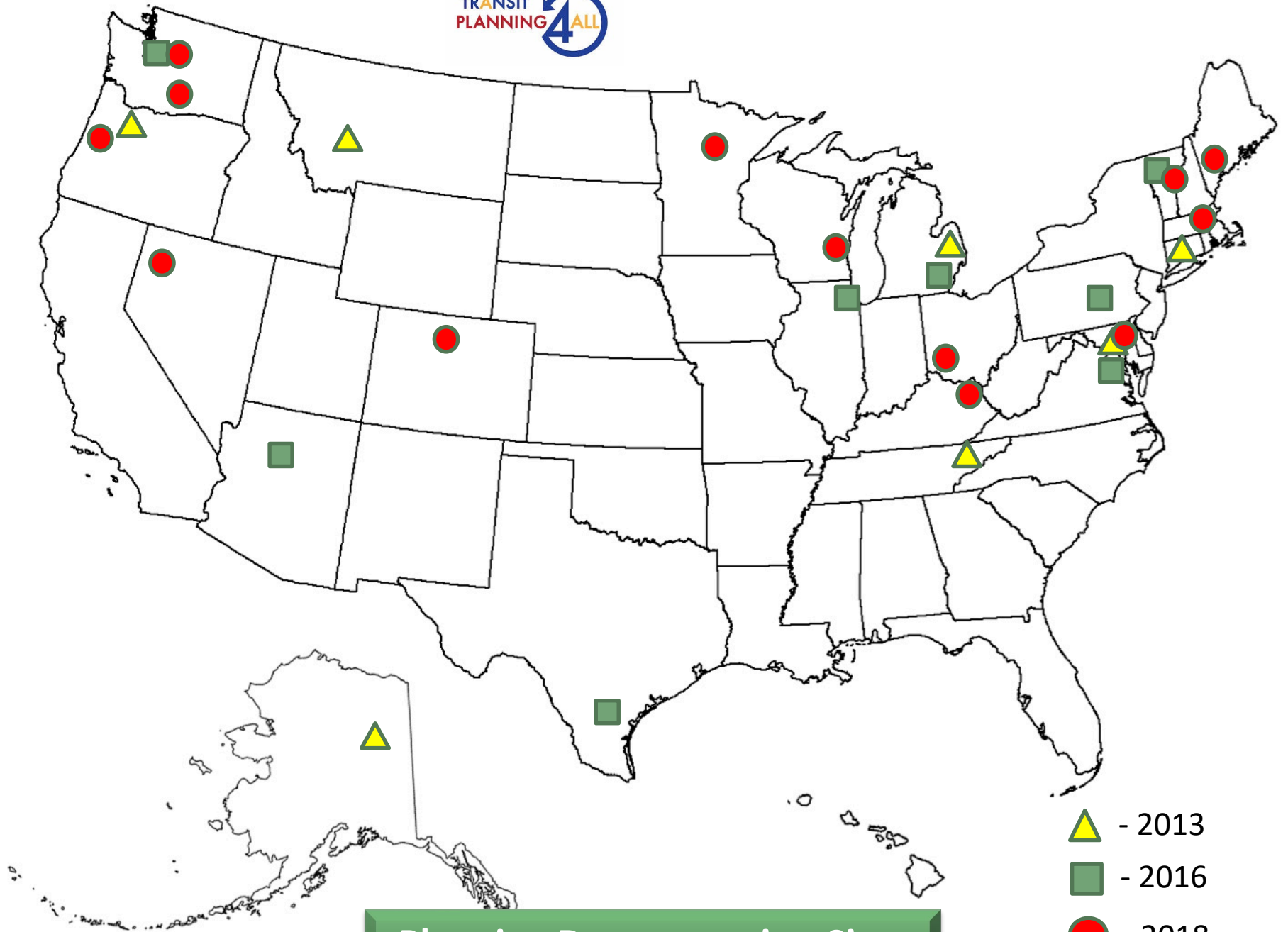
Project Theory of Change



Demonstration Grants

Planning Demonstration Grants

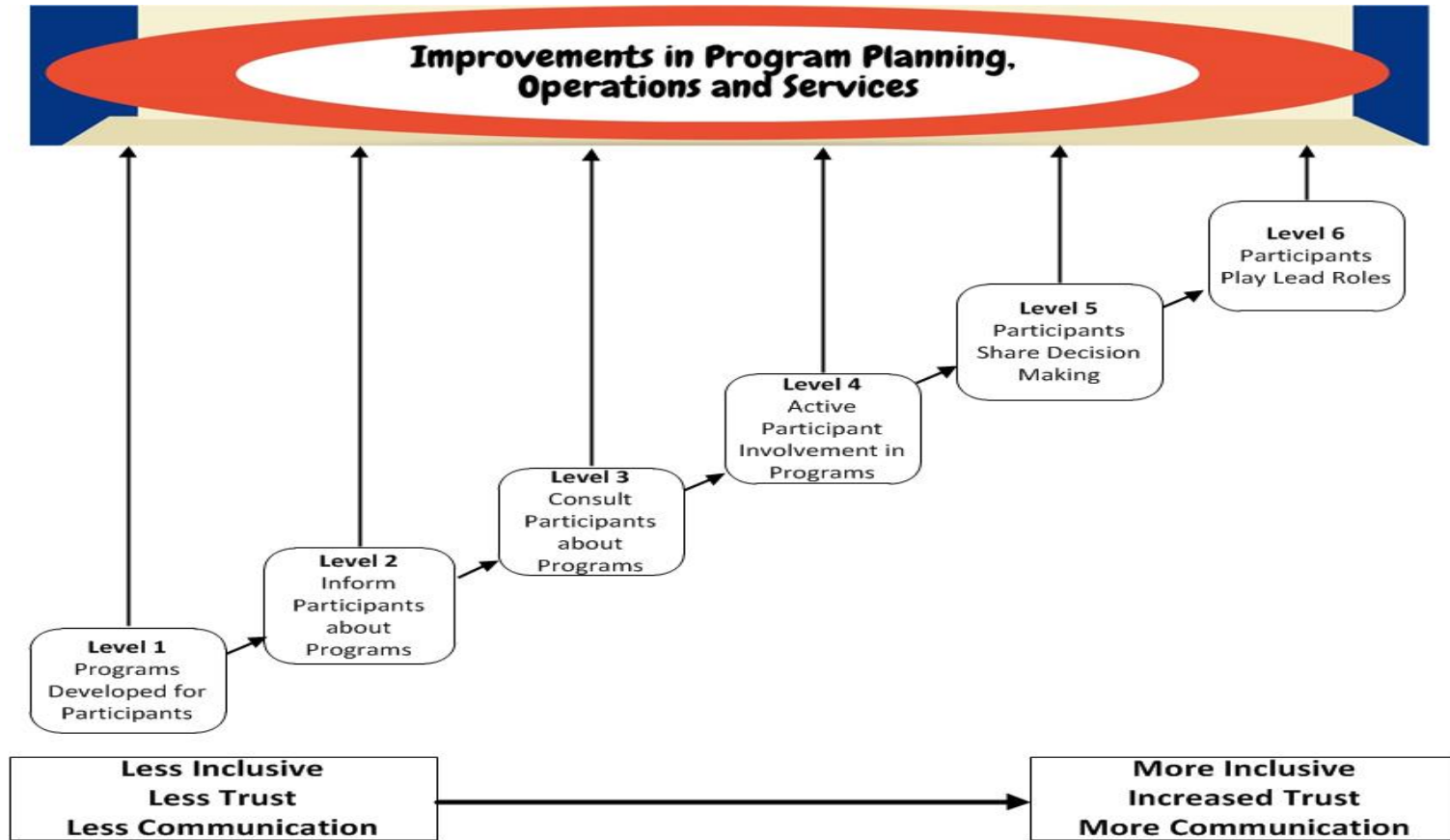
- 38 sites total
- Diversity of type, size, geographic location
- Variety of roles in transportation planning
- Diversity in focus/ desired outcomes of project efforts



Planning Demonstration Sites

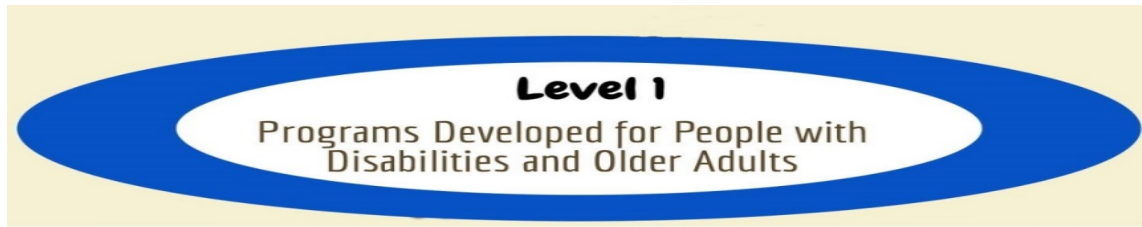
- ▲ - 2013
- - 2016
- - 2018

Pathway to Inclusion



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Inspired by Ladder of Citizen Participation (Arnstein, 1969)



Level 1
Programs Developed for People with
Disabilities and Older Adults

- Developed a list of barriers that older adults and persons with disabilities have with existing transit system.
- Staff attended a conference and were disappointed that ADA and accessibility were not topics.
- While we engaged with the public we did not specifically ask if they identified as OA/PWD.
- No outreach conducted this reporting period.
- No contribution by people with disabilities and older adults during this period.



- Older adults attended meeting w/project staff, provided input via surveys.
- Participant attended all weekly meetings and community conversations.
- Steering Committee meeting attended by 3 participants. They all actively participated.
- 33 participants or caregivers attended our summit.
- 14 people with disabilities attended our listening session.



Level 3
People with Disabilities and Older
Adults Consulted About Planning

- Steering committee members actively involved in reviewing materials and making presentations.
- Comments from participant committee members used in community event and survey.
- People with disabilities and caregivers were interviewed for a newsletter.
- One disabled person shared transportation barriers regarding blindness.
- Seven participants provided input on community convening and outreach strategies.



- One liaison (person with disability) did outreach to immigrant community.
- Participants taking leadership role in outreach and coordination.
- Participants designed surveys, conducted outreach, made meeting logistics, and meeting involvement.
- Participants involved with peer-to-peer interviews.
- Resource list and websites researched by older adult Steering Committee member.



- A member of our steering committee suggested using World Café method.
- Steering Committee members committed to community discussion including riders.
- Three committee participants helped interpret survey results and identified key findings.
- “Bus Rider Advisory Board” for SORTA leadership was recommended and will be implemented.
- Participants worked on future plans for the project and recommended 2 approaches.

A graphic consisting of a yellow rectangle containing a red oval, which in turn contains a white oval. The text is centered within the white oval.

Level 6

People with Disabilities and Older Adults Play Lead Roles in Planning, Implementation and Operational Decisions

- A member of our steering committee, led a World Café discussion.
- Participant volunteers hired part-time to play lead role in inclusive coordinated transportation project.
- Student participants held discussions with elected and appointed officials to promote transit options for people with disabilities.

Discussion

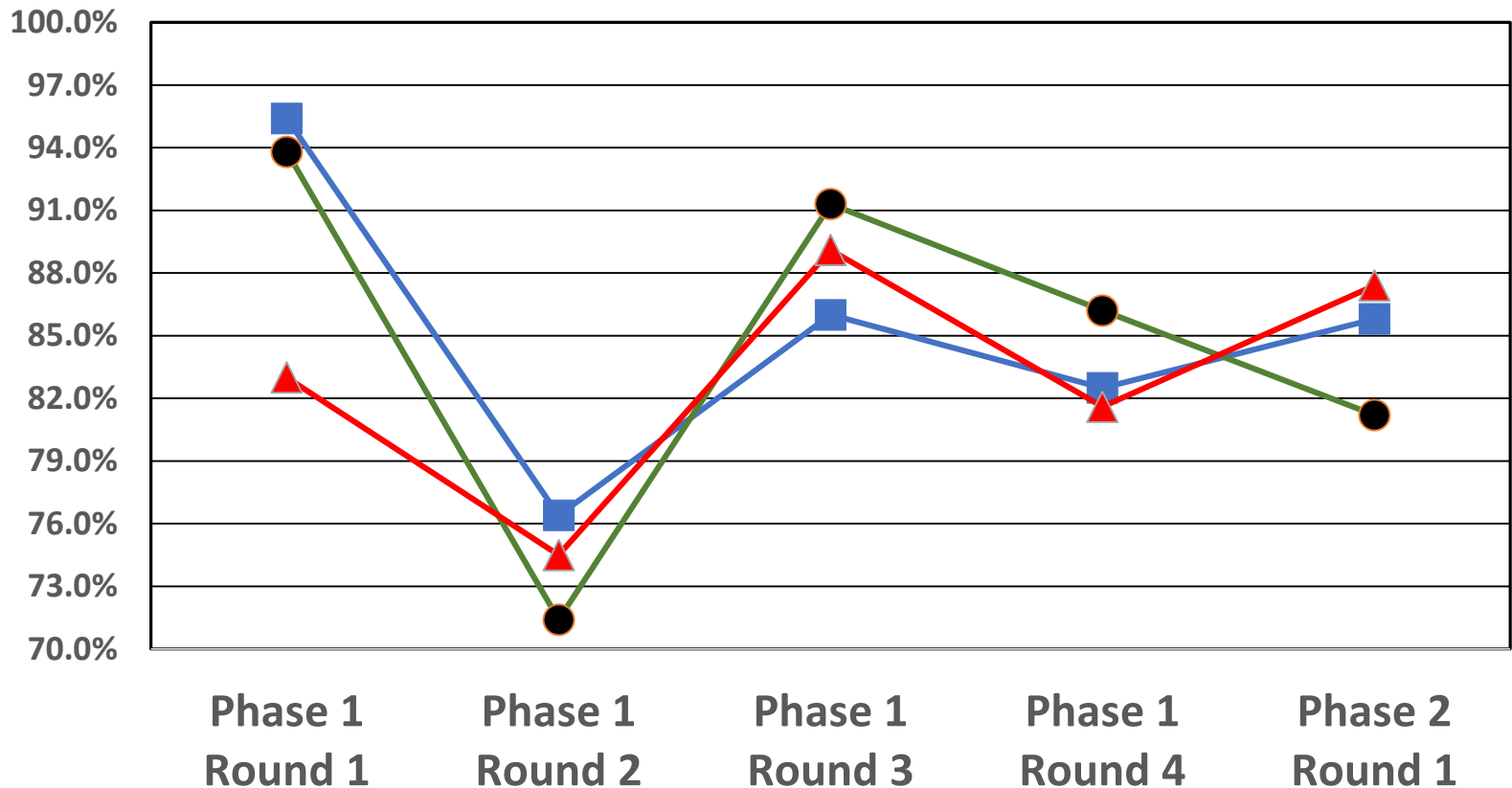


- What level has your organization achieved in planning programs for people with disabilities and older adults?
- What are the challenges in reaching a higher level?

Grantee Pathway Self-Assessment

- Pre-Grant Average Self-Assessment: Level 2 to 3
- Post-Grant Average Self-Assessment: Level 4

Participant and Partner Satisfaction



- Participant Satisfaction with Planning Process
- Stakeholder/Partner Satisfaction with Planning Process
- ▲ Participants Felt Opinion Had Impact

Lessons Learned: Communication

- Use multiple communication vehicles. Social media may work well, but always focus on accessibility.
- Ensure that the language/tone of communication is empowering, not patronizing.
- Use communication channels of partners/community organizations.
- Attend as many outreach events as possible to directly learn from participants about their needs.
- Phones may be the best way to communicate with many people with disabilities and older adults. They want to connect with a “real person.”

Lessons Learned: Engagement

- Finding participants to be actively and meaningfully involved takes time, and there will be turnover.
- Give participants active and meaningful opportunities to lead. Focus on what most engages them.
- Transit planners, social/human service providers, and decision makers should understand the life experience of people with disabilities and older adults.
- Include local universities, businesses, health care institutions, senior housing authorities, and government.
- Acknowledge the contributions and perspectives of all of those involved, and everyone should have a chance to participate.

Lessons Learned: Expectations

- Change and building momentum require perseverance over time.
- Avoid preconceived notions of what's "best" for participants. Listen and act on their feedback.
- Don't assume new partners completely understand inclusive processes. Be careful about the way you explain inclusion.
- Many organizations has "advisory" groups. Focus on letting participants "steer."
- Establish expectations from the community and steering committee members early in the process.

Lessons Learned: Practical Tips

- Meetings must be accessible (beyond ADA).
- Meetings may need to be outside “business hours” and located where participants can get to them. Not making people travel creates better participation.
- Educate participants about transportation and the planning process to enhance understanding and contributions.
- Creativity/flexibility are required to collect data.
- Having someone share in their own words how the engagement process affects them is the best way to tell the story. Officials are moved by personal stories/challenges.

Objective 1: Facilitate Meaningful Consumer Involvement

- In 38 grantee projects, people with disabilities and older adults meaningfully/actively involved in transportation planning to meet participant and community needs.
- Grantees developed customized approaches to meet community needs.
- Projects clearly addressed the specific needs for which grant applications were sought.

Objective 2: Increase Consumers' Participation and Satisfaction

- Participation of people with disabilities and older adults was expanded throughout the project.
- A vast majority of participants were satisfied with the planning process.
- A large majority of participants (over 80% in most rounds) felt that their opinions had an impact.
- Case studies provide qualitative evidence of the meaningful and active involvement in inclusive transportation partnerships.

Objective 3: Demonstrate Responsiveness to Participant Needs

- Every project provided evidence that inclusive transportation planning projects addressed the needs of transportation services for people with disabilities and older adults.
- Not clear that inclusion was maintained.

Objective 4: Enhance Awareness and Increase Knowledge

- Awareness and knowledge of the value of inclusive planning was expanded via the grant program.
- Less clear whether those not involved in this project are finding the resources related to inclusion.
- Pathway to Inclusion is particularly valuable in encouraging inclusive discussions around what inclusion means, the extent of inclusive practices, and identifying differences in assessment of inclusion between participants and organizations.