NEXT GENERATION PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT: GUESS WHAT, IT’S STILL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

FRANK ALARCON, RAMSEY COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS

CTS RESEARCH CONFERENCE
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About Rush Line BRT

• Dedicated guideway BRT.
• Downtown Saint Paul to White Bear Lake.
• Route, mode and general station locations determined through three-year Pre-Project Development Study (2014-2017).
• 21 stations.
• Diverse corridor in terms of racial and ethnic backgrounds, ages, abilities, languages spoken and income levels.
About Rush Line BRT

- Run seven days a week from early in the morning to late at night.
- 10-15 minute frequencies.
- Serve over 50 hospitals and clinics.
- Serve 106,000 jobs within a 10-minute walk of the planned stations.
- Transfers to/from METRO Green Line and numerous bus routes.

Rush Line BRT Development Process

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Local Decision Making
- Selection of Locally Preferred Alternative
- Public Hearings
- Environmental Decision

Ongoing Public Engagement
Rush Line BRT Engagement Goals

- Inform a diverse public.
  - Proactively engage:
    - Hmong.
    - Latino.
    - Somali.
    - African-American.
    - Karen.
    - Low-income households.
    - People with disabilities.
    - Seniors.
- Collect input from a diverse public.
- Use public input to shape the project.

Goals informed by Ramsey County’s mission:

*A county of excellence working with you to enhance our quality of life.*

Engagement by the Numbers

- Approximately 170 events since April 2018.
  - Average more than 2 events per week.
  - General events: 108.
  - “Campaign” events: 62.
- 1725 unique comments collected in-person and online.
- Documentation! #picsoritdidnthappen
REFINING STATION LOCATIONS ON SAINT PAUL’S EAST SIDE
VALIDATING AND VETTING COMMUNITY IDEAS

Arcade Street Station – Original Location
Station Area Planning Working Groups

Values: access, convenience, safety, redevelopment.
Refined Station Location Concept

From Idea to Validation

Values: transparency, humility, "working with you."
Transit Riders Know Best

Johnson High School Senior Leadership Class, May 2018

Identifying Gaps through Engagement

Legend:
- Proposed Stations
- Proposed Route
- METRO Green Line
- METRO Gold Line (Planned)
- Route 54

11/15/2019
Cook Avenue Station Concept

Values: access, cultural/community facilities.

From Idea to Validation

- Enthusiastic support from Hmong Village leadership.
- Feedback from Hmong Village vendors and customers.
- Park/rec center users and staff.
- Nearby employers.

Top: Pop-up at Hmong Village, January 2019
Bottom: Dinner with Santa at Duluth and Casa Recreation Center, December 2018
Lessons

• Budget for what you value.
  – Engagement costs time and money.
• Hire a team that shares those values.
• Show humility.
  – Be open to questioning original plans and assumptions in response to public input.
• If an idea comes from a small group, validate it with a larger sample of people with different backgrounds.
• Cultivate relationships.