

BETTER **BUS** STOPS

Community Engagement

What is Better Bus Stops?

A project to enhance access to opportunity by investing in bus stop shelters, lighting, heat and pedestrian access.

"Our front porch to our customers is the bus stop. That's where we present ourselves to our customers really for the first time."
 – Brian Lamb, Metro Transit General Manager



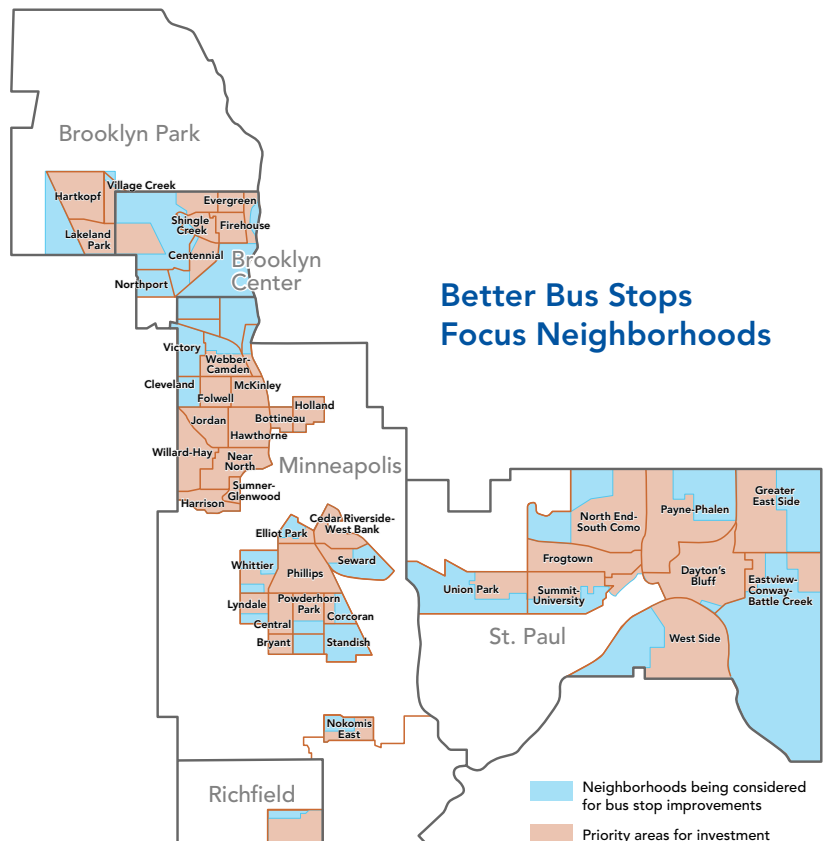
A community engagement process, active from March 2016 – March 2017, based in areas of concentrated poverty where more than half of the residents are people of color.

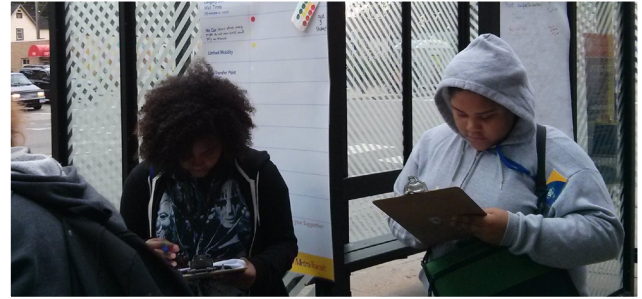
Why focus on community engagement?

To bring the community into the planning, decision-making and implementation of bus stop improvements and to influence the criteria the agency uses to prioritize shelter investments.

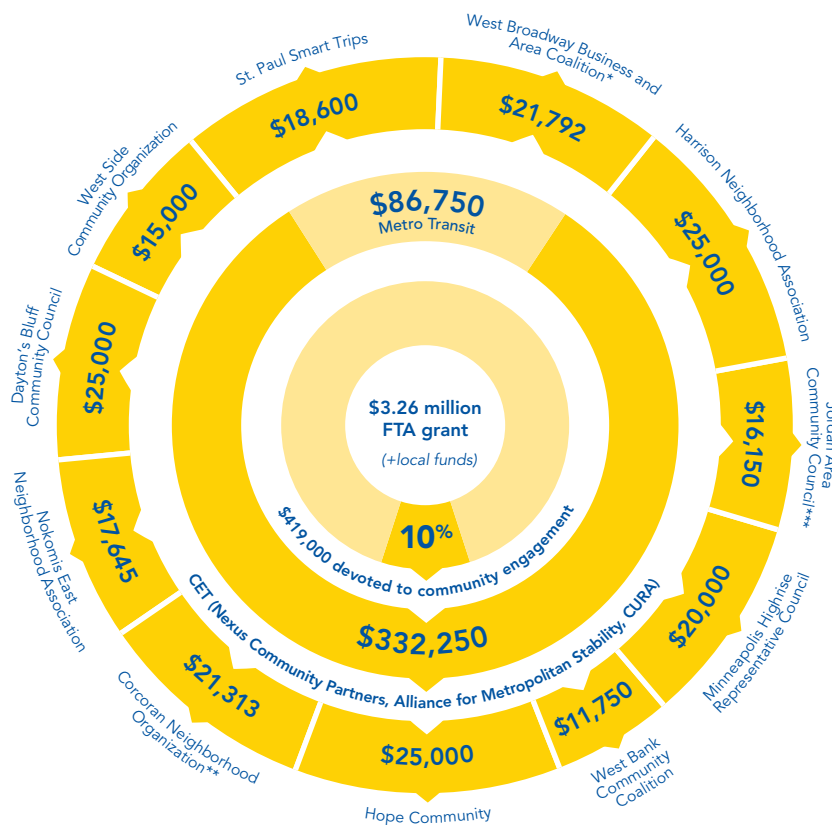
"Community engagement isn't something you check off. It really is the day in and the day out of being visible, asking good questions, and the follow up."
 – Community Organization

"The data's important but when you can align that with lived experience, lived outcomes, you get much better informed decision-making."
 – Community Engagement Team





Community Engagement Budget



\$419,000 devoted to community engagement

\$86,750

kept for Metro Transit, to do more traditional engagement and to provide engagement coverage for the entire Metro Transit service area (including a public engagement plan)

\$332,250

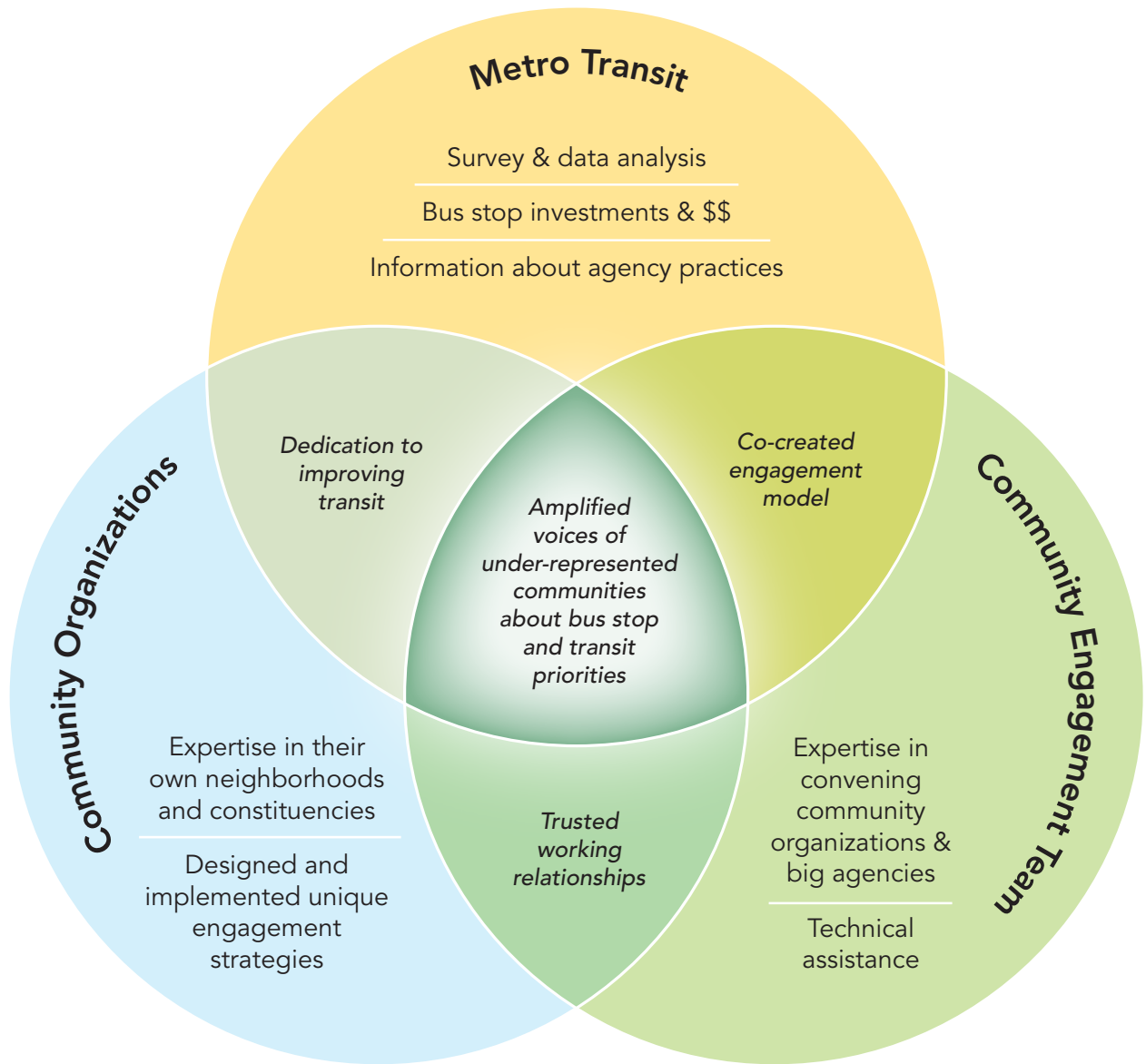
contracted to the CET (Nexus Community Partners, Alliance for Metropolitan Stability, CURA), with \$217,250 subcontracted out to community-based organizations

"All the players 'at the table' were paid to be there, rather than paid professional staff and volunteer community members. This created the conditions for leadership development and community ownership of the process – which ultimately yielded high quality results."

– Metro Transit staff

- * partnered with Juxtaposition Arts
- ** partnered with Central Area Neighborhood Development Organization, Lyndale Neighborhood Association, Lake Street Council
- *** partnered with Hawthorne Neighborhood Council

Community Engagement Model



"Co-creation of this model with the CET involved Metro Transit giving up decision-making power in several ways, which was essential in creating the conditions and space for community leadership and ownership of the work and outcomes.

Examples of this include who and how community engagement subcontracts were awarded, along with empowering community organizations to build off their expertise and create their own customized engagement plans for their constituencies."

– Metro Transit staff



Community Engagement Numbers



An estimated **7,000** people participated in community engagement



2,013 Metro Transit surveys completed
+ 2,230 surveys customized by community organizations



Nearly 200 community engagement events

About the CET

Community Engagement Team (CET) is comprised of Nexus Community Partners, the Alliance for Metropolitan Stability and Center for Urban and Regional Affairs at the University of Minnesota. The CET's work is focused on supporting low-wealth populations, indigenous communities, communities of color, new immigrants and people with disabilities.

"That traditionally underrepresented communities are well represented in the survey is just one measure of the value brought by community organizations. They successfully brought the survey to their communities, and used their relationships in the community to have conversations in ways that would not have been possible had Metro Transit staff or transit consultants initiated the conversation."

– Metro Transit staff

Subcontracted Community Organizations

- West Broadway Business and Area Coalition with Juxtaposition Arts
- Harrison Neighborhood Association
- Jordan Area Community Council with Hawthorne Neighborhood Council
- Minneapolis Highrise Representative Council
- West Bank Community Coalition
- Hope Community
- Corcoran Neighborhood Organization with Central Area Neighborhood Development Organization, Lyndale Neighborhood Association and Lake Street Council
- Nokomis East Neighborhood Association
- St. Paul Smart Trips
- West Side Community Organization
- Dayton's Bluff Community Council

What did we learn?

PRIORITIES FOR WHERE TO LOCATE SHELTERS:

- Where many people wait for the bus.
- Near hospitals, healthcare clinics, social service centers, senior housing, housing and services for people with disabilities, where children are waiting.
- Where residents don't have a car, where residents have lower income.

"Even though ridership may not be as high, shelters are needed near senior housing."
– Survey participant

PRIORITIES FOR SHELTER AND BUS STOP FEATURES:

- Signage and information
- Benches
- Shelters
- Lighting
- Heaters
- Safe street crossings
- Maintenance at bus stops and shelters

"Bus shelters with lighting, heat, benches and maps are extremely helpful to those of us who rely on transit."
– Survey participant

PRIORITIES BEYOND BUS STOPS:

- Bus service and operations
- Equitable distribution of resources
- Fares
- Safety

"When buses run late or too early, peoples' livelihoods are at stake." – Community Organization

"Some people actually don't have cars ... and they rely on the light rail and the bus every day they wake up." – Community Organization

PRIORITIES FOR SHELTER STYLE AND BUS STOP DESIGN:

- A safe path to the bus stop, and safe environment at the bus stop
- Design for all ages and abilities
- Better weather protection

"Wider sidewalks are a must. Too often I can't be visible to flag the bus without being dangerously close to fast driving automobile traffic. When I have a toddler with me I'm 10 times more anxious doing this."
– Survey participant

"[The bus system] has helped my family to attend doctor appointments, grocery stores when there are no other options. It helps us survive."
– Survey participant

"Safety must be addressed through an equity lens because of the different ways that safety shapes and defines bus riders' experiences depending on their location, identity and other factors. We heard from the majority of subcontractors that safety was a top concern for their community members when using transit. The diversity of comments and suggestions on this topic show that safety is defined and addressed differently in every community."
– CET



Community engagement accomplishments

- Engaging and centering the people and communities who are traditionally under-represented in transit decision-making, but are most affected by these decisions.
- Engaging the community in discussions focusing on equity and policy surrounding the investment of resources at the bus stop level to influence the criteria the agency uses to prioritize bus stops improvements.
- Fostering greater transparency on Metro Transit decision-making and providing more information about bus stop improvements.
- Creating opportunities to build capacity within the community on transit issues, by compensating community organizations as full partners.
- Documenting and sharing lessons learned from this model of community engagement.

"[As a result of the Better Bus Stops project] we have closer relationships with individuals from Metro Transit itself, the Metropolitan Council, and from various neighborhood groups..."

– Community Organization

"A major success is that residents in the community feel that we are doing something positive by being out there in the streets engaging with them. We have heard comments such as 'It's nice to see people wanting to do something positive in the neighborhood,' multiple times from the community."

– Community Organization

For more information, the Better Bus Stops Community Engagement Final Report and video, visit the Better Bus Stops website at metrotransit.org/better-bus-stops.