



APPENDIX A: Better Bus Stops Community Engagement Team Final Report

Prepared by Community Engagement Team

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History of the CET

The Community Engagement Team (CET), comprised of Nexus Community Partners, the Alliance for Metropolitan Stability, and Center for Urban and Regional Affairs at the University of Minnesota (previously the Center for Neighborhood Organizing), was formed in 2010 to create a process for engaging and involving underrepresented communities in all aspects of planning, decision-making and implementation along our region's proposed transit-way corridors. The CET's work is focused on supporting low-wealth populations, Indigenous communities, communities of color, new immigrants and people with disabilities.

The CET gained local and national recognition for their work on the Corridors of Opportunity project with the Metropolitan Council, which led to them being called upon by Metro Transit to conduct similar work on the Better Bus Stops project. As part of the Better Bus Stops project, the CET awarded \$217,250 in contracts to 11 community organizations to engage their communities around transit equity issues and inform Metro Transit's Better Bus Stops Program (BBS). As part of the Metropolitan Council's commitment to advancing equity in the region, the BBS program invests in bus stop improvements that enhance access to employment and educational opportunities. Metro Transit is using the results of the community engagement process to update their shelter placement guidelines, which determine where priority investments are made. The program improves bus stops located in neighborhoods with areas of concentrated poverty where the majority of residents are people of color.

The 11 community organizations (subcontractors) are Corcoran Neighborhood Organization, Dayton's Bluff Community Council, Harrison Neighborhood Association, Hope Community, Jordan Area Community Council, Minneapolis Highrise Representative Council, Nokomis East Neighborhood Association, Smart Trips, West Bank Community Coalition, West Broadway Business and Area Coalitions, and West Side Community Organization. While the subcontracts were awarded directly to these organizations, many worked with other neighborhood groups and partners to complete their work.

****See Appendix for further information on subcontractors****

The CET continues to bring together and work with representatives from the public, government and non-profit sectors to build and advance working relationships and find common areas of work. By linking neighborhoods to regional institutions, decision-making and economic opportunities, the CET is helping to ensure more integrated, equitable and sustainable change in the Twin Cities region.

The Story of Better Bus Stops

Subcontractor Selection Process:

Better Bus Stops outreach and engagement work was opened up to community-based organizations in the Better Bus Stops focus areas in a competitive application process. All applications were reviewed by a Selection Committee drawn from community-based organizations that are familiar with transit equity, with the support of Community Engagement Team members. Metro Transit staff were also involved in the application and selection process. The Selection Committee members drew from a collective body of knowledge and experience of community engagement to determine which community groups could best fulfill this project. In the end, 11 subcontractors from across Minneapolis and St. Paul were selected to engage their communities in Better Bus Stops. Throughout the project, the cohort (including subcontractors, CET members, and Metro Transit staff) met several times for trainings, updates, and

group sharing. The CET also offered individualized assistance and guidance to each of the subcontractors during their work to help them build their capacity for the project and sustain it moving forward. **See appendix for more information on the contract selection process.**

Highlights of the Work:

- **Creative Engagement Strategies**

The diversity of experience, culture, and creativity across the 11 subcontracted organizations created an environment of innovative and effective engagement methods. Collectively, they conducted over 150 engagement events in their communities. In total, they engaged approximately 6,000 community members for Better Bus Stops. Many made use of the survey that was developed by Metro Transit in their engagements, and several adapted the survey to fit the needs and culture of their community. Different engagements are successful and effective in every community, and the breadth of subcontractors' activities reflects the diversity of their communities.

Some of the creative engagement strategies employed include:

- transit survey driving tour (West Side Community Organization)
- equity-based participatory research project (Hope Community)
- focus groups with community elders (Dayton's Bluff Community Coalition)
- conducting surveys while riding the bus (Harrison Neighborhood Association)
- community picnics (Nokomis East Neighborhood Association)
- farmer's market outreach (West Broadway Business & Area Coalitions)
- tabling at schools and community centers (Corcoran Neighborhood Organization)
- youth-led survey teams (Smart Trips)
- community meeting videos (Jordan Area Community Council)
- flyering and door-knocking (Minneapolis Highrise Representative Council)

- **Developing New Partnerships**

The Better Bus Stops project presented a new model for community engagement partnerships between Metro Transit and community-based organizations. Throughout the year of work, relationships were forged between Metro Transit project staff and organizers and leaders working at the community level to uplift the voices of their neighbors and partners. As a result of this work, staff within Metro Transit have created a model for working with community partners and better including the voices of their constituency and leaders in communities have developed relationships with allies and resources in the public sector.

The 11 subcontractors were also able to take advantage of cohort meetings to network with each other and further develop the connections between their communities and build shared knowledge and power. The relationships developed through the Better Bus Stops project will last beyond the scope of this work and will allow for collaboration and partnership on future projects.

“[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 Northside neighborhood groups...” – West Broadway Business & Area Coalitions

“We were reminded that many other groups are working on the same issues and that it’s important to take the time to nurture connections. We also learned that Metro Transit has a wealth of data and information to be tapped.” –Minneapolis Highrise Representative Council

- **Leadership Development & Youth Development**

One of the clearest successes of the Better Bus Stops engagement process was the development of leaders within the subcontractors’ organizations and communities. Several subcontractors intentionally built leadership development into their proposals and their engagement plans, while some experience unanticipated success in developing leaders along the way.

“While surveying [for Better Bus Stops] at the Adult Basic Education School on Lake Street, we met Marvin. He took the survey and was so enthusiastic we hired him. His work was beyond extraordinary. He was the hardest working individual on the team. After the project ended he ran for a position on our board and was voted in.” –Corcoran Neighborhood Organization

At least three subcontractors engaged youth in their work on this project; both as interns and as community volunteers. Youth were able to gain transferable skills in surveying and community outreach, planning, and leadership that help build their professional capacity and the capacity of the organization. For example, St. Paul Smart Trips leveraged their project funding to develop youth interns to conduct community engagement and deepen their understanding of their communities’ unique transit concerns. Two of those youth interns have now been offered Lead Intern positions at Smart Trips.

- **Funding & Engaging Marginalized Communities**

Historically, the voices of marginalized communities have not been centered in transit surveys. However, when engagement is conducted by leaders and organizations from the communities who are being engaged, the results tell a different story. The 11 Better Bus Stops subcontractors were able to collectively engage over 6,000 people from low wealth communities of color across Minneapolis and St. Paul. The demographics of the people who responded to the survey and participated in engagements is representative of Metro Transit’s bus ridership in terms of race, age, and gender. Subcontractors were also extremely successful in engaging riders with disabilities, and people who are reliant on transit (Source: Metro Transit Survey Report). **This survey reached more bus riders who are representative of Minneapolis & St. Paul transit riders than any Metro Transit survey has before; this is due to the dedication and expertise of the 11 subcontractors in engaging their communities through culturally relevant and accessible methods.**

*“This is the first time [sic] Metro Transit has invited people from the community to survey the community. I appreciate that.” –Harrison Neighborhood Association organizer
(Source: <https://streets.mn/2016/08/10/rider-requests-for-better-bus-stops/>)*

Recommendations

Better Bus Stops Project Recommendations:

1. Metro Transit should work with the communities in their reach to understand their unique safety concerns, and develop actions to address them. 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.
Support: 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.
2. Metro Transit should continue to inform and engage subcontractors and their communities about the impact of the community engagement process on any internal guideline and policy changes. There should be a continued exchange between Metro Transit and the Better Bus Stops communities which lives beyond the end of the Better Bus Stops contracts.
Support: Throughout this project, a feedback loop was created between Metro Transit, Nexus, and the subcontractors. Subcontractors and their communities have asked for information to continue to be shared with them regarding this project, and any other relevant updates and information from Metro Transit. This also provides an opportunity for Metro Transit to further build trust and ongoing dialogues with community based organizations involved in the project.

Community Engagement Recommendations:

1. Metro Transit should continue to fund and partner with community-based organizations in under-resourced communities to do community engagement. Metro Transit should ensure that the value of this model of community engagement is implemented within other transit departments.
Support: This project was based on the CET’s Corridors of Opportunity model, which supports community-based organizations to be involved in the decision-making process. This model can be used as a leveraging point for getting government and public sector players and community-based organizations to think differently about their relationships with each other and promote long-lasting, mutually beneficial partnerships. Additionally, Metro Transit staff shared that the Better Bus Stops survey reached more bus riders in transit-reliant, low-wealth communities of color because engagement was conducted by community-based organizations in accessible and culturally-relevant ways. This survey provided Metro Transit with valuable and unprecedented information from their riders.

2. When possible, Metro Transit should proactively build community engagement into project plans and timelines due to the time and multiple layers of involvement that community engagement requires in order to be most effective. Intentionally focusing on community engagement early in the process enables community voices to be influential and provides more opportunities for equitable outcomes. Early engagement also allows for the required time and dedication that community engagement requires.

Support: Community members took notice of changes already being made to shelters and bus stops in their neighborhoods, and questioned why they were being engaged if decisions had already been made on bus stop improvements. It is important for community members to know that their input is being valued and implemented in order to maintain success in future community engagement processes.

3. Metro Transit should approach engagements, surveys, and community projects from the perspective of their constituents. Bus riders' experiences with transit intersect with the other factors of their lives (housing, employment, health, etc.) that impact how they ride the bus. When engaging bus riders, you must maintain an understanding of these other issues and how they will affect the feedback that is received.

Support: When community members were engaged and asked about their transit experience, they did not limit their feedback to the essential questions; they shared their stories that touched on broader transit and other issues.

Lessons Learned

While there are clear recommendations that the CET has for Metro Transit concerning Better Bus Stops and future community engagement processes, there are also lessons that were learned through this project on both sides of the relationship.

1. There is a level of pre-work that must be conducted on *both* sides of the relationship at the outset of a community engagement project like Better Bus Stops, especially for an institution like Metro Transit that has not conducted such a large-scale project with so many organizations in such a large geography before. It is important for both parties to discuss expectations and outcomes for the community engagement process, and to share their definitions and understandings of what community engagement and the process is. For the CET, this would mean conducting a training or facilitating conversations with Metro Transit staff on community engagement and how it can be a powerful avenue to equity and what realistic expectations are for the process. For Metro Transit, this would mean taking in the information from these conversations and responding internally to ensure that their systems and expectations are prepared for an involved and authentic community engagement process. This information can challenge existing organizational culture and systems. It is important that these conversations happen early to create internal buy-in from staff and leadership. It is also important from the outset for Metro Transit, or the funding institution, to provide clear information about what is expected from the contractors and subcontractors. This includes mandatory reporting, optional opportunities, etc.

Based upon our experience, there will be natural tensions that arise when an institution is stepping into authentic community engagement, and this pre-work allows for time and opportunities to facilitate that process. These conversations build trust between the two parties, which is necessary for community engagement. Without trust from the funder/overseeing organization, it is impossible for community-based organizations to successfully conduct their work with freedom to do engagement in the way that they know works best for their community. Additionally, large institutions often require significant reporting on projects, which is over-burdensome to small, community-based organizations. The development of trust between the institution and the organizations doing the work mitigates some of the need for this reporting.

2. Another lesson learned is that timing is very important for community groups doing community engagement and that forces outside of the project timeline will affect when the work is done. The majority of engagement events occurred over the summer, when there was ample opportunity to take advantage of the good weather and work with youth who were on break from school. There was also a subcontractor who was unable to complete engagement work during June because their community was celebrating the month of Ramadan. It is important to keep these timing considerations in mind when planning future projects.
3. The Better Bus Stops project showed Metro Transit that an authentic, equity-based community engagement process will bring in feedback that they had not anticipated. Throughout the Better Bus Stops engagement process, feedback from community members was not limited to the 5 essential questions that Metro Transit identified. Transit equity encompasses many issues which affect certain populations in different ways and is deeply tied to other community concerns and equity issues such as employment, housing, and education. The five essential questions were too narrow to capture the breadth of community transit inequities and riders' experiences with Metro Transit service. When community members were asked about their preferences for bus stops, they gave feedback on their whole bus riding experience. It is important that Metro Transit is prepared for this kind of feedback and is able to take the time to properly address the concerns outside of their specific project goals.

The Metro Transit Better Bus Stops project team did a good job tracking those comments outside of the 5 essential questions and sending each piece of feedback to relevant departments within Metro Transit. In order for community members and community-based partner organizations to build trust with Metro Transit, they must see that their feedback is being listened to and acted upon.

BBS Essential Questions

Shelter-Related Feedback:

Subcontractors successfully facilitated over 1,000 submitted responses to the survey that Metro Transit designed to capture community feedback specifically related to the three shelter-related essential questions. This number does not include the surveys which were adapted by some subcontractors, of which they received over 1,500 additional responses. Metro Transit conducted their own extensive analysis on the survey data in response to each of the three individual shelter-related essential

questions. In addition to the survey results, subcontractors reported on their findings from community engagement in their quarterly reports. The information that the CET received from subcontractors in their quarterly reports included themes and identified community priorities related to bus shelters. These are listed below. ****See appendix for more information about the reporting process.****

Concerning shelter location, features, and design, the most common feedback was:

- More heat in shelters, specifically shelters where many bus riders wait for long periods of time in the Winter
 - “The current Metro Transit practice of limiting heat provision to bus shelters at stops which average 100 boardings per day was not endorsed [by community members]. Many felt additional weight should be given to adding heat to shelters that serve vulnerable populations such as the elderly, disabled and young children.” – Subcontractor*
 - “Many individuals expressed the hard winters that one go through living in Minnesota and bus shelters without heating make it impossible to use Metro Transit to get locations. Heating was the number one priority from both students using the bus system to get to high school and mothers.” – Subcontractor*
- More light in shelters, especially those where riders are waiting at night
 - “Light is particularly important, because safety is a big concern in the neighborhood.” – Subcontractor*
 - “Community members would like to have heating, lighting, and more signage at bus stops.” – Subcontractor*
- More shelters at stops in areas where there are community centers, hospitals, schools, etc. and on high-use routes
 - “There should be bus [shelters] in areas where people don't own vehicles, near clinics, hospitals, schools, housing, jobs, businesses, senior housing and social service centers.” – Subcontractor*
 - “The most essential priorities that emerged were in areas where people do not own vehicles, near hospitals, clinics, at stops on busy roads where it feels unsafe.” – Subcontractor*
- More real-time schedule and route displays
 - “Up-to-date bus schedules in large enough type for older eyes to easily read are also desired.” – Subcontractor*
 - “[Make] information available in other languages on how and who to contact when bus shelters [need maintenance] or route times or any incidents occur.” – Subcontractor*
- More benches, especially in areas where there are many elderly and disabled transit riders

“Benches are a high priority for high-rise residents, many of whom are elderly and/or disabled. Having a place to sit down while waiting for the bus can make a huge difference in a senior's quality of life and ability to be active in the community.”

– Subcontractor

- More protection from wind and snow, and better snow removal from shelters and orientation that provides ADA accessibility

“It's helpful for the shelters to be near curb cuts so people in wheelchairs don't have to go out of their way to board the bus.”

– Subcontractor

Other Frequent Community Feedback:

- Buses that run late and off-schedule create significant problems and unsafe situations for bus riders

“People who participated in our survey talked about the impacts of the bus line on their lives. For many participants they depend on the bus not just for their livelihoods, but also to stay connected with their families and friends which are scattered across the city, and also to stay in compliance with probation/court mandated treatment procedures. When bus lines malfunction or run late, people suffer. When buses run late or too early, peoples' livelihoods are at stake.” – Subcontractor

- Discrimination and rudeness by bus operators can create unpleasant and unsafe experiences for bus riders

“Most Latino and African American respondents shared negative experiences using transit. They indicate these experience are based in part on their race.” – Subcontractor

“Several Native American and Black women spoke about experiencing discrimination and violence on the buses, often at the hand of drivers. This signals that transit riders want Metro Transit to change the operating procedures for bus drivers—they want drivers who know how to deescalate violence on the bus, they want drivers who understand their cultural needs, they also want bus drivers who are more compassionate... transit riders want bus drivers who will recognize their humanity....”

– Subcontractor

- Some bus riders do not feel as though there is adequate follow-up or action after they file a complaint through Metro Transit

“Our first date out on the bus stop in community we came across a young family with a language barrier, mom and two children, one using a wheelchair. We observed a very negative and non-servicing interaction with the bus driver. They had to wait 45 minutes for another bus, and the access to the curb on the bus stop was non-existent. They have reported previously with Metro Transit and have had no response, until we reported through our local council woman, and through our networks within Metro Transit. We

are now noting for further review the process of reporting issues such as this with Metro Transit and the response time to community.” – Subcontractor

- Transit inaccessibility for elderly transit riders and people with disabilities
“How are people who are elderly, disabled, or chronically ill supposed to stay warm, safe, and rested with the lack of amenities in these waiting shelters?” – Subcontractor

“Our team and residents have both observed instances where families with strollers would get off the bus for wheelchair users, and moments where the bus had to leave behind wheelchair users due to lack of space.” – Subcontractor

- Bus riders acknowledging and appreciating being engaged by Metro Transit, and eager to share their experiences with transit

*“High-rise residents welcome the opportunity to take the transit survey and to participate in transit-related discussions. Most residents depend on transit for their mobility and are hopeful their views will influence future transit planning.”
– Subcontractor*

“...People in underrepresented communities are eager to share their stories and are impacted greatly by lack of resources.” – Subcontractor

“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.” – Subcontractor

Historically & Culturally Significant Landmarks:

- 927 West Broadway (North Minneapolis)
- American Indian Cultural Center (Phillips Neighborhood)
- Ancient Traders Market (Ventura Village)
- Capri Theater (North Minneapolis)
- Cesar Chavez & State Street (West Side, St. Paul)
- Chicago Avenue & Franklin Avenue Intersection (Phillips Neighborhood)
- Emerge Career & Technology Center (North Minneapolis)
- Empty lot at Dale & University (Frogtown)
- Franklin ArtWords Building (Phillips Neighborhood)
- Franklin Avenue Library (Phillips Neighborhood)
- Friedman’s Shoes (North Minneapolis)
- Historic Milwaukee Avenue (Seward Neighborhood)
- Little Earth (Phillips Neighborhood)
- Little Mekong (Frogtown)
- Mississippi River (West Bank Neighborhood)
- Mounds Park (East Side, St. Paul)

- Park Avenue Mansions (Phillips Neighborhood)
- Pioneers & Soldiers Memorial Cemetery (Phillips Neighborhood)
- Riverside Towers/Riverside Park (West Bank Neighborhood)
- Scheffer Rec Center (Frogtown)
- Schmitt’s Brewery (East Side, St. Paul)
- Straightgate Church (Phillips Neighborhood)
- Torre de San Miguel Housing Units (West Side, St. Paul)
- Touchstone Plaza/Amen Corner (Phillips Neighborhood)
- Victoria Theater (Frogtown)

Regional Equity Essential Question:

Community members across all of the geographies represented by the 11 subcontractors communicated that the current Metro Transit policy of ridership numbers determining improvements at bus stops creates investment disparities between urban and suburban transit. Per Metro Transit’s internal policies, there must be 25 boardings per day in the suburbs and 40 boardings per day in the city in order for a bus stop to be considered for priority investment. Not only is it inequitable to have different determination numbers for the suburbs and city, but the metric itself is not adequately and equitably addressing the needs of communities. Ridership and boarding numbers do not show the unique needs of each neighborhood and community.

Rather, it was recommended that improvements be determined by prioritizing neighborhoods and routes where many residents and riders are heavily transit-reliant and do not have access to cars and areas where there has been a history of disinvestment.

“...diverse communities have inequitable systems that work against them with the bus system. An example is how many riders need to be at a bus stop in order to receive a shelter. There is a much lower number required in the suburbs than in the city. The types of buses that suburban commuters have access to are nicer than the urban buses.” – Subcontractor

“We are asking for no more than what Summit Hill, Grand Avenue, and the suburbs get in funding and support with transportation.” –Subcontractor

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

“There is a certain ‘classism’ at the bus stops. Poor people and people of color’s bus stops aren’t as nice and well-lit with heat and electronic schedules, as buses going to richer neighborhoods.” –Survey Respondent

“We need to feel safe and be considered viable citizens.” –Survey Respondent

Community Engagement Project Reflections

The diversity of activities and approaches to community engagement by subcontractors promoted success in gaining honest and insightful feedback from community members. People were engaged in the process because the engagement was conducted in culturally-relevant and accessible ways;

different strategies of engagement work for different groups based on their history, culture, geography, etc.

Community engagement processes are necessarily *fluid* processes, because of the nature of dealing with changing lives and changing communities. During this project, a few subcontractors experienced transitions in their staff and resulting changes in their organizations. Some organizations managed their project responsibilities through those transitions, while others were challenged and had to reassess and adjust the scale of their involvement. Understanding that these challenges will arise and that there must be time and space built into the project to manage them is necessary from the start. Community engagement takes time.

Despite the fact that there were unanticipated challenges that came up, the process was right. The Better Bus Stops project provided evidence of the success and value of this kind of community engagement model within Metro Transit now and going forward. When Metro Transit invests in under-resourced communities and invites community members into dialogue, the resulting work speaks for itself. Community engagement takes time, investment, and work, but is shown to deliver positive results.

Appendix 1: Subcontractor Activities

Each subcontractor took a different approach to the project, based on their unique community and their experiences with past community engagement projects. Much of the success of this project was due to the diversity of activities and the accessibility and relevancy with which each subcontractor approached the work.

Corcoran Neighborhood Organization (Subcontract: \$21,313): This group, along with the Central Area Neighborhood Development Organization, Lyndale Neighborhood Association, and Lake Street Council, covered approximately 17 bus stops in the Corcoran neighborhood. They focused their effort on engaging with bus riders at stops to complete the survey and talk about their experiences with transit. They were able to kick-off this work with a leader retreat where one of our team members, Joan Vanhala was able to provide some organizer tips and training. Throughout their surveying, they completed a whiteboard photo project where community members could display what was important to them at a bus stop and have their picture taken. Corcoran has moved members of their volunteer team into other leadership positions in the organization, including a board position, with the help of this work.

Dayton's Bluff Community Council (Subcontract: \$25,000): This group covered one of the largest areas as far as geography and populations in the Better Bus Stops project. They worked with many groups to do various listening sessions across the East Side, including with youth, elders, and local college students. This group did some of their work on the bus, taking rides and comparing and contrasting communities' experiences across the Metro Area.

Harrison Neighborhood Association (Subcontract: \$25,000): Harrison did the most extensive survey gathering and analysis of all the groups. This group used the majority of their contract dollars to hire up to 20 community leaders to do the work. Their organizers rode the bus throughout the summer and conducted the survey in transit. They were able to hire six of the 20 for continued work around voter engagement. Harrison also adapted the Metro Transit survey and completed a detailed report on their results.

Hope Community (Subcontract: \$25,000): Hope has a long history of leadership development and used this to bring in new leaders for this work. Their community organizer put together a five member team, called Root Words, to take this work to the streets. Their project took on community listening, participatory research, and leadership development. They see a lot of people and organizations doing work in their community and want to push the question of how can they make a difference. They want to continue working with Metro Transit to improve services for the community.

Jordan Area Community Council (Subcontract: \$16,150): Jordan, with the help of summer youth and Hawthorne Neighborhood Council, were able to do extensive outreach into the neighborhood. They used community events to table and many "pop-up" events to gather information from the community. There were many groups that identified safety as one of their key issues but Jordan was one of those groups that work on safety non-stop in their community. They were able to use the Better Bus Stops project to learn more about the unique safety concerns of the community and deepen their work on this issue.

Minneapolis Highrise Representative Council (Subcontract: \$20,000): This group reached a very important senior population that is reliant on public transit. They had a very diverse and active leadership team that spanned many of the high-rises in our target area. They conducted much of their work at Highrise Council meetings and Highrise community events. This was a group that took full advantage of this opportunity and will continue to work with Metro Transit to see how their needs can get met.

Nokomis East Neighborhood Association (Subcontract: \$17,645): This group targeted two communities in their area, the Latino and Somali communities. They leveraged this project to do outreach and build new relationships with cultural constituencies in their neighborhood, and were able to hire a bilingual organizer. They hosted community events and conducted bus stop surveys and door-to-door canvassing with organizers and community volunteers.

Smart Trips (Subcontract: \$18,600): From the very beginning of this process the Smart Trips youth interns stood out as leaders in this group. This group conducted engagement in the Frogtown community, capturing the youth and adult populations. 25% of the data collected was from youth. Through this contract they were able to grow the leadership of their youth team.

West Broadway Business & Area Coalition (Subcontract: \$21,792): This group had the closest connection with the business community in North Minneapolis. They partnered with Juxtaposition Arts to conduct creative and youth-led engagements in the community. They did a lot of their outreach at various community events on the Northside over the summer.

West Side Community Organization (Subcontract: \$15,000): This group was able to incorporate this work into their other transit work on the West Side of St. Paul. They worked with the Wilder Foundation to train their youth cohort in meeting facilitation and then the youth held listening sessions at various housing developments on the West Side. The youth also did an Equity Tour of the city as part of their learning, where they rented a van and surveyed the neighborhood with staff.

One of the original 11 subcontractors was unable to complete the project due to leadership changes and capacity issues at their organization. Therefore, there are only 10 subcontractors listed here.

Appendix 2: Better Bus Stops Community Engagement Subcontracts – Proposal Selection Committee Process

Introduction

The Better Bus Stops outreach and engagement work was opened up to community-based organizations through a competitive contracting process. Community-based organizations were contracted to support effective place-based initiatives that engage and involve underrepresented communities (low-wealth, people of color, new immigrants, people with disabilities, or other cultural constituencies) in participation, decision-making, and leadership roles around regional transit equity issues at the bus stop level. The program focus was on engagement of constituency members who use transit themselves.

The outreach and engagement work of community-based organizations did not replace Metro Transit's existing public engagement efforts, but occurred alongside more traditional tactics and supported the development of increased community capacity to participate on regional transit equity issues.

Decision-Making Process

The CET team settled on 12 people as the number for the full committee so that when the reading groups were split there would be six in each reading group and a member from Metro Transit and the CET Team in each reading group.

Recruitment Criteria

Applications were reviewed by a committee drawn from community-based organizations that are familiar with public transportation, transit equity and/or community engagement, with the support of Community Engagement Team members and Metro Transit staff. All final committee members were required to abide by a conflict of interest policy and a confidentiality agreement. This proposal review committee made contract award decisions.

Additional consideration when selecting the committee was diversity, geographic representation (east, west metro) and two-four members with no clear conflicts of interest with any of the organizations applying.

Committee Requirements

Committee members made the commitment to participate with an understanding of the requirements of the process, as follows:

Orientation Meeting

- Packets are given to the committee and orientation for the committee to go over the process and proposal review. These packets included a list of applicants, the orientation agenda, reading group meeting agenda, a list of committee members, and a timeline for the selection process.

Reading Group

- Proposal Selection Committee comes together to make recommendations for site visits
- Some site visits are moved forward from reading groups

- Site visit teams are selected

Site Visits

- Coordinator set-up site visits
- Committee members attend 1-2 site visits
- Site visit questions are prepared and sent to the groups prior to the site visits
- 1 hour site visits are conducted and documented
- Reports are prepared by site visit attendees to report back to the full committee for the subcontract award meeting

Subcontract Award Meeting

- Committee comes together to make final recommendations for award of subcontracts
- Review site visits and discussion

Selection Process

Stage One:

The CET team read all proposals and recommended for further consideration those that appear to meet our most basic criteria. CET team contacted applicants with questions and ensure that information is complete and that the group is legally eligible for funding. CET team gives the benefit of the doubt to the applicant and recommends the proposal if there is no clear precedent for rejection or if there is a chance of eligibility. CET team also got the number of proposals per reading group to a manageable number for the volunteer review committee.

The criteria considered at this stage are:

- Proposal targets one or more of the neighborhoods identified as targeted areas for investment.
- The proposed activities engage constituencies related to the five Essential Questions defined by Metro Transit.
- The proposed activities engage constituencies around broader regional transit equity issues (e.g. basic bus service, frequency, fares, improving the ridership experience, routes, etc.), including influencing how Metro Transit is able to help underrepresented communities better access opportunity and achieve more just and fair inclusion in our region.

When the initial review was complete, the remaining proposals were sent to all committee members. Cover sheets from rejected proposals were included along with a summary of rejected proposals and reasons for exclusion.

Stage Two:

The second stage is where the ranking criteria of the proposal were considered. At this stage the committee looked at the work plan, constituent involvement, desired outcomes, and how people who are historically excluded from decision-making are at the table (including those that use the Metro Transit system).

Ranking Criteria considered at this stage:

- Engagement: Engages underrepresented communities, including transit riders.
- Specificity: Clearly outlines how the outreach, organizing or engagement activities will lead to desired outcomes.
- Strategic: Proposed activities leverage this opportunity to achieve one or more longer-term goals of its constituents.
- Leveraging: Accesses other resources such as money, people, and learning opportunities.
- Project Design: Community members from underrepresented communities are involved in project design and implementation
- Effectiveness: Project is logically connected to desired outcomes
- Leadership: Decision-making within the organization is informed by underrepresented community members.
- Bridging: Project creates bridges between stakeholders
- Evaluation: Clear explanation of what change is expected as a result of this project
- Schedule: Includes a clearly defined project schedule that allows for engagement activities and related deliverables to be completed within timeframes established by the CET.
- Training and Education: Organization has the capacity to participate in post-award informational and educational sessions.

Because of the volume of proposals the Committee divided into discussion groups to consider a portion of the proposals. The group made recommendations on which proposals receive site visits and identified specific questions that should be answered at the site visits. A site visit list was drawn up at the meeting and committee members chose the site visits in which they will take part.

Proposals need to address the five Essential Questions:

1. Customer Waiting Shelter Locations. ESSENTIAL QUESTION: With equity as the goal, what do community members think is important in deciding which bus stops have customer-waiting shelters? What community priorities could factor into decisions related to locating shelters?
2. Customer Waiting Shelter Features. ESSENTIAL QUESTION: With equity as the goal, how do community members prioritize the addition of heat and interior light within the customer waiting shelter at the bus stop? What community priorities could factor into decisions related to the addition of a heater and interior light? What priority does community place on transit information at the bus stop?
3. Historical Significance. ESSENTIAL QUESTION: Are there buildings/structures/areas near bus stops within your neighborhood that are historically important to the community? If so, what are they?
4. Customer Waiting Shelter Design and Orientation. ESSENTIAL QUESTION: How much does the shelter style and placement of the shelter in the sidewalk area affect the customer, pedestrian, and property owner experiences?
5. Regional Equity. ESSENTIAL QUESTION: In what other ways is Metro Transit able to help community in accessing opportunity and achieving more just and fair inclusion in our region?

Stage Three:

One to two committee members conducted a site visit, with one staff member on each team. No site visit teams included more than four people. The core concern of this stage was to investigate the

organizational capability of the applicant in terms of being able to achieve objectives identified in the proposal, and to further investigate the best use of a Better Bus Stops Contract.

Criteria considered at this stage included:

- structures of accountability
- any other organizational capability issues
- any other issues identified by the discussion groups

Each applicant received a copy of the questions identified by the discussion group.

Each team made a recommendation based on the results of the site visit. The team recommended rejection, medium recommendation, or high recommendation. High indicates that the team believes the applicant exemplifies the Better Bus Stops criteria and absolutely should receive funding. Medium indicates that the team has some reservations but believes the project overall is worth funding. Reservations could cover a wide range including questions about feasibility to carry out the work, constituent involvement, or capacity to do the work. The site visit team could also recommend a rejection if they felt the organization did not meet the criteria after the site visit was conducted. These recommendations were used as a guide for committee members to evaluate together the site visits as a full group.

Stage Four:

At the final meeting, the team shared the site visit reports. A list was created of high recommendations, medium recommendations, and rejections. Awards were made based on availability of funds and the recommendations. The final recommendations also factored in that awarded contracts and proposed efforts have geographic balance and coverage of the project's focus areas.

Stage Five:

CET executed agreements and contracts. Contracts went out to selected organizations and CET communicated with those that did not receive a contract.

Appendix 3: Better Bus Stops Community Engagement Subcontracts – Request for Proposals (RFP)



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

2015-2016 BETTER BUS STOPS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CONTRACTS

What is the Better Bus Stops Program?

In October 2014, Metro Transit received a Federal Transit Administration Ladders of Opportunity grant for bus stop enhancements that improve access to employment, education, and other opportunities for communities of color and low-wealth communities. The Ladders of Opportunity grant is combined with other funding sources and bus stop improvement commitments made to advance regional transit equity through new investment in bus stops. This combined program of work is called the Better Bus Stops program.

The Better Bus Stops program will:

- Add up to 150 new shelter locations, and enhance as many as 75 existing shelter locations with light and in some cases heat
- Improve transit information within these shelters and at other bus stops.
- Provide funding to support the work of community-based organizations for community engagement focusing on regional transit equity and questions about future allocation of resources.

What is the role of community engagement in the overall program?

Better Bus Stops will engage community to:

- Influence the criteria Metro Transit uses to prioritize bus stops for shelters, heated shelters, transit information and other equitable bus stop improvements beyond the Better Bus Stops program;
- Engage with communities about how to proceed with equitable bus stop improvements at specific bus stops that are prioritized to add shelters but have site constraints, such as limited space or steep slopes. For these bus stops, gather community input that guides investment priorities and work with Metro Transit in its outreach to property owners.

What is the Better Bus Stops Community Engagement opportunity for locally-based community organizations?

The Better Bus Stops outreach and engagement work is being opened up to community-based organizations through a competitive contracting process. Community-based organizations will be contracted to support effective place-based initiatives that engage and involve underrepresented communities (low-wealth, people of color, new immigrants, people with disabilities, or other cultural constituencies) in participation, decision-making, and leadership roles around regional transit equity issues at the bus stop level. The program will focus on engagement of constituency members who use transit themselves.

The outreach and engagement work of community-based organizations does not replace Metro Transit's existing public engagement efforts, but is intended to occur alongside more traditional tactics and support the development of increased community capacity to participate on regional transit equity issues.

What are the topics for community engagement?

There are two areas of focus for community engagement within the Better Bus Stops initiative. Each proposal must address how the organization(s) will engage communities connected to both of the focus areas.

1. The outreach and engagement conducted by contracted community-based organizations should focus on answering the following four essential questions asked by Metro Transit:
 - a. Customer Waiting Shelter Locations. ESSENTIAL QUESTION: With equity as the goal, what do community members think is important in deciding which bus stops have customer waiting shelters? What community priorities could factor into decisions related to locating shelters?
 - b. Customer Waiting Shelter Features. ESSENTIAL QUESTION: With equity as the goal, how do community members prioritize the addition of heat and interior light within the customer waiting shelter at the bus stop? What community priorities could factor into decisions related to the addition of a heater and interior light? What priority does community place on transit information at the bus stop?
 - c. Historical Significance. ESSENTIAL QUESTION: Are there buildings/structures/areas near bus stops within your neighborhood that are historically important to the community? If so, what are they?
 - d. Customer Waiting Shelter Design and Orientation. ESSENTIAL QUESTION: How much does the shelter style and placement of the shelter in the sidewalk area affect the customer, pedestrian, and property owner experiences?

Metro Transit will create a survey on the Essential Questions and the broader transit equity issues that can be utilized by subcontractors – this is the one survey that will be used for the process.

2. Outreach and engagement conducted by contracted community-based organizations should also focus on advancing broader regional transit equity issues (e.g. basic bus service, frequency,

fares, improving the ridership experience, routes, etc.), including influencing how Metro Transit is able to help underrepresented communities better access opportunity and achieve more just and fair inclusion in our region.

How much money is available for community outreach and engagement work by community-based organizations?

There will be one round of funding, totaling approximately \$229,000. Individual contracts will not exceed \$25,000.

Where does the money come from?

The funding for this work was awarded to Metro Transit by the Federal Transit Administration and will be administered by Nexus Community Partners as a member of the Community Engagement Team (CET).

What is the Community Engagement Team?

The Community Engagement Team (CET) was formed to identify, develop and support targeted strategies that engage underrepresented communities in planning, decision - making and implementation processes on and around transit - oriented corridors. The CET is made up of three organizations: The Alliance for Metropolitan Stability, Nexus Community Partners, and the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs. The CET's work is focused on supporting low-wealth populations, communities of color, new immigrants, people with disabilities, and other cultural constituencies.

In the Better Bus Stops Program, the CET will administer the funds available to complete the engagement work including the solicitation, review and award of contracts to community-based organizations. The CET will also provide support and education for selected community-based organizations.

Who is eligible for Better Bus Stops Community Engagement contracts?

Eligible organizations include community-based organizations such as neighborhood organizations, cultural organizations, small business associations, district councils, and other community based entities representative of and/or led by low-wealth communities, communities of color, immigrant communities, people with disabilities, or other cultural constituencies. The proposing organization must be a registered 501c3 or have a pre-identified fiscal agent. (e.g. neighborhood groups, district councils, cultural organizations, small business associations, etc.).

Is there a geographic focus?

Yes, the following geographies are focus areas for new investment within the Better Bus Stops Program (see attached map): Areas of Minneapolis, Brooklyn Park, Brooklyn Center, Richfield and St. Paul. Outreach and engagement for the Better Bus Stop Program is anchored in these areas of focus. Community-based organizations should have demonstrated experience in working in these areas. Cultural organizations that represent communities that live in these neighborhoods are eligible and encouraged to apply.

- Brooklyn Center Neighborhoods: Bellvue, Centennial, East Palmer Lake, Evergreen, Firehouse, Garden City, Grandview, Kylawn, Lions, Northport, Orchard Lane, Riverwood, Shingle Creek, West Palmer Lake, Willow Lane
- Brooklyn Park Neighborhoods: Hartkopf, Lakeland Park, Village Creek
- Minneapolis Neighborhoods: Bancroft, Bottineau, Bryant, Camden, Cedar-Riverside, Central, Cleveland, Corcoran, East Phillips, Elliot Park, Folwell, Harrison, Hawthorne, Heritage Park, Holland, Jordan, Lind-Bohanon, Lyndale, McKinley, Midtown Phillips, Near North, Nokomis East, Phillips West, Powderhorn Park, Seward, Shingle Creek, Standish, Ventura Village, Victory, Webber-Camden, Whittier, Willard-Hay
- St. Paul Neighborhoods: Eastview-Conway-Battle Creek (District 1), Greater East Side (District 2), West Side (District 3), Dayton’s Bluff (District 4), Payne-Phalen (District 5), North End-South Como (District 6), Frogtown (District 7), Summit-University (District 8), Union Park (District 13)
- Richfield: Southeastern area

When will community engagement work occur?

Selected community based organizations may begin their work after receiving Contract Executions and Notice to Proceed, anticipated by February 27th.

Proposals must meet these minimum requirements:

- The proposing organization(s) must serve a community or constituency within one or more of the neighborhoods and/or District Councils listed on page 2.
- The proposing organization must be a registered 501c3 or have a pre-identified fiscal agent. (e.g. neighborhood groups, district councils, cultural organizations, small business associations, etc.)
- The proposed activities must engage communities around the four Essential Questions.
- The proposed activities must engage underrepresented communities: low-wealth populations, communities of color, new immigrants, people with disabilities, and other cultural constituencies.
- There must be a focus on engagement of constituency members who use transit themselves.
- Applicants who have received previous CET Outreach and Engagement Grants must be in good standing (have met reporting requirements) to be eligible for the Better Bus Stops Outreach and Engagement work.
- The proposed activities must include documentation on both the engagement process and answers to the Essential Questions. Documentation will be required quarterly (every 3 months).

See the attached review-scoring sheet for more information about how proposals will be scored.

What are my obligations if I am awarded a contract?

Subcontractors are required to provide quarterly reports. Subcontractors must agree to spend funds consistent with the proposal.

Will technical assistance be provided to selected community-based organizations?

Yes! The CET is committed to providing ongoing technical assistance and support to the efforts of its subcontractors. The CET will also help build bridges between community-based organizations/initiatives and public agencies including the project managers and planners at Metro Transit. Early in the grant year, the CET will work with funded organizations to bring together subcontractors, Metro Transit project managers and other governmental policy making entities to help build stronger working relationships between community organizations and government systems.

Who makes the decisions about what proposals are funded?

All applications will be reviewed by a committee drawn from community-based organizations that are familiar with public transportation, transit equity and community engagement, with the support of Community Engagement Team members and Metro Transit staff. The committee member selection process will be an open process. All final committee members are required to abide by a conflict of interest policy and a confidentiality agreement. This proposal review committee will make contract award decisions.

What is the process for application and review of subcontracts?

1. November 23rd, 2015: Release RFP Announcement
2. Week of November 30th, 2015: Information Sessions
3. January 8th: Full proposals due
4. Week of February 23rd: Decision Making / Notices of Award
5. February 27th Grants Go Out / Contract Executions and Notices to Proceed

How do I apply and what is the application deadline?

1. Submit applications as word or pdf documents by January 8th, 2016 to ladders@nexuscp.org
2. All Materials must be received by 5:00 p.m. on January 8th, 2016

Who should I contact for more information?

Please refer to RFP or contact Monica Bryand at monica@nexuscp.org or 651-246-5522.

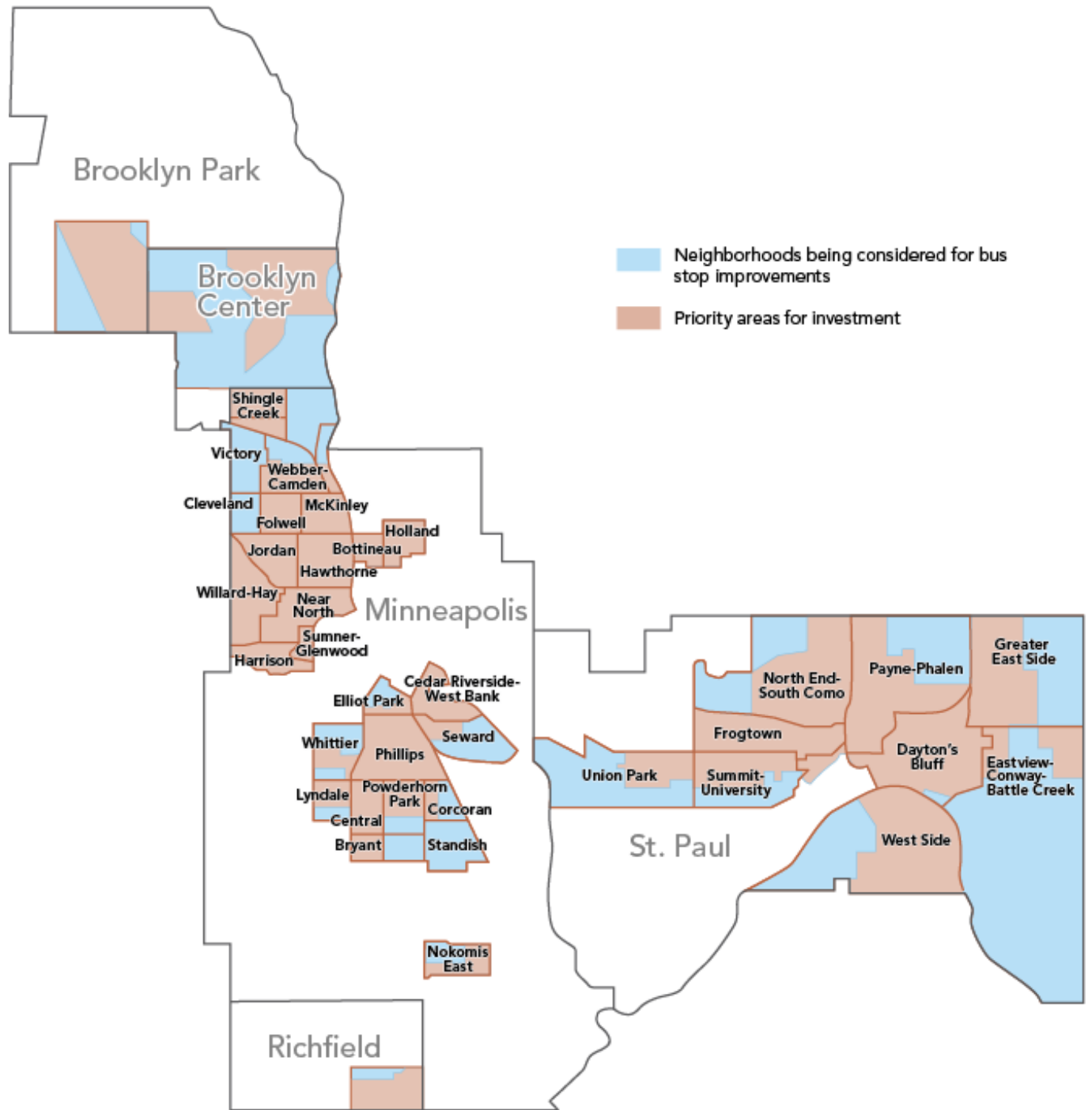
For more information about the Better Bus Stops Program, and to see what bus stops are considered for improvements, please visit <http://www.metrotransit.org/better-bus-stops>.

ATTACHMENTS:

Map of Better Bus Stops neighborhoods

Proposal review-scoring sheet

Application Questions



*[*Find this map at http://www.metrotransit.org/better-bus-stops](http://www.metrotransit.org/better-bus-stops)*

Below is the review-scoring sheet that will be used by review committee members to evaluate each application.

Threshold Criteria	Pass	Fail	Notes
Proposal targets one or more of the neighborhoods identified as targeted areas for investment.			
The proposed activities engage constituencies related to the four Essential Questions defined by Metro Transit.			
The proposed activities engage constituencies around broader regional transit equity issues (e.g. basic bus service, frequency, fares, improving the ridership experience, routes, etc.), including influencing how Metro Transit is able to help underrepresented communities better access opportunity and achieve more just and fair inclusion in our region.			

Ranking Criteria	Points (0- 5)	Notes
Engagement: Engages underrepresented communities, including transit riders.		
Specificity: Clearly outlines how the outreach, organizing or engagement activities will lead to desired outcomes.		
Strategic: Proposed activities leverage this opportunity to achieve one or more longer-term goals of its constituents.		
Leveraging: Accesses other resources such as money, people, and learning opportunities.		
Project Design: Community members from underrepresented communities are involved in project design and implementation		
Effectiveness: Project is logically connected to desired outcomes		
Leadership: Decision-making within the organization is informed by underrepresented community members.		
Bridging: Project creates bridges between stakeholders		
Evaluation: Clear explanation of what change is expected as a result of this project		
Schedule: Includes a clearly defined project schedule that allows for engagement activities and related deliverables to be completed within timeframes established by the CET.		

Training and Education: Organization has the capacity to participate in post-award informational and educational sessions.		
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- 0 Application did not address criteria, or section was skipped.
- 1 The application addressed the criteria, but was unclear about how the project would achieve criteria.
- 2 The application addressed the criteria, but provided minimum information.
- 3 The application addressed the criteria with adequate information about their approach.
- 4 The application addressed the criteria and provided good examples of future strategies.
- 5 The application addressed the criteria and effectively explained how the project is will be executed, measured and documented.

A mid-term written report submitted within 30 days of the mid-contract period. Final written report provided within sixty days of completion of the contract’s engagement activities.

There is a total of \$229,000 available for one-time subcontracts, not to exceed \$25,000 per individual subcontract.

Examples of eligible expenses:

- Personnel
- Partner organizations whose work is detailed in the subcontract application
- Meeting support (space, childcare, food, transport, rental of communication equipment)
- Communication tools including translation services
- Tours related to bus stop improvements for constituencies
- Local travel expenses (bus, bicycle, gas)
- Education and training

Examples of ineligible expenses:

- Capital purchases
- Out of region travel and lodging
- Direct lobbying of state and federal elected officials around specific legislation
- Support for electoral campaigns
- Organizing around a transit design or system issue that does not align with program guidelines listed above.

Better Bus Stops Community Engagement Contracts

Application Form Cover Sheet

Lead Organization:

Street Address:

City:

State:

Zip:

Phone:

Website:

Lead Organization's Mission or Focus of Work:

Partner Organization(s) or Constituency group Name(s):

Organization Name:

Street Address:

City:

State:

Zip:

Phone:

Website:

Primary Contact Person:

Applicant's Primary Project Contact Person:

Phone:

E-mail:

Subcontract Amount Requested _____

In 100 words or less describe the vision for how you will fulfill the community engagement work described in the Request For Proposals (RFP):

I. Organizational Information

1. Mission or purpose of your organization.
2. Who is your constituency (the people you are engaging and organizing with) and how you are accountable to them.
3. Organizational budget

II. Project Information

1. Describe your project, including information about:
 - a. Specific project activities.
 - b. The specific geography your project takes place in.
 - If you are not a place-based organization in one of the identified geographies identified in the guidelines, describe your relationship to communities in the area you are proposing to work in.
 - c. How will the work in this proposal address each of the four essential questions in the guidelines?
 - d. How will the work in this proposal address broader regional transit equity issues?
 - e. Projected schedule and timelines.
 - f. Any partnerships involved in the project.
 - g. How will this initiative leverage other resources (money, information, learning opportunities, etc.) and partnerships to achieve its objectives?

III. Project Budget

- a. Draft budget and detail regarding allocation of funds (among partners if partnership), and projected uses including staff time, materials, mileage, outside resources, etc.
- b. Listing of existing funding, and leveraged funds.
- c. Listing of project deliverables (including documentation, reporting, etc.).