



Caltrans Division of Research,
Innovation and System Information

Research

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Project Title:
City Best Practices to Improve
Transit Operations and Safety

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City Best Practices to Improve Transit Operations and Safety

Identify city policies and practices which facilitate and foster public transit to encourage cities to proactively work with their local transit provider to improve transit operations and safety.

WHAT IS THE NEED?

Many policies and infrastructure options that would improve transit operations and passenger safety are totally within the purview of cities, not transit agencies. This project would identify the city policies and practices which facilitate and foster public transit to encourage cities to proactively work with their local transit provider to improve transit operations and safety; this in turn would result in better transit service, increased transit ridership, less automobile dependency, and the environmental benefits that would follow.

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

This initial task has three components that are essential for the remainder of the project. These are the identification of transit agencies, transit experts, and cities from whom the researchers can learn what is needed and what they can do to facilitate public transit.

The next task is to perform a Literature Review:

- Review the Transit Capacity and Quality of Service Manual and assess whether any of these measures are or could be within the purview of a city and not the transit agency.
- Review the findings of the Institute of Transportation Engineer - State of the Practice report on Transit and Traffic Impact Studies, (published February 2019) for ideas on both current good practices, and gaps in practice on the part of cities in coordinating with and considering transit in the area of land development impact analysis.



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knowledge that improves
California's transportation system

- Search of literature for other publications on city and traffic engineering practices that help public transit, particularly surface fixed route transit.
- Research what other existing city “livability” ratings use as their measure for “transit-friendliness” if any, (e.g., American Association of Retired Person’s “Livability Index”, Livability.com’s “Top 100 best Places to Live”, Walkability.org score of Walk-Friendly communities).
- Research parallel awards and certifications including LEED, League of American Bicyclists’ Bicycle Friendly City Program; Institute for Transportation & Development Policy’s (ITDP) Bus Rapid Transit Rating.

Develop a list of questions for transit providers to solicit their opinions on what cities do that hinder their operations and what they wish more cities would do to improve transit service and passenger safety. Interview or provide questionnaire to the selected transit agencies.

Based on the findings of Tasks 2 and 3, develop a list of issues and city practices and policies within the city purview regarding public transit that either help or hinder surface transit operations, passenger safety while accessing transit stops or financial stability and funding.

Convene and consult with expert panel to:

1. Review, refine, and expand, if necessary, the draft best practices identified in Task 4;
2. Discuss the option of rating the best practices (e.g. highly recommended, recommended) and /or fitting them within a ranking methodology (i.e. gold, silver bronze-level city best practices).

The practices and policies of the five volunteer cities would be compared to the best practices as revised by the expert panel to see how well typical California cities fare in facilitating transit. This will also present an opportunity to obtain city input to further refine these identified practices.

WHAT IS OUR GOAL?

The objectives of this project are to:

- **Promote standards and best practices:** Identify and promote innovative practices and standards for what constitutes a transit-friendly city policy environment.
- **Promote transit funding:** Influence decisions on how cities allocate their resources to address transit needs, both capital and operations as well as passenger access.
- **Motivate advocates:** Inspire action and involvement among city officials and staff as well as citizens who want to improve conditions for transit.
- **Offer strategies:** Guide progress by providing concrete steps and actions that communities can take to not hinder public transit.
- **Raise expectations:** Raise expectations as to what is involved in becoming transit-friendly community.
- **Recognize improvements:** The identification of best practices could be the basis for a future audit and certification program, like LEEDs and BFC. This would reward positive steps toward improvements; cities would be motivated to improve their award rating, make changes, and come back again for a new certification.
- **Inspire friendly competition:** Provide an opportunity for peer pressure and friendly competition among adjacent cities to inspire city officials to create transit-friendly policies.

WHAT IS THE BENEFIT?

This research will assist in the better understanding of best practices within the purview of cities and local agencies, which will improve transit operations and safety.

WHAT IS THE PROGRESS TO DATE?

The research team has made the following progress:

- Prepared the deliverable for Task 2 "Literature Review Memo" on June 15, 2020.
- Completed the last of the five transit agency staff interviews for Task 3.
- Prepared the deliverable "Raw Data on transit agency staff interviews" on June 16, 2020.
- Began preparation of the consolidated list of best practices obtained from interviewing transit agencies and the literature review for Task 4.
- Recruited last of the five experts to serve on expert panel as promised in Task 5.