# Governmental Best Practices

**Summer 2001**

*"I know no greater depository of the ultimate powers of society but the people themselves.  And if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their indiscretion through education.  That is the true corrective of abuses of constitutional power."*

**-**    Thomas Jefferson

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## PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide dues paying members of the Institute of Portland Metropolitan Studies (IMS) with a collection of best practice solutions that addresses the critical issues presently faced by local governments in the Portland-Metropolitan Region.

These issues were originally identified through a series of interviews conducted on behalf of IMS by a small group of graduate students at Portland State University (PSU) in the spring of 2001. That investigation consulted local decision makers and top administrators in the Portland-Metropolitan area in order to produce a list of twelve key areas that are of concern to these local municipalities.

This capstone team was formed at PSU in the summer of that year to further investigate these items. In this report we have distilled the twelve key areas of interest into four critical issues. These constitute the most often cited areas of concern by local authorities. They include issues of traffic congestion, public involvement, volunteer programs and alternative funding sources.

## FINDINGS OF THIS REPORT

Traffic congestion has become an area of key concern to local governments in light of the additional administrative and financial burdens that are intrinsic to increasing population densities in the Portland-Metropolitan region. Two collections of best practices were identified. While both approaches aimed to discover those solutions that would most effectively increase transit patronage in order to ease problems of traffic congestion, the second proposed to determine the most economical means of achieving this end.

The best practices identified by this study to resolve these issues of traffic congestion include:
1) Strategies of fare simplification,
2) Targeted information campaigns,
3) Restrictive automobile policies, and
4) Practices of route customization.

Favored methods of simplifying the existing fare framework include the introduction of tokens, monthly billing options, smart cards, and multi-modal fare systems. Information campaigns may best be targeted to specific transit riders by way of more precise scheduling systems, route planning methods, direct mailing devices, and traffic coordinators. The most successful restrictive policies that were discovered include the introduction of licensing fees and the prohibition of certain traffic patterns. Lastly, route customization may best be achieved through the use of designated transit lanes and the enhancement of vehicle information systems.

It was determined that the introduction of voucher systems into local traffic management schemes constitutes the most cost-effective means of alleviating present problems of traffic congestion. This best practice enables municipalities to alter commuter behavior without the added expenses of enlarging existing infrastructures.

Public involvement emerged as the second critical issue for municipalities in the Portland-Metropolitan region. At interest in this segment was how to most effectively facilitate productive dialogues between a local government and its citizens. The best practices identified for this segment include the introduction of  (Undo justification above)
1) Citizen juries,
2) Citizen advisory committees,
3) Consensus conferencing, and
4) Technology centers into area communities.

The third issue of critical concern to Portland-Metropolitan area governments was the effective use of volunteer programs. Research indicates that the use of volunteer programs by government agencies has extensive, positive effects for both the hosting agency and its surrounding communities. At issue in this segment was how to most effectively design and introduce volunteer programs into municipalities.

Alternative funding sources was the final critical issue to be examined by this investigation. This concern reflected the need of most municipalities to immediately address the reality of a diminished revenue base despite rising demands for services. The best practices identified here include:

1) Creating additional revenue,
2) Inventing new savings,
3) Increasing the shift factor,
4) Advancing regional economic development,
5) Using more debt,
6) Investing idle cash, and
7) Exploring making it harder.

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# INTRODUCTION

The Institute of Portland Metropolitan Studies (IMS) is a service and research center located in the College of Urban and Public Affairs at Portland State University. The mission of the Institute is to serve the region and further the urban mission of Portland State University. This is done by:

- Providing new access to the resources of higher education for area communities
- Helping to make an understanding of the metropolitan area of strategic value to citizens, faculty, students, elected officials, and civic leaders
- Providing a neutral forum for the discussion of critical metropolitan policy issues
- Creating partnerships linking faculty, students, and community groups to meet community and scholarly objectives
- Sponsoring public service research

In accordance with this mission, and to assist members of the Institute, a curriculum was developed for students at Portland State University enrolled in a senior-level Capstone[1] course called Governmental Best Practices. The purpose of this class was to prepare a document outlining proven best practices for the Institute, which in turn would be disseminated to the members of the IMS. In preparation for this Capstone, a graduate studies class, which took place in the spring of 2001, interviewed eighteen officials from the Portland-Metropolitan region and the surrounding municipalities. The interviewers asked the officials questions about their definition of best practices, any experience with using best practices, and other questions regarding key policy issues facing their individual jurisdictions. Based on the interviews, the officials have many different explanations for what they believe to be best practices. Some of the officials have experience using best practices in their jurisdictions, while others feel that there aren't any existing best practices for their line of work, or do not feel that best practices could be applied in a real life situation. Depending on the location of their jurisdiction or line of work, the officials have a wide range of key policy issues.

The Best Governmental Practices Capstone, which convened in the summer of 2001, took the information from the interviews and selected research topics that they thought would be useful and meaningful for the IMS and its members. There were several criteria in the selection, such as the actual size of the problem and the availability of information regarding the topic. Each student selected a topic that was of interest to him or her and that was not so great in size so as to prohibit thorough research and thoughtful communication.

In conjunction with the research, the class was given the task of developing a working definition of Governmental Best Practices. This was challenging because the term can be interpreted and used in many different ways. For the purpose of this document, governmental best practices is defined as: the delivery of services in the most efficient and effective way that is relevant to the economic and social needs of the community. In addition, based on information obtained from the interviews as well as outside research, best practices must:

- Be scaleable, transferable and adjustable to different jurisdictions
- Have the potential for collaboration with other jurisdictions
- Be readily applicable
- Be of value to customers
- Be broadly cast to deal with large issues
- Be specific enough to communicate the concept of Best Practices

The document herein follows these assumptions regarding governmental best practices, and all suggested best practices fit these criteria.

During the eight-week duration of the Capstone class the students engaged in individual research, and attended regular group meetings to discuss problems and progress. The issues that are presented in this document are an amalgamation of the issues and problems addressed by the individuals in the class. The four main categories of issues and the corresponding best practices that follow are traffic, public involvement, volunteerism, and funding. Again these topics were chosen based on the interviews of Metro

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[1] PSU Capstone courses are designed to give the undergraduate student an opportunity to apply the expertise learned in their major. Students have a variety of courses to choose from, and all are intended to give the student exposure to real issues and problems in the community. A completion of Capstone is required for graduation from PSU.

region government officials and the interest of the students.  The class believes that the information presented here is useful for determining best practices in these categories.

# TRAFFIC

According to the 2000 census posted on the Fair Oregon web site, the Portland-Vancouver Principal Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA) has seen a population growth rate of 26.6% in the last decade alone. This population growth is having a dramatic effect on traffic. A larger population means more cars on the road. As the Portland Metropolitan area continues to expand outward instead of becoming more dense, people are commuting from farther and farther away, making the traffic problems ever more widespread in addition to congestion that is only getting worse (Local Jurisdiction).

Another obstacle that further compounds the region's traffic problem is funding. Funding, or a lack thereof, is always a concern for the municipalities. The Portland Metropolitan population is growing faster than taxes can be collected or solutions can be generated and implemented. Several interviews of city officials conducted by the Portland State University graduate students reveal mounting concern over the traffic problem and possible solutions, yet at the same time recognize the need to address financial constraints.

In this section, we will address some possible options to minimize traffic congestion. Because the lack of funding is such a significant variable, we have looked at best practices that will change commuter behavior, as opposed to using the more traditional and costly methods (e.g. building roads or new transit operations). This was only possible using the resources currently available, at limited or zero cost to the agency. In several instances, some of these practices even save or generate revenue.

Aside from monetary restrictions, we have also limited our discussion of best practices to those that have been proven effective, and can be scaled to fit within the Portland Metropolitan vicinity. While doing this, we do recognize that the criterion we have included for best practices eliminated several other possible solutions to the traffic problem. We believe that we have included only those options that are viable and practical with regards to the unique variables of the region.

## BEST PRACTICES FOR INCREASING TRANSIT PATRONAGE

The World Resources Institute website states that the Portland Metropolitan region will experience an increase of 500,000 people within the next 20 years. With that increase comes an increase in vehicles and traffic congestion during peak use times. Traffic congestion is expected to double within the next 15 years in the Portland area.

The other traffic article in this document focuses on incentives for transit use. This article addresses best practices for increasing transit ridership.

Increasing transit ridership will become a major concern as the Portland metropolitan region progresses with dense development within an urban growth boundary. Small municipalities along major arterials are experiencing traffic congestion and infrastructure problems resulting from heavy commuter traffic from the suburbs to the central business district. Transit patronage must be increased in order to alleviate the strain generated by intense commuter traffic.

The following attempts to address tested measures developed in other municipalities that reduced the amount of vehicular traffic during peak commuting times by increasing transit use among commuters. The article should be read as a list of governmental best practices used by both larger and smaller municipalities to combat traffic congestion through transit use.

Each major category contains a list of best practices specific to the category. The best practices are broken down into four categories:

- Fare simplification
- Targeted information campaigns
- Restrictive automobile policies
- Route customization

## BEST PRACTICES

### THE FALLACY OF CHEAPER FARES

Studies have shown a majority of transit riders do so out of necessity rather than as an alternative to private vehicles. Common assumptions claim transit users do so as a personal choice to save money, the

environment, or reduce stress (Oram et. al, 39).  Reducing fares does not significantly increase transit patronage, as the public transit market is considered price-insensitive (Rogue, 17).  Alternatives to fare reduction need to be utilized in order to increase transit patronage (Huey et. al, 66-67).

## FARE SIMPLIFICATION

Fare simplification involves the development of an easy-to-use system of charging for transit use.  A simplified fare plan permits even new users of transit services to access and pay for public transit easily and without confusion.

While the issue of fare simplification is a regional institutional responsibility, any increase in transit ridership will greatly benefit smaller municipalities that bear the affects of traffic congestion.  Local government involvement in the fare simplification process may involve the promotion of simpler fare structures, providing recommendations to Tri-Met regarding simple fares, and instituting local surveys regarding the use of simpler fares.

Governmental best practices involving fare simplification involve:
- Tokens
- Monthly Billing
- Smart Cards
- Multi-Modal Fare Integration

## Tokens

Easy-to-use tokens have been shown to increase transit ridership by providing a simple, convenient method to pay for transit services.  According to a study by the Chicago Transit Authority, more than eighty percent of those surveyed indicated they would be more likely to use transit if tokens were instituted (Huey et. al, 67).  Tokens also allow infrequent riders an option other than passes, which often are not used enough to be considered economical.  Tokens have also been shown to decrease boarding times to an average of 3.1 seconds (Baugher et. al, 94) compared with cash transactions, which averaged 5.8 seconds (Chira-Chavala et. al, 88).

## Monthly Billing

A promising best practice to increase ridership is the monthly billing option.  Rather than pay immediately for transportation use, a passenger is billed periodically much like a utility.  This option eliminates the up-front cost of transit use.

A major obstacle in the perceived benefits of transit use is the "time of receipt benefit."  An automobile has a lower perceived cost when compared with that of transit as one must pay immediately when boarding public transportation rather than experience the delayed cost of owning an automobile.  A periodic, monthly billing option allows the same delayed cost of automobile use to be applied to transit use, eliminating the "punisher" of immediate payment (Huey et. al, 69).  Monthly billing options are simple to develop and implement when used in conjunction with smart card technology.

## Smart Cards

A smart card stores information within an imbedded chip or magnetic strip.  This technology is most often issued to passengers as a card that is either swiped through a reader or transmits data to an onboard sensor.

Smart cards greatly increase the simplicity of fare collection as well as reduce the cost of processing transit payments.  Smart card use in Los Angeles was found to decrease passenger boarding time, equipment malfunction, as well as vehicle idle time (Chira-Chavala et. al, 84-89).  Smart cards can come in the form of a magnetic strip similar to an ATM card or a contactless smart card (CSC), which utilizes a low radio frequency to send a signal to an onboard receiver.  The use of smart card technology has been shown to increase ridership and efficiency when used effectively.

Hong Kong has seen remarkable results with the introduction of smart card technologies in its mass transit systems.  Over 3.5 million smart cards have been issued in the city (United).  Since smart cards have been in widespread use, Hong Kong has seen transit use increase and increased customer satisfaction after implementing the smart card system (American, Part 2, 8).

While Hong Kong has been traditionally reliant on public transportation and has always had a high percentage of public transit use, dozens of other municipalities have initiated smart card programs with promising results. London, Berlin, Barcelona, and Washington D.C. have such programs. Chicago, Seattle, and AMTRAK have plans to begin issuing smart cards in the near future (Blackwell et. al). A major benefit of smart card use, other than its effect on transit ridership, is its combination with multi-modal fare integration plans.

## Multi-Modal Fare Integration

Multi-modal fare integration is a uniform payment system for multiple modes of transportation, such as light rail and busses. A multi-modal system allows for an efficient transfer from one mode to another without changing fare medium. The system can also be integrated into other payment plans such as utilities, tolls, and other fees (American, Part 2). This is especially useful when combined with a smart card system. Hong Kong is the pioneer in the field of multi-modal fare integration. Municipalities in Australia, Singapore, and Japan have begun to develop this system in conjunction with the smart card technology.

## TARGETED INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS

Providing commuters access to transit information may be paramount to increasing transit patronage. Informing the consumer will eliminate confusion regarding transit services by providing updated data regarding schedules, real-time arrival times, online route planning, and direct mailings to both individual consumers and large employers. The National Academy of Sciences Transportation Research Board also suggests distributing information in multiple languages to achieve total audience coverage (American, 2).

Smaller municipalities will play a minimal role in targeted information campaigns. One possible function of local government is to provide direct mailings on transit services to local industry. Another possibility is to employ a transportation coordinator or solicit volunteers within businesses to act as liaisons between transit authorities and their respective companies. This will allow needed information regarding programs to reach employers and employees at the local level.

Online transit information provides updated data via the Internet. In Singapore, TransitLink Ltd., a consortium of transit contractors, provides electronic, touch-screen kiosks that give information on bus fares, travel times, routes, and service changes. In addition to the kiosks, global positioning satellite technologies have been integrated into a real-time arrival clock. The clock is a digital display that gives an exact arrival time based on the bus' location relative to the stop (Amreican Part 2, 7). The most common source of rider dissatisfaction is waiting for the bus to arrive; the addition of arrival displays virtually eliminates the frustration by informing the rider of the exact arrival time (American Part 1, 7).

The Internet is an ideal medium for the transmission of transit information. San Francisco's Fastline, Palo Alto's E-Line, and Washington D.C.'s SmarTraveler programs are excellent examples of online transit information. Online public transportation information provides the commuter with accurate transit information and fare information, as well as route changes and service options. This informs the commuter and makes him/her more likely to use public transportation (Gildea, 72-76).

Integrating a special Geographic Information System (GIS) for optimal route planning will further facilitate transit use. Montreal has developed an online GIS that allows individual riders to input a starting location and an endpoint, the optimal route is then calculated with the estimated travel times and fare. An online route-planning tool will provide both the frequent as well as the infrequent transit user the ability to plan efficient public transit trips in advance. Little knowledge of the existing transit structure is required (Chapleau et. al, 98-107). Implementation of the GIS has increased customer satisfaction and reduced the frustration associated with a general lack of information among new transit users.

Direct mail advertising and promotions have been utilized by transit authorities to provide information to employers regarding incentive programs and transit services. Sixty-six percent of transit agencies use direct mailings to promote transit services to large employers. Seattle's PACE program markets transit programs to large employers such as Boeing in an attempt to increase transit ridership (National, 25). San Francisco also markets to employers such as Lockheed Martin and other Silicon Valley firms (Livermore, 6-6). Such programs have increased transit ridership by offering customized transit programs for large employers and successfully marketing those programs to the users of the service. The

Jackson/Teton County Transit Development Plan (102) attributes less absenteeism and increased worker productivity to the success of marketing employer/institutional transit partnerships due to the increased usage of those transit services.

## RESTRICTIVE AUTOMOBILE POLICIES

A direct approach to increasing transit use is to restrict the use of automobiles. Restrictive policies involve prohibiting or charging licensing fees for certain automobile uses, such as commuting to the central business district (CBD) or driving during peak travel times. Small municipalities can easily accomplish the restriction of automobiles if they wish to reduce traffic congestion within their limits. Small municipalities have the authority to restrict automobile use through a variety of means.

On the extreme end of restrictive practices is Strasbourg. The French city banned through traffic by private cars in the CBD in an attempt to turn it into a pedestrian/public transit zone in 1992. Naturally, public transit use rose dramatically, and reached a majority following the introduction of a light-rail system in 1994 (American, Part 1, 3). Salzburg also banned private commuter traffic in the CBD. Alternative transit use increased to sixty-three percent following the implementation of the ban.

Area licensing schemes (ALS) can be used as a more reasonable alternative to banning commuter traffic. An ALS is a system of fees and permits for vehicles entering congestion zones at peak travel times. Permit holders are sold decals to place in the windows of private vehicles that allow access to the CBD during the restricted times. Singapore introduced an ALS in 1975 with surprising results. The implementation of the ALS in Singapore increased transit ridership from 35.9% to 43.9%. On the same note, carpools increased 96.9% (Zolla, 1).

Other municipalities with successful ALSs include Jakarta, Indonesia, and Adelaide, Australia. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and Bangkok, Thailand have both expressed interest in the development of an ALS, but their implementation has been hindered by a powerful auto industry (Midgley, 1996).

Given the dependence on the private car in the United States, any attempt at restricting automobile use can expect to be met with great hostility from both the automobile industry and individual commuters. Smaller communities can generate revenue while combating traffic through the use of these schemes, provided they can overcome the opposition.

## ROUTE CUSTOMIZATION

The final element in increasing transit patronage is the introduction of route customization. Route customization is the provision of specific transit services to larger clients that have a great need for transportation services. An example of route customization is Seattle's Bus to Boeing program. The program provides custom bus service, including after hours at the request of Boeing. This allows for greater convenience for Boeing employees and increased transit ridership.

Key bus routes have been implemented in Nagoya, Japan. These routes provide express service along heavily used routes. These routes also have designated transit lanes and enhanced vehicle information systems at stops that allow for increased traveler information. After developing the key routes travel times have been reduced by twenty-three minutes and ridership increased thirty-eight percent (American, Part 2, 7). Other examples of custom routes in the United States are Houston's FasTrak, Prince William County's (VA) OmniLink, and Seattle's LINC service.

The role of the small municipality relative to route optimization is minimal. While the authority of implementing these services is a regional issue, smaller communities can get involved by coordinating metro-region transit programs with local large businesses. The existing partnerships between Tri-Met and industry can be enhanced through the use of key routes similar to those in Nagoya. Greater participation in these custom programs by local companies will greatly alleviate traffic congestion.

### CONCLUSION

Increasing mass transit ridership is a daunting task in the car-dependent United States. Although difficult, it is not impossible to promote the benefits of transportation and increase the diversity in services. Through the implementation of the above transit programs, mass transit patronage should increase and traffic may be calmed. Many obstacles exist with the initiation of the best practices listed above. Local

governments as well as Metro must think progressively and decide today on the kind of region they plan to build in twenty years.

The Portland area is known as a reform-based model city. The region takes pride in its commitment to light-rail and the creation of a sustainable community. It is only natural that the city will take the pioneering steps to initiate transit reforms and reduce the destructive menace of gridlock. It can be seen from the transportation programs implemented today in the area, that the metro-region is dedicated to providing quality public transportation.

While mass transit is generally a regional issue, smaller municipalities can become involved in the processes that increase ridership. The local governments must play a key role in the implementation of these best practices. Much of the traffic congestion and transit use originates in suburban areas. The development of these best practices will require the cooperation and dialogue of all parties involved.

## TRAFFIC: THE USE OF VOUCHERS

Another way of reducing traffic is through modification of the current system such that it alters commuter behavior in favor of increased public transportation ridership. In this next section, the use of vouchers is investigated. Vouchers, which are currently in use in multiple US cities, have demonstrated a limited cost while still affecting a tremendous influence on ridership. Vouchers actually save money for the transit system by inadvertently redistributing some of its cost among numerous employers.

## OREGON STATE LAWS CONCERNING TRAFFIC

### ECO Rule

In the fall of 1996, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) developed Employee Commute Options or the ECO rule, as described in depth in the City of Portland Office of Transportation web site, to improve local air quality and to comply with the Federal Clean Air Act. Oregon, instead of concentrating on industrial air pollution for which the Clean Air Act was originally intended, has narrowed its focus to the reduction of commuter auto emissions. The goal of the ECO rule was to reduce auto trips in the Portland Metropolitan area by ten percent within the next three years.

This rule affects employers located within the Portland Air Quality Maintenance Area and who have a total of 50 or more employees at any single work site. This region encompasses the Washington, Multnomah and Clackamas counties, but leaves out Clark County, Washington, among others. There are two ways in which an employer can comply with the ECO rule: prescriptive or performance. The prescriptive option includes filing a commute trip reduction plan with the DEQ for approval, while the performance option requires no plan, merely a "good faith effort." It is difficult if not impossible to measure auto trips with a reasonable degree of accuracy, and it is equally difficult to determine employer compliance, so it remains unclear if the ECO rule ever realized its initial 1996 projections (ECO).

### House Bill 3850

In addition to the ECO rule, Oregon's Committee on Transportation wrote and cleared a parking "cash-out" bill on May 10, 2001: Oregon's House Bill 3850. This new bill demands that employers offer either a cash allowance or a transit pass to an employee instead of offering or providing either a free or subsidized parking space. This bill will not apply to employers until January 2002. The House Bill 3850 (HB 3850) has many restrictions. These restrictions include a city population minimum of 100,000, as well as accounting only for the commuter parking spaces (a parking space also available to the general public, not just to the employees). It also acknowledges that employers need to establish guidelines for the program to "avoid neighborhood parking problems," although this acknowledgment and how to resolve it is vague at best (House).

### FEDERAL LAWS CONCERNING TRAFFIC

Because the population has been increasing nationwide, and traffic problems are being realized, the federal government has implemented two commuter incentive regulations: the Internal Revenue Code Section 132(f) (IRS 132f) on qualified transportation fringe, and the IRS 125 or cafeteria plan.

#### IRS 132F

The IRS 132f states that an employer can offer an employee the amount of the transportation fringe benefit that may be excluded from gross income. The IRS, in an article written by the New York Transit Center, considers qualified transportation fringe benefits as any transit pass, commuter highway vehicle, or qualified parking. This means that an employee is allowed to deduct the amount of mass transportation from their paycheck, before taxes. The maximum deferred amount allowed is $65 per calendar month for transit passes. The amount for qualified parking (for a carpool or a vanpool) is $175 per month, although that amount is expected to increase at the end of the year 2001 (IRS).

#### IRS 125

The IRS 125 plan is the flexible spending account that allows an employee to set aside a certain amount of money from each paycheck into a separate account before taxes. Such an account can be used to pay for everything from daycare and medical costs to adoption expenses. The original intention of this plan was not to allow any deductions relating to the automobile. The law clearly states that there are to be no transportation fringe benefits allowed, yet there is a loophole that many employers have found, despite the plans clear intention (Cafeteria). For more information regarding the IRS 125 and the loophole and successful Supreme Court cases, refer to the IRS, under Part 8: Appeals, Chapter 7: Technical and Procedural Guidelines, Section 1: Guidelines for Cases with Special Issues (which can be found at the IRS web site: http://www.irs.gov).

### OREGON'S CURRENT TRANSPORTATION METHODS

Oregon currently has four transportation subsidy programs, as described by Tri-Met in their Employer Transit Incentives article featured in their web site. The first is the PASSport system, which is a fare program that enables employers to purchase All-Zone transit passes for their employees at a reduced rate. The employees are each given a sticker to be affixed to their employee identification card, which then acts as a transit pass as well. The second method, the e-PASS, allows employers to subsidize a portion of their employees monthly transit passes and to deduct the remaining portion from the employees' paychecks before taxes. A list of all of the participating employees is e-mailed to Tri-Met, along with payment, at which time Tri-Met returns the appropriate number of transit passes directly to the employees or to the employer for distribution. The individual company itself determines the third method of subsidy. Tri-Met allows transportation tickets to be sold at company work sites. Each month, passes and tickets are sent directly to the company to be sold at whatever discounts, if any, the firm may choose. The final subsidy program offered by Tri-Met is the PASS-by-mail. In this program, each company fills out a form indicating the number of employee passes requested, and sends it to Tri-Met along with credit card or billing information.

### TRAFFIC REMAINS A PROBLEM

#### ODOT's Efforts

The Federal Highway Administration Home page features a section on the "Quality Journey," or governmental best practices. When looking through this site, it is easy to stumble upon Oregon's best practice/policy: Use of Commuter Incentives to Minimize Congestion in Work Zones. Oregon states that it uses techniques such as incident management (e.g. providing tow trucks during peak commute times) and an aggressive lane rental specification (carpool and bus only lanes) to preserve existing freeway capacity for ODOT projects (e.g. during construction). To minimize congestion, ODOT also implemented demand

reduction measures (e.g. free carpool parking, constructing more park and ride lots) in hopes of reducing the number trips made in the corridor during peak commute periods.

Oregonians have made it clear that they wish to reduce traffic in the Portland Metropolitan area. The ever-growing number of legislative bills being introduced and passed indicates this, as well as the multiple transportation subsidies that Tri-Met has been encouraged to offer, along side Oregon's "aggressive" traffic tactics. Despite these efforts, the Portland Metropolitan area continues to be plagued with heavy traffic, and taxpayer complaints to city officials are on the rise. This is a direct result of Oregon's current system failing to work as well as originally projected, and of the constituents from the Portland Metropolitan area being reluctant to adopt new patterns of behavior.

## THE CURRENT METHODS ARE NOT WORKING

During an interview with Scott Spencer, a Transportation Specialist for the national nonprofit organization, Environmental Defense, he noted that creating a successful transportation program requires the assistance of various groups, such as unions, environmentalists, and businesses. He also noted that governmental reform programs, such as the ECO Rule, have been successful in engendering a common awareness in the overall public view of traffic and pollution, but they have provided an extremely limited positive impact. The ECO plan contains no real method of enforcement, other than the mere threat of a fine. HB 3850 hasn't changed any commuter behaviors relative to the reduction of cars on the road, because it applies to so few circumstances. Tri-Met has been forced to raise their rates consistently every other year in a desperate attempt to keep up with maintenance and service costs.

### Problems With Tri-Met

David Judd, Vice President of Marketing at the Commuter Check Program in California, has done considerable research regarding the benefits of the Program. Every program that Tri-Met offers adds the burden of administration, which includes such things as mailing the passes, sending forms, maintaining records, and the tracking of each employee in every program, all of which prove to be very costly. Mary Fetsch, Tri-Met's Communications Director, noted that while Tri-Met prides itself on excellent customer service (a claim we do not dispute), their overall program budget is approximately $80,000. Clearly this leaves virtually no money for marketing or advertising strategies to employers, which is where Tri-Met generates most of their riders. Tri-Met currently has no plans to expand into smaller municipalities, or expand upon their existing regions, where most of the current Portland Metropolitan traffic is originating (Fetsch). One study done by the Oregon Transportation Institute, entitled "Tri-Met's Fare Recovery Ratio," showed that Oregon's transit system is not recovering well. Tri-Met busses and lightrail fares cover only twenty percent of the operational fees, while the national average for public transportation is approximately forty percent.

## HOW CALIFORNIA IS HANDLING TRAFFIC

### The Commuter Check Program

The San Francisco Bay area in California has created a best practice called the "Commuter Check Program." This is based on the federal IRS 132 code, which enables employees to deduct the amount of their transportation cost from their paychecks before taxes. The program offers the purchase of a voucher with the pre-taxed funds in the amount of the transportation costs (as defined by IRS 132). The voucher is similar to a gift certificate, and is redeemable for mass transit fares at any participating transit operator (public or private). The vouchers can be bought by either the employer, the employee, or the cost can be shared between the two. The vouchers have been used variously as part of a monthly benefits package, as a bonus, as a reward for excellent performance, or as a prize in a random drawing, among other things (Who).

### Scaling Commuter Check For Use In Oregon

David Judd noted that the Commuter Check Program is easy to implement, which was the original intent. The Program has been successfully duplicated nationally, in varying municipality sizes. Municipalities as small as Norfolk County, Massachusetts and as large as the state of New York, through their "Transitchek Program," with approximately 85-90% of the population using public transportation. These programs have all been wildly victorious in reducing traffic in their cities. The scope of the program depends more on how far the public transportation and vanpools reach, and much less to do with the actual population size of each region.

Portland and San Francisco have little in common with regards to their size and density, yet the use of vouchers has proven to be effective in improving air quality, public ridership, and employer relations regardless of the municipality size. Currently there are more than twenty-five cities of diverse sizes across the nation, each with factors specific to their region, using the voucher program that began in California. While many of the cities chose to use a different name, such as Metrochek, Transit Check, or the Commuter Bonus, they all involve using a voucher. The Commuter Check Program is one of the most successful mass transit projects and is considered the best model due to its simplicity, effectiveness, and ease in converting to differing municipalities (Judd).

### RESEARCH SURROUNDING THE SUCCESS OF VOUCHERS

California has done extensive research on the success of the Commuter Check Program. California's Metropolitan Transportation Commission hired a third party consulting group to review the program and determine its ultimate impact, as well as finding the overall level of customer satisfaction. The results were reported in the article "San Francisco Bay Area Results: Impacts of the Commuter Check Program, Summary Report on Commuter Check Customer Service Survey," as posted on the Commuter Check web site. Seventy-nine percent of the respondents said that they had improved opinions of their employer, thirty-five percent of Commuter Check users felt they had reduced stress from not driving, and thirty-three percent noticed increased job satisfaction. Improved on-time arrivals as well as enhanced productivity were noted as well. Commuter Check was found to have increased transit use by an average of thirty percent at participating employers, and in some cases, by one hundred percent.

The same consulting group that did this study also found that because of the program, employees increased transit trips by 3.24 per week. The overall effects of the Commuter Check program were much more pronounced at firms outside of the immediate San Francisco boundary. Among the suburban areas, transit commute trips increased forty-eight percent, compared to the urban increase of twenty-five percent. There was no correlation between the amount of the voucher subsidy given by the employer and the amount of trips taken. These findings suggest that discounting the fare had a greater impact on the amount of transit trips taken than did the level of subsidy.

The study found that the main reasons that employers participated in the Commuter Check program were to improve employee benefits (37%), and because of the tax savings (21%). Eighty-four percent of employers needed no support (sales staff) to start the program, and approximately ninety percent reported having no difficulty with the program whatsoever. The voucher offered by the program provides a tangible item that people are willing to purchase, because the buyer feels as though they have something to show for their expense. As a result, vouchers have proven to be more successful than the more common intangible tickets or passes. While Tri-Met does offer tangible bus tickets, it is far more economical to use a method like the PASSport system, where the money is taken out of the paycheck, and a bus pass is never seen, only a sticker affixed to the employee's identification badge.

While public transportation generally has the support of environmentalists and low-income advocates, many businesses use the Commuter Check as a bonus to the benefits package, and many unions bargain for it. Scott Spencer pointed out that that it requires multiple groups to make a program successful. Many groups are necessary because the more advocates a program has, the greater likelihood of a successful implementation. Because the Commuter Check Program has so many advocates, all representing such diverse subject matter, it would be very difficult for Tri-Met to discount all of them.

### CALIFORNIA  VERSUS OREGON

**What Is Best For Oregon?**

While the programs that Tri-Met offers to Oregon are seemingly indistinguishable from those of California, there are minor, but extremely significant differences. The biggest difference is that the Commuter Check Program uses vouchers, which is an extra step. Currently, employers and employees give Tri-Met money directly, and Tri-Met gives the transportation passes to the employers and employees directly. At a first glance, this might appear to be more efficient. However, Tri-Met's system is not significantly more efficient, and it is far more costly for the transit operator (in this case, Tri-Met, who is already struggling financially).

The Benefits of Vouchers for Oregon

MORE MONEY FOR OREGON

The use of the voucher inadvertently forces the employers to shoulder the cost of administration, while the transit operator receives the full amount of the vouchers. Because the transportation system simply receives money, and distributes checks in predetermined denominations, considerably less labor is involved in California's program. By having the vouchers in predetermined denominations (e.g. offering vouchers only in the amount of $5, $10 and $20), individual consideration is not necessary when distributing the vouchers, and the accounting is uncomplicated. When the cost of administration is distributed among hundreds of employers, the individual cost is minimal. The tax savings that the IRS 132 offers are so great that the employers are generally willing to pay these minor administration costs. With the tax savings provided by the IRS 132, the general rule is that for every dollar the employer provides, they save up to ten cents; while every dollar the employee provides, they save up to thirty cents.

All things being constant, the use of vouchers does not create more money; instead, it frees money that was previously occupied to pay for administration costs. Tri-Met's actual fares cover a very minimal amount of their total cost. Because of this, there is no money to expand the coverage areas, or actively get more employers involved in their programs. Instead, Tri-Met just maintains the agreements they currently have with employers, leaving out a huge sector of employers that would and could use their programs (Judd).

TANGIBILITY

Having something tangible to purchase along with having a greater budget is what makes the Commuter Check program much more desirable than Tri-Met's programs. Through the various transit programs that Tri-Met offers, the rider never makes any kind of exchange, and the money is taken out of the employee's paycheck before they ever see the money. By having a voucher or something to physically exchange for the use of public transportation, it tends to change the behaviors of commuters. By using vouchers, commuters do not just use public transportation for work purposes only, they use mass transit for discretionary travel as well (Judd).

As of June 2001, Tri-Met had 669 employers involved in their four programs, while the Commuter Check program had just over 3,000. Although the Portland Metropolitan area is only about two thirds the size of the San Francisco Bay area, the number of employers involved in the Commuter Check program is four and a half times greater than those using Tri-Met's four programs combined. This is clear evidence of the Commuter Check success (Judd).

ALLEVIATING TRAFFIC WITHIN THE SMALLER MUNICIPALITIES

The main complaint concerning traffic that arose during the interviews done by the Portland State graduate students showed that the traffic problems are not just within the downtown Portland region. Traffic is a major problem wherever there is rapid population growth, which includes most of the suburban areas. While the Commuter Check program works well among the dense urban areas, the most marked impact that the program has is on the suburban regions surrounding San Francisco.

### HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE USE OF VOUCHERS

**Tri-Met's Infrastructure**

The implementation process is relatively simple because changing the current method only involves Tri-Met. Tri-Met is considered a municipal corporation of the state of Oregon. Tri-Met has the authority to distribute public transportation, decide where to get their funding (general obligation bonds and revenue bonds), and speak on behalf of the Portland Metropolitan District. Tri-Met is governed by a seven member board of directors. The governor chooses these members and they must live in, and represent different geographical areas that Tri-Met services.

This board is responsible for agency policy, contracts, and taxation. The board of directors meets both formally and informally every month and all of the meetings are open to the public (by law). The only limitations imposed on the board of directors are by legislation and the constitution. The laws (which are listed and explained on Tri-Met's home page) are minimal, and would not interfere with the use of vouchers in Oregon (Summary).

How to Make the Change Within Tri-Met

To implement the use of vouchers, getting in contact with Tri-Met's board of directors and proposing the use of vouchers is all that is necessary. The Board of Directors would make the decision, and have the ability to change the current system that Tri-Met uses. Any suggestions based on budget, expansion, and advertising should also be made to the board. The voucher system works by having the transportation operator work directly with the employers, so other group involvement is not needed.

### HOW TO ENSURE A SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

**Five Suggested Phases**

There is no specific required documentation or added paperwork in order to implement the Commuter Check Program. However, the Commuter Check has provided five suggested phases to help get those who are interested in the program. The five phases are: employee survey, introductory memorandums, payroll deduction authorizations, employee certifications, and order summary charts. The first phase, employee surveys, is suggested to help determine employees' interest in the program. This could be done either by the employers or by the municipalities (in a random sampling) in order to gauge potential participation. The second phase, introductory memorandums, is merely to announce the program to employees or the employers. The third phase, payroll deduction authorizations, is simply that when written documented employee consent for the payroll deduction. The fourth phase, employee certification is to ensure that employees receiving the vouchers use public transportation, and to serve as a receipt. The final phase, order summary charts, is a way of organizing and determining the voucher order requirements, tracking distribution and denomination frequency.

Where to Find Technical SupportAgain, the five phases are purely a suggested method of implementation but are not legally required. The Commuter Check web site has several examples of forms for each phase that can be printed out and used, which are located at http://www.commutercheck.com/emplcert.html. The Consumer Check Service Corporation has a support phone number and e-mail address where they can be reached should there be any general questions (phone (201) 833-9700, or e-mail at info@commutercheck.com).

### SUPPORT THAT COMMUTER CHECK WILL PROVIDE

Because the Commuter Check Program was designed for use in varying municipalities, it has a limited degree of difficulty through its basic plan. There is no paperwork, no proposals to be approved, and Tri-Met does not have to alter the way they are currently running their programs. In addition to this, the Commuter Check Service Corporation has already provided some means of assistance to both the employers and the municipalities who would like to practice the use of vouchers. Aside from providing

forms to ease implementation, the Commuter Check Program is trying make it effortless for companies to use the program. The Commuter Check Service Corporation provides and maintains a website, where they would post Oregon's information regarding the use of vouchers, to enable any employer or employee to download a voucher order form and start the Commuter Check program in their office. This would also serve as a medium for additional advertisement. The aid received by the Commuter Check Service Corporation not only makes it easy to put into operation, but less expensive than Tri-Met's current system.

## HOW MUNICIPALITIES CAN ASSIST

Because Tri-Met has a relatively small management group that is responsible for all decisions, there are few processes necessary to implement change. To initiate a program similar to the Commuter Check in the Portland Metropolitan region, an advocate group is essential, and this is where smaller municipalities can be crucial. Currently, the smaller municipalities within our region are not greatly involved with the operation of Tri-Met, and their potential contribution is missed. The voucher system has been shown to have greatest impact among the smaller suburban regions as opposed to the large cities. These smaller municipalities need to work with Tri-Met not only to get a voucher program in place, but also to formulate a working program that fits the needs of all parties involved.

In addition to forming an advocacy group for the voucher system, the municipalities also play a huge role in the success of the program once it has started. The municipalities know their districts and employers much better than Tri-Met does and direct solicitation on their part is exceptionally effective. Because of the smaller municipalities' knowledge, it is very important that each district supports employer advertisements of the program and encourage active participation.

# IMPROVING PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

## WHAT IS PUBLIC INVOVLEMENT?

Public involvement is the process by which the public interacts with government officials in the decision-making process.   It is a means, according to "Planning Analysis: The Theory of Citizen Participation," by which "citizens have a direct voice in public decisions."   This involvement can take place on a large scale, by addressing problems that affect a majority of the population or several municipalities. This interaction can also happen on a much smaller scale, by working on local, community-related issues.

## DESCRIPTION

What are the characteristics of public involvement?  Deborah Mattinson's "People Power in Politics" describes it as "a two-way communication, a multi-layered approach to public involvement." More specifically, Kristina Younger, in the Intermodal Surface Transportation and Efficiency Act planner's workbook, suggests that regardless of the size or the nature of the process, any type of genuine public involvement should be:
1) Proactive
2) Tailored to local needs and conditions
3) Ongoing
4) Inclusive
5) Frequent
6) Encouraged to be innovative and use a combination of techniques
7) Most efficient when supported by strong leadership and institutional support, and
8) Intended to impact the results of the planning process (Younger)

## MEASUREMENT

Public involvement can be measured in a number of ways.  One method is to use a continuum that lists "Passive" activities on one end, with "Active" on the other end.  According to "Planning Analysis: The Theory of Citizen Participation," examples of "Passive" activities are building public support and disseminating information, while two-way communication and securing advice and consent can be considered "Active."  Another much simpler unit of measurement, though just as worthy of consideration, is the idea of pseudo versus genuine participation.

 According to Wang's "Assessing Public Participation in U.S. Cities," if public participation "is defined as citizen involvement in making service and management decisions," then traditional participation mechanisms such as informing citizens about decisions, or placating complaints using direct mail, official briefings and surveys can only be viewed as pseudo participation.  This is due to the one-way nature of the flow of information.  Genuine participation exists when the public is engaged in administrative decision-making, and when the "citizens are the owners of government and the co-producers of public goods."  He goes on to note that "genuine participation, citizens are dominant discussants and decision makers, and government's supplementary role is to set goals, provide incentives, monitor processes and provide information" (Wang).

While mediums such as direct mail, official briefings, and surveys cannot be considered genuine participation; these methods do have their uses.  Surveys, direct mail, and briefings are inexpensive, and fairly effective means of disseminating information; yet it is important not to confuse these concepts with genuine participation.

## COMMITMENT

The proactive characteristic suggests a commitment on both the parts of the community, and from the elected officials.  The public commits by remaining involved through all phases of the decision making process. This is done through actively listening, providing input, and voting in each decision.  The elected officials commit to this dynamic by providing the means for the dialogue to take place as well as the

information for the community to make a rational decision.  Lastly, following through with the will of the community completes this commitment.

## WHY AND HOW SHOULD THE PUBLIC BE INVOLVED?

## BENEFITS FOR CITY GOVERNMENT

Why should the public become involved?  There are many benefits associated with a public involved in the decision making process of its legislators.  These benefits serve not only the public but also the individuals that are part of the city council or local governing body.  In order to legitimately develop publicly supported goals, missions, and service priorities, the government needs the support of its citizens.  First and foremost, Wang states in "Assessing Public Participation in U.S. Cities," genuine participation "leads to satisfying the needs of the public," especially in a situation where the needs of the public "are not automatically served by a bureaucracy whose main motivation is the maximization of its financial inputs."  This in effect will provide guidance for bureaucratic production and act as a balance and check system of equity to counteract private interest groups and any ulterior motives of the elected officials.  Secondly, public participation acts as a means of accountability by helping "build consensus on organizational goals, service priorities, good performance, and fiscal commitment."  Finally, public involvement helps to "resolve the tension between public demands" and the conflict of management reality in order for the public to "reevaluate its demands and better understand these management limitations."

Wang's research shows that public involvement "is perceived as effective in meeting public needs, building consensus, and improving public trust."  Furthermore, the survey[2] Wang conducted found that "function participation is positively associated with meeting public needs.  Governments with public involvement in more services and management functions[3] are more able to identify, assess, and satisfy public needs."  Finally, the level of participation also has significant influence on consensus building.  Results from this study show "public involvement in goal setting, strategy or policy development, budget determination, and evaluation seems to increase the chance to reach stakeholder agreement on organizational goals, service priorities, and performance expectations."

## THE PUBLIC'S RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE

Kristin Shrader-Frechette suggests another reason why the public should be involved is the right of the public to participate in the decisions that affect their livelihood and community well being.  The author's reasoning is fourfold.  The first and most basic is logic-based. Numerous uncertainties underlie all decision-making in situations where there is scientific uncertainty.  Consequently such instances become a policy issue (Shrader-Frechette).

Her second line of reasoning is ethics.  Since "assessments have consequences not only for knowledge but also for public welfare, the public has a right to participate" (Shrader-Frechette).  Making assessments without the inclusion of the public is not only undesirable, it also has a high probability to be inaccurate and also undermines the basic premise of genuine public participation.

The third reason for public participation is ontological.  Shrader-Frachette contends that "risks do not affect merely current health and safety, but also human autonomy, consent, distributive equity, equal opportunity, future generations, civil liberties, social stability and so on, scientific experts ought not to be the sole assessors."

The final point to be made is that "the applied science used [in decision-making] presupposes democratically determined goals, it can never be value neutral" (Shrader-Frechette).  Governmental decision-making should be both democratic and scientific.  Furthermore, if the current decision making policy of a municipality is to disallow or stifle public participation, then it "errs in reducing democratic and

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[2] "A survey was sent to all chief administrative officers in U.S. cities with populations greater than 50,000 in the late 1990's and early 2000…two hundred and forty-nine of 541 surveyed cities returned the survey."  Three dimensions of public participation were measured: participation mechanisms, function participation, and participation indecision making (Wang).

[3] Wang's nine functions are: policing and public safety, code enforcement, zoning and planning, parks and recreation, transportation and street maintenance, solid waste and garbage collection, budgeting, personnel management, and procurement management.

procedural values to technocratic and scientific ones." This argument will be returned to later in this section.

## RECOGNIZING TRUST

With the incorporation of the public in the decision making process, there are a few key issues to keep in mind. Lynn Frewer states in "Consensus Conferencing and Public Participation" that "trust, and other social factors must be recognized as important in developing this dialogue between the different stakeholders." This trust is an essential piece of the framework. Shrader-Frachette states that, "incorporated into the concept of public participation is the notion of 'procedural justice.' This refers to the fairness of processes by which decisions are reached. 'Procedural justice' implies the need for a participatory communication process, rather than the altogether more familiar top-down approach. Lastly, any attempts of public participation will surely fail "unless the public recognizes that the results of public involvement are incorporated into subsequent policy decisions" (Shrader-Frechette).

## PERCEPTION

"Planning Analysis: The Theory of Citizen Participation," emphasizes that the perception of the public and its officials is a matter worth addressing in the development and implementation of any public participation program. Public involvement is often a requirement for government officials, but it is purely an option for the citizens. Citizens choose to do so out of their own volition and for the intrinsic value the experience brings for them. "Participation can offer a variety of rewards to citizens," they may be personal or instrumental, and it is significant for city officials in creating a better planning process and product. Therefore, the disparity of the perception between official's and participant's expectations needs to be kept at a minimum. "If expectations are different, conflict is probable. This conflict is damaging to the planning process (as well as the agency's reputation), and to the relationship between the participants and the government agents. Often, it is avoidable because its source is in conflicting expectations rather than conflicting demands" (Planning).

## ISSUES CONCERNING PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

## THREAT TO OBJECTIVITY

One major objection against the use of public involvement in decision-making is the threat the public poses to the objectivity of the proceedings. Shrader-Frechette argues that the procedures for public involvement in decision-making do not threaten scientific objectivity. The author also raises the question of whether scientific or technocratic objectivity is always the appropriate course of action in the decision making process. "Another response to worries about objectivity is to recognize that, even if scientists and stakeholders disagree about how to deal with" uncertainty in decision-making, the public is "not necessarily irrational in being averse to particular types of risk" (Shrader Frechette). Mattinson comments that "anyone who has been involved in any of the projects conducted so far will agree that they prove that ordinary citizens without training or expertise, and drawn from all social background, can grasp the most complex and demanding of issues."

## THE FALLACY OF UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Returning to the concept of the proactive nature of genuine participation, there is a need to consider what Shrader-Frechette calls the "fallacy of unfinished business." The author describes this phenomenon as the "fallacy of assuming that all our risk controversies can be solved by 'business as usual' – by more and better technical analysis." In order for officials to avoid committing this error, they need "to learn to recognize the social, ethical and procedural dimensions of risk assessment. This does not mean of course, that we exchange the flaws of technocratic expertise for those of democratic participation" (Shrader Frechette). The consideration of both professional and laymen beliefs and values is necessary in the face of the ever-present uncertainty in decision-making.

The three models of public participation that will be discussed are citizen advisory committees, consensus conferencing, and citizen juries. Looking back at the original guidelines suggested by Younger in the ISTEA planner's workbook, all three models have the capability of fulfilling the discussed criteria. The three chosen models will involve a great deal of interaction among all participants, and under the right circumstances have the possibility to make significant impacts. They all share the ability to be universally applied to almost any subject matter, whether the situation happens to be on a larger or more localized scale. Given the proper support and basic understanding for the groundwork of the models, they can become a regular practice, providing a meaningful and worthwhile experience for the community, and an integral cog in a governing body's decision making process.

These models do have their faults. Frewer says that the problem of making sure that extensive media coverages reaches the intended audience through one "competing high interest news event" that media coverage is minimal," is likely to guarantee that news coverage will be nominal. This exposure is an integral part of validating the experience. Furthermore, another problem arises from the small number of lay people involved in any conference, which means that the decision might not be representative of the whole. The process of deciding which model to use will ultimately involve debating these similarities and differences, and strengths and weaknesses.

## CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

According to Frewer, the Citizen Advisory Committee, or CAC, is "aimed at incorporating public views into policy decisions." She comments that this practice, mostly used in the United States, predominantly deals with issues such as scientific or technological matters, and environmental concerns. A CAC generally has a greater opportunity to interact with government/industry representatives. Citizen Advisory Committees also tend to be "more enduring, and involving wider deliberations, rather than focusing on a single specific issue"(Frewer).

There are some concerns with this model. Since interest groups sponsor the members, this could lead to a situation where the desires of the interest groups take precedence over the actual wants and needs of the community. In consideration of this method, Frewer says that it is important to define the purpose of this group clearly, especially since these groups tend to exist for longer periods of time. It is also important to select members who ensure that the committee is credible and has public support. This last criterion is of special importance due to the unique selection process for CAC's.

## CONSENSUS CONFERENCING

Consensus conferencing is described in"Models of Public Involvement" as a panel of lay people who develop their understanding in a specific field in dialogue with experts. This model has been effectively used in European countries such as Denmark, and most recently in Great Britain. This article describes the basic methodology as follows:

- A panel of between ten and twenty volunteers are recruited through advertisements
- A steering committee is set up, with its members chosen by the sponsors of the conference
- The panel attends two preparatory weekends where they are briefed on the subject and identify the questions that they want to address in the conference
- The conference lasts for 3–4 days and gives the panel a chance to ask experts any outstanding questions
- The conference is open to the public and the audience also has the opportunity to ask questions
- The panel retires and prepares a report independent of the steering committee to set out their views on the subject
- Copies of the report are made available to the conference audience (Models)

These allow the audience members to participate in the question and answering phase, which is unique to this specific model. This could prove to be a double-edged sword. While the audience might provide a

distinctive view that was not considered by the members of the group, this process could possibly lead to a great deal of irrelevant discussion and commentary.

## CITIZEN JURY

One of the more widely used and relatively common models is the citizen jury. Two examples come from Cologne, Germany, and Minneapolis, Minnesota. The citizen jury has been used in a number of other countries such as Great Britain, Denmark, Spain, and Australia. This model has been used to tackle a wide range of issues, from the national level (health care reform and budgeting) to the local level (school district facility needs). "Models of Public Involvement" describes the Citizen Juries as "an attempt to involve the public in decisions which affect them in their own communities. The approach developed out of concerns about low levels of involvement in democracy." The basic methodology is illustrated as follows:

1) A small group of ordinary people (12-16) is recruited to be broadly representative of their area
2) They are asked to address a question or questions on an important matter of policy or planning
3) They sit for up to four days and are assisted by independent moderators
4) They are informed about the issue, cross examine witnesses, and discuss the matter fully
5) Their conclusions are compiled in a report which is submitted, subject to jurors' approval, to the commissioning body
6) The commission is expected to publicize the findings and to follow its recommendations or explain why they chose not to (Models)

Frewer describes some of the difficulties that have been experienced by previous citizen juries. For example, "jurors initially found it difficult to cope with all the information they needed to address the issues, and even questioned their competence, although they become more confident with time." The jury also had some problems with practical issues, for instance " the jurors found it easier to make decisions when choosing between clear options, rather than debating open-ended questions; and they experienced difficulties regarding the equal participation of all members." This problem was solved with the addition of a moderator who kept the discussion on course, made sure all members made an equal contribution, and ensured that expert witnesses answered the questions put to them (Frewer).

## GOAL SETTING

One final issue worth discussing is the importance of goal setting, regardless of whatever model is chosen for this group process. For the most part, these models have no official legislative power. Nor are there any current methods to evaluate their effectiveness. Therefore, it is necessary to figure out which measure of success the community uses to define effectiveness. In time, with repeated use, the support of both the community and the governing body, a decision could be made to legitimize the decisions of these public involvement models (Frewer).

## SUMMARY

Public involvement is the method by which the community interacts with its elected officials in the decision-making process. This process can take place on several different levels, starting from a position of very low involvement, with an act such as answering a survey, to a very active level, such as partaking in a citizen jury, citizen advisory committee or even by consensus conferencing. It is only by using the high participation activities that these actions can be considered genuine and provide the catalyst for changing the stagnant relationship between the community and its officials. Research has shown that cities and municipalities with a high level of community involvement have a better understanding of the wants and needs of the public and have greater success in agreeing on goal setting. In getting the community involved, several issues need to be taken into consideration. These include trust, perception, and the threat of the public to scientific objectivity.

Citizen juries, citizen advisory committees, and consensus conferencing are three models of public involvement. All three achieve a high level of public involvement, yet each has unique qualities unto itself.

None of the models are perfect; all three have strengths and weakness.  With the lack of any real authoritative power, it is necessary to create goals and a means of how to measure effectiveness.

# PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT VIA COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY CENTERS

An additional method of public involvement involves the use of computer technology centers (CTCs). As described on the CTCnet center start-up manual website, "a community technology center is a community service, social action, and/or educational facility where computers and related communications technologies are available to people who otherwise might have little or no opportunity to use or learn to use these technologies." One might ask how CTCs translate into public involvement. CTCs lead to an observed increase in civic participation by the participants at these technology centers (CTCnet, principle).

Although CTCs can be costly, they are necessary to produce an all-inclusive involvement of the public in community participation through computer technology. According to the Minnesota E-Democracy Project website, computer technology could be the future of civic participation in governmental affairs. The absence of these centers may potentially prevent members of the community that cannot afford to purchase the necessary computer equipment independently from participation in governmental affairs via computer technology.

Merely putting governmental information on-line does not equate to civic participation in community activities. Studies of community technology centers suggest that the participation experienced at these places translates into an increased desire in public and community involvement (CTCnet, principle). In a study by June Mark, a fifty-six year old African American man who advanced his education using such a center, was quoted as saying " 'I wanted to give something back to the program….' "

## BENEFITS OF CTCS

The CTCnet principle findings website publishes findings on the results of CTCs within a community. As noted on this website, "participants reported feeling a sense of community and belonging developed through their attendance at a community technology center…a few said they wanted to 'give something back' by volunteering or teaching at the center" (CTCnet, principle). The study found that CTCs provided participants with access to community, governmental departments, and to various services. Several participants voiced such opinions on social and political issues via e-mail. In a survey conducted by CTCnet to determine the explicit role of community technology centers in providing governmental and civic resources, fifty-five percent viewed these centers as important resources in obtaining governmental and civic information (CTCnet, principle).

Virtual communities, which are created by the implementation of CTCs, "not only offer a multitude of topic areas, but also the ability to participate at a convenient time. There is no weekly meeting to catch after work. The meetings happen whenever the participants have time to login and read the new postings" (Wired). This is one observed benefit that makes governmental participation via computer technology useful and emphasizes implementation of CTCs in order to get the entire community involved. CTCs increase civic participation because they enable participants to voice their opinion on social and political issue primarily via e-mail (Mark).

A positive side effect of CTCs is that many people go to these centers not only to collect information, but also to meet others within their community. It has been observed that as a result of the help they obtain at these centers and through the relationships that are formed there, the participants report a sense of community and belonging (Mark). Of twenty-eight participants surveyed by Mark, eight noted " a greater sense of community engendered such positive feeling within participants that they wanted to find ways 'to give something back' to the community and to the center…."

Jason Alexander and Joseph Grubbs cite further benefits of CTCs in a report. They concur that "these new technologies [CTCs] might…be employed by public agencies to engage citizens in the policy-making process for the purpose of enhancing both democratic participation and governmental responsiveness to citizen demands." Alexander and Grubbs claim that such programs require more public accountability from governmental agencies, and thus CTCs are a benefit to the public. It is important to note that a recent survey identified that fifty-one percent of Internet visitors use the service to gain information on their local communities (Alexander). This emphasizes the usefulness of CTCs.

Community technology centers are an invaluable asset in engaging public participation in community and government policies and agencies. There currently exists several such programs in Oregon, and these sites/programs can be accessed via the CTCnet member directory website[4].

## CTC START-UP STEPS

The first step towards creating an active community technology center is visiting the CTCnet center start-up manual website. This website outlines the implementation procedure of a CTC. All of the following steps are taken directly from this website, which should be referenced for detailed instructions or questions on the implementation process. The CTCnet network manual consists of nine basic steps in the implementation of a CTC. The steps are as follows:

1) Timeline and process
2) Mapping community resources
3) Determining program focus
4) Staffing
5) Software and selection criteria
6) Space, hardware, and security
7) Scheduling, outreach, and self-assessment
8) Budgeting and funding
9) Preparing a business plan

### Step One

The first step, timeline and process, describes the process of evaluating how long a CTC will take to implement and the staff necessary for the process to take place. Examples include community members, businesses, professionals, and representatives from the educational community. Also, this step details the governance structure that will be needed to oversee the process of implementation and regulation.

### Step Two

The second step, mapping community resources, evaluates the anticipated participants of the center and the interests and needs of those people. This step also cites the need for local resources and it suggests methods to locate and utilize them.

### Step Three

The third step outlines the specific programs that will be offered by the CTC. These include those who will be involved in the center and the times they will be involved. For example, will the center cater to the elderly by having it available during the day? Will it be tailored to youth who would require after school hours? Or consider whether it will be used by working adults who need the facility in the nighttime.

### Step Four

The fourth step evaluates the jobs that will be performed at the center, the staff that will be needed to support those tasks, and the budget that will be available to hire employees.

### Step Five

Step five outlines the steps necessary to evaluate the hardware connection that will be needed, the level of sophistication of the software, the computer language that will be spoken at the center, and the provision of teaching aids.

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[4] This CTCnet website can be accessed at http://www2.ctcnet.org/ctc.asp.

**Step Six**

In the sixth step, requirements of the physical space and the furnishings of the center, the location of the CTC, the space needed, and the electrical connections are outlined.

**Step Seven**

This step of scheduling, outreach, and self-assessment outlines the need for scheduling structure within the center, community outreach by the center, and how the CTC can reach its target audience.

**Step Eight**

Step eight deals with budgeting, funding, start-up expenses, personnel costs, and site-costs.

**Step Nine**

Finally, step nine presents a business plan that suggests the best practice for running and maintaining a CTC.

**TECHNOLOGIES OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM CASE STUDY**

One example of a CTC, although not specifically labeled as such, is the Technologies Opportunities Program (TOP) Project InterLinc. In this case study, prepared by Nicole Bartfai and Barbara Kapinus, a public grant was awarded to the City of Lincoln, Nebraska. The purpose of this award was to facilitate the delivery of "useful and practical governmental services to empower citizens with information about health/human services, public safety, and assist with voting, community forums, and communication with elected officials" (Bartfai). The project was designed to provide opportunities to underserved residents. This case study lists the purpose of the project, the grant monies received, the project cost, project implementation, and the results and problems of the project (Bartfai).
This paper assumes that the case study of Lincoln, Nebraska, with a population of 213,000 residents, will easily translate to municipalities in the Portland metropolitan region. Some potential users include Beaverton, Gresham, and Hillsboro. It should be noted that Project InterLinc represents the connection of an entire city, with the development of several CTCs throughout Lincoln. When discussing and planning for CTC development in the municipalities of Oregon, as they have smaller populations than Lincoln, not as many sites would be needed. Specifics of the Project InterLinc study will be discussed in the funding and result areas of this section.
Project InterLinc created several CTC sites located within Lincoln, Nebraska. In one such urban area, at a library, students used the site to look up information on school projects and adults used them for job hunting (Bartfai). However, most applicable to this paper were the results from the rural site of Denton, Nebraska, where local residents hold their board meetings and provide business and administrative services at the CTC. Availability to the Internet has provided these residents with greater accessibility to governmental services online, although the explicit benefit of such access for the residents requires further observation (Bartfai). In short, every site, with its different members, different services provided, and different emphases results in unique findings that can be generalized to an overall feeling of connectedness by the participants. "It enabled the villages and urban sites to forge a relationship with the city government that was previously not established" (Bartfai).

**Project Partners**

Community technology centers work together with project partners to inform the public about these centers. Project partners are discussed in the CTCnet start-up manual in step seven under the heading of "How can a CTC Reach its Target Audience?"
The TOP research and evaluation website describes project partners as educational organizations, community organizations, private sector entities, and governmental agencies that aid the project by donation of their services. The services can be monetary, or voluntary (people as volunteers). This aid can

take the form of free advertising or educational advising. In the case of Project InterLinc there were many project partners, but two had the specific intention of informing the public about the project. These partners were KFOR, a radio station in Lincoln, and Nebraska Education Telecommunication (NET). KFOR provided free Internet access to citizens for a short time (they no longer provide the service, but they still promote Project InterLinc on the air and on their website). NETs website also promoted the Project (Bartfai).

As mentioned previously, project partners also provide monetary assistance to the project. Major contributions by project partners to Project InterLinc were provided by Aliant Communication. Aliant offered a fifty percent reduction in the rate of their Internet service provider for 18 months; this amounted to a $44,000 "in-kind" donation. Another partner was Information Analytics; they also provided rate reductions in their Internet service rates (Bartfai).

## COST CONSIDERATIONS

### Project Partners

The inhibiting factors of CTCs are the associated costs necessary to operate and implement them. Consequently, project partners are key elements in reducing the cost of CTCs. The cost of Project InterLinc was estimated at $548,651. $185,000 of this sum was expected to come from federal grants, while the rest was to be supplied by applicant (user) and partner donations. However, the actual cost in this case was shy of the estimated cost. Only $147,440 of federal money and $290,640 of applicant money was used. The total costs were $438,080 (Bartfai).

The cost of these centers is site specific and depends upon what is required. Several questions must be asked. For example, is there already a public space where computers can be placed or will such a space need to be constructed? Will computers need to be bought, and if so, how many? How many personnel will need to be employed to run the center?

These costs are considerable. To evaluate these expenses, the CTCnet start-up manual should be referred to, but there are options to reduce the total cost of implementing a computer technology center within a community. The government offers grants towards the implementation of CTCs. There also exists the U.S. Department of Commerce's Technology Opportunities Program as a funding resource. It must be noted that this is not an all-inclusive list of money sources in the funding of a CTC, consult the CTCnet start-up manual (CTCnet, center).

### Governmental Grants

Governmental grants can be received for the implementation of a community technology center. The Department of Education offers such grants for one-year awards (Department of Education website). According to the Department of Education, "The purpose of the Community Technology Centers program is to promote the use of technology in education through the development of model programs that demonstrate the educational effectiveness of technology in low-income or economically-distressed urban and rural communities." The exclusion of "civic participation" in governmental agencies from this definition is not a dilemma. As will be discussed in the results section of this topic, it has been observed that participation at these centers, regardless of the actual activity performed there, can lead to an increased desire to participate in community activities.

Applicants for a governmental grant offered by the Department of Education must meet the eligibility criteria as listed on their website. Furthermore, applicants must submit grant applications through the Internet using software also provided on the Department of Education website. These applications can also be delivered as a hardcopy sent via mail, but again, the website should be referenced for specifics on this application process (Department).

### Technology Opportunity Program Grants

Another source of available money for the funding of CTCs comes from the U.S. Department of Commerce's TOP. As with the Department of Education, these grants must be applied for. Matching grants are provided to nonprofit organizations, schools, libraries, hospitals, public safety entities, and state and local governments. It is important to note that three-fifths of the grant recipients were educational

organizations (Technologies, Evaluation). However, this could be the result of an overwhelming number of applications from such institutions.

## CASE STUDY CAVEATS AND GOALS UNREALIZED

Project InterLinc encountered several problems and it suffered three unrealized goals. Some difficulties the project encountered stemmed from a lack of support from city officials as well as city service departments. This lack of support translated to barriers that were overcome only after increasing media exposure of the site. Other problems were encountered when one of the project partners left the project; this created an unexpected financial burden on additional project partners. Problems also existed at the end user site with both staff members of the facilities and with the community participants. Some of the staff members did not perform as expected, and some of the equipment was stolen from one of the sites (Bartfai).

These unrealized goals were mainly fiscal. Visions for these sites included the ability to pay for certain governmental expenses on-line. For example, taxes, tickets, and licenses could be paid online (Bartfai). However, this goal was not met because of the additional fees associated with credit card transactions (Technologies, Evaluation).

## CONCLUSION

CTCs are necessary for the all-inclusive involvement of the public in governmental matters via computer technology. They can be implemented following the steps outlined on the CTCnet website. Lack of funding should not be inhibiting with the availability of federal grants and with the aid of project partners.

# VOLUNTEERISM IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

By definition, a volunteer is a person who, of his or her own will, works without receiving monetary compensation for doing so. For the purposes of this section, the emphasis will be on volunteers who are involved in delivering a public service associated with programs within or sponsored by government agencies.

According to the "Volunteer Facts & Stats Sheet" available on the Points of Light Foundation web site, "volunteering among adults has increased significantly over the past decade (109 million in 1998 compared with 80 million in 1987)." Another important finding from this study is that nine out of ten individuals volunteered when asked.[5] The significance of this information to government municipalities is that people *are* interested in giving their time and skills, and they are willing to volunteer when asked. This section will explore the impact, both on the agency and the community, of using volunteers for agency programs and operations. To this end, discussions of program types, costs and benefits, recruiting, and planning and implementing volunteer programs will follow. Also included is a list of services and resources available for volunteer coordinating.

## EFFECTIVELY UTILIZING VOLUNTEER SERVICES

Volunteers can be used in a variety of government agencies, but in general there are positions and programs that are better suited for volunteer involvement than others. Susan Ellis is a recognized expert on volunteerism and president of Energize, Inc., a training, consulting, and publishing firm specializing in volunteerism. In her essay entitled "Volunteerism and the Government Sector," she lists the following places where volunteers can routinely be found:

- Public schools and public libraries
- Local parks and recreation programs
- Community, U.S. military, and veterans hospitals
- Centers for services to the aging
- Facilities housing family and child counseling and protection services
- Courts, jails and prisons, probation and parole departments
- Homeless shelters

This is by no means a comprehensive list, but it is representative of the variety of situations in which volunteers can be found.

A 1996 study done by The Maine Commission for Community Services, authored by David Beam, takes this assertion a step further and discusses various types of volunteer services performed in municipalities.[6] The most common type of involvement observed was that of directly providing public service. "What defines the programs in this category is that they are integral to the day-to-day running of the community and they [are] provided directly by volunteers" (Beam). Examples of jobs in this category are helping needy citizens and positions in fire departments. Other common job categories include fundraising, planning – including local decision-making in the form of boards and committees – beautification, and recreation. An analysis of your programs and positions is necessary to determine if and where volunteers could be used, as volunteers are not right for all job functions, or even for all agencies.

## COSTS VERSUS BENEFITS

Volunteers can be used in many programs and job functions, but they should not be considered an alternative to paid labor. In fact it may be illegal to replace regular paid employees with unpaid volunteers. "Public law and contracts with employee unions prohibit many government organizations from substituting volunteers for paid staff" (Brudney, 32).

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[5] These findings are based on interviews with respondents who were asked about patterns of volunteering and giving in their households during 1998. The Gallup Organization conducted the interviews for Independent sector.

[6] Based on a mailing of 1600 surveys in the state of Maine. 119 surveys were returned. 54 of the surveys were from municipalities, 32 from schools, and 33 from libraries.

The fact that volunteers are not paid wages doesn't mean that the government agency will not incur any costs in putting together and maintaining volunteer programs. In his book Fostering Volunteer Programs in the Public Sector, Jeffrey Brudney discusses some common expenses associated with volunteer programs. There are indirect and direct costs that may be associated with a program. Indirect costs (which may include office space, utilities, and furnishings used by the program) are difficult to estimate and therefore are frequently overlooked, but they should be considered in the overall cost of a program. Direct costs include such expenses as a volunteer coordinator, recruitment and promotional efforts, orientation and training of volunteers, and possibly reimbursement for volunteers' out of pocket expenses (26-31). Brudney recommends measuring the cost effectiveness of a volunteer program according to a six-step method developed by G. Neil Karn and printed in the *Journal of Volunteer Administration*. This method is thought to be the most widely used and accurate way of assessing the economic worth of volunteer services.

Despite the costs involved, volunteers are a worthwhile investment. The agency's expenses may increase, but the potential to increase the cost-effectiveness of services provided should outweigh these expenditures. "While the benefits possible to clients thorough volunteer involvement programs elude precise statistical calculation, [Karn's] method can help public agencies to hold costs down in achieving a given level of service, or to increase services for a fixed level of expenditure" (Brudney 37). Brudney also lists a series of studies that were done to determine the economic effect on an agency. It was found that, "volunteers have greatly assisted public organizations in extending the reach and scope of public services at minimal cost" (37).

Another noteworthy benefit is that volunteers can improve the quality of service and impact in the community. According to Jeffrey Brudney, volunteers increase the quality of service in three prominent ways. The first is that, as volunteers are assigned to a specific job, their performance can be directly measured in the overall effectiveness of the agency. Second, volunteers can increase the effectiveness of regular employees by supporting and facilitating their work. Lastly, because volunteers are not regular employees, they have a unique relationship with the community and a fresh perspective. They are able to personalize the service being provided by the agency and help to generate, in the minds of the clients, a less formal and more trusting view of the agency. Through their unique position within the agency, volunteers serve as an intermediary for information between citizens and officials that may increase the responsiveness of the government to citizens (Brudney, 52-72). Undoubtedly, volunteers provide an invaluable service to government agencies.

## RECRUITING

Once you decide that you have an opportunity available for volunteers, the question becomes, "How do you find the volunteer?" There are many options available for finding qualified volunteers, several of which will be discussed here. One promising option to consider is workplace recruiting. "Trends show us that one of the largest growing resources for volunteers are corporate or employee sponsored programs" (Merrill, Building). Corporations that organize volunteer opportunities for their employee's benefit by reducing boredom and increasing productivity at work and by fostering an environment where employees gain company and community identity through doing something meaningful outside their routine job. Local companies such as Nike and Intel have community involvement programs in place that encourage employees to be involved in a volunteer project. Such programs allow employees to work in the community for a day instead of coming to work, while they continue to earn regular wages (Intel, Nike). A government agency can tap into this corporate practice by focusing its advertising efforts to companies located within the surrounding community. A good way get the word out about your volunteer needs is making contact and building relationships with the Public Affairs or Community Relations Department at such companies.

In an online excerpt from her book The Volunteer Recruitment Book, 2nd ed, Susan Ellis discusses additional ways of reaching volunteers where they work. She suggests doing an inventory of the area that is within walking distance of your agency. This will help you to recognize the potential resources in your neighborhood. You can then more easily identify people that might be available to help you. Prospects may include business people who could volunteer on their way home from work or at lunch, students at the nearby college or university, sole practitioners that have professional skills that would be valuable to your agency, and neighbors with shared service goals that would be willing to contribute resources. People are much more willing to contribute time and energy to something that is physically close to them both because

it is convenient and because people tend to be more emotionally attached to the communities in which they live and work.

Other ways of communicating your need for volunteers are listed in an article called "Turning a Volunteer Job Description into a Recruitment Strategy" on the CyberVPM [7] web site. Its suggestions include paid TV, radio, newspaper, or magazine ads, human interest stories about your program, school newspaper articles, senior center bulletins, Internet web pages, online recruitment organizations, Yellow Pages ads, community bulletin board posters, volunteer fairs, and word-of-mouth promotions by current employees. CyberVPM also gives five basic steps for volunteer recruiting in an article called "Volunteer Recruitment That Actually Works." These steps are summarized as follows:

1) **Know your Product** – Make sure your volunteer opportunities are integral to achieving your agency's purpose. Prepare job descriptions and know the value of the position to the volunteer and the agency.
2) **Create a Clear Path to your Door** – Have a procedure for recruitment, screening, and training, and have it ready to use before you start recruiting. Practice good customer service by returning initial calls quickly.
3) **Make your Recruitment Message User-Friendly** – Prepare a message that gives the audience a reason to want to volunteer for your agency. Answer typical questions in the message and reflect the rewards and positives while being honest.
4) **Get to Know your Market** – Acquaint yourself with the ways you can get the word out and be informed about what other agencies are doing.
5) **Advanced Volunteer Recruitment** – Have an ideal volunteer in mind and compose a message tailored to them.

Another important facet to consider here is how to match the volunteer with the job. It is important to realize that though volunteers are not regular employees, they should be screened and evaluated as such. As noted above, an agency should have job descriptions and a clear process for recruiting, hiring, and training volunteers. Applicants should have the necessary skills to do the job and they should be considered a valuable human resource. Volunteers will be drawn to jobs where they are challenged and where they will receive some benefit for doing so. Successful recruitment of volunteers will take all of these areas into consideration and develop a plan that meets the needs of both the volunteer and the agency.

## PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

Volunteer programs should be an important piece of your organizational planning. Your use of volunteers should be a consideration in your business plan and in the overall vision of your agency. This is the only way that you will have effective programs that increase the efficiency of the services you provide. According to a study done by the Points of Light Foundation and printed in an article by Merrill Associates called "Developing a Philosophy of Volunteer Involvement," organizations that were effective in involving volunteers had the following characteristics:

- A foundation built on a mission and vision, articulated to and shared by the entire organization
- Inspiring leadership and effective management
- Understanding and collaboration between management, employees and volunteers
- The ability and desire to learn, grow, and change

These are not all of the characteristics needed for a successful volunteer program, but rather highlights of the most significant ones. For practical information on planning or evaluating your volunteer activities, various experts have recommended precise steps or guidelines that can be followed. Depending on where your agency is in the planning process, you may want to follow a business planning outline as recommended in a Merrill Associates article called "Developing a Business Plan." This outline is specifically designed with the volunteer program in mind, and would be a helpful starting point for a public agency. Jeffrey Brudney, in his book Fostering Volunteer Programs in the Public Sector, provides some general guidelines that may help in planning or improving an existing program. These guidelines discuss such topics as sharing power with volunteers and employees, providing adequate funding for programs, and obtaining feedback for the evaluation of volunteer programs (192-200).

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[7] CyberVPM.com is an online resource for volunteer managers. VPM is an acronym for Volunteer Program.

In general there are basic steps to take that may help to ensure the long-term success of the program. Many of these steps have been discussed in detail in this report, so the following should be seen as an overview of the planning and implementation process. These steps, found in an article called "Seven steps to achieve effective volunteer support" on the CharityVillage web site are summarized as follows:

1) Define why you need volunteers and make sure to have support from the board of directors and senior administrators
2) Design valuable opportunities that will challenge and motivate volunteers. Have goals and objectives for each position clearly stated in job descriptions
3) Recruit carefully, targeting an audience that will be interested in your opportunities. Mirror the characteristics and culture of your existing team
4) Screen, interview, and place cautiously to show your commitment to the project and the volunteers, and to ensure the effectiveness of the program
5) Bring them on board with training to provide volunteers with general information about the agency, its mission, philosophy, and project-specific training
6) Recognize volunteers through programs that show appreciation and support from the agency. Formal and informal recognition methods are recommended
7) Follow-up and evaluate the volunteer program to determine the areas that are successful or those that need improvement

Lastly, the job of planning, implementing, and evaluating successful volunteer programs can be a sizeable responsibility. The need for a paid volunteer coordinator or director was stressed in all the literature assessed for this section. Jeffrey Brudney suggests that, "Regardless of the structural arrangements chosen to house the volunteer effort, the program should have a position bearing overall responsibility for the management and representation of the volunteers" (101). He goes on to cite symbolic and practical purposes which include: perception of the existing employees with regards to the significance of the program, accountability for the program, and the amount of work necessary to run an effective program.

## SUMMARY

Utilizing volunteers in local government agencies can be a very effective way to increase the efficiency of services provided to the community. When considering the use of volunteers, or in evaluating current volunteer programs, several important factors should be considered. The first is the type of job function that would be best suited for a volunteer position. The most common type of position in which volunteers are found is that of providing a public service. These volunteers are integral to the day-to-day operations of the agency (Beam). An evaluation of your programs and job functions is necessary to determine the feasibility of using volunteers in your agency.

The second consideration is the cost to the agency of implementing and maintaining volunteer programs. Even though volunteers are not paid wages, there are both direct and indirect costs involved in these programs. Experts believe that the economic and intrinsic benefits of a successful volunteer program will more than offset the costs. A popular method of assessing cost effectiveness is a six-step process developed by G.N. Karn (Karn).

Third, having a plan for recruiting volunteers is a very important aspect of volunteer programs. There are numerous ways to recruit volunteers, and one of the most progressive is that of using companies in the local area as a primary resource. Developing an advertising message tailored to a target audience and having a recruiting plan are also important aspects of recruiting volunteers.

Lastly, the foundation of every volunteer program should be a company-wide mission for volunteerism and a vision that communicates that mission. Thorough planning of a program is vital to its success; experts recommend employing a director of volunteer services to evaluate, plan and implement volunteer programs.

## CURRENT VOLUNTEER RESOURCES AVAILABLE

- **The Points of Light Foundation (www.pointsoflight.org)** – "Founded in May 1990, the Foundation is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization devoted to promoting volunteerism. The Foundation is based in Washington, DC, and works in communities throughout the United States through a network of over 500 Volunteer Centers. The Foundation's mission is to engage more people more effectively in volunteer community service to help solve serious social problems" (Points, Home).

- **VolunteerWorks (www.volunteerworks.org)** – A *Points of Light Foundation* volunteer center. "VolunteerWorks provides the community service of connecting groups and individual volunteers to nonprofits and public agencies in the Portland metro area and the surrounding areas of Multnomah, Clackamas and Washington counties" (VolnteerWorks).
- **International Year of Volunteers – "**In November 1997, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2001 as the International Year of Volunteers. To prepare for the year, the United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV) has been designated as international focal point. With its main objectives of increased recognition, facilitation, networking and promotion of volunteering, the International Year of Volunteers 2001 (IYV) provides a unique opportunity to highlight the achievements of the millions of volunteers worldwide and to encourage more people globally to engage in volunteer activity" (International). Program website has a library of volunteerism resources such as books, articles, and other research materials.
  http://www.iyv2001.org/iyv_eng/research/research.htm

# FURTHER FUNDING

Local governments[8] provide most of the programs and services on which the public relies on a daily basis (Felbinger, 103). In his essay "The Challenges of Community Government," James Banovetz describes these entities as "the governments of last resort," in order to communicate how critical their services have become to the quality of daily life in one's community (3).

Over the past decade there has been a marked reduction in the revenue base that is available to local governments in Oregon (Measure 50 Facts). This drop in funding sources exists despite the fact that the overall demand for the services that are provided by these entities has continued to rise. Similar economic and social trends have conspired to create a shocking fiscal strain in municipalities across the country (Mainwaring, 82).

The purpose of this investigation then, has been to produce a short collection of functional alternative funding sources that would enable local governments to ease their associated financial pressures. The final list was originally composed in consideration of the specific funding issues faced by local governments in the six county Portland-Metropolitan area. This region includes the Oregon communities of the Columbia, Washington, Yamhill, Clackamas, and Multnomah counties, as well as Washington State's Clark County.

The reader is asked to remember however, that local governments throughout the state of Oregon share many of the forces driving this region's budget shortfalls. Consequently, other communities may find that its contents are equally applicable to their own fiscal concerns.

## WHY PORTLAND-METRO GOVERNMENTS NEED ADDITIONAL FUNDING

There are two primary reasons why Portland-Metropolitan area governments repeatedly find themselves in need of additional funding resources. The first is that the total amount of revenues that are available to them has recently decreased (Measure 50 Facts). The second is that net demand for local government services continues to rise (Mainwaring, 72).

The primary driver behind the decrease in revenues suffered by most Oregon municipalities is the substantial impact of past voter initiatives. Secondary drivers include the overriding state of the local economy, the use of tax expenditures, and the increased appearance of state or federally mandated programs without associated funding supports (Economic).

The increase in demand upon municipal services is a result of population demographics, the rising cost of administration, and changing social concerns (Iannone, 98). Also important to consider in this context are the comparative disadvantages suffered by some municipalities (Bensen, 5).

## PAST VOTER INITIATIVES

Oregon has a long history of voter-adopted restrictions that limit the ability of both state and local governments to levy taxes upon the public (Mainwaring, 9). Because local governments typically generate the bulk of their revenues from property taxes, for our purposes, the most important of these are those that relate to them (Services).

In 1990 voters passed a constitutional amendment[9] that significantly restricted the amount of property taxes that could be levied by local governments (Chapter, 3). Strict assessment limitations were

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[8] Cities, counties, and special districts are each a form of local government that is used extensively throughout Oregon. Therefore, when used in this section, the term 'local governments' refers to each of these components in an aggregate sense, unless otherwise indicated.

9 The Oregon constitution initially mandated that a majority of the state electorate must approve all constitutional amendments. This was to be preceded by its endorsement by two consecutive sessions of the Oregon legislature. However, the Initiative and Referendum Amendment, approved by the legislature in 1899 and 1901, and by voters in 1902, made it much easier to alter the constitution. It effectively granted voters the rights to not only create constitutional amendments, but to delete them as well. This meant that voters could create both new statutes and constitutional amendments.

Proposals to amend the constitution require the signatures of at least eight percent of the number of registered voters that voted in the last gubernatorial election. Petitions to place new statutes to popular

established for residential, business, and public properties (Oregon). Also restricted was the ability of local government to introduce new property tax levies, valuations, growth rates, and ceiling levels. Still frequently referred to as ballot measure fifty (BM50), this amendment set maximum tax rates that could be levied on any piece of property. Combined non-school taxes cannot exceed $10 per $1,000, or one percent, of any property's market value. Combined school taxes were to be phased down by 1995 to no more than $5 per $1,000. The net effect of these provisions was to immediately reduce the property tax collections of local governments, including school districts, by an average of seventeen percent (Measure 50 And).

Furthermore, we must consider that not all property taxes that are levied will be collected. In their "Percent of Property Taxes Collected by County," the Oregon Department of Revenue's Research Section cites the percentage amounts of property tax collections actually received for each of the past five years. Over this time frame, on average, the members of the six county Portland-Metropolitan region experienced property tax un-collectibles of four percent per year of those levied.

## THE STATE OF THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Changes in the condition of the local economy will affect the revenue base of area municipalities (Local). The connection between the two relates to a process of revenue allocation in this state that hinges upon Oregon budget laws. These require that local governments periodically produce and approve balanced budgets for the future year.[10]

Oregon's balanced budget law stipulates that a municipality cannot expect to spend revenue that it cannot reasonably expect to have access to. This means that proposed expenses must not exceed official estimates of income from current sources (Economic). The challenges inherent in this task are that estimates must be generated not only of the number of people to be served over the period for which the budget was constructed, but also of the costs that are expected to be incurred for those services over that (Local). Estimates ought also to include possible program improvements or reductions and their resultant savings.

The complexity of this task becomes apparent when we consider that such expectations of demand and expense are each a function of finite economic variables that fluctuate with and without pattern. Examples of such drivers include expected inflation values, regional economic growth and development patterns, property value assessments, or the cost of welfare and other social programs (Economic). These in turn may drive or reflect an area's other societal characteristics such as immigration habits or consumer consumption patterns.

The Office of Economic Analysis (OEA), housed under the umbrella of Oregon's State Department of Administrative Services, generates many of the above economic forecasts. However, it is the responsibility of each municipality to balance these figures with estimates of the particular wants and needs of their surrounding communities when allocating funds to programs and services for the next fiscal year.

## THE USE OF TAX EXPENDITURES

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vote require the signatures of six percent of that total. If the required numbers of signatures are obtained, the proposal is subjected to popular vote.

A referendum is the right to subject newly enacted laws to popular vote, thus creating an opportunity for voters to delete new pieces of legislation. Creating a referendum requires that a petition be signed by four percent of those who last voted for governor. Filing rules are strict; for instance, all petitions must be submitted within ninety days after the legislature adjourns, or the public looses the right to contest that particular piece of legislation. The Initiative and Referendum Act was extended to local governments in 1906. Consequently, voters can also alter the structure of local government charters and constitutions.

[10] Local budget laws require that budgets be passed for each fiscal year; July 1 through June 30, by the area's locally governing boards. These must appoint a budget officer and a budget committee for this purpose. It is the budget officer's job to submit an annual budget, which includes an estimate of future revenues and their proposed allocations of it, to the budget committee for popular vote. An inherent challenge in this task relates to the fact that estimates ust be made for expected state contribution. As these are in turn based upon independent estimates of state revenues sources, local budgets are frequently in flux (Another).

Contrary to popular belief, property tax expenditures do not represent areas of municipal spending, but rather areas of granted exemptions that essentially constitute targeted property tax relief (Oregon). These exemptions are provided to real properties used by various groups some of whom include government entities, religious groups, and non-profit organizations (State). All household furnishings, automobiles, personal property, crops, timber, orchards, business inventories, stock, bonds and bank accounts are likewise not legally taxable under Oregon property tax laws (partial exemptions exist for some forest, farmlands and open spaces).

Tax expenditure provisions originated to help low-income homeowners, or elderly home owners, manage annual property tax burdens, however they are also frequently employed to encourage new business investments (Chapter 2). For example, the creation of enterprise zones allows cities and rural areas, with state approval, to offer eligible businesses exemptions from property taxes for up to 5 years on investments that they make within the designated enterprise zones. This creates jobs and facilities in areas with high unemployment rates.

The purpose of including these provisions in this section is to point out that all such exemptions constitute forgone revenues for local governments. While the Oregon Department of Revenue clearly indicates that the value of these lost revenues is not equal to the sum of exercised tax expenditures, it does note that their value is material (State).

## MANDATED PROGRAMS

Most local governments agree that the increased appearance of state or federally mandated programs or services without any associated funding supports severely disadvantages municipalities and amplifies the revenue shortages induced by voter initiatives that they are experiencing (Mainwaring, 71).

Examples of such mandates abound. Take, for instance, the variety of land use laws with which local governments must comply. These state that every city and county must develop a comprehensive land use plan that is in conformance with statewide goals and guidelines and that it must be submitted and approved by the state after which point the local government is charged with its enforcement through zoning, subdivision and permit ordinances (Weeks, 35).

## COMPARATIVE DISADVANTAGES SUFFERED BY SOME MUNICIPALITIES

Although not frequently discussed, significant issues revolve around the comparative disadvantages that are suffered by some municipalities as a result of certain demographic or geographical trends characteristic of their region (Bensen, 5).

For example, there are more than 26,000 miles of county roads in Oregon and each one must be both constructed and maintained by the county within whose boarders it lies. State gasoline taxes and federal timber revenues contribute in part to these ventures, but the downward trends suffered by timber revenues over the past years has proportionally reduced these contributions (Economic). A comparative disadvantage exists in this case within the boarders of those counties with proportionally fewer residents and more square miles than their peers. Such areas, consequently, are unable to seize scale economies and are inadvertently harder hit by state and federal mandates that are enacted without guaranteed funding provisions.

## POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS

The increase in demand on some municipal services is a direct result of recent population growth and demographic trends. Portland-Metropolitan area in-migration trends, population growth, and demographic characteristics are each culpable for the resulting pressures levied upon local municipalities to stretch existing programs and services beyond present capacities.

An area's population growth can be described as the sum total of its natural increases, internal migration, and immigration trends (Edmonston, 31). The management of population growth presents a challenge on several fronts. On the one hand, federally and state mandated programs and services must continue to be maintained in spite of rising population figures. On the other, voluntary programs provided by the city, county or special district may be strained beyond their capacity, forcing planners to re-evaluate its importance to the community. Finally, expenditures needed to satisfy the maintenance costs of existing infrastructure must be considered as increased use will accelerate their depreciation schedule.

Demographic trends present their own problems for local governments. Consider, for example, how an increase in proportion of school age children will affect local government services. The same sort of situation appears with the impending retirement of the baby boomer generation.

## THE RISING COST OF ADMINISTRATION

It is an unavoidable fact that the administration of public works has become both increasingly complicated and increasingly expensive over the past several decades (Banovetz et al., 338). Rising compliance costs can be attributed to new and more detailed statues and ordinances. These reflect state rules that have come to govern matters from budgeting to purchasing and contracting to personnel practices. Local rules that can be just as inclusive further complicate the administrative environment.

The result is an increasing need for more sophisticated administrative personnel, larger office staffs, and greater commitments to technologically advanced office infrastructure systems. The net effect of these trends of course is added expense that must somehow be supported by local governments; especially those that manage highly populated regions like that of the six county Portland-Metropolitan area.

## CHANGING SOCIAL CONCERNS

Another driver of the public's demand for services is local social trends. Such preferences reflect where the public seeks to spend communal monies and by their very nature, these preferences are subject to varying degrees of continuous change. Some recent trends however have decidedly resulted in higher spending patterns. For example, we are arresting and convicting a larger number of criminals than in the past. Furthermore, we are imprisoning them for longer periods of time as prison sentences become more severe, according to legislative mandates. This strains prison infrastructures and pressures community corrections programs to expand and forces local governments to reassess prior revenue allocation schemes (Mainwaring, 45).

### ALTERNATIVE FUNDING SOURCES FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

The best practices presented here are those alternatives that were expected to be of most use to the small municipalities that operate within the Portland-Metropolitan Region. However, others may find that this discussion will also assist them in their own fiscal endeavors given that the present plight of many local governments to secure adequate funding oftentimes mimics our own.

When reviewing these practices the reader is advised to consider that a successful funding alternative does not necessarily dictate that there be an actual delivery of currency to the municipality that is employing it. Rather, funding alternatives represents a more inclusive concept of fiscal action. As such, they may also entail any options that generate money in an abstract sense. Examples might include those solutions that create a net savings for the entity that employs them. Such savings might be generated through a series of cost reduction schemes or through the elimination of various financial obligations.

It is also important for the reader to consider that for this list to be of service, the concept of a best practice must be more extensive than the mere identification of a specific alternative that has proven successful elsewhere in the past. Rather, it must be a subjective measure of how successfully a proposed action will satisfy the particular aims and circumstances of the community in question. Consequently, a collection of critical success factors has been included with the description of each alternative funding source in order to highlight, for the reader, those areas that will most likely determine the success with which they are able to use a particular funding source alternative.

The collection of best practices described herein is as follows:

1) Create Additional Revenue
2) Create Savings
3) Increase the Shift Factor
4) Advance Regional Economic Development
5) Use More Debt
6) Invest Idle Cash
7) Explore Making It Harder

## BEST PRACTICE #1: CREATE ADDITIONAL REVENUE

The most common means by which governments attempt to resolve their funding shortages is to pursue the acquisition of additional revenue sources. Within the framework of this best practice, such activities amount to those that generate an actual increase in the dollars that are available for a municipality to spend. These dollars might represent additions to that municipality's general fund, or they may be dedicated monies that it has newly acquired.

Local administrations can generate new funds in several different ways, but regardless of the means by which it was obtained, each new revenue supply can be traced backwards to an identifiable source. Hence, for the sake of clarity, the alternative means by which local municipalities can capture these additional incomes are classified here according to their origin.

Four classes of funding sources have emerged over the course of this investigation. These include The Federal Government, The Oregon State Government, The Business Community, and The Public Sector. Selected means by which local governments may go about acquiring funds from these sources are described below.

When evaluating these alternatives it is important to note that the face value of any new funding source is not necessarily its only, or its most important, characteristic. Although the aggregate amount of any award is essential to consider, also relevant are several of its other characteristics. Issues to address include:

1) The speed with which additional funds become available to the recipient
2) The ease, in terms of labor-hours and administrative red tape, with which local governments may acquire the promised funds
3) The autonomy with which the municipality can consume these monies
4) The community's receptiveness to the alternative method

As with every best practice, the weight that is to be given to each of these traits must be determined according to the scope and quality of the resources that are available to the particular county, city, or special district that is considering them. As such they should be considered the critical success factors for this category.

### The Federal Government

The Federal Government is a net supplier of funds to both the State government and its various local municipalities. This includes those monies that are unrestricted as well as the larger block grants that are typically dispersed as dedicated funds. For example, in Oregon the federal government contributes roughly sixty-one percent of most human resource funding and further requires the state to provide the balance. Numerous federal rules exist according to program content, matching state monies, and the recipient characteristics that constitute recipient eligibility for dedicated funds.

Unfortunately, blanket federal provisions like the one above have become more unusual over the years (Reed, 316). Municipalities that seek federal aid are advised to pursue smaller federal grants that are awarded on an individual basis. Although these pursuits can be lucrative, such monies are typically restricted to specific programs or services. Furthermore, as they vary greatly according in their application requirements and qualification criteria, they require significant energies to acquire. Provided these are available, the pursuit of federal grants constitutes the first best practice for a municipality to create additional revenue.

Notices of Funding availability (NOFAs) are published by the United States government on a regular basis in *The Federal Register.* Interested parties may access this information at
http://ocd.usda.gov/nofa.htm.

### The Oregon State Government

The state of Oregon is a material financial contributor to local governments. As such, the possibility exists that local governments may seek to acquire larger disbursements from the state from one period to the next. The appropriate approach to use to achieve these ends depends first upon what part of the State's budget the purported funds have originated from, and second upon the ability of the local government to influence these disbursements.

There are two major classifications within the state budget[11]. The first is called the General Fund. The second is dedicated funds. About eighty-two percent of the general fund comes from annual collections of statewide personal and corporate income taxes (Mainwaring, 78). The bulk of the difference constitutes income derived from fees, federal grants, and other various statewide taxes or profit sharing mandates (Commission).

The general fund amounts to a little over one third of the State's total budget. It is over this portion that the state Legislature retains total discretion. Because it may be allocated at their discretion, budget hearings constitute an opportunity for municipalities to seek additional state funds for the coming biennium. However, many lobbyists and citizens choose to champion particular programs each period as well. Consequently, the success with which a municipality might petition Salem for additional funds depends in part upon its size, influence, publicity, and political savvy.

Because the Portland-Metro region is composed of larger local governments, this approach was proven to be a best practice in the context of this study. However, other forms of local government have also found increased success on this front when approaching Salem budget hearing in collaboration with others.

The league of Oregon cities web site is one of many resources that is able to provide information about how such forms of local government might work together to affect such changes. Interested parties may access this organization over the internet at http://www. orcities.org. An additional resource of interest is the Special District Association of Oregon, available at http://www.sdao.com.

## The Business Community and The Public Sector

The Business Community and The Public Sector categories have been combined because the means by which local governments may pursue additional revenues from these sources are largely the same. To this end, three general courses of action exist. These include:

1) Charity
2) Fees for Services
3) Coercion

The effectiveness of each of these actions is tempered by their inherent limitations. These include issues of the total potential dollar amount that can be created as well as elements of feasibility. They constitute Alternative Funding Source Best Practices in those situations in which these limitations are minimal or cease to exist.

### 1. Charity

Soliciting donations from both the business community and the public sector remains a viable alternative means of procuring additional funding for many local municipalities. Special districts, for example, have experienced much success through this strategy. Most frequently revenues from this source are acquired directly from the potential donor by the city, county or Special District that seeks sponsorship.
***Charity based strategies are discussed in more detail by the author of the following section.***

### 2. Fee for Services

Fee for services have historically been justified upon the grounds of voluntary public works utilization. One criticism in defense of this concept frequently made by city dweller is the complaint that

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[11] Oregon budget law requires that the Governor submit a budget recommendation to the Legislature every two years for the following biennium. In it the Governor can define certain priorities for funding or cutting, but his or her proposed budget may or may not influence the Legislature whose ultimate responsibility it is to reach a balanced budget consensus (Local).

Once the budget has been submitted, the Legislature assesses and debates its contents. Each house has a joint ways and means committee of about 10 members whose job it is to divide the budget into components for further study and to conduct public budget hearings. Ultimately they will make the budget recommendations on which the house will vote. Their recommendations need a majority in both the house and senate to pass (Local).

many Oregon laws permits suburban residents to use some city services, in effect allowing them to avoid payment through their exclusion from city property tax rates (Mainwaring, 91).

Fee for services can be used to generate additional revenue in two ways. On the one hand, it can be used in order to augment, or fund, service programs that would otherwise be impossible. On the other, it can reduce municipal spending by transferring traditional funding patterns to a fee based system.

The concept of fee for services is not a new one. Many utility services, for example, are presently extended to the community on such a basis. Increasingly, however, fee for services have been introduced to support various leisure services such as public pools, parks, boat rentals, museums, concerts, and other high-risk activities (Sessoms, 144).
While this has been a largely successful means to supplement, or supplant, various inadequacies in the tax revenue base in the past, there are significant social risks inherent in this approach that may potentially jeopardize its overall utility for a community (Bensen, 4). These include issues of economic disparity and social inequality.
***Fee for services are discussed in more detail by the author of the following section.***


3. Coercion


New monies can typically be compelled through the introduction of new taxes or through the growth of existing ones. These may be brought against both the business community and the public. The success of this approach must be considered both in light of its political practicability as well as in terms of its actual viability before steps are made to implement it.

The political practicability of coercion relates in large part to public perception of existing tax burdens.[12] When considering the source of the public's aversion to new taxes two general explanations emerge. The first constitutes a social systems debate over whether a schism exists between the user of social services and the financers of them (Sessoms, 144). The second issue is a matter of assessing the subjective impact of changing federal laws on voters. For instance, the fact that sales taxes are no longer deductible from federal income taxes may or may not have a significant affect upon the Public's resistance to its introduction (Reed, 319).

Actual viability is a function of legal restrictions in place at the local, state, and federal levels (Summary). Local revenue restrictions begin with the property tax, but local governments remain able to levy many other kinds of local taxes with voter approval (provided that the required amount of citizens do not sign referendum petitions) and they have done so successfully in many instances.

Specifically speaking, all local Oregon governments, especially cities and counties, have the power to enact local sales and income taxes.[13] However, with the exception of some specialized sales taxes, none have done so to date. Even so, such specialized taxes have been very lucrative for those communities that elected to implement them. For example, the city of Ashland imposes a restaurant and tavern sales tax while Multnomah County requires automobile renters to pay a sales tax with each rental.

Taxes can also be used to defer particular expenses. For example, Oregon law lets local governments and cities levy various system development charges. Such dues allow the municipality to charge developers or their customers a share of the community's overall infrastructure costs. In the past, many cities have used this option to help fund streets, parks, water, sanitary, storm, and sewer systems. State law also allows cities to levy franchise fees on utilities.

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[12] Politically speaking, public sentiment has historically not favored the introduction of most, and particularly major, tax measures. This tendency has appeared consistently across the State despite the fact that the US Census Bureau reports that the average Oregonian's individual tax burden is smaller than the nation's average. In fact, Oregon's tax burden has been falling since 1993. But this decline is due in large part to voter initiatives that have significantly reduced property taxes. Furthermore, it discounts the fact that the State has periodically increased personal income taxes to offset property tax declines such that average income tax collections per person in 1993 were the 5th highest in the country and continue to be above the national average (Mainwaring, 78).

[13] Local sales and income taxes can be allocated to either general or dedicated funds according to local desires. Many cities for instance have hotel and motel taxes. Sometimes these proceeds are set aside for tourist promotion. Portland levies a business license tax on business owners and the self-employed that is part of the general fund.

Although State property tax law has become more cumbersome in the past years, Oregon law still does provide some wiggle room. Cities can, for example, create so-called Local Improvement Districts and thereby finance new streets, utility lines and other improvements. Nearby properties that can be shown to directly benefit from the projects can be assessed some of the costs for the improvement of the district. For example, some cities base traffic impact fees on estimates of the number of vehicle trips that a property will attract.

## BEST PRACTICE #2: CREATE SAVINGS

Municipal savings can be created in a variety of ways. This can be accomplished by reducing costs per program, pursuing collaboration, improving operating efficiencies, and increasing incentive programs (Special Task, 2).

### Reducing Costs Per Program

The purpose of this alternative is to lower the cost of existing programs. The concept encourages the exploration of new ways of assessing program structural efficiencies and strengths. Examples of such programs include Oregon's vote by mail program and the deference of non-critical maintenance routines for various governmental infrastructures (Felbinger, 108). In 1993 Oregon conducted the nation's first statewide mail election. Mail elections are estimated to cost roughly one third less than the traditional elections that utilize voter booths and volunteer coordinators. Further evidence exists that additional benefits can be generated. For example, a larger portion of the population is likely to vote in mail elections than poll based elections.

Although efforts in both 1995 and 1997 to convert all elections in the state to mail ballots have incidentally failed, due to partisan politics, this general alternative funding approach still constitutes a best practice for local governments as even initial set-backs can have positive cost saving consequences. For example, although the transition to statewide mail in voting failed per say, any Oregonian may now request either temporary or permanent absentee status and in effect vote by mail. In point of fact, roughly half of all 1996 votes were cast by absentee ballots.

### Pursuing Collaboration

Considerable overlap exists in some programs and services that are provided by various state and local governments (What). In many cases, the consolidation of those services can create inter-governmental collaborations that generate savings for each participant (Special Task, 3). Take for example law enforcement. Oregon city, county, and state law enforcement agencies each employ a number of sworn law enforcement officers. In 1997 City police officers accounted for nearly sixty-two percent of this total. In turn, County sheriffs represented roughly twenty-three percent while state troopers represented fifteen percent. A recent study conducted for former governor Barbara Robert by a Special Task Force on Local Governmental Services funded by the State of Oregon found that by merging the law enforcement agencies of Multnomah County with overlapping city police forces a cost savings could be created (Special Task, 13). The expense of determining the areas in which overlaps exist, or where it would be advantageous to remove such overlaps, can best be avoided by the municipality by referencing existing data produced by past task forces and academic research teams.

### Improving operational efficiencies

Taking control of an area's organizational system is the first step in a systems wide efficiency analysis that will ultimately create cost savings for a local government. Voters have a variety of means to modify the organizational structure of various forms of local government. For example, state law provides that the voters  who reside with a particular county or city may elect to adopt a home rule charter outlining such structures for the governmental bodies that will operate within that district. Within this framework municipalities themselves have considerable leeway with which to streamline operations and thereby reduce inefficiencies that generate unnecessary costs. This would in effect allow them to take better control of and customize that organization's operational structure. Special districts have been particularly successful in this regard (Best).

**Increasing Incentive Programs**

There are a variety of incentive programs in existence today that are designed to offer some measure of financial reward to the municipality that meets a certain or variety of necessary criteria. Frequently they entail only a municipality's participation in various information collection exercises or environmental impact reductions.

An excellent example of an incentive program available to special districts is that presented by the Special Districts Association of Oregon. Through this program special districts can obtain a reduction in insurance expenses by participating in a series of surveys and other activities that accumulate points on their behalf towards a predetermined goal whose achievement earns them the stated insurance discount. Interested parties can examine the program specifics at http://www.sdao.com/best_practices/best-practice.htm.

## BEST PRACTICE #3: INCREASE THE SHIFT FACTOR

The shift factor describes what is ultimately a managerial decision to transfer some of the financial burden of supporting a particular community service or program from the county or city level in which that program originated to various community providers, businesses, non-profits, or faith-based organizations. Under this approach the original host county or city would retain the responsibility to co-ordinate many particulars of the program in question, but without the fiscal responsibility to finance it (Banovetz, 3).

## BEST PRACTICE #4: ADVANCE REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

At the local government level, the purpose of economic development activities is ultimately to increase tax revenues (Cortright, 19). The impacts of introducing new enterprises into a region brings with it many varied changes. Some examples include associated increases in state income tax revenue, personal and business consumption patterns, new jobs, land value and demographics. Because most local governments derive their revenues from property taxes, the focus here is to inadvertently increase the number of businesses and private households that reside within a particular area and thereby increase net tax revenue. This aim is realized by making a county or city more attractive to a business (Ionnone, 82).

Various programs have been developed in order to accomplish this. For example, Oregon's strategic investment program was passed by the legislature in 1993. Multnomah and Washington counties were the first to take advantage of it. A similar program was approved in 1997 for eighteen rural counties. These essentially allow municipalities to give companies various tax breaks on a temporary basis in order to reap net tax gains and associated development benefits.

Under the rural strategic investment program, for example, new businesses that invest at least fifty million dollars and hire at least one hundred employees with average wages fifty percent above the local average can qualify for a complete property tax abatement for up to fifteen years. An additional credit in income taxes is available to firms that have paid their first million in taxes.

The strategic investment program is similar in that its aim is economic development per the creation of additional tax expenditures. Under this program counties are allowed to cap the tax value of new industrial plants at an assessed dollar amount of $100 million for up to fifteen years. If the facility cost is higher, property tax savings will result. The advantage to the county of this arrangement is two fold. First, it may capture a fee of up to $2million or twenty-five percent of the resulting property tax savings to the facility. Second, it may realize economic development benefits by setting other requirement such as required wage levels or guaranteed numbers of new jobs to be created.

## BEST PRACTICE #5: USE MORE DEBT

The constitution tightly restricts local borrowing, except for voter-approved bonded debt. Consequently, debt can be hard to issue without voter approval. However, many communities are willing to fund debt, particularly when it is dedicated to a desired service. Its advantages to municipalities include the

fact that the public assumes much of the financing cost. In practice the local government borrows from the public to pay for a program and with the right to levy small taxes upon the public in order to pay for the interest expense on the bonds. In effect the public subsidizes the area's cost of capital.

***The use of debt is discussed in more detail by the author of the following section.***

## BEST PRACTICE #6: INVEST IDLE CASH

Local governments often have idle cash in their possession at any one point in time (Investment). The possession of idle cash by any entity ignores the time value of money and creates a loss through missed interest revenue. Investing such funds would rectify this omission, but municipal resistance is typically high. The most prevalent justifications for such objections are predicated upon the assumption that large amounts of managerial expertise and administrative resources are necessary to properly employ it. Risk is inherent in most investment markets and many rules exist governing the investment of public funds. For example, the state constitution prohibits state purchases of stock in a corporation with the exception of funds to be invested for higher education. Furthermore, local governments cannot buy stock in or loan funds to private corporations.  However, solutions do exist. For example, the Oregon Department of Treasury maintains short-term cash investment funds. Access to this pool is extended to counties so that they may make better use of their idle cash without undue risk. More information is available at http://www.ost.state.or.us/wrapinv.htm.

## BEST PRACTICE #7: EXPLORE MAKING IT HARDER

The final alternative means by which local governments may ease their funding shortages includes acting to make it more difficult for the funding of existing programs to be reduced, or for new programs to be mandated on the state or federal levels if not accompanied by a guaranteed funding source. Most local government officials agree that such mandates prove problematic for municipalities (Mainwaring, 71).

Steps to prevent such mandates were made on the federal level in 1995 by the US Congress. In 1996 Oregon voters passed an amendment that requires that the state pay for expansions or additional services demanded of counties and cities and that there be at least a sixty percent legislative majority for any decision that would reduce state funding. Such accomplishments reflect significant collaboration not only on the state level, but also on a national plane.

The 'Making it Harder' approach is also relevant in the local sphere for municipalities may also choose to make such mandates. These may include building in provisions to their programs that likewise call for reliable funding sources as a criterion for new program creation, or mandate greater majorities to reducing existing funding.

One of the biggest obstacles facing municipalities today is a budget shortfall. There simply is not enough money to go around to fund all the programs necessary. Lack of funds is not just affecting large cities but small ones as well. The challenge then becomes figuring out what municipalities can do so they may function at full capacity with limited funds. Many cities have found alternative funding sources that allow them to receive money from sources other than the state and federal government. The alternative funding sources that are laid out in this document are designed as examples that have been used successfully in other municipalities and may be helpful for local municipalities to implement.

## FEE FOR SERVICES

Municipalities across the country have had luck receiving funding through the use of fees. Many services that are provided by local municipalities are used by only a small percent of the community but are funded through taxes paid by the entire community. An alternative-funding source for communities to implement is user fees. A user fee is a charge imposed for governmentally provided service, based on the level of service demanded by or provided to the user. This is a voluntary charge, unlike a tax which is imposed on everybody. If a citizen wants to use a certain service they must pay a fee that is proportional to their personal usage.

There are two key points to identify for services that will benefit from user fees. First, the service that is to be funded needs to have an identifiable user who would benefit with more use of the service. Second it should be assured that nonusers could be excluded from the benefits of the service (Charles, 2).

There are several advantages to user fees. Fees that are imposed on those who use a service can be envisioned as a fair system. Unlike using a tax which is imposed on everyone even though only a small percent of the population may use it. Using fees gives a local municipality flexibility based on consumer needs and requests. The price of services can also be changed based on the market. As prices in the market fluctuate with the state of the economy, municipalities would have the option of altering user fees depending on that state. If a city were to face a recession they would have the option of lowering user fees or canceling them for a period until economic conditions were to improve. Implementing user fees gives a citizen the feeling that they have the freedom to choose what they spend their money on.

Libraries and parks provide services that many people use and are not charged for. Most libraries do not charge for a library card, to check out books, or for other services they may provide. If libraries were to charge fees to use of their goods and service much of the shortfall that they have could be solved (Charles, 4).

Cities may also be able to gain revenue through the rental of park space within the city. It would be a simple fee for the use of a park, whether it is for sporting events, club meetings, or social functions. The amount of money that a city spends on maintenance of parks could be subsidized through user fees. Using fees to pay for maintenance of city run parks is currently used in many cities across the United States. The San Clemente municipal golf course charges a user for use of the course. The city imposes a set rate for residents of San Clemente and anther fee for the non-residents who use the course. The city occasionally proposes rate increases as needed, which happened when the budget for maintenance of parks was cut due to budget cuts (Beck, 1).

Another way cities can increase revenue is through a pollution fee. Currently the system for fining companies who pollute is based on a regulatory system of pollution permits, standards, and enforcement. If a company receives a permit for a determined amount of pollution, they have no incentive to decrease their pollution. Imposing fees based on the amount of pollution that a company discharges gives them this incentive while giving the city a solution to this problem. A fee could also be assessed to motor vehicles based on the amount of driving done by an individual. Similar to the way tolls are collected for highway use, a fee could be calculated every time a car passes through a designated area. This would give incentives to those who choose to use mass transit as an alternative to driving.

E-commerce is an ever-growing way to obtain funds for a city and or state. Adding a surcharge fee to pay for goods or services purchased via the Internet saves many people time, time they are willing to pay for. There are many instances where paying via the net could be used by a municipality. Allowing residents to pay such things as their water and sewer bill, parking fines, and permit applications would save the resident the hassle of finding the correct place to obtain the services, waiting in line, or making sure a

payment makes it in the mail in time.  California had success when it began allowing residents to apply for vehicle registration via the Internet for a fee of four dollars. Although this was met with some resistance, the web site for registration is averaging about 15,000 transactions a month.  If the site did not exist that would be 15,000 transactions that would take place in vehicle registration offices without the four dollar fee (Sarkar, 1).

Implementing user fees are an increasingly common occurrence in many cities, though the success of such plans depends greatly on the demographics of the city, and whether it would be viable to charge for services and goods. Creating a fee system can limit the availability of services to those who are unable to afford the cost.  It is unlikely that a city whose demographics consist of either lower or lower-middle class residents would have much luck in implementing user fees.  If they did choose to go forth with the fees, cities may want to look at linking those in the community with sponsors to help offset the cost of the fees.

## BONDS AND LEVIES

One of the most common ways for municipalities to gain funds has been through bonds and levies. Every year cities place bonds and levies on the ballot hoping that the voters will support the need for increased funds in everything from schools to fire and police.  Many communities have been successful in getting a majority of their bonds and levies passed each election year.

Bonds and levies do well in communities that have a strong support for community resources. Cities that are unsuccessful getting voter approval for bonds and levies are likely to be unsuccessful on a regular basis.  Schools seem to have the greatest success passing bonds.  Communities such as Lake Stevens, Washington, have had tremendous luck getting voters to approve such issues.  Due to the support of the community, the school district has been able to modernize and build new schools in response to an enrollment increase of seventy-five percent  (Lake Stevens).  The success in Lake Stevens may have a lot to do with the large volunteer staff that assists in the running of the school district.  The volunteers have made it known that without voter approval the school district would not be able to run at the capacity needed for quality education.  To decrease the need for large bonds and levies, Lake Stevens has developed a lasting relationship with businesses in the area, gaining economic support from such companies as Boeing.

Large urban communities have seen positive results with levies.  In February of 2001 both Seattle and Tacoma placed levies on the ballot to help with the renovation and building of new schools.  The districts had success in November of 2000 when two education-based initiatives were passed with strong voter approval, and again in February when the voters passed both levies in Seattle and Tacoma.

The Seattle levies passed with over seventy percent approval, well over the sixty percent needed to pass the levy. After the election the President of the Seattle School Board, Don Nielson said, "absolutely phenomenal news…I think it's a remarkable event when an urban school system has two major levies in a row pass with an excess of seventy percent plurality," he later went on to say, "if the levies failed everything would have come to a screeching halt" (Ervin).  The Seattle School District levies from November 2000 and February 2001 totaled $736 million.  Tacoma, Bethel, and South Klatsap also received voter approval for levies in February 2001, although they did not pass by a landslide (Butler, B2).

## REDISTRIBUTE EXISTING FUNDS

Developing new ways for municipalities to spend their money could create new cost saving avenues.  It may be possible for municipalities to modify how they use available funds. Schools may be able to use this concept to their advantage.  For example, currently textbooks account for about fifty percent of a schools' expenditure on instructional materials, or about two percent of the total budget.  Instead of spending that entire amount on just textbooks, some of these funds could be shifted to multimedia courseware and online instructional material. Additionally, eight percent of school spending is allocated to instructional support.  It may be possible to expand these positions to address teacher training and support needs. This would allow teachers to be used to the fullest extent of their training and departments to better serve the students and staff. One option is to focus the instructional support on ways to assist teachers with integrating technology-based tools into their curriculum.  Using tech-based tools could cut down on the cost of books and supplies if they are able to gain what they need from the Internet (Kickstart).

## GRANTS FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Many municipalities have turned to the private sector to help solve the funding problem. Corporate sponsorship of programs has become more common in recent years. Gaining corporate sponsorship has a twofold effect; the community that needs funds is able to get financial support and the corporation gains visibility within the community. In some cases corporate sponsorship has not been beneficial because it leads to a company making demands of publicity and advertising. However, many communities have found that without such sponsorships they would be unable to continue certain programs.

School districts have had positive results using corporate sponsorships. In some cases individual schools are sponsored, such as MCI's sponsorship of Rosa Parks Elementary in Baltimore, Maryland. Sponsorships can also be found on the national level. AT&T has set up a national Learning Network which has dedicated $150 million over the next five years to provide schools with internet service and usage (Kickstart).

## CONCLUSION

Budget cutbacks have undoubtedly created a strain on municipalities. They are expected to continue providing services as they have they done in the past, on a budget that could be as much as fifty percent less. These cutbacks have forced municipalities to turn to alternative sources of funding in the community. The ideas that were outlined in this paper are just a few that could be used to help offset these shortfalls.

# CONCLUSION

## USES FOR GOVERNMENTAL BEST PRACTICES REPORT

From the onset, the students who researched and prepared this paper understood that the objective was to address the overriding concerns of the members of the Institute of Portland Metropolitan Studies. The members addressed many concerns in their interviews, but only those that were consistently mentioned and could be researched to produce meaningful discussion were chosen. The students feel confident that the ideas and the recommendations of governmental best practices as presented in this paper can be used to implement new laws, programs, and policies that will alleviate the member's issues. This paper should be used as a guide toward those governmental best practices, but it should be understood that the research in this paper is be no means an all-inclusive solution to any of the problems. Other governmental best practices exist for all of the above-mentioned problems; these are only recommended solutions.

The students would like to emphasize the resources included in the Additional Resources section of this paper. These resources include best practices web sites and other information that will be helpful to members implementing governmental best practices. The students found that almost every interviewed member reported feeling a lack of connection with other similar agencies and offices. They also reported, and the students concur, that connection among agencies is imperative in determining best practices. It is the hope of the students that this paper, and the web sites herein listed, will be used to facilitate further connectivity among similar agencies, offices, and municipalities.

## SERVICES PROVIDED BY IMS

The Institute for Portland Metropolitan Studies, or IMS, offers a wide variety of services, information, publications, and access to resources for their clients. The mission of IMS includes creating a shared understanding of the metropolitan region, fostering partnerships within and between communities and its members, and the sponsorship of public services among many other things. Many of these services revolve around the provision of a nonpartisan forum wherein discussion of common issues and prospects can take place.

One of these public discussions includes the quarterly Regional Roundtable, a meeting where current topics of interest are discussed. This is an important resource in that it is a way for members of diverse municipalities to gather together to discuss how they are dealing with new changes or problems in their communities. Significantly, this forum provides city officials an opportunity to exchange information and establish new contacts.

IMS has a variety of educational publications, including the *Metroscape* magazine, *The Catalyst*, which is their quarterly newsletter, and the biennial *Metropolitan Briefing Book.* These publications provide information about the current issues, news, upcoming events in the communities, overall trends, demographics, and social concerns. They are a useful tool for helping IMS clients keep abreast of current common issues.

IMS has multiple ways of providing access to information and resources aside from these publications. IMS also maintains a web site containing links to governmental sites, neighborhoods and regional agencies. The site offers information about their past, current and future projects, their partnerships, and other regional data. One of the latest projects that IMS is currently working on is the Community Geography Project Maps, which will help citizens use Geographic Information System technology to meet objectives, address problems, and work on new and innovative projects.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following are additional resources that the students felt were helpful in their research. The web site, along with a brief description of the site contents is listed.

**Corporation for National Service –** Developing an online database for best practices. Allows you to search for program practices as well as enter your own relevant best practices.
http://www.nationalservice.org/resources/epicenter

**IRS -** Contains information regarding IRS codes, taxes, and administrative resources. Allows you to download IRS forms, and search for specific laws and Supreme Court cases.
http://www.irs.gov/

**Oregon Department of Transportation –** Includes information concerning Oregon's construction, permits, financial data, publications and news.
http://www.odot.state.or.us/

**The Library of Congress –** Legislative information, such as bills that are proposed or have recently been passed. Includes a library where articles and documents relating to congress can be found.
http://www.loc.gov/

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