

July 8, 2011



Public Participation Plan Executive Summary



San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Public Participation Plan (PPP) is a guide for San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District's (BART) ongoing public participation endeavors. Its purpose is to ensure that BART utilizes effective means of providing information and receiving public input on transportation decisions from low income, minority and limited English proficient (LEP) populations, as required by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its implementing regulations.

Under federal regulations, transit operators must take reasonable steps to ensure that Limited English Proficient (LEP) persons have meaningful access to their programs and activities. This means that public participation opportunities, normally provided in English, should be accessible to persons who have a limited ability to speak, read, write, or understand English.

In addition to language access measures, other major components of the PPP include: public participation design factors; a range of public participation methods to provide information, to invite participation and/or to seek input; examples to demonstrate how population-appropriate outreach methods can be and were identified and utilized; and performance measures and objectives to ensure accountability and a means for improving over time.

Summary of Findings

In general, PPP development participants requested that BART offer a variety of community meeting formats, from large group discussions to one-on-one interviews. They also are interested in utilizing methods other than community meetings, such as smaller focus groups, surveys, or a telephone line, to provide their input to BART. They further requested that meeting formats be tailored to specific public participation goals. Many participants stated that convenient meeting times and locations, plus amenities such as child care and refreshments during meetings, were helpful in encouraging diverse meeting attendance and participation.

The PPP development process revealed population-specific findings for low income, minority and LEP communities, demonstrating that effective public participation strategies make use of a variety of methods in order to reach the greatest possible diversity of participants. These findings are discussed in detail in Section III, "Public Participation Strategy Design Factors," and Section IV, "Public Participation Methods."

Comments and survey data from the PPP development process are used throughout the document in support of both general and population-specific findings. Note that these comments and data are based specifically on PPP

community meeting and survey participant responses, and are in no way meant to generalize views based on an individual's membership in a protected group. The surveys conducted during the PPP development process were not intended to be statistically valid, but were included as additional support to public input which was primarily received through verbal and written comments.

Summary of Process

In order to engage low income, minority and LEP populations in the development of the PPP, BART conducted two rounds of multi-lingual community meetings (29 total) throughout the BART service area in spring 2010. BART coordinated with community-based organizations (CBOs), offered translation services in 10 languages, and collected more than 1,350 surveys and 750 written comments through evaluation forms and wallgraphic notes recorded during meetings.

BART supplemented the extensive public participation process by conducting informational meetings with CBO stakeholders serving LEP populations in the BART service area. In May 2010, outreach that included telephone interviews and focus group meetings was conducted throughout the BART service area. In the fall of 2010, 19 LEP focus group meetings were conducted and attended by well over 400 LEP persons. The CBOs represented the following language groups: Chinese, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog and Vietnamese. Finally, an internal BART stakeholders' meeting was convened in May 2011 to review and reflect on internal stakeholders' experience with the PPP.

A database containing contact information for more than 1,000 individuals and more than 400 CBOs was created from outreach, surveys and sign-in sheets at the community meetings held throughout 2010, and will continue to be updated.

The input from these meetings validated the most successful practices that are described in this PPP. It also suggested revisions and enhancements based on lessons learned from the public participation methods conducted over the past year.

