Public Decision Making for Transport Projects

The Case of the Caltrain Downtown San Francisco Extension Project

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Presentation Outline

I. Importance of Public Involvement

II. Caltrain Downtown Extension Case Study

III. Public Involvement Lessons

IV. Case Study Applicability to ALP-Net

V. Questions & Discussion

I. Why is public involvement important?

- **Public can *stop* projects.**
  - **Legal & Administrative Means**
  - **Project Finance**

- **Public can *improve* projects.**
  - **Creative Thinking … More Comprehensive**
  - **Identify & Reduce Impacts**

II. Caltrain DTX Case Study

Description of Caltrain

- Commuter Rail System connecting San Francisco Peninsula/Silicon Valley with city of San Francisco.
- Heavy two-way passenger demand.
- Approximately 80 trains per day.


Caltrain
San Francisco
4th and King
ZONE SF
22nd St.
Paul Ave.
Bayshore
South San Francisco
San Francisco International Airport
ZONE 1
San Bruno
Millbrae
Broadway
San Mateo
Burlingame
Bay Meadows (race days only)
ZONE 2
Hayward Park
Hillsdale
Belmont
San Carlos
Redwood City
ZONE 3
Atherton
Menlo Park
Palo Alto
California Ave
Stanford (football days only)
San Antonio
ZONE 4
Mountain View
Sunnyvale
San Jose International Airport
Lawrence
ZONE 5
Santa Clara
College Park
ZONE 6
San Jose Diridon
Tamien
Capitol
Blossom Hill
ZONE 7
Morgan Hill
San Martin
ZONE 8
Gilroy
Transfer to San Francisco Muni Metro or Santa Clara VTA Light Rail
Transfer to Amtrak and Altamont Commuter Express (ACE)
Transfer to Free Airport Shuttles
Caltrain Station Map
Regular Service
Commute Hours only
SFO-Millbrae Caltrain Shuttle (free)
VTA Rt. 10 San Jose Airport Flyer (free)
Fare Zone boundary

Downtown Extension Project - DTX

- Caltrain SF Terminal currently 1.25 miles from Downtown CBD - Requires transfers/walking.
- Idea of Downtown Terminal studied many times from early 1900s till now.
- Case study describes preparation of Draft Environmental Impact Study 1995 - 1997.

Environmental Impact Statement - EIS

- Document required for federal funding.
- Late in planning process.
- EIS Process:
  - Public Hearing - Project Initiation
  - Technical Studies
  - Draft EIS Preparation/Hearing
  - Final EIS Preparation/Hearing
  - Approval of Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA)

Caltrain EIS - 1

Study Initiation

- Significant Public Information Effort
- Stakeholder Interviews
- Public Hearings
- Governing Board Decisions > Public Input
  - Eliminate Alternatives
  - Add Alternatives
  - Increase Coordination with Transbay Project

Caltrain EIS - 2

Refining Alternatives

- Recognition that too many alternatives for effective analysis and public understanding.
- Need to reduce the number of alternatives.
- Design Options Screening (DOS) Process
  - *Break alternatives into pieces.*

Caltrain EIS - 3

Design Options Screening Process

- Break alternatives into 8 pieces (decisions).
- Provide public with technical information about each decision.
  - Summary: Newsletter
  - More Detailed: Design Options Screening Report
  - Most Detailed: Individual Technical Studies
- Use Question Structure for Public Input.

DOS Process Results

- **Effective Public Involvement:**
  - **Good input from public (clear, calm)**
  - **Agency able to make decisions**
- **Changes to Project Scope**
  - **Eliminated alternatives**
  - **Increased Coordination with Transbay Study**
  - **Increased Analysis of Geotechnical Impacts**

Caltrain EIS - 5

DEIS Publication & LPA Selection

- **Based on Success of DOS Process, Caltrain used similar process to select LPA.**
- **Five decisions to identify LPA.**
  - ***Used DOS public information and decision structure.***
  - ***Newsletter 6: Web References:***

    www.transitinfo.org/caltrain/annc/otrt-3-97

    www.transitinfo.org/caltrain/annc/otrt-3-97/poster.html

Caltrain EIS - 6

Caltrain DTX Conclusion

- **Great Operation, but Patient Died.**
  - *New SF Mayor decided to oppose project.*
  - *Insufficient political support to continue - June 1997.*
- **Change of Heart.**
  - *November 1999 Initiative: Build Extension.*
  - *DEIS Study Process restarted.*
  - *Addressed two issues from first study: Transbay Terminal & Tunneling in Neighborhood.*

III. Public Involvement Lessons

1. **Commit to a strong public involvement process.**

   - ***Use public involvement to guide study.***
   - ***Provide sufficient time and funding for a strong public involvement program.***
   - ***Keep the public interested in the study.***

Public Involvement Lessons

2. Structure the study to encourage public involvement.

- ***Think creatively about how to structure study tasks to use public input.***
- ***Recognize that changes will take place as the study continues … be flexible.***

Public Involvement Lessons

3. Use Advisory Groups to guide study.

- *Good audiences for draft reports, brainstorming and project discussions.*
- *Citizens, Technical Staff members, Stakeholders.*
- *Will be more involved than general public.*

Public Involvement Lessons

4. Develop a relationship with key stakeholders.

- *One-on-one meetings helped provide information in non-threatening environment and personal relationship that is important to study success.*
- *Stakeholders are people (or group representatives) who can make a project happen or prevent it from happening.*

Public Involvement Lessons

5. Hold relevant & interesting public meetings.

- *Well-organized, interesting and provocative.*
- *A good public meeting is hard to organize and manage - Use professionals!*
- *Many types of public meeting - use the most appropriate type for your need.*

Public Involvement Lessons

6. Break down complicated issues into smaller ones.

- ***Example: Caltrain DOS Process.***
- ***Can provide STRUCTURE to study that is very helpful to reaching conclusions.***
- ***Requires careful presentation of information.***

Public Involvement Lessons

7. Prepare logical & clear study information.

- *Strong communications is critical for good public involvement.*
- *Work with professionals - they can help you!*
- *Editing, Graphics, Page Layout, Focus on Important Information, Many Levels of Information.*
- *Communications program should be consistent with rest of study.*

IV. Applicability to ALP-Net

Major Study Differences:

- Study Scope - Stage in Planning Process
- Study Complexity
- Geographic Area

Differences - 1

Study Scope - Planning Stage

Caltrain: *Late* **ALP-Net: *Conceptual***

- **ALP-Net needs greater public involvement since it needs to develop a good Problem Definition**
- **Public can be very helpful in Conceptual Stage:**
  - **New ideas**
  - **Early ID of non-starters**

Differences - 2

Study Complexity

Caltrain: *Complex* **ALP-Net: *More Complex***

- **More complexity means wider variety of solutions: Improvement Projects to Regulations/Laws.**
  - ***Need efficient decision-making structure (DOS).***
- **More complexity means more Stakeholders.**
  - ***Need efficient ways to use stakeholders.***
  - ***Requires excellent communications (Languages!)***

Differences - 3

Geographic Area

Caltrain: *About 1 sq.mi.* **ALP-Net: *???***

- **Larger area = More & Better Communications.**
  - ***Bigger scope, language/tradition differences.***
- **Larger area increases need for efficient involvement and input techniques.**
  - ***Internet Public Involvement?***
  - ***Requires excellent communications (Languages!)***
  - ***Structured Processes (DOS)***

V. Questions & Discussion