

Transportation Academies as Catalysts for Civic Engagement in Transportation Decision-making

(Paper #: TRBAM-23-00718)

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Transportation Academies as Catalysts for Civic Engagement in Transportation Decision-making

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Presentation agenda:

1. Public engagement in transportation decision-making – what's the problem?
2. Community Transportation Academies as a piece of the solution
3. What is the impact of transportation academies?

What does public involvement look like?

Are people engaged?

Do they know:

- When and where to get involved?
- Who to talk to?
- Which questions to ask?



Foothill Freeway hearing, Los Angeles (1966)

Image source: Los Angeles Public Library



FY 20 BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

- BOE budget request is up \$1.1 million (1.26%)
- BOS budget request is up \$0.3 million (0.92%)
- Debt Service is down \$766,000 (-7.0%)
- Tax Relief for Elderly/Disabled increased to \$1.23 Billion
- Total Funds Required is up \$0.52 million (0.43%)
- Net Taxable Grand List dropped 2.58% due to Revaluation
- SR Rate would rise 2.38% if StreetNet allowed by voters

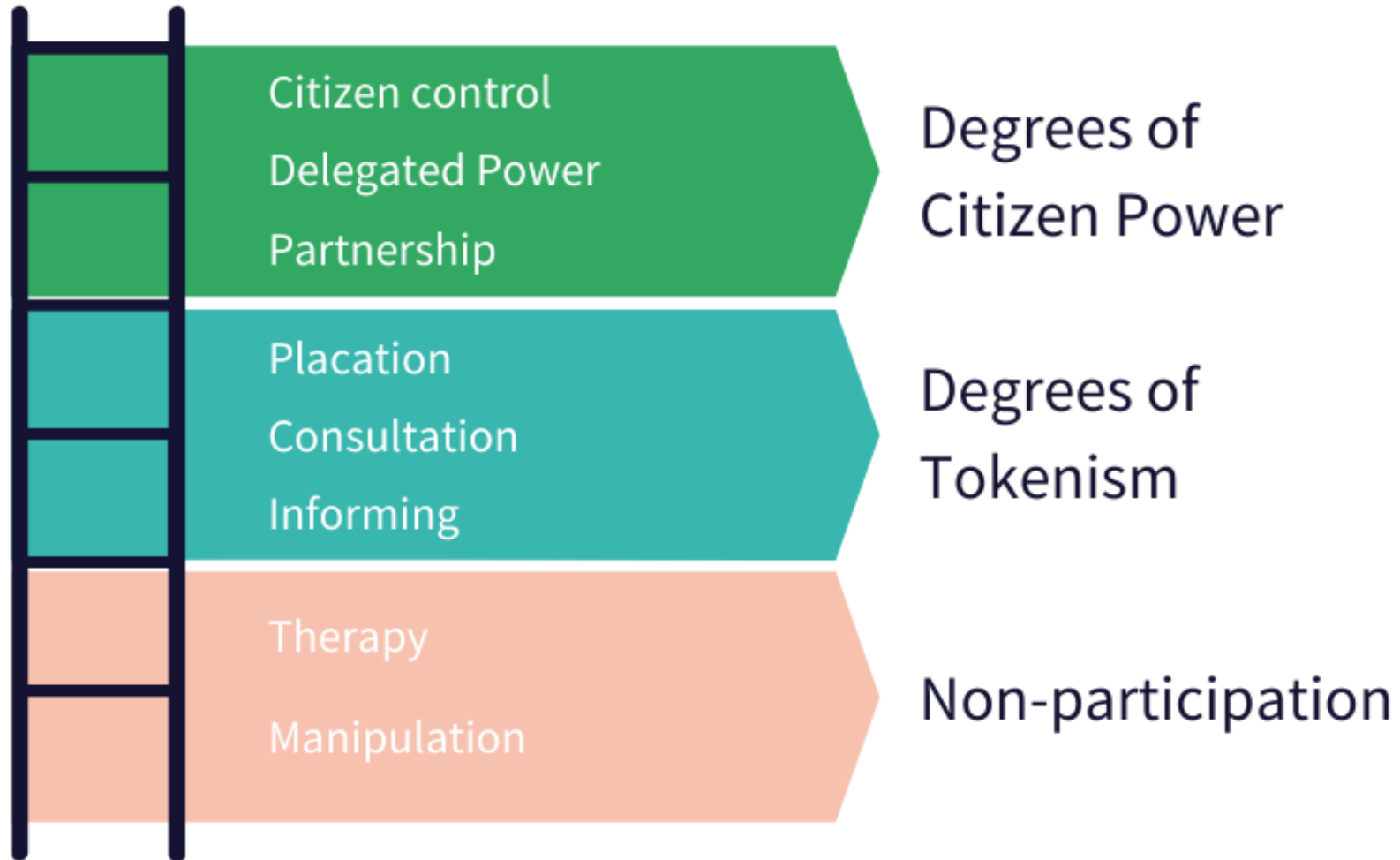
“BOF Holds Public Hearing on Town Budget (for Audience of 10)”

Image source: goodmorningwilton.com



Image source: planetizen.com

Arnstein's Ladder of Public Participation

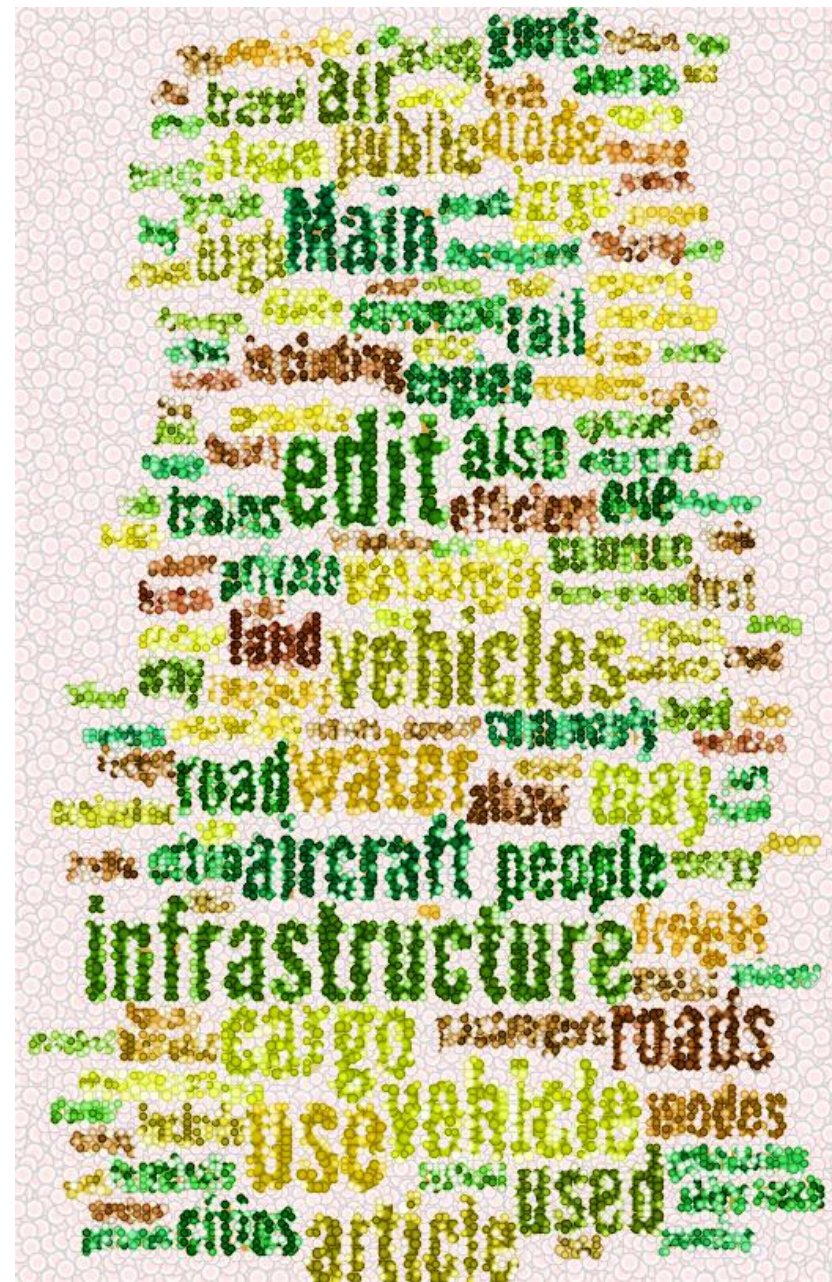


source: commonplace.is

Motivations: Civic education

Transportation is complex:

- Engineering principles
- Travel behavior
- Policy
- Politics
- Agency constraints



Wordle for Wikipedia "transport" page

Transportation
decision-making is . . .

Cronyism?



Professionalization of bureaucracy?



source: tobyelwin.com

Uncaring centralized planning?



C.M. Stieglitz, *Robert Moses* (1939)

source: Library of Congress

Motivations: Develop Community Capacity

Community capacity can be defined as:

“the interaction of human capital, organizational resources, and social capital existing within a given community that can be leveraged to solve collective problems and improve or maintain the well-being of a given community. It may operate through informal social processes and/or organized effort”

Chaskin, R. J. Building Community Capacity: A Definitional Framework and Case Studies from a Comprehensive Community Initiative. In *Urban Affairs Review*, Vol. 36, No. 3, 2001, pp. 291–323.

Motivations: Fostering Connections

- Building connections among community members
- Building connections between community members and decision-makers
- “meeting” = “trusting”

What is a Community Transportation Academy?



Course Key Elements

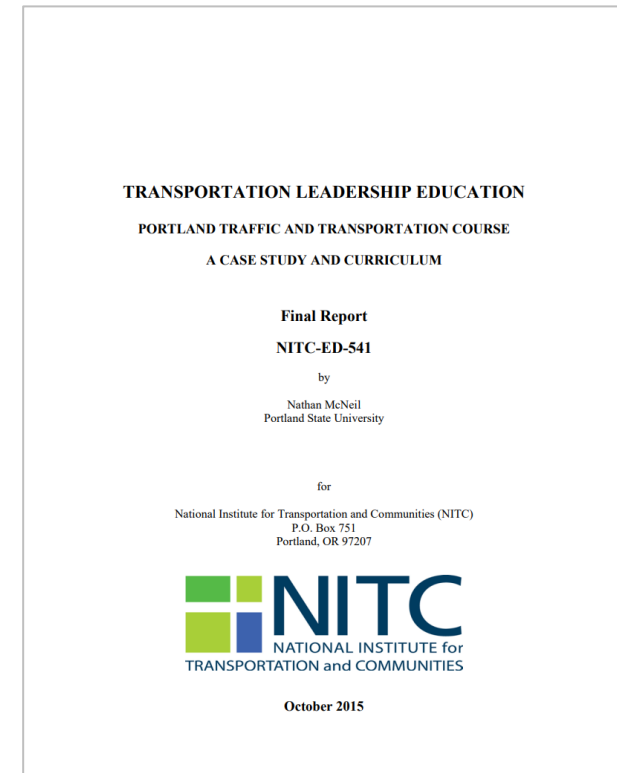
Community members can enroll in the class, meet regularly to learn about different facets of the transportation system and decision-making process

Key elements include:

- Presentations from transportation practitioners
- Transportation tour / field trip
- Mentored student project

Portland Traffic and Transportation Class (OR)

- Started in 1991
- Partnership between Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) and Portland State University (PSU)
- 2015 NITC study documented the class and created an implementation handbook



PTT Case Study - 2015

<https://nitc.trec.pdx.edu/research/project/541>

Wasatch Transportation Academy (UT)

- Inaugural year: 2022
- Collaboration between PSU, University of Utah, and local partners in Salt Lake Region
- NITC funded project used PTT and the NITC Implementation Handbook as guides



Planning and launch of WTA – 2022

<https://nitc.trec.pdx.edu/research/project/1518>

Other examples

Tampa Bay Citizens Academy on Transportation (FL)

- Launched in 2021
- Part of a UTC funded project at the National Institute for Congestion Reduction

Denver Reg Council of Govts: Civic Academy (~2007)

- Operated by Transit Alliance until ~2018
- Focus now extends beyond transportation

Surrey Transportation Talks Program (BC)

- Partnership with Simon Fraser University and City of Surrey
- Launched in ~2009

Central Maryland Transp. Alliance: Transportation 101 (~2017)

- Modeled after Denver course

1000 Friends of Wisconsin

- La Crosse, WI.
- Launching in February 2023!

What topics do Transportation Academies cover?

Topic	Wasatch	Portland	Tampa	Surrey
Transportation History	X	X	X	X
Statewide Planning	X	X		
Regional Planning	X	X	X	X
Municipal Planning	X	X	X	X
Transit Planning	X	X	X	X
Walking and Biking	X	X	X	
Site Visit	X	X		X
Transportation Equity	X	X		
Advocacy	X	X	X	
Theory and Design	X	X		X
Land Use				X
Group Activity	X	X		
Final Project	X	X	X	X

Examples of Student Project Topics

Wasatch Transportation Academy:

- Encouraging Bountiful to Adopt and Implement It's Active Transportation Plan
- eVoucher transit fare system for seniors
- Better roadway markings
- Glendale Transportation Group
- Bike paths to/from TRAX stations
- LinkUtah Network Study
- Fashion Place streetscape
- Active Transportation Plan for Cedar City
- State Street redesign
- 700 E/ 200 S corner
- Bike access to 3300 S
- Layton east-west bike connections
- TOD best practices
- Protected bike lane on 3300 S
- Parleys-S-Line-Jordan connections
- Transp Planning for disabilities best practices

Portland Traffic and Transportation Class:

- Transportation and Mobility for an Aging Portland
- Better Belmont Business District
- Fully Immersive Virtual Reality Simulation for Driver Education
- Milwaukie Avenue
- Foster Avenue remodel
- Pop-up events at TriMet Park and Rides to increase transit ridership
- E-bike: “Game Changer”
- Rethinking “Pave and Paint”: a better Hawthorne is Possible

Evaluating Citizen Academies

How do we know if a transportation academy is making a difference?

Are we fostering the development of community capital?

Types of community capital*:

- **Human:** Individual knowledge, leadership skills, personal empowerment, etc.
- **Social:** Networks and ability to build capital. Bonding and Bridging
- **Cultural:** Norms and values, social and institutional trust, necessary for engagement, collective action
- **Political:** Access and relationships, connections to decision-makers
- **Financial:** Monetary resources to invest in community
- **Built:** Assets and infrastructure
- **Natural:** Natural resources, amenities, beauty of a place

* Types of community capital and outcome tiers proposed in Mandarano, "Civic Engagement Capacity Building: An Assessment of the Citizen Planning Academy Model of Public Outreach and Education," Journal of Planning Education and Research, 2015

Evaluating Citizen Academies

How do we know if a transportation academy is making a difference?

How do you evaluate outcomes that take place at different levels over different timeframes?

Outcome tiers*:

- **First-tier:** Improvements in individual-level capitals, directly tied to participation in the academy. Focused on human, social, cultural and political capital.
- **Second-tier:** Post-academy actions taken using newly acquired individual capitals to enhance their community / community capital.
- **Third-tier:** Longer terms outcomes, improvements in community capital

* Types of community capital and outcome tiers proposed in Mandarano, “Civic Engagement Capacity Building: An Assessment of the Citizen Planning Academy Model of Public Outreach and Education,” *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 2015

Evaluating Citizen Academies

How do we know if a transportation academy is making a difference?

Developing an evaluation framework

Ongoing work:

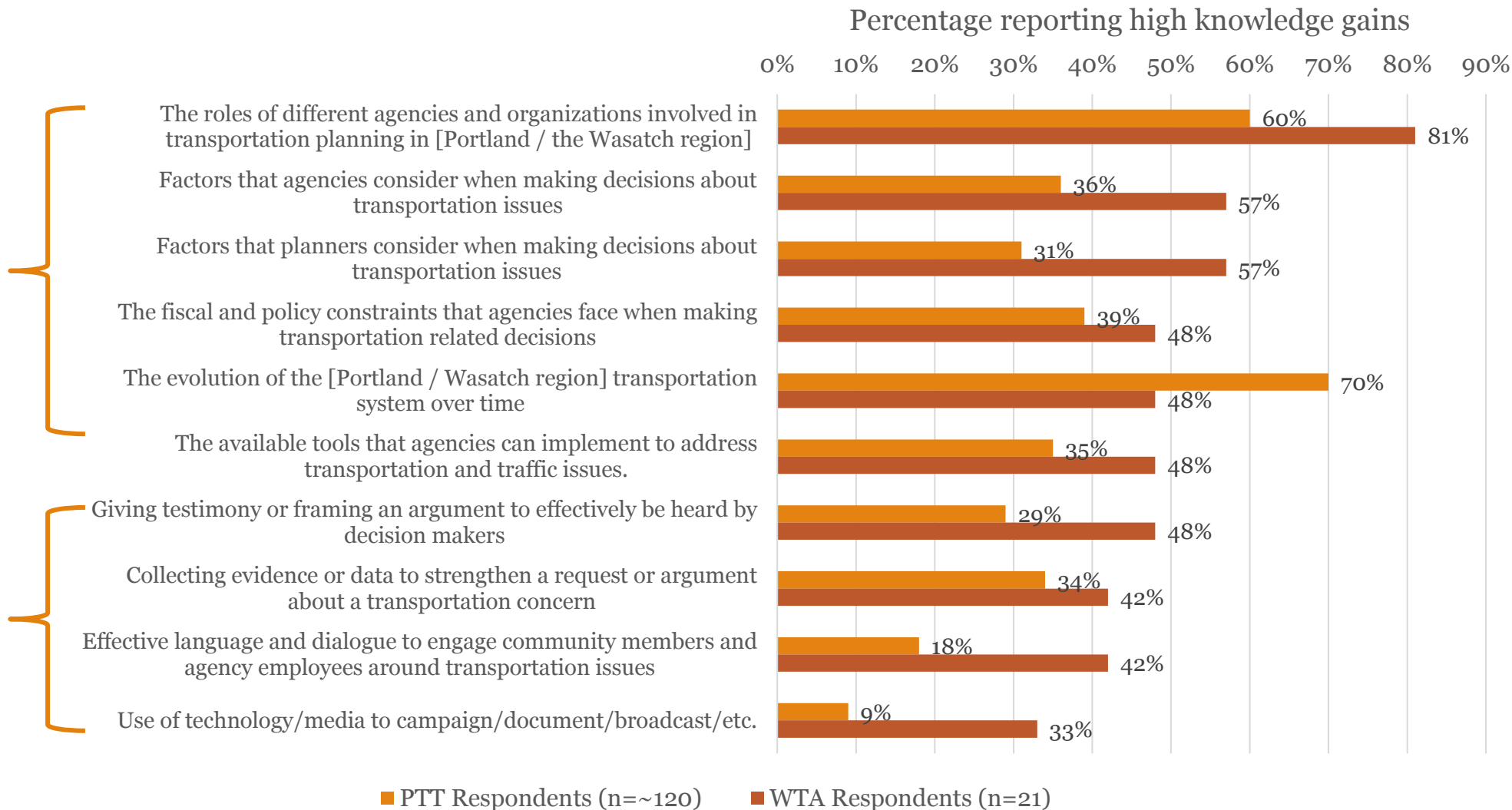
Survey at 3 points in time – pre-academy, post-academy, further in future

- Self-rated knowledge on a set of topics
- Self-rated community skills, engagement, participation
- Self-reported actions to advance personal and community capital
- Self-reported perceptions of change in community capital

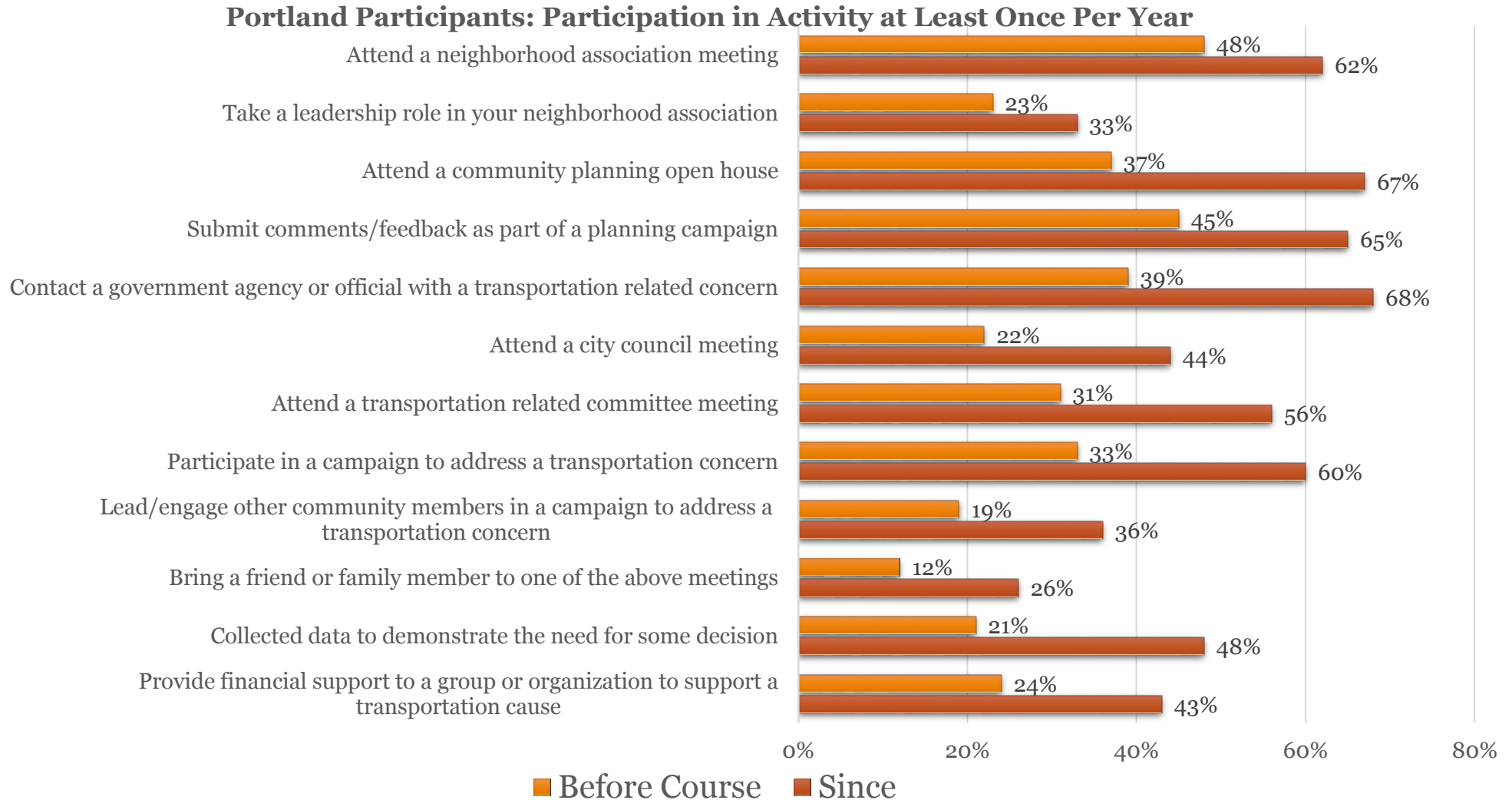
Evidence so far: *Tier 1 – individual capital*

Knowledge about transportation systems / agencies

Knowledge about how to engage / affect decision-making



Evidence so far: *Tier 2 – post-academy actions*



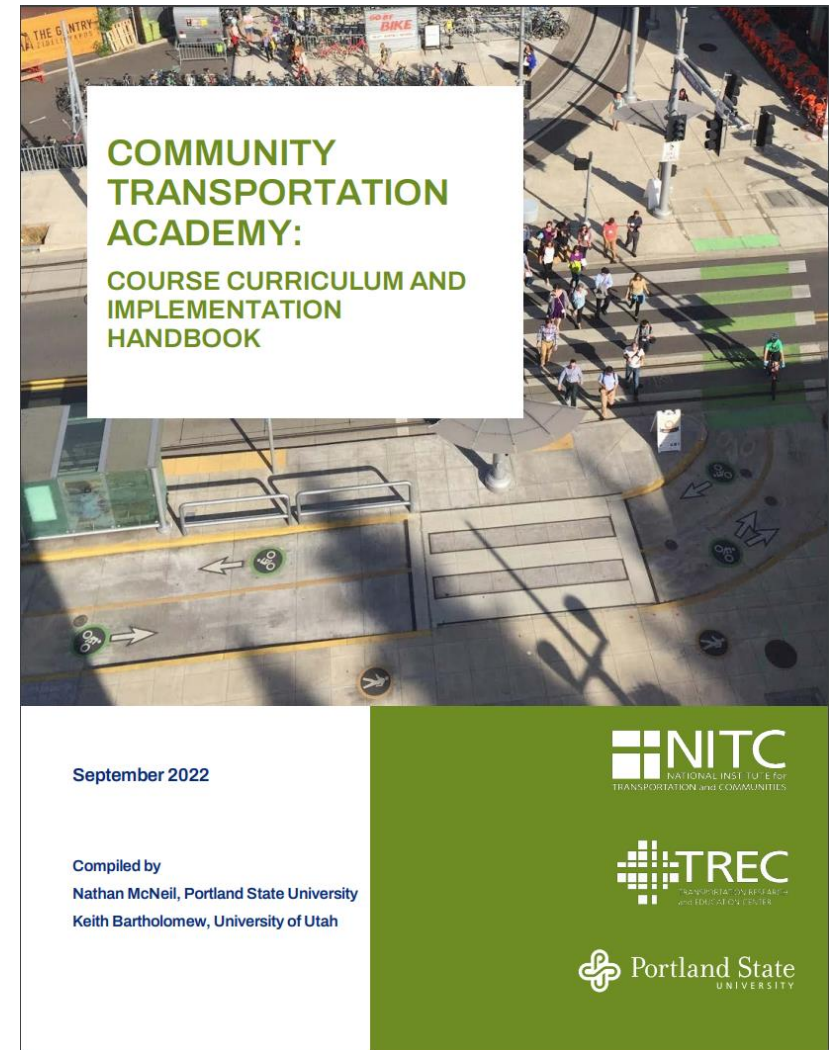
What's next?

- Further developing evaluation framework
 - Benefits to students + impact on the community
- Expanding peer knowledge exchange between academies
- Encourage new transportation academies!

Resources

2022 CTA “Course Curriculum and Implementation Handbook”

- Sample class project assignments
- Potential class sessions
- Suggested readings
- Course operating principles, checklists, and tips for organizers, instructors and presenters
- Wisdom and expert advice



<https://nitc.trec.pdx.edu/research/project/1518>

Thank you!

- Nathan McNeil, Transportation Research and Education Center, Portland State University nmcneil@pdx.edu
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- Matthew Ryan, University of Utah

Find out more

- Project overview:
<https://trec.pdx.edu/news/wasatch-transportation-academy-piloting-investment-community-capital>
- Project webinar:
<https://nitc.trec.pdx.edu/events/professional-development/webinar-10202022>



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