

5-19-2023

Stakeholder Engagement in Urban Public Transportation Agencies in the United States

Tyler Joseph Wolfe
Portland State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/open_access_etds



Part of the [Public Administration Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Wolfe, Tyler Joseph, "Stakeholder Engagement in Urban Public Transportation Agencies in the United States" (2023). *Dissertations and Theses*. Paper 6423.

<https://doi.org/10.15760/etd.3568>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations and Theses by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. Please contact us if we can make this document more accessible: pdxscholar@pdx.edu.

Stakeholder Engagement in Urban Public Transportation Agencies in the United States

by

Tyler Joseph Wolfe

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Public Affairs and Policy

Dissertation Committee:
Bruce Gilley, Chair
Birol Yesilada
Shane Day
Aaron Golub

Portland State University
2023

© 2023 Tyler Joseph Wolfe

Abstract

Major urban public transportation agencies in the United States are often under pressure to engage stakeholders in order to improve both the legitimacy and effectiveness of their transit systems. Based on qualitative methods of directed content analysis, this dissertation answers three related questions: (I) How do internal organizational qualities affect stakeholder engagement? (II) How do external socioeconomic factors affect stakeholder engagement? and (III) Does stakeholder engagement lead to better performance? Using a most similar comparative case study design, this research studies stakeholder engagement in five major urban public transportation agencies (Denver, Oklahoma City, Seattle, Portland, and Memphis). It demonstrates the importance of both internal organizational capacity and external socioeconomic factors to carrying out effective stakeholder engagement. It raises questions however about the conditions under which stakeholder engagement improves system performance. Finally, this research introduces a new tool called the *Organizational Stakeholder Engagement Rubric* (OSER) as an evaluative tool for the examination and analysis of organizational qualities and their expressed organizational stakeholder engagement practices.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my children Adelaide and Aidan, to my wife Emily.

Acknowledgements

First, I'd like to acknowledge the love and support that I have received from my wife, Emily, over the last five years, without whom this would not have been possible. There have been many moments throughout this journey that I may have given up. Emily provided not only support and encouragement, but also a belief in my ability to be successful – even when I did not believe in myself. She has been an anchor for our family, providing patience, stability, love, and friendship even in the most difficult of times – thank you Emily.

I'd like to acknowledge my daughter Adelaide for her independence, work ethic, drive, and passion. Even at such a young age, Adelaide has served as an example of what can be achieved if you put your head down and work. She is so much like me, and in her I see my own ability to work toward my goals and passions – thank you Adelaide.

To my son Aidan, you have reminded me that I should be working to become a better father and a better man every day. When I see you, play with you, watch you grow and develop, I am reminded of the axiom – do not be the man your father wanted you to be, be the man you want your son to be – thank you Aidan.

To my mother, Dr. Tara Fairfield, you raised three children on your own, working full-time, and earning your doctorate. What more can I say? When things were difficult during this process, I was reminded of all that you went through. Your hard work, sacrifice, and dedication to your children stands as an example of perseverance that pushed me forward in difficult times – thank you.

To my committee chair, Dr. Bruce Gilley, it has been a pleasure working with you over the last five years. Your dedication to your students, and desire to see them learn and

grow stands as an example of how faculty can enable student success. Without your support, encouragement, guidance, and expertise it is likely that I would not have been successful in this endeavor – thank you.

To my committee members – Dr. Birol Yesilada, Dr. Shane Day, and Dr. Aaron Golub – thank you for your willingness to serve on the committee, the knowledge and expertise that you each contributed to this research, and your invaluable support and feedback throughout the process.

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Dedication	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
List of Tables	vi
List of Figures	vii
Chapter 1 Introduction	8
Literature Review	11
Chapter 2 Research Design, Methods and Analysis	48
Organizational Profiles	65
Chapter 3 Comparative Case and Data Analysis	122
Chapter 4 Discussion and Conclusion	140
References	173

List of Tables

Table 1: Case Study Descriptions	57
Table 2: Example Organizational Stakeholder Engagement Rubric	62
Table 3: Categorical Indicators	64
Table 4: Organizational Stakeholder Engagement Rubric, Seattle	75
Table 5: Organizational Stakeholder Engagement Rubric, Portland	89
Table 6: Organizational Stakeholder Engagement Rubric, Denver	100
Table 7: Organizational Stakeholder Engagement Rubric, Memphis	110
Table 8: Organizational Stakeholder Engagement Rubric, Oklahoma City	120
Table 9: Mill Joint Method of Agreement and Difference, organizational Stakeholder Engagement Categorizations	124
Table 10: Organizational Capacity and Stakeholder Engagement Categorization	126
Table 11: Case Study Socioeconomic Data	128
Table 12: Case Study Ridership Performance Data	132
Table 13: Case Study Budgetary Performance Data	134
Table 14: Mill Joint Method of Agreement and Difference, Socioeconomic and Ridership Performance Categorizations.	134
Table 15: Mill Joint Method of Agreement and Difference, Socioeconomic and Budgetary Performance Categorizations	135
Table 16: Mill Joint Method of Agreement and Difference, Socioeconomic and Performance Categorizations	136
Table 17: Example Organizational Stakeholder Engagement Rubric	150
Table 18: Qualitative Coding Indicators	152

List of Figures

Figure 1: Research Questions

52

Chapter 1 Introduction

Over the past 50 years there has been a proliferation of terms used specifically in Public Administration scholarship to describe the role of the citizen in the public sector decision making process. *Civic Engagement*¹, *Public Engagement*, *Public Encounters*, and so on are terms intended to frame, in their own way, private citizens as legitimized stakeholders in public decision making processes that are not only affected by policy decisions but also regarded as active participants in making such decisions. While each of these terms adds nuanced richness to the way in which the role of the private citizen might be conceptualized in public decision making processes, all of these terms point to the private citizen as a legitimized stakeholder in such processes. For example, Arnstein's (1969) work in the area of civic engagement attempts to clarify these terms by defining "*citizen participation*" as "...having the real power needed to affect the outcome of the process" (p 216). More contemporary authors, however, have sought to move beyond predominantly normative definitions of civic engagement. Fung (2006) argues that a value-based understanding of participation alone is lacking in application. Here, Fung (2006) asserts that public participation should be understood through a mechanistic approach. That is, through the specific participatory mechanisms used in public decision making processes with regard to the democratic values they advance. In this way, Fung (2006) sees public participation as taking place through both traditional democratic institutions (i.e. elections) as well as through more direct engagement in public decision

¹ The term *Civic Engagement* has a range of meanings specific to the field of Political Science. Its usage in this paper refers to its common connotations within the field of Public Administration.

making processes that might have the potential to advance (or hinder) democratic norms based on how participation is carried out. Finally, terms like *public encounters* have arisen in an attempt to provide a better understanding of not only how participation takes place, but also the nature of the subsequent interactions between various types of participants (Bartels, 2013). Given the ambiguity in terms like public participation, civic engagement and so on, in both their definition and application, the term *Stakeholder*, in a contemporary context, should suffice to describe the role of not only public agencies at various levels of government, private sector firms and nonprofit entities that might partner in the provision of services, interest and advocacy groups that lobby for a given set of policy preferences, but also the various ways in which the private citizen might participate in the public sector decision making process.

Stakeholder engagement is a broad field that can include topics that range from stakeholder analysis to engagement practices and outcomes. Here, the study of stakeholder engagement has long concerned itself with the role of the private citizen. It would not be hyperbole to regard the role of the private citizen in public decision making processes as one of the most studied areas within the stakeholder engagement literature. From how and when the citizen is engaged, to the power dynamics present amongst various stakeholders, to engagement limitations facing underserved populations, to process and policy outcomes of stakeholder engagement practices and so on, the private citizen has figured prominently in the study of stakeholder engagement. However, despite this, the private citizen as a stakeholder is often treated as an antecedent to the issue being studied. For example, considerable time, effort, and debate has been given to whether or

not citizen involvement in the public decision making processes adds or detracts from outcomes of stakeholder engagement, or whether or not the timing of citizen involvement impacts stakeholder engagement outcomes. Additional work has focused on the power dynamics present in stakeholder engagement practices, how those dynamics impact inclusion, and the resulting process and performance outcomes of those engagement practices. While a considerable amount of work has been done pertaining to the role of various actors, the process design itself, and the subsequent outcomes of stakeholder engagement processes, this focus, almost exclusively on participants and processes, has led to a semi myopic examination of factors that have the potential to impact engagement practices. Less work has been done within Public Administration scholarship with regard to the specific exogenous and endogenous conditions that might impact stakeholder engagement practices at the organizational level utilizing direct public services that require a high level of inherent public interaction.

This literature review will explore the history and evolution of stakeholder engagement in Public Administration, detail the considerable amount of work done pertaining to the study of stakeholder engagement, incorporate relevant streams of literature in the areas of Stakeholder engagement, contemporary governance, social capital and modernization, and finally, identify gaps in the literature that indicate a need for additional research.

Literature Review

Brief History of Contemporary Stakeholder Engagement

Under President Lyndon B. Johnson, the Federal government introduced a slew of federal social programs during the 1960s. These programs, given the moniker “The Great Society” programs, ranged from antipoverty programs to education and healthcare reform. The success and efficacy of these programs has been hotly debated over the decades. Some scholars have pointed to the social reform groundwork laid by Johnson’s domestic policy. Still other scholars have noted the detrimental impact of adjacent criminal justice reforms that led to the disproportionate incarceration of minorities and the problems that plague the modern day system of incarceration (Hinton, 2015; Levitan & Taggart, 1976). However, the focus on social policy at the community level brought with it a newfound interest in the role of community members in shaping localized policy and implementation.

While serious and widespread consideration of the citizen as a legitimate stakeholder in the provision of localized social programs and services was still in its infancy, scholars in the 1960s began to examine the role of the citizen in public decision making processes in order to develop models intended to explain the nature of these varied roles and relationships. One of the earliest and most notable scholars to model the relationship between the citizen and those that govern was Sherry Arnstein. Arnstein (1969) developed a model referred to as the *Ladder of Participation*. The ladder was intended to describe both the varying levels of citizen involvement in public decision making processes as well as the nature of the relationships the citizen and administrators

experienced at those different levels. Arnstein categorized the two lowest levels of participation as “*Manipulation*” and “*Therapy*” postulating that at these two lowest levels the citizen is both a non-participant in decision making processes, as well as used to meet some larger technical requirement or goal of the public organization. For example, Arnstein points out that under *manipulation* the citizen might be generically involved (i.e. on a committee or advisory board) but in reality, hold no real authority or power to influence the process. This type of involvement was common in the 1960s and as Arnstein points out, regularly practiced in “urban renewal policy” (p. 218).

According to Arnstein, as degrees of involvement increased the citizen might experience various forms of tokenism where the citizen might only have input through sharing information with administrators in a consultative capacity. Here again, while the citizen might be slightly more involved, their involvement serves a broader organizational or institutional agenda. In the case of involving the citizen through consultation, the institution or organization “placates” (p. 220) the citizen and by doing so, aims to bolster institutional legitimacy.

Finally, at Arnstein’s highest levels of participation, the citizen is seen as either a partner or, even more involved, as having control over either the production or the delivery (or both) of services. This concept of citizens as producers and managers – along with Arnstein’s ladder as a whole – was ahead of its time. The concepts introduced by Arnstein would take shape over the next fifty years, being built upon by other scholars—and in some cases bore out in real-world application--and are still relevant in the study and practice of stakeholder engagement to date.

Before the concepts introduced by Arnstein became fully fledged, however, the role of the citizen as a stakeholder would be reimagined several times over. From the late 1970s through the 1990s, a set of public sector managerial reforms swept the developed world – reshaping both the administrative and bureaucratic structures of developed nations, as well as the roles and relationships citizens had with their governments. These reforms sought to prioritize the efficiency and cost effectiveness of public service delivery primarily through the introduction of market-based principles from the private sector (Harvey, 2005; Thomas, 2013). This governance philosophy, and the subsequent policies and practices that came with it became known as *New Public Management* (NPM). While there are many facets of NPM – some that are beyond the scope of this review – two key aspects of NPM are notably relevant: (I) by introducing a market-based philosophy into the public sector, NPM reconfigured the participatory role and central identity of the citizen, the role of the administrator, as well as how the citizen was viewed by the administrative bureaucracy; and (II) the large-scale introduction of competition among private sector firms for public contracts introduced a whole new subset of stakeholders that reshaped stakeholder engagement from that point forward (Aberbach & Christensen, 2005; Harvey, 2005; Lynn et al., 2000; Thomas, 2013).

Thomas (2013) notes that with this governance shift, the citizen adopted a role more akin to that of a customer. Here, the citizen no longer expressed displeasure with policy or provision through direct political participation, but instead through choice and by communicating product preference. Proponents of NPM argue that this form of preference signaling is, in many ways, more responsive than traditional forms of public

participation (Aberbach & Christensen, 2005). Aberbach & Christensen, (2005) examine the effects of NPM on a range of governance factors including civic identity, the role of the administrative bureaucrat, and impacts on public service delivery. The authors conclude that while it might be argued that a consumer centric version of the citizen might allow for a more direct line of accountability and responsiveness from administrators as well as better service provision (more closely aligned with customer preferences), this definition diminishes civic traditions associated with healthy republics, reduces the focus on outcomes that favor the collective public good, and relies too heavily on theories related to consumerism and public choice². Here, the authors argue that from a practical perspective, public agencies and administrators need to utilize the substantive input of citizens in order to fully identify and address the issues and challenges they face as a collective community – not simply as individual consumers. Further, scholars have argued that partly as a result of NPM as well as the governance shifts that followed, bureaucratic administrators often bear the brunt of the public policy burden – having wide latitude in aspects of policy development and implementation, as well as being the “arbiters” of civic values such as public participation (Nabatchi, Goerdel, and Peffer, 2011). The implication here is that in order to develop policies that address collective problems, the utilization of substantive citizen input in the decision making process is essential. As an additional counter argument to increased accountability gained through a customer centric approach to public service provision, Thomas (2013) argues that this constrained role severely limited the recourse available to the citizen as

² *Public Choice Theory* – Explores individual decision making and primarily asserts that individuals will act in their own self-interest with minimal regard to the broader public good (Shaw, 2008)

essentially a non-participant in public sector decision making, and relegated the citizen to a stakeholder only in a peripheral sense. In support of these assertions, Thomas (2013) examined public call center data from various locations throughout the United States and found that hotlines set up by public agencies comprised almost 70 percent of citizen-administrator interactions. These call centers were explicitly modeled after customer service hotlines – used to lodge complaints or report issues – commonly found in the private sector. Finally, with the private sector competitively bidding on public contracts, the balance of policymaking and implementation power was primarily split between the public organization and the private firms vying for limited contracts – leaving only those entities as participating stakeholders in public sector decision making processes.

While there is little debate that NPM did, in many ways, lead to more cost effective service provision (Andrews & Van de Walle, 2013) that benefited both governments as well as citizens, it has also been widely acknowledged that the relegation of the citizen to that of a customer exclusively has been to the detriment of broader governance efforts (Aberbach & Christensen, 2005; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000). Perhaps more concerning, Brown (2017) argues that while administrative bureaucrats sought to maximize efficiency and effectiveness through these public sector managerial reforms, they were also used with the intent of bureaucrats to quell civic identity and participation. While contemporary governance philosophies have seemingly attempted to move on from NPM, NPM and many of its tenants and governance characteristics remain – notably the ongoing presence of private firms that seek (and are sought after) to partner

with public sector agencies in service provision. This has meant that the private sector remains, to date, a powerful stakeholder in the majority of governance activities.

In the late 1990s into the early 2000s, there was a push among scholars and practitioners to once again reconceptualize the role of the citizen in public sector decision making processes. This effort became known as the *New Public Service* (NPS). NPS has two key facets that have impacted the work that has come out of this effort as it relates to the legitimization of the citizen as a stakeholder: (I) the concept of a citizen-centric public decision-making process, and (II) the reimagining of the role of the administrator as an arbiter of participation (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000; King et al., 1998). King et al. (1998) asserted that while the citizen should be an engaged stakeholder, from a process perspective, they were the furthest removed of the decision making process. The authors argued that the citizen should actually be the closest, and most involved participant in the process, and that there were untapped benefits to repositioning the citizen in such a manner. Later research, in many respects, would bear this out.

Denhardt and Denhardt (2000) took a more head-on and critical approach to their rebuke of New Public Management, which they saw as a pervasive governance philosophy that not only threatened democratic ideals, but also robbed the public administrator of their original identity as a public servant. Denhardt and Denhardt critiqued not only NPM as a governance philosophy, but also those academic studies that upheld the philosophy as superior to other governance approaches. The authors asserted that the primary examinations of NPM's efficacy were based on myopic criteria that lent itself to favorable evaluations. Ultimately, the authors called not for some major

governance revolution, but rather, for a return to the ideals of public service. Denhardt and Denhardt (2000) saw the role of the public servant as one who aids the citizen not only in participation, but also in the understanding and expression of their needs. This was in stark contrast to the administrator as conceptualized under NPM – that of a customer service specialist – and placed the administrator alongside the citizen in the decision making process.

Out of this reimagining of both the role of the citizen and the role of the public administrator in public decision making processes came empirical work in governance models akin to New Public Service. Harkening back to Arnstein's (1969) work, *Coproduction* and *Co-management* models began to take hold in the early to mid-2000s. These models would place the citizens on (or near) the top rung of Arnstein's *Ladder of Participation* as coproducers managers, and/or deliverers of public services. Bovaird (2007), developed a planning and delivery matrix to conceptualize what roles the citizen might play in these processes. Aspects of this matrix ranged from fully professionally planned and delivered services to services planned and delivered under full citizen control. The author details the various aspects of the matrix, and provides pragmatic case study examples of where various levels of coproduction might work. On the most extreme end of the matrix – "*Community sole delivery of co-planned or co-designed services*" – the author points primarily to volunteer run community services and centers. These limited types of services lend themselves to coproduction models and place the citizen stakeholder in (or near) the center of the planning and delivery of public goods and services.

However, earlier work by Carlsson and Berkes (2005) that focused on the co-management of public goods between citizens and administrators, took aim at the efficacy of co-management models (and by extension, aspects of coproduction). The authors found that there are several major challenges that face co-management efforts. These challenges include an overemphasis on structure versus task allocation, the oversimplification of the “state” as a homogeneous entity, the need to view power sharing as the ends versus the means, and the limited context in which co-management strategies might be applicable and useful. While the authors acknowledge the limited scope of this governance philosophy, they also highlight the utility of such an approach. The authors hold that co-management arrangements can be useful for task allocation, risk mitigation, resource sharing, conflict resolution, and other benefits related to networking.

While coproduction and co-management models have done well to reframe the role of the citizen as well as the role of the administrator, as governance philosophies that seek to centralize the citizen as a legitimate stakeholder, they face significant, pragmatic shortcomings. As either implied or directly pointed to by both Bovaird (2007) and Carlsson and Berkes (2005), the broad application of these governance approaches to the majority of essential public services is, in most cases, not feasible. Furthermore, with regard to stakeholder engagement, coproduction models that place the citizen as the sole producer and provider of a given service is not only unrealistic but also exclusionary to resources and perspectives that have the potential to add value to the decision-making process – which is a primary argument in favor of including the citizen as a legitimate stakeholder.

Stakeholder Engagement in the Context of Contemporary Governance

Perhaps the largest shift in contemporary governance philosophy in the last twenty years has been the advent of *Collaborative Governance*. Incorporating aspects of NPM – such as partnerships between the public and private sector – as well as aspects of coproduction and co-management, Collaborative Governance purports to tap into all relevant stakeholder perspectives in order to collaboratively and cooperatively provide public goods and services, and solve complex problems (Chhotray & Stoker, 2009). Collaborative Governance as a governance theory varies in practice, but can generally be conceptualized as a decentralized, networked³ arrangement containing relevant participants that span the public, private, nonprofit, and civic sectors (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015).

Collaborative Governance has frequently been touted as a way to both empower and involve citizens in public sector decision making processes, and bring consensus agreement to complex problems that involve a multitude of stakeholders. Here, citizens can be involved in collaborative arrangements either on an individual level or through participation in an advocacy or interest group that has representation in the arrangement (Kirk Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015; Innes & Booher, 2004). While there is very little debate that collaboration on some level is often needed to solve complex problems, some scholars have questioned the seemingly idealized assertions made regarding its ability to enhance democratic ideals through the legitimation of the citizen as a relevant stakeholder. For example, Innes and Booher (2004) call attention to the reality that

³ There is commonly a distinction made among scholars between network governance and collaborative governance. The finite differences between these two terms is beyond the scope of this literature review.

common stakeholder engagement practices can exacerbate problems. However, when examining cases of alternative collaborative stakeholder engagement practices in public decision making, the authors find that while collaboration can contribute to policy solutions, an institution's willingness and capacity to adhere to collaborative principles is paramount. It is in this way that democratic gains in stakeholder engagement made through collaboration are often still limited. This institutional limitation, associated with process, is not exclusive to Collaborative Governance as a governance philosophy. In a review of stakeholder engagement studies, Reed (2008) found that while there might be practical policy benefits to inclusive stakeholder engagement, the processes and procedures under which the engagement takes place often undermine any potential gains made through stakeholder engagement itself.

Building on Arnstein's (1969) *Ladder of Participation*, Fung (2006) highlights democratic deficiencies often still present in contemporary governance. While Arnstein (1969) conceptualized citizen engagement as a highly desirable normative value wherein the goal was to achieve the highest level of citizen engagement and empowerment possible, Fung (2006) offers a practical application approach with the acknowledgement that various contexts are going to dictate the desired level of public involvement. Here, Fung (2006) does not conceptualize maximized participation as a desired norm exclusively but rather evaluates participatory practices based on the democratic value they either hinder or advance. Fung's (2006) *Democracy Cube* is both a framework and a tool through which to analyze participatory elements based on three criteria: *who*

participates, how communication takes place, and how power and authority are distributed.

Fung asserts that it is crucial to focus on stakeholder engagement in order to access key community-level information. However, Fung critiques the open engagement process commonly present in contemporary governance. The author holds that self-selected participation alone advantages some while ignoring the disadvantages of others – ultimately leading to a non-representative process. As an alternative, the author suggests an open process that is coupled with targeted outreach to those stakeholders with intimate knowledge, experience, and interest in a given problem in order to address ongoing limitations to stakeholder engagement efforts within contemporary governance contexts.

Fung (2006) goes on to critique the common methods of communication used between the elected official, the administrator, and the citizen stakeholder. The author notes that the vast majority of communication comes through public comments that are shared either through an open public comment period or a designated time during a public meeting. These forms of communication, according to the author, are intentionally exclusive. Less common are various forms of deliberation and debate, and even more rare are forms of sortition or deliberative voting on a public decision. These more directly democratic forms of public decision making within the United States are generally confined to the traditional New England town hall style of public meeting. Though rare, these forms of public decision making are seen as more inclusive and come with a range of benefits. Here, the author offers a spectrum of decision making ranging from “*Exclusive*” – run primarily by the state – to “*Inclusive*”, where members of the public

have substantive opportunity to contribute to the decision making process (Fung, 2006, p. 68, 2015).

The third dimension of Fung's (2006) *Democracy Cube* is *Power and Authority*. Fung ties the various levels of power and authority to how communication takes place within the public setting. Levels of power and authority range from "*Least Intense*" – where the stakeholder is merely a spectator – to "*Most Intense*" (Fung, 2006, p. 70). At this highest level of power and authority, the stakeholder directly contributes their knowledge and expertise to solving the problem or developing policy. Here again, Fung notes that settings where the stakeholder – especially the citizen – might actually have this level of authority and power in the public decision making process are rare. Despite this rarity, the author holds that across the dimensions of the *Democracy Cube*, those stakeholder engagement processes that embrace more intentional and inclusive practices will enjoy both perception and performance outcome benefits (Fung, 2006, 2015).

Finally, there has been a rise in the use of technology as a primary mode of communication between stakeholders and public officials. Here, it is argued that the use of social media and other online based forms of communication might represent a shift in stakeholder engagement practices that benefit engagement efforts as a whole. Firmstone and Coleman (2015), in a case study of a major United Kingdom municipality, examined the use of digital media as a form of communication and found that while it is used to convey information, there is no evidence that it can or will replace more direct forms of involvement. However, the authors do note that the advent of technological communication represents new ways to interact with stakeholders and a potential shift in

stakeholder engagement norms (Firmstone & Coleman, 2015). These findings reinforce previous work by Rowe and Gammack (2004). The authors took stock of the potential benefits and drawbacks of these more contemporary forms of electronic engagement and communication. The authors found that while there may be added benefit of access and efficient communication, electronic forms of engagement limit other forms of non-verbal communication – such as body language, tone, and facial expressions that indicate a participant’s disposition toward a given decision. Further, the authors found that there are limits to electronic participation related to self-selection and equitability as it pertains to access to and knowledge of the use of technology (Rowe & Gammack, 2004). Overall, the authors conclude that while electronic forms of communication have the potential to increase modes of participation, the quality and depth of such engagement is limited and cannot substitute more traditional face-to-face engagement (Rowe and Gammack, 2004).

Stakeholder Engagement in the Public Transportation Sector: Best Practices

The public transportation sector has often found itself on the forefront of stakeholder engagement practices. As an area of the public sector that is both highly technical as well as highly dependent on user feedback for the improvement of service provision (Cascetta & Pagliara, 2013), agencies that govern various aspects of public transportation have developed both a broad set of performance indicators as well as a set of best practices pertaining to organizational stakeholder engagement (Codd & Walton, 1995; USDOT, 2022).

Codd and Walton, (1995) established foundational performance metrics with which to evaluate the quality of service provided by transit agencies and organizations.

These metrics include; ridership, on-time departures/arrivals, safety records, overall budgetary performance, project budget adherence, project timeline adherence, and more. Researchers have suggested through various studies pertaining to both the public transportation sector as well as the public sector more broadly that these types of performance metrics can rely, at least in part, on engagement and feedback from a variety of stakeholders – including various community members (Beierle, 2000; Innes & Booher, 2005; Cascetta & Pagliara, 2013; Guo & Neshkova, 2013). This reliance has highlighted the need to effectively engage stakeholders in decision making processes pertaining to both policy and design improvements and led to the development of leading *Best Practices* for service providers.

Here, the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) has developed a set of best practices over the last twenty to thirty years. In many ways, these practices mirror stakeholder engagement practices that have been widely accepted throughout the public sector and beyond. As such, they represent an enmeshment of consummative and practical elements that include; aspects of organizational capacity, accessibility and representation through targeted outreach, equity in involvement, frequency of early and often engagement, and institutionalized support for stakeholder engagement efforts (USDOT, 2022). Additionally, the agency has operationalized these elements through recommended applied stakeholder engagement practices. These practices include; the use of outreach tools such as social media/online communication platforms, the use of various types of advisory boards, various types of public meetings, partnership development activities, the use of small group engagement and learning, and overall, the

tailoring of stakeholder engagement practices to organizational and community needs (USDOT, 2022).

Finally, these established stakeholder engagement best practices purport to have a number of different benefits. Some of these benefits are pragmatic in nature and some are normative and/or consummative in nature. The purported consummative benefits of these practices include; increased trust between stakeholders and the organization, increased legitimacy of organizational activities, empowerment and advancement of inclusion and equity, and the sharing of knowledge between stakeholders (Beierle, 2000; Innes & Booher, 2005; Reed, 2008; Romenti, 2010; Sherman & Ford, 2014; Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015). The purported practical benefits of the established stakeholder engagement best practices include; the identification of effective policy and design solutions, delivery of improved projects that more directly meet the needs of the community, and ensures compliance with organizational and governmental requirements pertaining to stakeholder engagement efforts (Krupa et al, 2020; USDOT, 2022, P. 6). While both consummative and practical benefits are often cited as justification for increased levels of organizational stakeholder engagement, there is still a healthy debate regarding the added value of stakeholder engagement practices.

The Added Value of Stakeholder Engagement: Impacts on Process-Oriented Outcomes

The study of stakeholder engagement has always concerned itself with the question of added value. While some scholars have put forward normative arguments regarding the role and responsibility of the public official in the advancement of

democratic values (Nabatchi et al., 2011)⁴, there is a substantial body of literature concerned with the benefits and outcomes of incorporating a variety of stakeholders in the public decision making process. While the potential benefits of inclusive stakeholder engagement have been well documented and range from claims regarding improved perceptions of government, to claims of improved policymaking processes, to improved service provision, the added value of stakeholder engagement has historically been a point of debate.

Here, opponents have pointed to challenges regarding reaching policy consensus as well as additional potential pitfalls when there are a variety of diverse stakeholders present in the decision making process. As an alternative, hierarchical governance models – such as NPM – are often seen as more efficient governance models based on their reduced reliance on state actors as well as the emphasis on “top-down” management of public goods and services (Ferlie & Steane, 2002, p. 1461). In a review of the NPM literature, Ferlie and Steane frame NPM as a hierarchical governance structure that lacks a diverse network of stakeholders – enabling NPM practitioners to engage in more unilateral decision making. Even within highly inclusive governance models – like coproduction – there exists a risk to use considerable resources with very little return (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004). Despite this, research has established numerous potential upsides for outcomes of stakeholder engagement.

Broadly, outcomes can be disaggregated into three categories: *Perception*, *process* and *performance*. Perception outcomes are those outcomes that pertain to how

⁴ This review will forego primary normative arguments that go beyond perception based outcomes

members of the public feel or what members of the public think about the policy making process, the efficacy of the resulting policy, as well as the agency charged with the policy making and implementation itself. Perception outcomes can also be tied to the perceived quality of a given public service from the user's perspective. Process based outcomes are tied to the ability of a governing entity to effectively and efficiently pass and implement policy – particularly contentious policy. Performance based outcomes, on the other hand, are those measurable outcomes that range from service efficacy to budgetary adherence. Here, an example of service efficacy might be the number of on-time bus or train routes. Contemporary forms of governance not only purport to enhance stakeholder engagement, but also, by doing so, improve perception, process, and performance based outcomes.

Stakeholder engagement literature is replete with claims of improved perceptions of public agencies, government institutions, and public officials as a result of inclusive stakeholder engagement practices (Reed, 2008; Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015). These claims primarily center around benefits of improved trust in government, improved legitimacy for the government agencies and officials, as well as increased positive perception of public policy and subsequent services. Perhaps one of the most notable studies that established this relationship, in part, was Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti (1994). In a landmark study of regional (North and South) governance in Italy during the 1970s, the authors found that regions with a richer history of civic engagement, and less hierarchically oriented governance structures enjoyed higher levels of trust between officials and citizens. While the work was expansive in its design and findings, the authors examined 15 newly created regional governments and found support for their

thesis that flatter, more network oriented governance structures that prioritized *civic engagement* improved trust, and further, that trust and continued engagement improved governance performance.

The findings of Putnam et al. (1994) find contemporary support in the work of Leach and Sabatier (2005). Here, the authors used a rational behavioral model to examine ways in which trust is built between stakeholders as they engage in the policy making process. The authors found that prolonged, in-person interactions and the participants' perception regarding the fairness of the policy deliberation process improved trust and legitimacy to the initiating agency (Leach & Sabatier, 2005). While the authors' 75 case studies pertained to preformed collaborations between "policy elites" (p. 491) as a stipulation of their methods, the collaborations contained at least one interest group – a widely acknowledged avenue for the citizen stakeholder engagement. Ultimately, their work broadly demonstrates the perception benefits that are possible through collaborative policymaking and stakeholder engagement when practiced under the proper conditions.

Additional support for improved perceptions through stakeholder engagement practices can be found in the management literature related to *Corporate Social Responsibility* (CSR) research. Romenti (2010) found that increased efforts on the part of corporations to reach local community stakeholders and involve them in corporate decision making processes resulted in improved perception of corporate reputation. Here, the author used a case study model to demonstrate that through a robust network of local community stakeholders, corporations within the Italian service industry were able to build organizational capacity and ultimately improve their reputations. While the

stakeholder engagement efforts were broad within the case study company – ranging from relationship building with suppliers, to employee engagement in vision casting, to innovation groups – two key components to their stakeholder engagement efforts were: customer workshops to improve sustainability and product delivery, as well as ongoing internal efforts to build a cooperative company culture. These findings from the private sector parallel and support claims regarding both the potential positive perception impacts of stakeholder engagement, as well as the importance of institutional culture and capacity for effective stakeholder engagement practices found in the public sector stakeholder engagement literature.

While Leach and Sabatier (2005) established that relationship building in collaborative policymaking can improve perceptions of government and the policymaking process, Conner (2017) examined collaborative stakeholder partnerships among tribal educators and found – among other findings – that perceptions of trust among stakeholders were highly dependent not on the collaborative process, but rather, on the nature of the preexisting relationship between the stakeholders. Additionally, the author found that while student performance was improved by the efforts of the collaborative partnerships, the process-oriented outcomes did not clearly benefit from the collaborative arrangement. Here, the author’s findings in this area mirror the findings of Leach and Sabatier (2005) by highlighting the importance institutional relationships in the overall success of the collaborative effort. Thus, perceptions of trust should not only be seen as a potential outcome of stakeholder engagement (Leach & Sabatier, 2005;

Romenti, 2010), but also as an institutional prerequisite for a more effective stakeholder engagement process (Conner, 2017).

The success of process oriented outcomes, such as policy consensus, are often tied to the conditions under which stakeholder engagement and the subsequent policymaking process take place. Here, Irvin and Stansbury (2004), and Reed (2008) examine optimal stakeholder engagement conditions based on a review and analysis of the stakeholder engagement literature. Irvin and Stansbury (2004) analyzed the conditions under which claims pertaining to the benefits of stakeholder engagement were made. The authors found that *low* and *high* cost, and *low* and *high* benefit indicators were present in the academic work analyzed. Here, the author found that certain conditions such as citizen mobility, income, homogeneity, and policy knowledge impacted the costs and benefits of stakeholder engagement as well as the ability of the citizen to participate. Institutionally, the authors found that a history of successful policy passage without the necessity of stakeholder engagement, a hostile relationship between stakeholders and government officials, and the unwillingness to empower stakeholders in decision making processes all impacted the costs and potential benefits of stakeholder engagement (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004). Reed (2008) found that in order to take full advantage of the purported benefits of stakeholder engagement, the process needed to be enculturated with trust and equity, flexible, initiated early in the decision making process, representative of all relevant stakeholders, contain clear objectives, specific to the policy issue and context at hand, be moderated, inclusive of “local knowledge”, and ultimately institutionalized as an essential practice (p. 2422-2426). Ultimately, the author found that when these conditions

are not met, or are only met in part, the outcome benefits of stakeholder engagement suffer.

Taken together, the work of Irvin and Stansbury (2004), and Reed (2008) further underscore several key insights regarding the importance of both stakeholder engagement design as well as exogenous factors in maximizing any benefits available through inclusive stakeholder engagement. That is: (I) that citizen-stakeholders might face particular socioeconomic barriers to engagement that impact the stakeholder engagement process at large; (II) institutional relationship history, culture and bureaucracy have the potential to impact stakeholder engagement practices; and (III) practical stakeholder engagement design must be implemented at a particular point in the decision making process (early) and contain certain characteristics (relevant stakeholders, clear objectives etc.) in order to take full advantage of potential benefits.

The passage of public policy – particularly those policies that are contentious or complex in nature – can be fraught with conflict. While process oriented outcomes can range from resource sharing to policy learning, to risk mitigation (Carlsson & Berkes, 2005), policy consensus is often seen as a primary indicator of process oriented success. Here, research has identified key elements of stakeholder engagement processes that yield not only policy consensus, but also, a range of process oriented outcomes (K. Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015). Jones (2011), for example, examined the development of transportation policies that were aimed at increasing accessibility for users. Specifically, the author examined the impact of stakeholder engagement practices among cooperating agencies and users, and found that stakeholder engagement practices that utilized small

group policy education workshops were able to more effectively develop policies aimed at improving transportation system accessibility. Moreover, the author found that agencies that did not coordinate in this manner from the outset of their planning process made disjointed decisions, suffered from a lack of information exchange, and ultimately exacerbated accessibility issues within their respective transportation systems.

Bartels' (2014) work provides additional support for these findings. Bartels' (2014) work in the area of *Public Encounters* examined the specific manner in which stakeholders interact with one another in public settings. The author examined three public service provision projects in three different European cities. The author used a narrative analysis to examine the dominant manner through which stakeholders communicate. The author found that communication often suffered based on common institutionalized forms of communication between stakeholders, as well as presuppositions regarding traditional stakeholder roles (Bartels, 2014). The author found that due to these communicative barriers, policymaking efforts became less efficient (took more time) and used more resources. Here, the author asserts that the ability of stakeholders and government officials to break through traditional communication barriers and effectively communicate their positions has the potential to improve the efficiency (time taken) of the policymaking process and reduced the resources used when arriving at policy consensus. Bartels' (2014) work provides further support regarding the importance of institutional culture and capacity, and its potential impacts on process oriented outcomes related to stakeholder engagement practices.

Additional support for the use of small group, face-to-face stakeholder interactions in reaching policy consensus can be found in Pyrialakou et al. (2019) pertaining to the use of focus groups in stakeholder engagement practices. Using the passage of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA) of 2008 as a case study, the authors examined local stakeholder engagement practices pertaining to the allocation and usage of funds in producing policy intended to improve passenger rail travel. Here, the authors focused on the efficacy of stakeholder engagement processes as opposed to the performance of the policies produced – particularly, those processes that incorporated small group settings, and included stakeholders that ranged from members of the community to administrators and technical professionals. The authors found that through the incorporation of small group settings, stakeholder engagement practices yielded valuable technical and lay information for future policy development. This information revealed, for example, that community members were in support of policies geared toward increasing the infrastructure capacity of local rail travel, and preferred such policies over alternative mobility investment proposals (Pyrialakou et al., 2019). Beyond preferential findings, the authors found that the use of small groups led to innovative ideas and the general sharing of knowledge among a variety of stakeholders. Pyrialakou et al (2019) further illustrates the importance of stakeholder engagement design in producing useful process oriented outcomes.

The Added Value of Stakeholder Engagement: Understanding Performance

Outcomes

Beyond process oriented outcomes, a considerable amount of work has been done with regard to the impact of stakeholder engagement on public sector performance outcomes. One common metric used to measure performance outcomes is budgetary performance. Using state level Departments of Transportation across the United States, Neshkova and Guo (2012) examined the impacts of stakeholder engagement practices on budgetary performance. By indexing the type (mechanism), frequency, and timing of stakeholder engagement in the budgeting process, the authors were able to empirically establish that agencies that engaged stakeholders earlier and more often throughout the budgeting process performed better budgetarily than those agencies that engaged stakeholders through fewer mechanisms and less frequently throughout the budget process. By using a codified index of common stakeholder engagement practices, and regressing that against a continuous variable (revenues-expenditures), the authors provided strong evidence regarding the ability of stakeholder engagement to improve agency budgetary performance. Additionally, Guo & Neshkova (2013) built on their previous work by demonstrating that agencies that have more autonomy regarding the manner in which they engage stakeholders perform better budgetarily than agencies that adhere strictly and exclusively to state and federal stakeholder engagement mandates.

Additional support for indexing methods designed to weigh the impact of stakeholder engagement on organizational performance is provided by Gross (2015). Here, the author proposes a weighted index to examine the impact of stakeholder

engagement efforts on *Triple Bottom Line* (TBL) performance indicators. TBL performance indicators span *Environmental, Economic* and *Social* organizational performance categories. The author's proposed index assigns a weight to each category based on its perceived impact on stakeholder experience. By examining four public organizations, the author demonstrates how indexing TBL indicators can be useful in identifying both organizational priorities as well as their potential impacts on stakeholders. Ultimately, the author contends that while TBL indexing is useful, it must be coupled with preexisting organizational culture, priorities and practices in order to yield useful insight regarding stakeholder priorities.

Building on Neshkova and Guo's (2012) work, Park (2019) analyzed the relationship between the use of performance based budgeting as a function of stakeholder engagement in the budget process. To perform this analysis, the author used the *State of the Profession* survey data from the *International City Managers Association* (ICMA) paired with the *Comprehensive Annual Fiscal Report* (CARFS) data to develop the independent and dependent variables used in the analysis. Dependent variables ranged from "strategic planning" processes to evaluative criteria, while the independent variable was citizen stakeholder engagement – "Were citizens involved in decision-making related to the fiscal crisis, such as decisions about how to allocate resources?" and "If citizens were involved in these decisions, how?" (Park, 2019, p. 287). Here again, the author used an additive index to operationalize engagement. Lastly, the author used a number of control variables in the analysis that ranged from governance type to political conflicts, to education levels of leaders and per capita revenue.

Park (2019) found that cities that practiced stakeholder engagement in their budgeting process were more likely to adopt a performance based budgeting strategy. Further, the author found that when citizen stakeholders participate in performance based budgeting, agencies are more likely to engage in strategic planning. Lastly, additional findings pertaining to the control variables revealed that cities with higher levels of education among leaders are less likely to engage in performance based budgeting. Park (2019) postulates that this may be due to the higher average level of education among community members, their associated income levels and the resulting higher tax revenue base. Here, the author calls for a need for continued research in this area. Overall, Park's (2019) work adds support to assertions regarding the added benefits of stakeholder engagement in governance performance.

Here it should be noted that there is a rich sub-stream of literature pertaining to Participatory Budgeting (PB). Participatory Budgeting can be defined as a process that allows citizens to directly engage in the policy making process by giving them authority over budget allocation decisions through a democratic decision-making process (Wampler, 2000). Originating in Brazil, PB has now been implemented in various countries at various levels of government around the world – usually at the municipal level. The findings across the PB literature often mirror those findings in the larger stakeholder engagement literature as it pertains to performance – that it has mixed effects on both process and performance based outcomes. For example, Sintomer, Herzberg, and Rocke (2008) in an examination of the application of PB in cities across Europe, found that there were examples of PB leading to improved relationships between citizens and

administrator. However, the researchers also found that there were examples of constrained relationships between administrators and citizens in some localities. The authors offer two key findings; (I) that the quality of the outcomes of PB efforts are dependent upon the conditions under which they take place, and (II) that the performance impacts of PB are difficult to elucidate because of the differences in both models and applications of PB as well as the reality that PB is relatively new in its broad application as an engagement strategy.

Ultimately, as it pertains to this research, PB informs the broader scope of this research by highlighting its potential ability to improve those consummative qualities of stakeholder engagement – such as increased equity and inclusion in public sector decision making processes. However, PB in its formal application is not something that is overtly used on a wide scale in the public transportation sector. Instead, stakeholder engagement specific to the public transportation sector focuses on a broader set of engagement best practices that are then applied (or not) to the budgetary process.

Beyond fiscally based performance outcomes, stakeholder engagement can yield more pragmatic, experiential outcomes. Cascetta and Pagliara (2013) used a case study of railway system performance in the Campania region of Italy. The authors found that when stakeholders are engaged through multiple mechanisms (internet, phone, in-person small groups etc.) and throughout the planning process, transportation planners were able to create more accurate user forecasts as well as build out service infrastructure tailored to the needs of users (Cascetta & Pagliara, 2013).

Additional work by Lindenau and Böhler-Baedeker (2014) in the area of transportation planning reviewed and analyzed the stakeholder engagement literature specific to local transportation systems throughout the European Union (EU). The authors found that those systems that prioritized stakeholder engagement early and often in their planning were better able to build out systems that served the needs of their communities (Lindenau & Böhler-Baedeker, 2014).

Stakeholder engagement studies in developing countries also provide useful insight regarding the potential benefits of stakeholder engagement practices for governance performance. Here, Sherman and Ford (2014) conducted a broad study regarding the impacts of stakeholder engagement on climate adaptation projects in developing countries, and Ndaguba and Hanyane (2019) examined the community and economic development literature to assess the potential impact of stakeholder engagement practices to improve the economic development efforts in South Africa municipalities. Sherman and Ford (2014) examined the stakeholder engagement processes and evaluated the performance of 18 climate adaptation projects in three developing countries. The authors present a range of findings regarding the impacts of stakeholder engagement on project performance. These impacts range from equity to sustainability, to program legitimacy. Further, the authors found that limited institutional capacity hindered stakeholder engagement efforts and by extension the aforementioned benefits. Additionally, the authors compared program management structures and found that those programs that adhered to a rigid hierarchy regarding project planning and practiced limited stakeholder engagement did not perform as well regarding project

“effectiveness”, “efficiency”, “sustainability”, “legitimacy” and “replicability”⁵ (Sherman & Ford, 2014, p. 425). Ndaguba and Hanyane (2019), reviewed the economic development literature and found that approaches to economic development that prioritize stakeholder engagement see more successful and sustained economic development efforts. The authors suggest that the prioritization of stakeholder engagement is key to the success of economic development models and the reduction of poverty in South African Municipalities.

Sherman and Ford’s (2014) work provides further support not only for the positive impact of stakeholder engagement efforts on performance outcomes, but also, the potential positive impact of perception oriented outcomes such as governance legitimacy. Additionally, Ndaguba and Hanyane’s (2019) work suggests the potential for improved community and economic development – and the subsequent reduction of poverty – through the prioritization of stakeholder engagement practices.

Lastly, it should be briefly acknowledged that stakeholder engagement has the potential to bring pragmatic benefits to the community that go beyond organizational project outcomes. Here, building on their previous work, Cascetta et al. (2020) found that improving transit provision through stakeholder engagement brought notable economic growth to those areas. These findings highlight the importance of stakeholder engagement in planning processes and the resulting potential external benefits brought to communities.

⁵ See page 420 of referenced article for operationalized definitions

From budget-based performance outcomes to program and project outcomes, there is a strong case that inclusive stakeholder engagement practices – if optimized – have the potential to improve a range of performance outcomes. From perception, to process, to performance oriented outcomes, there is an expansive body of stakeholder engagement literature that provides support for the added value of stakeholder engagement in public (and private) sector decision making processes. At the same time, it has also been widely acknowledged that these purported benefits are highly dependent on design and implementation factors that have the potential to hinder collaborative stakeholder engagement efforts (Bartels, 2013; Conner, 2017).

Barriers to Stakeholder Engagement: Limitations, Insights and Opportunities

To this point, it has been well established that there are clear potential benefits to inclusive stakeholder engagement practices at the organizational level. The stakeholder engagement literature has also provided insight regarding potential limitations and barriers to stakeholder engagement, and by extension, the potential for lost benefits. These barriers can occur at the organizational level, pertaining to such factors as organizational capacity and culture, communication methods and practices, and political dynamics related to a history of organizational conflict. Barriers can also pertain to factors exogenous to the organization or institution. Often alluded to are exogenous barriers faced by citizen stakeholders such as income and mobility limitations etc. Here, it has been widely acknowledged that socioeconomic factors can impact the ability of citizen stakeholders to participate in public decision making processes (Fung, 2006; Fung, 2015).

Often referred to as “*The Dark Side of Stakeholder Engagement*” (Kujala, Sachs, Leinonen, Heikkinen and Laude, 2022, P. 165), stakeholder engagement practices at the organizational level have the potential to have negative impacts on organizational decision making processes. Here again, the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) literature provides relevant insight. A meta-analysis of CSR stakeholder engagement research – spanning multiple management and policy disciplines – performed by Kujala et al. (2022) found that various organizational elements can cause disruption in decision making processes and ultimately impact outcomes when stakeholders are involved. These organizational elements can include a range of organizational factors such as managerial or stakeholder self-interest, mission misalignment, and various types of bad-faith behaviors on both the part of stakeholders as well as managers (Kujala et al. 2022). These findings mirror stakeholder engagement research conducted within the public sector.

Within public sector-oriented stakeholder engagement literature, it has been established that organizational factors – such as history of conflict with stakeholders (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004; Reed, 2008) – can impede stakeholder engagement processes. Likewise, organizational capacity is also often seen as a significant barrier to successful stakeholder engagement (Bartels, 2014; Sherman & Ford, 2014). As an example of the potential impacts of organizational capacity on the policy process, Riley, Taylor, and Eliot (2003) conducted a qualitative study of public health program implementation. The authors found that the policy implementation process was highly dependent on organization staffing capacity, leadership predisposition, hierarchical structure, and the knowledge and abilities of the staff (Riley et. al., 2003). Here, the authors’ work

emphasizes the various aspects of organizational capacity and the role they might play in the policy process. Finally, the potential relationship between socioeconomic conditions and organizational capacity finds additional support from Diehl et al. (2018). The authors performed a meta-analysis of approximately three-hundred studies in multiple countries that focused on factors that impact organizational capacity. The authors found that exogenous socioeconomic conditions such as high income inequality, have a negative impact on employee productivity and performance. Perhaps more relevant to this review, the authors also found that poor socioeconomic conditions negatively impacted “*Organizational Citizenship Behavior*” (p. 9). The authors define the term *Organizational Citizenship Behavior* as the organization’s predominant disposition toward recognizing and honoring the civic rights of employees as well as the broader community (Diehl et al., 2018). The authors’ work contributes to the understanding of the impacts of socioeconomic factors on organizational capacity, and lays the groundwork for closer examination of the impacts of socioeconomic preconditions on specific aspects of organizational capacity – such as stakeholder engagement practices.

Work in the area of social capital as a subfield of political science provides additional insight in this area. Here again, the work of Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti (1994) provides some insight. While the primary focus of Putnam et al.’s (1994) work pertained to the relationship between governance structure and social capital, the expansiveness of the authors’ modeling yielded additional insights. Some of the authors’ results suggested a potential relationship between regional wealth and higher levels of *civic engagement*. That is, that regions with higher median incomes were more engaged

in governance decision making than those regions with lower incomes. However, it should be noted that the authors stop short of declaring a causal relationship here. While Putnam et al's (1994) main thesis is that democracy begets wealth, the potential relationship between socioeconomic preconditions and increased *civic engagement* finds some support in the peripheral theory of modernization. Modernization theory holds that factors such as industrialization, education, and economic development are necessary preconditions to democratization (Carothers, 2002). While modernization theory is primarily focused on regime transition, this literature sheds light on the potential for wealth to beget democratic governance, norms and values. For example, Carothers (2002) examines claims related to prerequisites for regime authoritarian regime change. By reviewing regimes that are said to be in "transition", the author finds that claims pertaining to motivated leadership as a primary driver of democratic transition are rather obsolete. Instead, there is support for the assertion that factors akin to modernization are primary drivers of democratization (Carothers, 2002).

Fiorina (1999) addresses the potential impacts of socioeconomic factors on stakeholder engagement by examining contentious localized policy decisions within the United States. While the author does not perform a notable empirical study, the author's examination of the decision making process reveals the potentially negative aspects of stakeholder engagement. More specifically, in examining cases of land use decisions, the author identifies ways in which people and groups with less resources are often drowned out by more powerful and resource rich stakeholders. Further, the author holds as a result, that those impacted most by these policy decisions are often the least represented in the

process. Here, the author frames this as a potential downside of inclusive stakeholder engagement due to the ability of certain actors to dominate both the process as well as the outcomes. The author's work highlights ways in which socioeconomic factors can impede stakeholders and disrupt the equity of stakeholder engagement efforts.

The assertions made by Fiorina (1999) find additional support in the work of Krupa et al. (2020). Taking advantage of Alaska's unique public policy proposal process, the authors quantitatively demonstrated that policy proposals are both more frequently submitted by stakeholders with more resources as well as more frequently adopted (Krupa et al., 2020). The state of Alaska employs a rather unique policy proposal process through which any stakeholder – or stakeholder group – may put forward any number of policy proposals suited to their preferences pertaining to a given policy problem. By analyzing the number of proposals put forth by various stakeholders and the subsequent policy adoption choices made by public officials, the authors not only presented a novel method for quantifying stakeholder engagement, but also, found that Alaska's stakeholder engagement process lacked equity and favored those stakeholders that were both resource rich as well as positionally powerful. This often resulted in a lack of representation (fewer proposals) and influence (less adoption) in the policy process for stakeholders that faced barriers related to socioeconomic factors (Krupa et al., 2020).

Taken together, Putnam et al's (1994) work in social capital, Fiorina's (1999) examination of *civic engagement* practices in the United States, and Krupa et al.'s (2020) analytical work specific to stakeholder engagement practices in Alaska's public decision making processes, there is a strong case for the impact of socioeconomic barriers on both

the ability of the citizen stakeholder to participate as well as the integrity of the stakeholder engagement process itself.

Drawing from diverse streams of literature, this review has demonstrated the potential benefits and barriers to stakeholder engagement. Barriers to stakeholder engagement can range from institutional and organizational capacity and culture to socioeconomic conditions that limit the citizen-stakeholder's ability to access public decision making processes. While organizational capacity has the potential to impact stakeholder engagement, and the potential impact of socioeconomic conditions on both access to public decision making processes as well as organizational capacity has been established, there remains an opportunity for further exploration regarding the potential impact of socioeconomic factors on organizational capacity specific to stakeholder engagement practices, regarding the potential impact organizational qualities on applied organizational stakeholder engagement practices, the potential impact of organizational stakeholder engagement practices on organizational performance. This review serves as framework for understanding the history and development of stakeholder engagement in contemporary governance contexts, detailing the work that has been done regarding stakeholder engagement processes, outcomes and barriers, and highlighting opportunities for additional research.

Building on the literature reviewed, this dissertation primarily seeks to address the specific gap related to the potential impact of organizational qualities (dimensions) on organizational stakeholder engagement practices. That is, this research is focused not only on the design and execution of stakeholder engagement practices, but more

centrally, the broader organizational qualities (dimensions) that provide the organizational context for stakeholder engagement practices. Here, attempts to define, categorize, analyze, and understand effective stakeholder engagement practices often utilize either semi-typological tools that contain an enmeshment of consummative and practical elements – creating a potentially conflated understanding of stakeholder engagement qualities and applied stakeholder engagement practices – or a set of limited applied practices that are accepted as effective across public sector settings. These typologies range from Arnstein’s *Ladder of Participation* (Arnstein, 1969), focusing on level of involvement, communication and power, to decision-making charts that focus on designing engagement based on pragmatic managerial need and resource management (Thomas, 1993; Beierle, 2000), to tools like Fung’s (2006) *Democracy Cube* – designed to assess types of communication and level of involvement. Here, there is a need to clarify dominant understandings of stakeholder engagement by separating, yet accommodating, both consummative and practical elements when examining various aspects of stakeholder engagement at the organizational level.

Additionally, this research is concerned with the potential relationship between exogenous socioeconomic conditions on organizational stakeholder engagement practices, as well as the subsequent performance outcomes related to public service provision. As a potential peripheral benefit, this research might also add to parallel streams of literature in the areas of *Social Capital and Modernization* through the exploration of the potential relationship between socioeconomic preconditions and the stakeholder engagement practices of government agencies. Finally, this review has also

demonstrated the ongoing need within Public Administration scholarship to better understand factors that contribute to organizational stakeholder engagement processes as well as their subsequent outcomes.

Chapter 2

Research Design, Methods and Analysis

Introduction: Design and Methods

The potential positive impacts of stakeholder engagement on various aspects of organizational performance have been well documented (Neshkova & Guo, 2014; Connor, 2017). These impacts can range from improved budgetary adherence to improved service delivery for key services such as public transportation (Neshkova & Guo, 2013; Lindenau & Bohler-Baedeker, 2014; Connor, 2017; Ignaccolo, Inturr, Giuffrida, Le Pira, and Torrisi, 2017). Extensive research in the area of stakeholder engagement has also provided insight regarding not only the impacts of stakeholder engagement but also the process of stakeholder engagement itself. These insights include the optimal timing of engagement, the efficacy of various engagement methods as well as the frequency and composition (who participates) of engagement throughout decision making processes (Reed, 2008; Jones, 2011; Bartels, 2013). Finally, research in the area of stakeholder engagement has also identified key organizational factors that can either limit or encourage fruitful stakeholder engagement. These organizational factors can range from practical operational capacity limitations – such as limits to staffing, budget and institutional expertise – to less tangible elements such as organizational culture, leadership disposition and history of conflict with particular groups of stakeholders (Reed, 2008; Krupa, McCarthy, Cunfer and Clark, 2020). Research has made clear that while design and procedural elements are key to successful stakeholder engagement, so too are elements of organizational capacity. While a handful of studies have provided key insights into the impacts of organizational capacity and other institutional elements on

stakeholder engagement practices, many of these studies employ case study methodology to observe such impacts. While this does not inherently diminish their findings, it does indicate a need for further research in the area of organizational impacts on stakeholder engagement practices as applied to expanded and diverse contexts.

This research asks three questions regarding organizational stakeholder engagement:

- (I) Primary Research Question: *How do organizational qualities affect stakeholder engagement practices?*

When examining stakeholder engagement at the organizational level, the literature often discusses two concepts; (I) the organizational qualities that lead to the prioritization of stakeholder engagement, and (II) the actual applied practices of engaging stakeholders. Here, research has established a set of qualities that can be observed in organizations that prioritize stakeholder engagement in their internal decision making processes. These qualities include trust, equity in the process, targeted stakeholder recruitment for representation, leadership attitudes toward stakeholders, a focus on a clear objective, and more (Stansbury, 2004; Reed, 2008). Likewise, research has established a set of stakeholder engagement practices that are often regarded as being most effective when engaging stakeholders at the organizational level. These practices range from early and ongoing engagement in the decision making process, to the use of focused, small group work sessions, to the dissemination of policy relevant informational material (Fung, 2006;

Bartels, 2013; Neshkova & Guo, 2014). Taken together, research has established both the organizational qualities needed for the prioritization of stakeholder engagement and also, the stakeholder engagement practices that are regarded as effective when engaging stakeholders. This research seeks – in part – to understand the connection between the organizational qualities associated with the prioritization of stakeholder engagement in decision-making processes and the stakeholder engagement practices widely regarded as effective in order to develop a typological tool that can be used to assess the impacts of organizational qualities on the applied organizational stakeholder engagement practices.

(II) Secondary Research Question (A): *How do exogenous socioeconomic factors affect organizational stakeholder engagement?*

Initial research indicates that socioeconomic factors such as education and income can impact internal organizational capacity when employees experience external financial hardship (Diehl, Richter and Sarnecki, 2018). Further, an abundance of research points to socioeconomic conditions as potential barriers to stakeholder engagement. These barriers can impact everything from the citizen-stakeholder's ability to participate in public decision making processes (Stansbury, 2004; Fung, 2006) to the power dynamics present within a given stakeholder arrangement (Fiorina, 1999; Krupa et al., 2020).

(III) Secondary Research Question (B): *Does the prioritization and practice of effective stakeholder engagement at the organizational level yield better performance outcomes?*

By treating organizational qualities and stakeholder engagement practices as separate but related, this research can then ask the question of outcomes. That is, do stakeholder engagement practices at the organizational level that are widely regarded as effective, actually yield better outcomes. Here, there is a strong body of research that suggests that stakeholder engagement provides useful insight in policy problem identification, communicates preferences in a way that helps refine policy solutions, and impacts outcomes that range from budget adherence to service delivery (Neshkova & Guo, 2012; Gross, 2015; Park, 2019). Additionally, some research has suggested that stakeholder engagement can improve overall perceptions of organizational legitimacy (Ndaguba & Hanyane, 2019; Pyrialakou, Gkritza & Liu, 2019). This research will operationalize organizational performance through two sector specific performance metrics; longitudinal ridership (year over year percent change) and budgetary performance. Here, there are many ways to operationalize budget performance. For example, some research regarding the impacts of stakeholder engagement on budgetary performance utilizes overall operating budgets as a way to capture budgetary performance (Neshkova & Guo, 2012; Park, 2019). This research will attempt to operationalize budgetary performance through year-over-year percent change in an agencies budget net

position in order to capture both operational aspects of budget performance as well as more elusive or latent budget components – such as capital spending, various internal returns on investment, rainy day funds and federal funding matches. In this way, a year-over-year percent change in net position also allows for the mitigation of single year funding windfalls, and provides a more wholistic view of an agencies budget.

The goal of this research is to contribute to the larger body of stakeholder engagement literature in the following ways: (I) by developing a semi-typological tool that might be used by researchers and practitioners to understand how organizational qualities might impact the application of stakeholder engagement practices, (II) by exploring the potential upstream impacts of socioeconomic conditions on downstream elements of organizational qualities and practices, and (III) by examining the potential impact of stakeholder engagement practices on organizational performance. This research can be visualized as follows in diagram 1.



Figure 1: Research Questions

Pertaining to research question 1, stakeholder engagement research often relies on typological or prescriptive approaches to understanding and developing best practices regarding organizational stakeholder engagement. Additionally, best practices are often an enmeshment of both consummative qualities – those qualities that uphold a social norm or expectation between stakeholders – as well as pragmatic applied engagement practices. This research seeks to examine these practices independent of one another at the organizational level in order to understand their respective impacts on both organizational stakeholder engagement efforts as well as organizational performance outcomes (2B). In this way, this research has the potential to add granularity related to the added value of specific organizational stakeholder engagement best practices and their respective impacts on organizational performance.

Lastly, as it pertains to the potential impact of exogenous socioeconomic conditions on organizational stakeholder engagement efforts, multiple streams of literature – from democratization to modernization, to stakeholder engagement literature have traditionally pointed to socioeconomic conditions as a barrier to civic, democratic, and stakeholder engagement. This research aims to enrich and inform that literature by examining the impacts of socioeconomic conditions on governmental and organizational engagement efforts.

In order to examine the potential impacts of organizational capacity on stakeholder engagement practices, this research will employ a *Most Similar Systems* approach to case study selection and examination. Here, organizational capacity is being operationalized through the examination resource allocation to stakeholder engagement

efforts. These resources include; (I) budgetary resources allocated to organizational stakeholder engagement efforts, (II) The staffing of personnel trained in various aspects of stakeholder engagement or public outreach, and (III) the allocation of staffing numbers to carry out engagement efforts and activities. A *Most Similar Systems* approach to case study methodology allows for the isolation of particular variables of interest while attempting to limit confounding factors by utilizing case studies that share a set of similarities but are different concerning a particular element of interest to the research being done (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). In the case of this research, case study organizations will be drawn from the United States public transportation sector, with the primary variable of interest being the quality of organizational stakeholder engagement. That is, this study will utilize organizations that are similar in most ways though potentially different in their organizational capacity and practice of stakeholder engagement.

Additionally, this research will employ *Content Analysis* as its primary analytical data collection method. Three main forms of content analysis – *Conventional*, *Directed*, and *Summative* – comprise the dominant available approaches to this data collection method (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This research will specifically employ the primary tenants of *Directed* content analysis focusing on existing categorizations of both organizational dimensions as well as applied stakeholder engagement practices that have been established through the extant stakeholder engagement literature (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Finally, due to the interest in the potential impacts of socioeconomic factors on organizational stakeholder engagement, socioeconomic data from case study locations will also be examined and treated as an independent variable. Finally, to understand any potential impacts of stakeholder engagement practices on organizational performance, performance data will be collected whenever possible and treated as an outcome or dependent variable in relation to stakeholder engagement practices.

Public Transportation Service Provision

The U.S. public transportation sector provides an ideal service provision model for the study of stakeholder engagement, specifically as it relates to citizen-stakeholder engagement, for several key reasons: (I) the use of *Transit Authorities*⁶ provides a uniform institution through which to apply a *Most Similar* case study methodology, (II) public transportation is an essential and widely used service, (III) both empirical and perception based performance data is regularly collected and relatively easily accessed, and (IV) scholars have recognized the uniqueness of public transportation as a model for studying various aspects of stakeholder engagement due to its highly technical nature while still being dependent on user feedback for policy and delivery improvement.

While at the local level, the governance arrangements of transit authorities can be a complex collaboration comprised of multiple localities and government agencies, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) – under the United States Department of Transportation – along with state regulators govern these localized arrangements. For the

⁶ The term *Transit Authority* will be used broadly to refer to Metropolitan Transit Authority, Regional Transit Authority, and Metropolitan Planning Organization.

purposes of this research, these governance arrangements are of less concern, and the unit of analysis will be the localized transit agency tasked with the direct provision of public transportation services. Therefore, this research will forego discussions that go beyond governance arrangements that do not directly impact the stakeholder engagement practices of the direct transportation service provider. Pertinent to this discussion are the federal requirements and oversight provided by the FTA with regard to the stakeholder engagement practices of the public transportation service provider. The FTA was created in 1964 under President Johnson after almost ten years of legislative efforts. The agency is tasked with the allocation of federal funding to local transit authorities, ensuring adherence to federal laws and regulations, and providing technical assistance when needed on large infrastructure projects (Federal Transit Administration, 2020). In order to carry the designation of transit authority and access federal assistance, the agency must adhere to the guidance of the FTA. The nature of this institutional arrangement guarantees through federal law (23 CFR 450.316) that some base level of stakeholder engagement must take place at the local level during capital project planning and policy proposals. These base requirements for stakeholder engagement are (I) Notice of meetings, (II) Review of public comments throughout the planning process, and (III) digital and in-person accessibility (FTA, 2020). The federal requirement for stakeholder engagement means that each case study agency will utilize some level of engagement, allowing this research to scale the specific engagement within agencies that differ in their capacity and capabilities

Case Study Candidates: Selection Criteria

Selection of case study locations was determined by a number of factors. Methodologically, the goal in selection was to select between six and nine case study agencies that varied in organizational qualities with regard to their respective prioritization of stakeholder engagement. These qualities included; (I) adequate organizational capacity with regard to staffing, funding, and expertise, (II) accessibility, equity and inclusivity, and (III) institutionalized policies regarding stakeholder engagement practices (See Tables 2 through 7). Further selection criteria focused on (I) location population, (II) service provider coverage area, (III) governance structure of the service provider, and (IV) the availability of data for the selected service providers (See table 1).

Table 1: Case Study Descriptions

Location	~Population ⁷	~Coverage (Sqm)	Service Provider	Governance Structure	Data Accessibility
Seattle, WA	1.2 M	6,000	Sound Transit	Proportionate Rep	Strong
Portland, OR	2.4 M	2,900	TriMet	Appointed by Governor	Strong
Denver, CO	*3.8 M	2,300	Regional Transit	Districted Election	Adequate
Memphis, TN	706,000	280	MATA	Appointed (By Mayor)	Adequate
Oklahoma City, OK	681,000	621	EMBARK	Hybrid Appointed and Elected	Weak

While the initial goal was to select six to nine cases, this research ultimately identified five case study locations based on the identification of medium to medium-large municipalities with medium to medium-large transit systems that met the forementioned criteria for data availability. Other potential case study candidates were eliminated based on either the complexity of their transit systems serving multiple large

⁷ Populations represent the total population of the municipalities included in the service coverage area

urban populations, or a lack of clarity in data availability due to multiple systems and agencies serving a given population.

Data Collection

In order to answer the three research questions posed by this dissertation, three distinct types of data were collected; (I) qualitative data regarding organizational qualities and stakeholder engagement practices, (II) socioeconomic data pertaining to each of the five case study locations, and (III) commonly used system performance measures for each of the five case study agencies. Used in conjunction with one another, the three types of data are used to operationalize variables of interest to this research, and provide a comprehensive profile of each the case study agency and location. By taking this comprehensive approach to data collection, this research will be able to examine the potential impacts on stakeholder engagement that are both endogenous and exogenous to each of the five case study locations as well as identify any potential impacts of stakeholder engagement practices on agency performance.

Primary Question: Organizational capacity indicators and applied stakeholder engagement practices

In order to examine any potential impacts of organizational capacity on the stakeholder engagement practices of a given agency, an agency profile was created for each of the five case study agencies using analysis of publicly available documentation, information, and media⁸. The information used in the creation of the agency profiles pertained to both various elements of organizational capacity as well as aspects of

⁸ Media refers to archival documents and recordings (i.e. public meetings)

stakeholder engagement practices widely regarded as effective in the stakeholder engagement literature. This data was collected using three different sources; (I) public facing documentation and information⁹ regarding the agencies capacity to practice stakeholder engagement as well as what those specific practices are, (II) conversations with administrators regarding specific stakeholder engagement efforts carried out within the agency, and (III) observations of public meetings in order to understand the practical interactions between stakeholders and administrators.

To collect public facing information, each agency website was mined for all information regarding the agency's capacity and applied stakeholder engagement practices. This information included; organizational charts, staffing capacity with regard to the role(s) and responsibilities of staff tasked with public engagement/relations, the use, authority and role of advisory committees that participate in agency decision making processes, any institutional codified policies that dictate stakeholder engagement practices, any promotional, educational, or outreach material used to engage stakeholders, as well as public meeting minutes that detailed interactions between stakeholders and administrators.

To bolster this publicly available data, conversations with public administrators at each of the five agencies were used to provide more in-depth information regarding practical aspects of the agencies' stakeholder engagement practices. These conversations pertained to agency practices concerning four basic dimensions of stakeholder engagement; (I) stakeholder analysis, (II) stakeholder outreach, (III) stakeholder

⁹ Public facing documentation and information includes any information available through agency press release or website content

communication, and (IV) stakeholder interactions. Approximately three questions per dimension guided these conversations and were designed to identify key aspects of each dimension of stakeholder engagement. The information provided through these conversations not only detailed agency practice with regard to internal stakeholder engagement operations, but also, provided insight into agency priorities and practices when interacting directly with stakeholders. To supplement the conversations in the event that person-to-person interaction was not able to be achieved, questions were sent to administrators and written responses to the guiding questions were provided.

Finally, public meetings were either attended virtually at each of the five case study agencies or archival footage of public meetings was observed in order to observe first-hand stakeholder interactions, the role of each stakeholder in the public setting, the time and authority distribution among stakeholders, and the nature of the interactions between stakeholders. These observations further supplemented the public facing data as well as the conversations with agency administrators. In the event that a given agency did not make archival recordings available, public meeting minutes were collected and reviewed in order to supplement either the live attendance or archival recordings of public meetings. Ultimately, these observations highlighted key elements of stakeholder interactions such as the time distribution given to various stakeholders and the manner in which interactions do or do not take place between stakeholders

Introduction to Organizational Profiles and the *Organizational Stakeholder Engagement Rubric* (OSER)

The three sources of qualitative data – public facing information, conversations with agency administrators and observations of public meetings – were used to create detailed organizational profiles of each case study location. These profiles provide a brief overview of the organization’s history, the organization’s governance structure, the organization’s capacity¹⁰ to carry out stakeholder engagement for projects and policies that might benefit from stakeholder input, the organization's applied stakeholder engagement practices, as well as limitations faced by this research in collecting qualitative data from each location. Accompanying each written profile is a table used to highlight key dimensions of stakeholder engagement predominantly regarded within the stakeholder engagement literature as *effective*. In order to organize, categorize, and eventually analyze the data collected from each of the five case study locations, this dissertation presents an indexing rubric designed to separate organizational qualities (*Dimensions*) from applied organizational stakeholder engagement practices referred to as the *Organizational Stakeholder Engagement Rubric* (OSER). Indexing of the data took place across six organizational stakeholder engagement dimensions. These dimensions were; (I) *Organizational Capacity*, (II) *Accessibility and Representation*, (III) *Equity*, (IV) *Inclusion*, (V) *Frequency*, and (VI) *Institutionalization*. Following the organization of content across the six dimensions, the data was separated into two categories; (I)

¹⁰ Organizational capacity refers to those elements set forth in the literature pertaining to an organizations ability to conduct effective stakeholder engagement. These elements include; Adequate Staffing Capacity, Budget, Leadership predisposition etc.

Organizational Dimensions, and (II) *Applied Stakeholder Engagement Practices*. The rubric then yields a score out of 24 possible points across the six dimensions – resulting in a summed score at the bottom of the rubric intended to indicate the overall level of stakeholder engagement at the organizational level. An example of the resulting table can be found below.

Table 2: Example Organizational Stakeholder Engagement Rubric

Example Table: Transit Agency			
SE Dimensions	Organizational Dimensions	Applied Stakeholder Engagement Practices	Score
Adequate Organizational Capacity Organizational capacity indicators	Organizational indicators for the dimension listed to the left	How are these qualities expressed in organizational practices pertaining to stakeholder engagement?	Score out of 4 possible points
Accessible and Representative How does participation take place and who participates?	Organizational indicators for the dimension listed to the left	How are these qualities expressed in organizational practices pertaining to stakeholder engagement?	4/4
Equitable Who has power and how is that power exercised in the decision making process?	Organizational indicators for the dimension listed to the left	How are these qualities expressed in organizational practices pertaining to stakeholder engagement?	4/4
Inclusive How is SE knowledge used to inform the decision making process?	Organizational indicators for the dimension listed to the left	How are these qualities expressed in organizational practices pertaining to stakeholder engagement?	4/4

Frequency When and how often does stakeholder engagement take place throughout the decision making process?	Organizational indicators for the dimension listed to the left	How are these qualities expressed in organizational practices pertaining to stakeholder engagement?	4/4
Institutionalized Codified organization level policies	Practical organizational indicators for characteristics listed to the left	How are these qualities expressed in organizational practices pertaining to stakeholder engagement?	4/4
Score	20/20 [Excluding Organizational Capacity] [24/24 Overall]		

For each dimension, there was a possible available score of 1-4, with 1 indicating a low level usage of that dimension and 4 indicating a high level usage of that dimension at the organization level. Each table yielded two total overall scores – one score that excluded the organizational capacity dimension (20 possible points) – in order to mitigate any confounding influence of that dimension on the remaining five dimensions – and one score that included all six dimensions (24 possible points). The score for each dimension was then assigned a categorical value of either high = 4, medium = 2 to 3, or low = 1. The overall scoring categorization for the exclusion of organizational capacity out of 20 possible points was either 16-20 = high, 10-15 = Medium, and 5-9 = low. For the score that includes all six dimensions, out of a possible total score of 24 points, the categorizations were 17-24 = high, 12-16 = medium, and 6-11 = low. These categorizations are reflective of the level of usage of stakeholder engagement best practices at the organizational level.

A possible score of 1-4, and a trichotomous categorical coding scheme was used due to the varied nature of the qualitative data. Both the scoring and the categorization schemes are intended to capture the variation in different approaches to each of the six stakeholder engagement dimensions. The table below offers an example of the criteria used when assigning numeric values to each dimension¹¹.

Table 3: Categorical Indicators

SE Dimension	High Indicator	Medium Indicator	Low Indicator
Organizational Capacity	Staff devoted to stakeholder engagement or other activities at the leadership level Budget allocation for specific stakeholder engagement efforts – including staffing support	Staff that are tasked with stakeholder engagement efforts but are not at the leadership level Single staff member/non department Limited funding	Absence of devoted staff position and insufficient funding
Accessible and Representative	Representation at leadership level Multiple opportunities and avenues to participate Targeted outreach strategies	Non-elected leadership Still multiple opportunities to participate No codified targeted outreach strategies	Non-elected leadership Limited participatory pathways No codified or implemented outreach strategy or plan
Equitable	Participatory pathways are imbued with influence or authority in decision-making processes	Participation takes place but there is limited authority or influence	Participation and authority is highly controlled by leadership
Inclusive	Multiple participatory opportunities that vary in form and mitigate barriers – all of which imbue the participants with some level of influence or authority	Participatory pathways exist but they are limited in their scope and ability to mitigate a range of barriers	Participation does not work to account for or mitigate a range of barriers
Frequency	Engagement initiated early and used consistently	Engagement takes place sporadically	Engagement assumes traditional forms and

¹¹ Coding decisions were based on the available data and the combination of factors represented in the table above

	throughout the decision making process	throughout the decision making process	only occurs at the outset of the decision making process
Institutionalized Policy	The presence of a formalized and comprehensive engagement plan at the organizational level	Strategies that are made available but not comprehensive	No codified engagement plan or strategy

Organizational Profiles

Sound Transit – Seattle WA

History

The history of transit – particularly rail transit – in Seattle, Washington and the surrounding areas is a complicated one, full of potential, missed opportunities, political strife, as well as success. Attempts to form and fund a modern rail system in Seattle as well as a regional Metro government date back to the 1950’s – with the earliest attempts failing by vote in 1952 and 1958 respectively (King County – Milestones 1950’s, 2022). It was not until 1973 that voters finally approved the creation of King County Metro (or Metro), having missed prior opportunities in 1970 to secure \$1 Billion of Federal funding intended for a rail system that would serve Seattle and the surrounding areas (King County – Milestones 1970’s, 2022). That 1970 bond measure as well as all other transportation related bond measures of 1970 failed by a ~6% margin. In its place, a county level vote approved a 0.3% sales tax to fund Metro. The sales tax was backed by a state legislature approved funding match and designated for the creation of the new agency with the capacity to provide bus-only transportation services. Metro’s ability to impose county-level excise tax is codified in legislation along with the creation of the agency and was further upheld, despite challenges, by the Washington State Supreme Court in 1976 (King County – Milestones 1970’s, 2022).

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Metro expands its services and service area while also implementing regional long-range transportation planning – including its first major rail projects – within its coverage area. Additionally, the agency forms key partnerships with the surrounding counties of Pierce and Snohomish in order to expand a collaborative service area well beyond the Seattle metro area (King County Metro – Milestones, 2022). Entering the 2000s, Metro faced major funding shortfalls primarily due to statewide transportation funding limitations as well as a voter approved reduction in county level vehicle excise taxes - resulting in a major service reduction on the part of Metro. Despite these major funding challenges, through the mid-2000s Metro was able to once again build out its service capacity through minor organizational restructuring and providing scheduling flexibility to support and service staff (King County Metro – Milestones 2000s, 2022). To date, King County Metro holds contractual agreements with Sound Transit to operate both Sound Transit Light Rail trains as well as the additional buses provided by a small fleet of Sound Transit Buses (King County Metro, 2022).

While King County Metro still provides bus services to the Seattle metro area, attempts to form a larger Regional Transit Authority (RTA) for Seattle and surrounding areas did not die in the 1950's. However, it was not until 1996 that voters in three counties – King, Pierce, and Snohomish – finally approved the creation of an RTA. Designated *Sound Move*, voters approved the creation of a new organization – Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (or Sound Transit) – to spearhead the building and operating of a light rail transportation system across the three county area (Sound Transit, 2022). Broken into three developmental phases – *Sound Move*, *Sound Transit 2*,

and *Sound Transit 3* – represent the RTA’s long-range transportation plans from the mid-1990s to the early 2020s. Each phase requires additional voter approval and is primarily funded through property tax levies across the three county area. The initial phase of development saw the building of 91 total miles of rail (Light and heavy) and the addition of bus services to complement the service provided by King County Metro (Sound Transit, 2022). With relative success during the first phase of development, voters once again approved *Sound Transit 2* in 2008 at an estimated overall project cost of to the voters of \$7.8 Billion over the life of the project (15 years). This phase of the project was heavily focused on the expansion of light-rail specific service and bolstering bus service capacity with a completion deadline of 2023. However, due to the economic recession of the mid-2000s as well as a number of other variables – including increased construction costs – Sound Transit was forced to reallocate *Sound Transit 2* funding to maintaining existing infrastructure (Sound Transit, 2008).

Despite financial challenges and delayed timelines due to exogenous variables as well as decreasing confidence in Sound Transit’s ability to deliver on projects and projections, voters approved the final *Sound Transit 3* package in November of 2016. While *ST2* approaches its deadline, the third phase of development has been running concurrently since 2016. *ST3* has a project timeline that extends to 2041 and focuses on building light-rail infrastructure that will eventually connect 38 cities using a total of 116 miles of rail (heavy and light) from Everett to Tacoma, and east to Bellevue and Issaquah.

Organizational Governance

The Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (Sound Transit) is a state and federally recognized Regional Transit Authority (RTA). Approved by the Washington State Legislature in the mid-1990s, the organization is tasked with public transportation planning and provision in the central Puget Sound region covering Snohomish, King, and Pierce counties north to south (Sound Transit, 2022). While not categorically governed under the Washington State Department of Transportation (WASDOT), the organization is monitored (as are all state transit providers) by WASDOT to ensure compliance with established federal and state transit regulations. Beyond this, Sound Transit is governed by an 18-member board of directors. The board of directors are comprised of locally elected officials from the three-county coverage area. Seats on the board are appointed by the respective county executives, and the distribution of seats on the board are proportional to the population of each county (Sound Transit, 2022). Additionally, state law requires that a board seat be held by at least one elected official from the most populous municipality from each county and that unincorporated representation be proportionate to the representation of populous areas for each county (RCW 81.112.040). The 18th and final seat on the board is reserved for the State Secretary of Transportation.

The Proportional composition of the board is as follows; Snohomish – 3 members, King – 10 members, and Pierce – 4 Members. Codified through legislation, the proportional composition of the board – both at the county and local levels – is designed to ensure representation across the three counties. Furthermore, by composing the board

of locally elected officials (versus appointed professionals), it ensures at least some level of accountability and access to a sanctioning mechanism via electoral processes. Additionally, it could be argued that by composing the board in this manner and subjecting the board to the potential of sanctioning through electoral processes, board members may be more responsive to voter mandates as it pertains to transportation planning and performance. With that said, it should also be acknowledged that this proportional composition – like many forms of proportional representation – still has its limitations. Namely, that more populous areas have more votes, and in this case the two most populous counties (King and Pierce) control 2/3 of the voting with King County having enough votes to override both Snohomish and Pierce counties. The implication here is that the interests of King County are far more likely to be advanced over the interests of either of the two smaller counties. This has the potential to be problematic for a range of issues from taxation to long-range infrastructure planning that might benefit one area over the other.

While Sound Transit does not have the same authority to implement an excise tax that other transit agencies have – such as TriMet – State law gives them the ability to propose ballot measures and call for local and county level votes to increase funding for transit projects and provision (Sound Transit – Board Rules and Operating Procedures, 2022). Here again, the state of Washington as well as Sound Transit as an organization has placed a high value on organizational accountability via voter controlled funding increases. Taken together, the composition of the board as well as their well-defined and

limited authority indicates the recognition and prioritization of citizens as stakeholders in organizational activities despite the inherent limitations.

Organizational Capacity

With an 18-member board comprised of elected officials overseeing policymaking, long-range planning, and major infrastructure projects, the day-to-day operations within Sound Transit – from transit service provision to stakeholder engagement- are carried out by a robust staff of administrative and technical professionals. In addition to providing public transportation services to a three-county area, Sound Transit has to manage the interests of a diverse group of stakeholders that span multiple communities of varying size, different forms and levels of government (including tribal governments), a variety of business interests, and finally, any and all contractual partners.

In order to manage these interests, Sound Transit places a heavy organizational emphasis on public outreach, equity and inclusion, tribal relations, and contract management at the executive level. The organization staffs two separate and independent executive departments devoted to government and community relations, as well as equity and inclusion. Sound Transit's *Community and Government Relations* department staffs *Coordinators* that are responsible for managing both governmental and community-level stakeholder interests on a regional basis (South, North, and Central coverage regions), with executive level staff devoted specifically to managing tribal relationships. Additionally, the department devotes staff specifically to managing stakeholder relationships with board members. Sound Transit's *Diversity, Inclusion and Culture*

Executive department staffs DEI program managers and specialists as well as staff devoted specifically to adherence to civil rights and title IV compliance (Sound Transit, 2022). Finally, below the executive level, Sound Transit also staffs a *communications* department with 69 employees responsible for heading up various aspects of public relations and outreach efforts. These engagement and outreach efforts – at and below the executive level – comprise ~\$70,000 (over 10%) of the overall ~\$ 636,000 departmental operational budget (Sound Transit, 2022).

The organizational composition at the executive level as well as a devoted *Communications* department is indicative of an organization that has placed a premium on various aspects of stakeholder engagement. However, there is also an apparent lack of technical and engineering expertise reflected at the executive level (within the organizational chart). While the organization does have an executive level department devoted to systems operations, structurally that department is not as robust as other executive departments – such as the Diversity, Inclusion and Culture department. While this might appear problematic, this is likely due to the ongoing contractual relationship Sound Transit maintains with King County Metro. Here, King County Metro provides operations, maintenance, facilities management for Sound Transit bus and rail fleet (King County Metro, 2019).

With this unique and ongoing partnership, Sound Transit has been able to prioritize various aspects of stakeholder engagement at the executive level without sacrificing institutional knowledge and organizational capacity pertaining to the most pragmatic aspect of public transportation service provision. As a result, Sound Transit's

capacity for stakeholder engagement is able to be prioritized and encultured at the organizational level.

Stakeholder Engagement Practices

Across the remaining five dimensions of organizational stakeholder engagement qualities, Sound Transit places a high priority on creating an accessible, representative, and equitable stakeholder engagement environment. In order to achieve an accessible, representative and equitable stakeholder engagement process, the organization houses multiple committees comprised of a cross-section of the community. While the organization utilizes committees – such as the *Rider Experience Committee* – for administrative purposes, they also utilize committees to create participatory opportunities for external stakeholders. These committees include the *Diversity Oversight Committee* (DOC), the *Citizen Accessibility Advisory Committee* (CAAC), and the *Community Oversight Panel* (COP). These committees have a range of roles and responsibilities, with the *Diversity Oversight Committee* reporting directly to the CEO regarding equity and accessibility in Sound Transit contracting practices, and the *Citizen Oversight Panel* providing a measure of external accountability for projects and policy changes (Sound Transit – Diversity Oversight Committee, 2022; Sound Transit – Citizen Oversight Panel, 2022). Operating within board approved parameters, the 15 member *Citizen Oversight Panel* provides external accountability, monitoring and recommendations on a range of organizational activities. These activities include; stakeholder engagement activities, project related decision making, budget adherence, rider experience, and other internal

policy changes related to accessibility, equity and inclusion (Sound Transit – Citizen Oversight Panel, 2022).

While the panel has direct communication with the Sound Transit board and advises on a range of issues, the 15 members are approved to serve via board reviewed applications, and are severely limited in both their ability to formally influence board decision making as well as sanction undesirable board activities. The nomination process, as well as the limitations placed on the panel put both the power and the responsibility squarely on the board to ensure equitable panel composition and adoption of panel recommendations. The implication here, of course, is that the board still retains exclusive decision-making authority with minimal substantive accountability from the panel. With that said, the creation of such a panel on the part of the Sound Transit board demonstrates a desire and a willingness to engage external stakeholders in order to potentially utilize their tacit input.

Additionally, the formation of committees and panels as well as the range of responsibilities assigned to each group is codified through internal organizational policy. For example, the *Citizen Oversight Panel's* authority and responsibilities are codified through organizational policy number R-2022-05 (Sound Transit, 2022). By utilizing internal policies to guide dimensions of stakeholder engagement, these dimensions and their related practices are institutionalized and contribute to the development of organizational culture as it relates to stakeholder engagement practices.

This institutionalization is evident in Sound Transit's organizational practices. Broadly, Sound Transit views stakeholders as any entity, group, or individual that is

either directly involved in projects and policy development, or any entity, group, or individual that might be impacted by projects or policies. Further, Sound Transit regards their ridership as the primary stakeholder group when considering projects or policies. As such, Sound Transit regularly seeks to involve a broad set of stakeholders in their decision making processes through a set of institutionalized stakeholder engagement practices.

These stakeholder engagement practices include; outreach events, open houses that allow stakeholders to engage with Sound Transit leadership and communicate preferences, committee consultations, public meetings and forums, and the sharing of information regarding policies and projects through a number of different mediums primarily at the outset of projects. The organization will then seek input from stakeholders as needed throughout the course of the project/decision making process – regularly seeking the experiential feedback of their ridership. A potential shortcoming here is that while the agency makes efforts to engage a wide range of stakeholders, transit projects often exist on an extended timeline making it difficult to regularly involve stakeholders through the duration of technically complex infrastructure projects. Additionally, while the organization employs a variety of outreach and engagement strategies, and has institutionalized many of these efforts through organizational policy that prioritizes accessibility, equity and inclusion, no formal strategy or policy exists as it relates to applied stakeholder engagement practices that specifically target underserved populations (Sound Transit Administrator Conversation, 03/30/2022).

Finally, the organization utilizes these stakeholder practices to balance the demands of a wide range of stakeholders that include community members, riders, contractual partners, government agencies at varying levels of government, and advocacy groups that are both community based as well as politically oriented. While Sound Transit does have some gaps in their stakeholder engagement practices, on the whole, the organization has made a clear and concerted effort to engage a wide variety stakeholders in their decision making processes.

Limitations

Data collection for the Sound Transit case study site was straightforward and accessible. Data collection for this case study consisted of conversations with an administrator that oversees community and stakeholder engagement, easily accessed public facing information from the organization website, supplementary articles that provided coverage of various projects carried out by Sound Transit, as well as observations of multiple public meetings – both live and archival. This qualitative data was used to construct a detailed organizational profile, identify organizational stakeholder engagement dimensions present within the Sound Transit organization, and identify applied organizational stakeholder engagement practices.

Table 4: Organizational Stakeholder Engagement Rubric, Seattle

Sound Transit (Seattle, WA)			
SE Dimension	Organizational Dimension	Applied Stakeholder Engagement Practices	Score
Adequate Organizational Capacity Adequate Staffing Capacity, Budget, Leadership predisposition,	Sound Transit’s organizational chart reflects a heavy focus on public relations and community outreach. This includes divisions devoted to PR, DEI, public	In practice, Sound Transit employs a robust set of stakeholder engagement efforts that range from outreach efforts to citizen advisory committees, to traditional public meeting opportunities. Leadership has	4/4 High (4)

Organizational Expertise, Org structure	<p>outreach, and tribal relations. However, there is also an overemphasis on admin personnel coupled with an apparent lack of technical engineering expertise at the executive level.</p> <p>\$70,000 annually to specific stakeholder engagement efforts (not including separate Communications department).</p>	signaled a prioritization of stakeholder engagement practices	
<p>Accessible and Representative</p> <p>Active, targeted stakeholder outreach and accessible leadership reflective of the community</p>	<p>Comprised of locally elected officials proportionate to the pop of each of the three counties. Multiple committees representing a cross section of the community with the expressed purpose of extending public outreach. Separate committees that focus on DEI as well as citizen oversight.</p>	<p>In practice, Sound Transit has provided multiple avenues for stakeholders to access leadership. The DEI committee reports to the board of directors, and the Citizen Oversight Panel operates independently to ensure inclusion of citizen stakeholder feedback. The panel is appointed by the board and monitors adherence to public engagement policies as well as works to achieve greater involvement of citizens in policymaking. However, there are no specific codified strategies organization-wide to target underserved populations.</p>	<p>3/4</p> <p>Med (2-3)</p>
<p>Equitable</p> <p>Dispersed influence over the decision making process</p>	<p>While committees are appointed by the board and make recommendations to the board, the COP is empowered to engage and include citizen stakeholder feedback directly in the policymaking process.</p>	<p>In practice, decision making authority still rests with the Sound transit board, but the addition of the independent panel that advises the board allows for stakeholders the potential of influencing the decision making process.</p>	<p>4/4</p> <p>High (4)</p>
<p>Inclusive</p> <p>Accounts for and utilizes tacit localized knowledge in decision making process</p>	<p>Entire section devoted to DEI and Civil Rights assurance. Multiple committees devoted to various stakeholder engagement efforts</p>	<p>In practice, three groups – the Diversity Oversight Committee, Citizen Accessibility Advisory Committee, and Citizen Oversight Panel – work in conjunction to create an inclusive stakeholder engagement process for citizens</p>	<p>4/4</p> <p>High (4)</p>
<p>Frequency</p> <p>SE process is initiated early in decision making process and maintained throughout all phases of policy process</p>	<p>Stakeholder engagement efforts take place throughout the decision making process in various forms,</p>	<p>Panel and advisory committee engagement activities take place early in the process and are ongoing throughout the decision making process in addition to other more traditional</p>	<p>4/4</p> <p>High (4)</p>

		participatory efforts (public meetings, forums etc.)	
Institutionalized Above practices are encultured and codified through organizational level policy (separate from mandates beyond the organizational level)	Stakeholder engagement practices are codified with regard to public meeting procedures ranging from meeting notices to the public to public comment and testimony procedures. Engagement practices are supported by limited organizational policy.	In practice, each committee/panel has a handbook of procedures and a set of authorities given to it at the organizational level. Though lacking here is an organization-wide stakeholder engagement plan	3/4 Med (2-3)
Score	18/20 - High (Excluding Organizational Capacity) 22/24 - High (Total)		

TriMet – Portland OR

History

Originally founded in 1969, the Tri-County Metropolitan Transit District or TriMet in its original configuration was a metropolitan transportation district voted on and created by the Portland City Council (TriMet, 2022). The district coverage area includes, to this day, Washington, Multnomah, and Clackamas counties. Interestingly, the creation of this new district preceded state legislative authority to create such districts by approximately two months with the city council acting in January of 1969, and legislative authority to do so coming in March of 1969. With the passage of HB 1808 in the Oregon Legislature (TriMet, 2022), transit districts were given a range of new authorities that still persist today – namely, the ability to impose localized payroll taxes within the district’s service area in order to create and bolster revenue (TriMet, 2022).

Prior to the creation of TriMet, transportation service in Portland and the surrounding areas was provided by Rose City Transit until TriMet’s acquisition of the company in late 1969 (TriMet, 2022). With the transportation infrastructure and usage in

decline, TriMet spent the next ten years implementing a long-range infrastructure plan that included both highway and proposed rail-system projects. These projects proceeded under the direction of TriMet until the late 1970s when voters in the greater tri-county area approved the creation of a new regional government known as Metro. Metro has a range of authorities and responsibilities, but among those is urban growth and transportation infrastructure planning (TriMet, 2022). Under Metro’s long-range urban growth plans a new focus on light-rail infrastructure development would set the stage for the creation and expansion of the Metropolitan Area Express, or MAX light-rail over the next 40 years (TriMet, 2022).

In its current configuration, TriMet is technically and legally categorized as a Municipally Owned Corporation. Municipally Owned Corporations have a rather broad definition that can range from an incorporated area of land – such as a town, township, county etc. – to water, school, and transportation districts, and beyond (ORS 33.720; RCW 39.69.10). The local government literature defines a Municipally Owned Corporation as “*autonomous organizations owned by municipalities, used to produce or deliver local public services outside the local bureaucracy*” (Voorn B., Van Genugten M. L. and Van Thiel S., 2017, P. 820). In this configuration TriMet is owned by the city of Portland, continues to serve its original districted area, retains its original legislative authority and has two primary roles related to Metro’s regional governance; (I) to work with Metro to oversee and implement Metro’s long-range urban growth plans as it pertains to transportation infrastructure development, and (II) manage operation of TriMet’s fleet of buses and MAX light-rail trains. From its inception in 1969, the history

and development of TriMet as an organization has led to a rather unique governance arrangement that presents an opportunity to examine the potential of organizational impacts on stakeholder engagement practices under unique governance conditions consisting of multiple levels of government with broad authorities and potentially varied priorities and agendas.

Organizational Governance

At the state level¹², the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) sets and provides oversight for statewide transportation policy and planning. The OTC also oversees and guides organizational activities related to nearly all forms of transportation throughout the state – including various forms of public transportation (Oregon Transportation Commission, 2022). The commission is led by a five-member, governor appointed commission representing regions throughout Oregon. This representation is designed to ensure that oversight of transportation policy and development is responsive to the specific needs of a given region of the state.

At the regional level specific to TriMet’s coverage area, Metro develops and oversees long-range land use and transportation planning. Metro is a voter-approved regional government formed in 1978 that provides regional governance to Washington, Multnomah, and Clackamas counties (TriMet, 2022; Metro, 2022). The regional governing body is led by six council members elected by district and a president elected

¹² This section will only cover sub-national governance of Oregon specific public transportation governance

regionwide. While Metro has a range of authorities and responsibilities, perhaps the most relevant authority given to Metro is its Congressional designation as a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). MPOs are defined as; “*a policy board of an organization created and designated to carry out the metropolitan transportation planning process...*” (Federal Transit Administration – Metropolitan Planning Organizations, 2022). This designation allows Metro – in accordance with state and Federal law – to submit long-range transportation plans to the Federal Transit Administration in order to access federal funding for transportation projects at the local and regional levels. Here Metro plays a key role in not only ensuring that regional planning accounts for the varied interests of stakeholders throughout the region, but also that proposed projects that TriMet implements are able to access available federal funding. Finally, as an oversight body, Metro acts as an accountability measure as TriMet implements Metro’s long-range transportation development. The primary way Metro achieves this accountability is through codified authority put in place during the creation of Metro – namely, that Metro retains the right to take over the day-to-day operation of TriMet in order to execute its planning agenda (TriMet, 2022).

As a municipally owned corporation, TriMet is primarily responsible for the implementation of Metro’s long-range transportation development plans as well as the day-to-day public transportation service provision for Washington, Multnomah, and Clackamas counties. In order to uphold these obligations, the organization is given broad powers by the state legislature to manage municipally owned bonds as well as levy local payroll taxes in order to raise revenue (TriMet, 2022). At the organizational level, TriMet

is led by a seven-member board of directors that are appointed by the governor to serve four-year terms (TriMet, 2022). Beyond the seven-member board - who primarily set organization level policies and procedures – TriMet’s organizational structure resembles a typical corporate hierarchy consisting of a top-down General Manager, Chief Operating Officer, team of executives directors, and department heads (TriMet, 2022). These departments range from public affairs – managing equity and inclusion in decision-making processes, government relations, etc. – to safety and security for users of the transportation services, and beyond.

It is within this governance framework that TriMet as an organization operates, needing to have the capacity to adhere to the oversight and guidance provided by the OTC, implement Metro’s long-range transportation development plans, effectively utilize the authorities granted to them by the Oregon legislature, and finally, set organizational policies and procedures to meet their obligations effectively and efficiently. Not only does TriMet operate within a semi-complex governance framework, but as the organization responsible for implementation and operation of an expansive transportation network, it also has to manage a variety of government and citizen stakeholder interests.

Organizational Capacity

In order to manage these interests, TriMet has a robust organizational capacity. The stakeholder engagement literature outlines specific characteristics of organizational capacity considered to be essential for increased and effective stakeholder engagement. These characteristics include; adequate staffing, budget, leadership attitudes and

prioritization of stakeholder engagement in the decision making process, expertise in the implementation of stakeholder engagement practices, staff compensation, history of conflict between various stakeholders, and more (Riley et.al., 2003). In the areas able to be effectively considered in this research—staffing capacity, budget, expertise, and staffing income—TriMet shines.

TriMet has a robust staff of both technical and administrative professionals. Pertaining to TriMet’s stakeholder engagement processes, the organization staffs multiple positions and committees designed to directly engage community level stakeholders, non-government (private sector) stakeholders, as well as positions dedicated to managing government TriMet’s ongoing relationships with government agencies at various levels of government. These positions include a *Director of Customer Experience*, a *Director of Government Relations*, as well as Directors of *Marketing*, *Communications*, *Community Affairs*, and *Community Engagement*. With multiple staffing roles dedicated to various aspects of stakeholder engagement, TriMet’s leadership structure reflects an organizational prioritization of not only stakeholder engagement but also, community level civic engagement (TriMet, 2022). This prioritization can be seen in agency-level documents such as the “*TriMet Public Engagement and Outreach Framework*” (TriMet, 2019) – a framework that outlines a set of guiding principles and strategies ranging from messaging to targeted demographic outreach strategies, to accountability mechanisms and on.

Budgetary capacity¹³ is an essential aspect of organizational capacity as it pertains to stakeholder engagement. An organization's budgetary performance can dictate their capacity to perform adequate stakeholder engagement by nature of sufficient or insufficient resource allocation to stakeholder engagement staffing and outreach efforts. Additionally, budgetary allotment can signal an organization's priorities (Gross, 2015). Here, TriMet dedicated nearly \$ 1.1 Million to various aspects of stakeholder engagement in 2021 (TriMet – Budget FY 2022). These expenditures ranged in purpose from staffing FTEs (~ 9 FTEs totaling ~\$ 500,000) to department specific outreach efforts such as safety and security (~\$ 504,000) outreach to the community, as well as outreach and engagement efforts emphasizing equity and inclusion in general decision making processes (~\$ 70,000). With stakeholder engagement expenditures roughly split between staffing and outreach specific efforts, TriMet has signaled their prioritization of both adequate staffing capacity as well as community stakeholder engagement – clearly placing an emphasis on engagement pertaining to the safety and security of their ridership.

Further, research has indicated that adequately compensating staff that implement and participate in stakeholder engagement processes can impact the quality of the stakeholder engagement practices (Diehl et al., 2018). More specifically, staff that experience socioeconomic hardship in relation to their co-workers as a function of significant differences in earnings are less motivated and engaged in work-related tasks and are less productive overall (Diehl et al., 2018). In turn, this impacts the organization's

¹³ In-depth discussions of budgetary performance will be reserved for the secondary research question sections

ability to achieve broader goal, thus negatively impacting overall organizational capacity. More importantly, according to Diehl et al. (2018), employees that experience income inequality often have a more negative disposition toward “*Organizational Citizenship Behavior*” (P.9), causing them to potentially disengage from decision-making processes. Here again, TriMet has signaled a prioritization of compensation for their staff charged with stakeholder engagement. The earnings for these mid to high level administrative positions range from ~\$50,000 on the lower end to nearly ~\$90,000 on the upper end. While there might appear to be a notable difference between the lower and upper end of the above salaries, due to the broad nature of TriMet’s outreach activities, the range in pay spans very different positions from customer service representatives to outreach and engagement coordinators and directors (TriMet – Budget FY 2022).

Overall, TriMet’s organizational capacity reflects a prioritization of technical and administrative expertise, a balance in stakeholder engagement related expenditure between staffing compensation and outreach, and an emphasis on engaging stakeholders from a variety of sectors. Further, TriMet has clearly signaled their commitment to stakeholder engagement through not only their resource allocation but also through their purported adherence to processes set forth in their engagement framework (TriMet, 2019).

Stakeholder Engagement Practices

The stakeholder engagement literature presents five primary dimensions of effective stakeholder engagement beyond organizational capacity; *Accessibility* and

Representation, Equitability, Inclusiveness, Timeliness and *Consistency* (throughout the decision-making process), and *Institutionalization* of codified policies and practices. The *TriMet Public Engagement Framework* (2019) guides the organization's stakeholder engagement practices. This document outlines the various levels of engagement available to administrators as they engage in decision making on various projects and policies. These levels are; "*Inform*", "*Consult*", "*Involve*", and "*Collaborate*" (P. 4). Each level of engagement has a corresponding level of commitment that the agency has institutionalized regarding their stakeholder engagement practices. On the lowest level of engagement – *Inform* – it is just that, the organization has committed to keeping stakeholders informed regarding decisions made by the organization. Here there is little to no engagement of substance and the organization retains all decision making authority. At the highest level – *Collaborate* – the organization has committed to including stakeholder "advice in formulating solutions and [to] include [stakeholder] advice and recommendations in the decisions to the maximum extent possible" (P. 4). Here, at the highest level of stakeholder involvement, the organization incorporates stakeholder feedback directly into their decision-making processes. However, it should be noted that even at this highest level, the organization still retains all decision-making authority within the bounds of their roles and responsibilities. Perhaps more interesting are the intermediate levels – *Consult* and *Involve*. At the level of consultation, the organization has committed to informing and listening to stakeholder feedback as well as providing feedback regarding if and how the feedback was incorporated into the organization's final decision(s). A step higher at the level of involvement, the organization has committed to

“work with [stakeholders] to ensure that [stakeholder] concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how stakeholder input influenced the decision” (P. 4). While the organization retains all decision making authority at every level of engagement, levels 2-4 reflect (some) aspects of optimal stakeholder engagement practices laid out in the literature.

Additionally, the organization’s Public Engagement Framework details strategies and methods for executing these various levels of stakeholder engagement. The strategies focus on diversifying forms of communication, prioritizing stakeholder education regarding policy change or projects, gathering input either directly or peripherally related to policies and projects, and emphasizing deliberation when applicable and focused on goal achievement (TriMet, 2019). The organization’s methodological approach to stakeholder engagement practices focusses on soliciting feedback through interviews with various stakeholders, listening sessions geared toward gaining insight into stakeholder concerns, small group sessions to educate stakeholders and tap into the collective tacit knowledge of stakeholders, open houses in order to increase access to the decision-making process, and other forms of outreach (TriMet, 2019).

The practical implementation of TriMet’s Public Engagement Framework (2019) takes the form of multiple advisory committees that focus on a range of issues – including access and equity – various accessibility accommodation partnerships with multicultural organizations (TriMet – Conversation, 2022), as well as multifaceted, phased engagement and outreach strategies. While stakeholders are able to attend most meetings across all committees, the *Transit Equity and Access Advisory Committee*

(TEAC) was formed with the expressed goal of providing “Meaningful public involvement in planning and decision-making, Public accountability and financial transparency, and [to] Ensure benefits and burdens are distributed equally across all income levels” (TriMet – Advisory Committees, 2022). This particular committee is made up of a cross-section of community members that meet monthly with TriMet’s General Manager to advise on community input regarding policies and projects being undertaken by the organization. Additionally, at the outset of major projects, TriMet holds public meetings, open houses, and other outreach oriented events to either inform, educate, or solicit feedback from stakeholders. Further, TriMet’s two-phased engagement strategy means that following initial input, the organization will seek to reengage stakeholders to solicit feedback regarding the incorporation of initial input into project and policy planning. The organization has prioritized ridership as well as those impacted more broadly by policy changes or projects. In those cases where a subset of the population is impacted, TriMet will perform targeted, two-phased outreach and engagement to solicit feedback and engage stakeholders initially and through a second phase of follow-up engagement. These phases are geared towards soliciting initial input, and follow-up feedback after the organization incorporates the initial input into, for example, route change proposals (TriMet – Conversation, 2022).

While TriMet shows organizational qualities that indicate the use of key stakeholder engagement dimensions as well as applied stakeholder engagement practices that are regarded as effective within the stakeholder engagement literature, it does still face organizational challenges as well as challenges related to interactions within the

public meeting setting. While TriMet has clearly prioritized stakeholders, devoted organizational resources to their stakeholder engagement efforts, and worked to enculture civic values of public engagement, the use of tacit, community level knowledge in planning and implementation is still highly dependent upon the disposition of leadership as well as the continued renewal of codified organizational commitments to the prioritization of stakeholder engagement. Additionally, limitations can observe within public meeting settings that put on display the limited ability of certain stakeholders – namely members of the public – to interact with and participate in the decision-making process. Here, interaction and engagement assume a traditional form of public engagement through either pre submitted comments or a dedicated, limited public comment period during the meeting wherein administrators are not required to respond to or engage with public comments. However, it should be acknowledged two-fold that (I) public meeting settings have historically been limited in their engagement capacity due to the nature of such interactions (i.e. public meetings are actually organization specific meetings that are open to the public) as well as the need to carry out organizational business with limited time resources, and (II) that TriMet has worked to mitigate this limited form of interaction through supplementary stakeholder engagement efforts and practices such as open houses, various committees, community-based partnerships, a clear outreach and engagement strategy, and more.

Limitations

Limitations to data collection for TriMet were minimal. For this particular case study site, data collection included an extensive conversation with a public

administrator¹⁴ tasked with overseeing and implementing various aspects of stakeholder engagement and community outreach. Additionally, publicly available documents from TriMet’s website and archives were collected and reviewed to identify stakeholder processes and procedures, as well as, applied stakeholder practices. These public documents included documents that outlined the roles and responsibilities of TriMet’s various committees, press releases and other forms of public communication, organizational policies regarding stakeholder engagement, and public meeting minutes that recorded any interactions between various stakeholders (including community members), and administrators. Finally, virtual public meetings – both live and archival – were attended across TriMet’s various committees in order to observe interactions between stakeholders (or any meeting attendee) and administrators.

Table 5: Organizational Stakeholder Engagement Rubric, Portland

TriMet (Portland, OR)			
SE Dimension	Organizational Dimension	Applied Stakeholder Engagement Practices	Score
Adequate Organizational Capacity Adequate Staffing Capacity, Budget, Leadership predisposition, Organizational Expertise, Org structure	Organizational Capacity Staffing consists of various operations specialists, Engineers, operators etc., as well as dedicated public relations and outreach roles. Hierarchical org structure with a dedicated community affairs committee advising the director and on to the GM. Various community oriented advisory committees with access to leadership. \$1.1 million devoted to stakeholder engagement efforts. Lastly, TriMet leadership has signaled the organizational prioritization of various aspects of stakeholder engagement.	In practice, TriMet has a robust set of stakeholder engagement efforts in the form of both traditional public relations, committee meetings, and access to public meetings. The organization also employs additional outreach strategies such as community meetings and events geared toward dialogue and education, as well as multiple advisory committees that provide pathways for participation.	4/4 High (4)

¹⁴ The term “Public Administrator” or “Administrator” will be used to refer to agency staff in general

<p>Accessible and Representative Active, targeted stakeholder outreach and accessible leadership reflective of the community</p>	<p>Board members appointed by governor. Multiple committees representing a cross section of the community with the expressed purpose of extending public outreach. Access to TriMet leadership through committees.</p>	<p>While an appointed board might be less representative than an elected board with diminished subsection to sanction, TriMet provides access to leadership through committees (though they function primarily in an advisory capacity). TriMet makes clear efforts to reach out to a cross section of the community to illicit participation.</p>	<p>3/4 Med (2-3)</p>
<p>Equitable Dispersed influence over the decision making process</p>	<p>Stakeholders are primarily advisory, and members of the public participate through public meetings. However, the public is able to access and share concerns with committees.</p>	<p>In practice, TriMet has provided access to leadership through multiple committees, and while stakeholders function in an advisory capacity, the various types of formal access provide opportunity to potentially influence decision making processes.</p>	<p>3/4 Med (2-3)</p>
<p>Inclusive Accounts for and utilizes tacit localized knowledge in decision making process</p>	<p>Community based knowledge is accessed and accounted for via the <i>Transit Equity & Access Advisory Committee (TEAC)</i> and citizen advisory committees. Appointed by GM in consult with community members</p>	<p>In practice, these committees provide advisory input in a variety of areas to leadership and provide an additional participatory pathway for stakeholders – the extent to which information is used in the decision making process is at the discretion of leadership</p>	<p>3/4 Med (2-3)</p>
<p>Frequency SE process is initiated early in decision making process and maintained throughout all phases of policy process</p>	<p>While leadership meetings are held on a regular basis, the bulk of stakeholder engagement work for a given project is done at the outset of the project.</p>	<p>In practice, stakeholders have consistent access to leadership through meetings and committees, though additional outreach efforts (open houses, educational sessions etc.) occur most prominently in the early stages of a project</p>	<p>3/4 Med (2-3)</p>
<p>Institutionalized Above practices are encultured and codified through organizational level policy (separate from</p>	<p>Stakeholder engagement is codified with regard to public meeting procedures ranging from meeting notices to the public to public comment and testimony procedures.</p>	<p>In practice, this institutionalization is reflected in the TriMet public engagement framework – a comprehensive</p>	<p>4/4 High (4)</p>

mandates beyond the organizational level).	Additionally, the organization has institutionalized practices and philosophies with regard to stakeholder engagement.	organizational strategy for stakeholder engagement	
Score	16/20 - High (Excluding Organizational Capacity) 20/24- High (Total)		

Regional Transit District – Denver CO

History

Created in 1969, the Denver *Regional Transit District* (RTD) was established by the Colorado legislature to plan, design, build and operate public transportation for Denver, CO and the surrounding areas (RTD, 2022). While the organization originally focused primarily on bus rapid transit, from its inception, RTD was forward thinking with regard to rail infrastructure projects. Early in its history RTD actively explored elevated light rail to address congestion in the downtown core of Denver and to more efficiently move passengers. While this original foray into rail infrastructure did not come to fruition, these early steps set the stage for future rail-based infrastructure projects (Minor, 2022). Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the organization would build out its transportation infrastructure with a focus on developing partnerships with surrounding municipalities and expanding its bus route coverage area.

In 1994, the Denver RTD opened its first light rail train to serve the Downtown Denver area (Minor, 2022; RTD, 2022). This original line ran a total length of 5.3 miles along the central downtown corridor as a stand-alone rail line that would eventually be connected to a larger rail infrastructure system throughout the 2000s (RTD, 2022). To date, the entire RTD light rail network contains ~120 miles of rail across twelve

interconnected lines split between light and heavy commuter rail (RTD, 2022). This expansive rail system, in conjunction with RTD's fleet of rapid and para transit buses now serves a district that spans more than ~2,300 square miles. The coverage area has an overall service population of ~ 3 million people across 40 municipalities and eight total counties (RTD, 2022).

Organizational Governance

Unlike some other public transportation providers, the Denver *Regional Transportation District* (RTD) governance structure is relatively straightforward. The designation of Regional Transportation District is given by the Colorado State Legislature (1969), creating a *Special District* governing body with limited scope and authority. The state of Colorado has made a clear legal distinction between Special Districts, and state and local governments (State of Colorado, 2016). While RTD is considered a public agency, their distinction as a *Special District* affords them a specific set of authorities based both in the state constitution (C.R.S. 29, 2020) as well as the specific state legislation that created the organization in 1969 (RTD, 2019; RTD, 2021).

Notable powers granted to RTD include; (I) the ability to enact sales and use tax in order to bolster funding, (II) budgetary and contractual flexibility, (III) the authority to privatize up to 5% of the rail service, and (IV) the ability to expand district boundaries in conjunction with an annexation process initiated and led by the annexed governing body – such as a local municipality or county (RTD, 2019; RTD, 2021; RTD, 2022). Over the years, RTD has used their annexation process as well as their ability to enact sales and use taxes to expand their coverage area and fund, in part, infrastructure expansion.

Furthermore, recent legislation has provided the agency with increased budget and contractual flexibility in order to allow them to expand contract competition, and remove limitation regarding fee structures and land use impacts in certain areas (Colorado General Assembly – HB21-1186, 2021). While it is unclear as to the impact of this new deregulation, the organizational governance structure does provide stakeholders – particularly citizens – some recourse.

The RTD board is comprised of 15 members that are regionally elected from throughout the district coverage area. Board members serve staggered four-year terms and act as the primary planning and policy making body for the agency (RTD 2019; RTD, 2022). Policy passed at the organizational level requires a simple majority and the organization is legally required to redistrict voting regions district-wide following the release of each census (RTD, 2022). Finally, while RTD technically functions independently as an organization, it maintains working relationships with governing bodies within its coverage areas as well as state agencies such as the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) in order to both collaborate on transportation infrastructure planning as well as comply with relevant operational safety regulations (CDOT, 2022).

Organizational Capacity

The Denver *Regional Transportation District* (RTD) staffs a variety of administrative and technical professionals in order to meet the needs of their ridership. At the executive and leadership level, there is an emphasis on administrative and technical expertise with the balance of executive positions devoted to legal, financial, and various

aspects of operational oversight. Here, RTD has a robust team at the senior leadership and executive levels, comprising the overwhelming majority of the organizational leadership below the RTD *Chief Executive Officer* and the board. With the majority of the senior leadership and executive staff devoted to administrative and technical expertise, the organization also staffs one position each for the communications and engagement officer, and civil rights manager at the senior leadership and executive levels (RTD, 2017; RTD, 2022). In addition to these senior leadership and executive positions, RTD staffs a *communications* department of approximately 118 employees (RTD, 2022) focused on customer service, building and maintaining government relations, as well as marketing and public relations (RTD, 2017). This department is comparable in size to other departments such as the *Finance* department, but is considerably smaller than departments focused on aspects of operations and planning (RTD, 2022). Additionally, the communication department is allotted an annual budget of ~ \$ 15,000 in non-staffing related expenditures (RTD, 2021). This budgetary allotment is notably smaller than transportation service providers of similar size – comprising less of their overall budget comparatively. Finally, salaries within this department range from \$50,000 to over \$100,000¹⁵, comparable to similar positions in other organizations of similar size.

The resulting leadership structure reflects an organizational prioritization of technical expertise at the leadership levels, and a peripheral focus on various aspects of stakeholder engagement. Here, the organizational disposition appears to tend toward

¹⁵ Data from Indeed.com may fluctuate and compromise reliability

elevating government and contractual partnerships, while regarding community level stakeholders (ridership) as primarily customers.

Stakeholder Engagement Practices

Across the remaining five dimensions of organizational stakeholder engagement qualities *Regional Transit District Denver* (RTD) faces notable limitations that are reflected in their stakeholder engagement practices. While the organization does utilize a small set of committees to enhance engagement, these committees are both limited in their accessibility as well as their scope and authority. The three committees that are housed by the RTD are the *Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities* (ACPD), the *Access a Ride Paratransit Advisory Committee* (APAC), and the *RTD Citizen Advisory Committee*. While these committees have clearly outlined roles, none of them have explicitly outlined reporting lines to either the board or the executive team. Instead, in the case of the ACPD and the APAC committees, they seemingly report to another committee (i.e. a steering committee). In the case of the *Citizen Advisory Committee* their expressed primary role is not only to advise leadership regarding public input regarding infrastructure projects, but also to raise community awareness regarding RTD services. Additionally, it is unclear how selection for committee participation takes place as well as how ad hoc interactions between community members and committee members might take place (Regional Transit District Denver, 2023).

While committee access to the board and executive team is limited to the executive-led committees (finance etc.), RTD does prioritize private sector small business stakeholders through the *RTD Small and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Advisory*

Council. The role of the council is to attend organizationally sponsored meetings to build contractual partnerships, express preferences, share feedback, address contractual barriers etc. The priority here is to address the concerns of small business stakeholders and build-out RTD's contractual network (Regional Transit District Denver, 2023).

While RTD provides additional participatory opportunities through their *Customer Discussion Panel* as well as telephone open houses and public meeting attendance, access to these avenues can be limited in several ways; (I) the *Customer Discussion Panel* runs throughout the year and primarily serves as a deliberation forum with no direct advisory role with RTD leadership, (II) recruitment timelines and procedures for participation in the discussion panel are unclear, and (III) participation in public meetings is limited to pre-submitted comments, with no explicitly devoted public comment period reflected in either the meeting agendas or minutes. Further, in the event of a pre-submitted public comment, the process for addressing the comment is to fold it into the meeting agenda dependent upon the discretion of the board (Regional Transit District Denver, 2023). The potentially problematic implication here is not that comments must be relevant to the subject matter of the meeting, but rather that inclusion of comments is a discretionary judgment made on behalf of the board – leaving this already limited participatory avenue vulnerable to the judgments of those with the highest level of decision-making authority.

One area that RTD has excelled is through the solicitation of an external accountability committee. The role of the *RTD Accountability Committee* was to address critical organizational issues related to funding, staffing capacity, service provision,

organizational transparency, governance, and more. The external committee provided a set of recommendations in all of these areas – with organizational transparency addressing key needs as it relates to stakeholder engagement. Here, the committee asserted that the agency lacks sufficient data to propose metric driven recommendations and recommended the development of a set of measures to adequately capture stakeholder engagement efforts (RTD Accountability Committee, 2021). Further, the committee devoted an entire report section to addressing organizational needs related to equity and accessibility. This section addresses equity issues in areas that range from finances, to governance, to organizational structure – providing improvement recommendations for each. With each of these recommendations, there was special attention paid to how the recommendation would positively impact underserved and underrepresented communities. While there are a range of recommendations with this focus, as it pertains to community and stakeholder engagement equity improvements, the committee recommended that the organization seek to diversify their leadership, reconsider board membership process (Hybrid elected/appointed), seek to elevate the role of stakeholders – such as local governments, community leaders, and committees and councils – in the decision-making process, and in general work more directly with communities to mitigate disproportionate impacts on community stakeholders (RTD Accountability Committee, 2021).

With these recommendations, there is potential for RTD to begin to address the lack of institutionalized stakeholder engagement practices. This opportunity is two-fold; (I) there appears to be a lack of coherent engagement strategy at the macro-organizational

level, and (II) based on the organizational stakeholder engagement practices, there is a present but undeveloped culture of stakeholder engagement prioritization. First, while there does exist some codified stakeholder engagement practices, these amount to strategies and tactics more than encultured practices. For example, the organization does have an official outreach plan that calls for a certain set number of public hearings and meetings, but it does not diversify the outreach practices beyond those basic interactions, and more problematic, this outreach plan is specifically designed to be coupled the redistricting effort exclusively. Additionally, RTD has published a list of strategies, but they lack specificity and detail with regard to implementation (RTD – Communication Tactics, 2022; RTD – Redistricting Outreach Plan, 2021). All of this has amounted to a present but underprioritized approach to organizational stakeholder engagement practices.

Limitations

Data collection for this case study site faced some minor obstacles. While the RTD Denver website does provide meeting agendas, minutes and video archives for public access, these meetings are limited to executive leadership meetings, while committee meetings – such as the Citizens’ Advisory Committee – are not accessible after the meeting has taken place. Furthermore, it is unclear from the website how to attend, or even be selected to serve on the committee. The other committees housed within the organization do have clear application guidelines, processes, and timelines, they too are limited in their publicly available content (Minutes etc.) post meeting. Additionally, it is unclear whether or not non-committee members are able to attend these

meetings, and this lack of clarity seems to be exacerbated by pandemic precautions related to unclear remote attendance procedures. To date, the available information via the RTD website lists dated information regarding past meetings and lacks clarity regarding resumption of in-person meetings.

Finally, data collection for this particular site faced significant challenges contacting administrators tasked with public outreach/stakeholder engagement. Despite success making initial contact, and arranging meeting times, administrators were unable to meet those time commitments, and failed to appear at agreed upon meeting times between the researcher and themselves. As a result, data for this section is limited to available public-facing documents, and meeting observation and documentation.

Table 6: Organizational Stakeholder Engagement Rubric, Denver

Regional Transit District – RTD (Denver, CO)			
SE Dimension	Organizational Dimension	Applied Stakeholder Engagement Practices	Score
<p>Adequate Organizational Capacity Adequate Staffing Capacity, Budget, Leadership predisposition, Organizational Expertise, Org structure,</p>	<p>The RTD org chart reflects a focus on administrative and operational procedures. Lacking here is explicit technical expertise at the executive level, as well as any devoted office to public engagement. The executive level does staff a civil rights manager RTD does staff a public outreach position, with a budget of ~ \$15,000 (non-staffing)</p>	<p>In practice, this results in stakeholder engagement practices that are robust in number but under optimized in practice. That is, the organization has multiple participatory pathways, but these pathways have various shortcomings that potentially limit the ability of stakeholders to substantively participate in decision making processes.</p>	<p>3/4 Med (2-3)</p>
<p>Accessible and Representative Active, targeted stakeholder outreach and accessible leadership reflective of the community</p>	<p>Board members are elected on a district level basis. Discussion groups for customers as well as citizen advisory committees and town halls. Also has a small business and para transit advisory board. A focus on prioritizing service delivery and local – one of which is an external local council on accessibility and outreach: Denver Regional Mobility and Access Council (DRMAC),</p>	<p>In practice, RTD’s leadership design is representative of their coverage area, and the organization employs multiple participatory pathways. Though these pathways are limited in access by unclear participatory instructions and panel/board direct access to leadership – instead reporting to a steering committee.</p>	<p>2/4 Med (2-3)</p>
<p>Equitable Dispersed influence over the decision making process</p>	<p>While board members are elected, once in office, participation in org level decision making processes include public comment periods, a customer service line, and panel participation.</p>	<p>In practice, the above limitations present the potential to diminish the impact of certain stakeholders on decision making processes.</p>	<p>2/4 Med (2-3)</p>
<p>Inclusive Accounts for and utilizes tacit localized knowledge in decision making process</p>	<p>Participation in decision making processes includes public comment periods, agency managed surveys, a customer service line, and panel participation.</p>	<p>In practice, the organization uses these participatory pathways to access various stakeholders, giving stakeholders the ability to participate in multiple ways (Though this is often below leadership levels) and it is unclear as to the processes to ensure that feedback is considered in decision making processes</p>	<p>3/4 Med (2-3)</p>
<p>Frequency SE process is initiated early in decision</p>	<p>Organization has multiple avenues for consistent participation that occur at</p>	<p>In practice, the majority of stakeholder engagement practices take place at the outset</p>	<p>2/4 Med</p>

making process and maintained throughout all phases of policy process	various stages of policy and project timelines	of major projects. Beyond that, the organization utilizes discussion forums, panels/committees and public meetings on a regular basis (though recruitment to these panels/committees only opens once a year).	(2-3)
Institutionalized Above practices are encultured and codified through organizational level policy (separate from mandates beyond the organizational level)	Beyond accessibility policies related to disability access, no organizational level policies exist to bolster a substantial focus on citizen stakeholder engagement. There are, however, policies that prioritize partnerships in the way of service provision, and econ development.	While the organization has clear policies with regard to participatory procedures as well as the roles and responsibilities of panels and committees, the lack of a clear, uniformed, organization-wide strategic stakeholder engagement plan contributes to the under optimization of existing stakeholder engagement practices.	2/4 Med (2-3)
Score	11/20 - Medium (Excluding Organizational Capacity) 14/24- Medium (Total)		

Memphis Area Transit Authority – Memphis TN

History

The Memphis Area Transit Authority (MATA) was established in 1975 to provide transportation services to the Memphis Tennessee metropolitan area (MATA, 2020).

While the agency has not changed dramatically over the past nearly 50 years from an infrastructure development standpoint, the organization has, over the years, recognized the need for adaptation in order to meet the needs of its ridership and stakeholders at large. The organization’s infrastructure primarily focuses on a robust network of buses, with the later implementation of expanded paratransit and a short-line trolley service intended to improve mobility through the downtown core (MATA, 2022).

Shortly after the establishment of MATA, the states of Tennessee and Mississippi established the Memphis Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). With its

establishment in 1977, the organization was tasked with transportation planning and policy development at the county level as required by federal law for urbanized areas that exceed 50,000 people (Federal Transit Administration, 2022; Memphis MPO, 2022). The organization's coverage area includes two counties in Tennessee and two counties in Mississippi (Memphis MPO, 2022). Finally, in addition to transportation related planning and policy development, the organization ensures compliance to federal standards for localized transportation providers – such as MATA.

For over 30 years the organization exclusively provided bus services until federal law required the organization, in conjunction with the Memphis MPO, to develop (and implement) mid to long-range plans to improve public transportation accessibility, efficiency, and equity for users – with a specific focus on the elderly and disabled populations – initially as part of a federal infrastructure grant program known as the *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users* (SAFETEA-LU) in 2007 (NBM Assoc., 2007; Transportation Research Board, 2022). In accordance with federal grant requirements, as well as key federal infrastructure legislation such as the *Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act* (MAP-21) and the *Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act* (FAST) acts introduced in 2012 and 2016 respectively, the organization in conjunction with the Memphis MPO has developed and built out their *Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan* (CPT-HSTP) detailing infrastructure and service improvements from 2007 to present. The CPT-HSTP details infrastructure and policy development that range from improved

the addition of para-transit services to the introduction of short-line light rail intended for trolley services introduced initially in 2014 (Memphis MPO, 2021).

The introduction of trolley services in 2014 marks the first major addition to existing infrastructure for MATA. While the agency has made research forays into expansion of light rail services, administrators have approached that type of system expansion with apparent caution since 2014. A 2014 system analysis emphasized the expansion of current services, the addition of increased Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) trips and the expansion of BRT routes (Transit Vision Memphis, 2022; Transit Vision Memphis, 2022). Further, a comprehensive plan put forth by the city of Memphis in 2021 emphasized the continued focus on meeting the basic transportation needs of the community (City of Memphis, 2021). In keeping with both the analysis and the city's comprehensive plan, the organization continues to focus on the continued improvement to a small suite of services aimed at meeting the essential needs of the city of Memphis through an increase in bus routes and trip frequency. While the organization incurred losses and was forced to reduce services for a time in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, it has also been able to continue to operate, build back to pre-pandemic capacity, and work toward their mid to long-range goals due, in part, to the receipt of a \$36 million dollar COVID-19 relief package as part of the federal CARES act (MATA, 2020).

Organizational Governance

The *Memphis Area Transit Authority* (MATA) is governed at the organizational level by a nine-person Board of Commissioners. The board is tasked with setting agency-level policy for the operation of public transportation in the Memphis metro area (MATA, 2022). The nine-person board is appointed by the mayor and appointments are approved by the city council. Additionally, MATA staffs an eight-person executive management team to oversee various aspects of organizational operations. These executive positions range from *Chief Executive Officer* (CEO) to operations officer, to positions dedicated to safety and security, and development (MATA, 2022).

While MATA's Board of Commissioners sets organizational policy concerning the operation of localized public transportation, responsibility for regional transportation policy development, federal compliance oversight, and long-range infrastructure planning falls to the *Memphis Metropolitan Planning Organization* (MPO). Creation of the Memphis MPO was done through collaboration between governor of Tennessee and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA, 2022). The Memphis MPO is governed by the *Transportation Policy Board* (TBB) which is comprised of the principal elected official for each municipality in its coverage area (Memphis MPO, 2022), and consist of 29 members in total (Memphis MPO, 2022). The TBB acts as the primary transportation policymaking body for a four county region that spans two states, and develops policy with the assistance of five advisory committees that span various areas of transportation expertise (Memphis MPO, 2022).

In addition to the five committees that advise the TBB, the Memphis MPO staffs seven *Transportation Planners* and a *Grants Coordinator* in order to assist with technical advising for the TBB as well as all advisory committees. While MATA is responsible for localized public transportation provision, and the Memphis MPO has oversight authority, and regional policy and planning responsibilities, the two organizations work closely with one another to develop and implement transportation policies and plans (Memphis MPO, 2022).

Organizational Capacity

The Memphis Area Transportation Authority's¹⁶ (MATA) executive leadership structure consists of eight executive management positions. In addition to the Chief Executive and Deputy Executive Officers, these positions include a Financial Officer, Operations Officer, Human Resources Officer, Safety and Security Officer, Development Officer, and a Compliance Officer (MATA, 2022). Additionally, the organization staffs an administrative department as well as an operational department. The administrative department staffs professionals with expertise ranging from contract management to customer experience and public information, to grants management, performance improvement and more. The operations department consists of expertise in facilities and maintenance of transportation vehicles (MATA, 2022).

¹⁶ While MATA works closely with the Memphis MPO, and derives capacity benefits from that partnership, this section will focus exclusively on MATA's organizational capacity independent of any added benefits through such a partnership.

With its current leadership structure, there are potential gaps at MATA's executive level with regard to stakeholder engagement. More specifically, there are seemingly no executive leadership positions that are entirely dedicated to aspects of stakeholder engagement (e.g., public relations/affairs/engagement or customer service etc.). Further, there are no advisory boards or committees dedicated to various aspects of stakeholder engagement that might have access to either the executive leadership team or the Board of Commissioners. However, below the executive level the administrative department has dedicated at least two managerial positions to customer experience and public relations (MATA, 2022). These two positions as well as a customer service call center staff that totals ~ 123 employees allow for the potential of at least some public input or participation.

Often an examination of the organization's operating budget can shed light on organizational priorities as it relates to various stakeholder engagement efforts, however, as a relatively small agency, personnel costs are aggregated above the departmental level. Despite that limitation, the budget does reflect a call center staff of ~ 87 employees, which is 23% of their union bargaining unit (comprised of 377 employees – operators and call center) or 16% of total organizational staff. Salaries for that unit appear to total ~ \$22.5 million. While it is not possible to determine an exact funding allotment to staffing for call center employees based on the aggregate method used in the budget, it can be very roughly estimated that ~ \$5.2 million is budgeted for the call center department –

which is less than 1% of the overall personnel operating budget expenses¹⁷ of ~ \$84 million (MATA, 2022).

Stakeholder Engagement Practices

Generally, the Memphis Area Transit Authority (MATA) adheres to traditional stakeholder engagement practices that are akin to those often required under either state or federal statute. That is, the agency employs a customer-centric outreach strategy that utilizes customer call centers, public meeting comments submitted ahead of board meetings, information sharing through their social media platforms and website, as well as text messages and virtual open houses. In the utilization of these stakeholder engagement methods, the agency makes efforts to mitigate barriers to participation through publications in various languages as well as accommodations for individuals with disabilities (Administrator Conversation, 2022; MATA, 2022). Additionally, while stakeholder engagement efforts are often focused on the early stages of project or policy development, MATA makes efforts to utilize their stakeholder engagement methods throughout the decision making process – with their ridership being prioritized as a key stakeholder throughout decision making processes (Administrator Conversation, 2022). Further, the organization works to identify and maintain partnerships with key community stakeholders such as local businesses, schools, parks and libraries (Caissa Public Strategy, 2017).

¹⁷ The MATA operating expenses are personnel expenses – not the overall proposed operating budget of ~ \$750 million (personnel, operations and infrastructure).

While the organization's stakeholder engagement practices seek to provide a basic level of participatory avenues for stakeholders, there are also potential limitations to the variety of available engagement opportunities. For example, customer call centers provide an opportunity to share feedback as well as questions and concerns, but are limited in their ability to access decision makers, engage in substantive dialogue and discourse, and meaningfully impact the decision making process. Further, while stakeholders can attend public meetings, those meetings are limited by pre-submitted and approved public comment periods as well as the discretion of board leadership. An additional concern is the lack of an institutionalized public engagement plan. While the organization has contracted a strategic communications plan – prepared by an external firm – and that plan has sections regarding aspects of stakeholder and community engagement, the document is vague in its recommendations regarding targeted strategies for the engagement of citizens/ridership, instead providing general recommendations regarding the importance of identifying the needs of the customer (Caissa Public Strategy, 2017). Finally, while the agency works to keep stakeholders informed, and the agency has signaled a willingness to view communication with stakeholders as a two-way process, much of the communication is done below the executive leadership level, and there is seemingly a lack of direct access to decision-makers (i.e., through advisory committees etc.).

In general, MATA's stakeholder engagement practices are not as robust as other organizations examined in this research. While they utilize a small suite of basic stakeholder engagement practices, there is room to incorporate additional opportunities

through practices that provide more direct and substantive interactions between leadership and stakeholders. For example, this might be accomplished through community-led advisory groups, or the inclusion of open format discourse opportunities such as open houses or discussion/educational groups where leadership and stakeholders can engage in substantive dialogue that provides opportunity for both the organization to better understand stakeholder needs and priorities, as well an opportunity for stakeholders to better understand the work being done by the organization. Ultimately, while there is still room for improvement regarding the organization's stakeholder engagement practices, as a relatively small agency, MATA's current suite of stakeholder engagement practices appear to be sufficient in their ability to be responsive to their ridership as a central stakeholder.

Lastly, because MATA's focus is operational in nature (though they do work closely with the Memphis MPO in planning processes), it should be noted that the Memphis MPO has additional stakeholder engagement practices that are geared toward community involvement in mid to long-range transportation policy and infrastructure planning (Memphis MPO, 2022). This allows for community members throughout the region to participate in long-range transportation planning more directly. Both the Memphis MPO *Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan* (CPT-HSTP) as well as the *Memphis 3.0 Comprehensive Plan* incorporated directed stakeholder engagement efforts in the planning and development processes (Memphis MPO, 2022).

Limitations

Data collection for this case study site was adequate with respect to access to public administrators, but limited with respect to publicly available documents – requiring reliance on “grey” literature to establish certain sections such as organizational history. A public administrator tasked with community and stakeholder engagement was responsive and able to converse regarding the organization’s stakeholder engagement practices – providing additional support for the available public documents. Embark provides a robust archive of public meeting documents that range from minutes to agendas to notes, all combined into one downloadable packet. The archives date back approximately seven years and are accessible via their website. One potential limitation is that the archives do not contain video or audio records of the meetings. Additionally, there does not appear to be a virtual attendance option for public meetings, and in order to access accommodations – such as auditory assistance – the attendee must contact the organization no later than 48 hours prior to the meeting. As a result of the above conditions, data for this case study site is comprised of publicly available board meeting packets, any press or news releases made available via the organization’s website, and a conversation with a public administrator tasked with public and stakeholder engagement.

Table 7: Organizational Stakeholder Engagement Rubric, Memphis

Memphis Area Transit Authority – MATA (Memphis, TN)			
SE Dimension	Organizational Dimension	Applied Stakeholder Engagement Practices	Score
Adequate Organizational Capacity Adequate Staffing Capacity, Budget, Leadership predisposition,	The MATA org structure reflects a focus on administrative and operational expertise akin to that of a private corporation. Lacking here is any devoted exec office to public engagement, community outreach, or stakeholder engagement. However, the organization does	With a customer-centric disposition, MATA’s stakeholder engagement efforts are potentially limited by the lack of dedicated public outreach staff at the exec. Level, leaving the	2/4 Med (2-3)

Organizational Expertise, Org structure,	staff a Manager of Customer Experience as well as a Public Information Officer. The budget allocates departmental funding to staff customer call centers, but any funding dedicated to stakeholder engagement efforts could not be determined.	majority of engagement work to take place at lower managerial and staff levels	
Accessible and Representative Active, targeted stakeholder outreach and accessible leadership reflective of the community	Board appointed by Mayor. MATA's strategic plan identifies negative stakeholder (riders, media, businesses, partners, gov agencies) perception as a problem. In response the organization dedicates efforts to improving brand image, with accessibility to leadership limited by traditional forms of participation (meetings, hearings etc.)	In practice, accessibility to leadership is limited to public meetings (which have their own limitations), with the predominant avenue of access coming through customer call centers and internet-based communication	1/4 Low (1)
Equitable Dispersed influence over the decision making process	Appointed board bares the policymaking responsibility with input from the executive leadership.	While MATA has placed a high value on rider satisfaction and signaled a prioritization of ridership considerations in decision-making processes, in practice, stakeholders (especially at the community level) are limited in their avenues of influence to expression of customer preference.	2/4 Med (2-3)
Inclusive Accounts for and utilizes tacit localized knowledge in decision making process	Participation of any stakeholder is limited to brand communication material and public comment periods (Board meetings and customer feedback).	In practice, board meeting comments must be submitted online ahead of meeting, must be on topic, and address of comments is at the discretion of the board. Limited modes of participation in general have the potential to limit inclusivity. The organization has made efforts to address issues of access and inclusion through disability accommodation (must be set up in advance).	2/4 Med (2-3)
Frequency SE process is initiated early in decision	MATA has demonstrated a willingness to engage stakeholders	In practice, this means regular public meetings, online communications,	4/4 High

making process and maintained throughout all phases of policy process	(through their available methods) on a regular basis	the occasional virtual open house, and an always accessible call center – all of which take feedback throughout decision making processes	(4)
Institutionalized Above practices are encultured through organizational level policy.	Limited to civil rights policies, minimum legally required public comment periods and externally prepared communication strategy	In practice, the lack of a clearly available public engagement plan (beyond a communications strategy) limits the optimization of any stakeholder engagement efforts.	1/4 Low (1)
Score	10/20 - Medium (Excluding Organizational Capacity) 12/24 – Medium (Total)		

EMBARC – Oklahoma City, OK

History

Prior to the creation of EMBARK, transportation in the city of Oklahoma was provided by the *Central Oklahoma Transportation and Parking Authority (COTPA)*. Created in 1966, COTPA’s transportation authority was granted through action on the part of the local city-council and agreements with the surrounding municipalities. The organization was tasked with providing and monitoring public parking enforcement as well as public transportation. The primary mode of transportation at the outset of COTPA’s service provision centered around bus services (EMBARC, 2022).

As a public trust, COTPA still operates today having gone through several partnership changes – including formal partnerships with city of Oklahoma through intergovernmental agreements in the 1980’s and METRO transit (a precursor to EMBARK) in the 1990’s. Currently, COTPA has partnership agreements with EMBARK

to provide a suite of transportation services to Oklahoma City (EMBARC, 2022). These services include bus mass transit, para-transit services, ferry services, a streetcar service in the downtown core and various additional services that range from parking enforcement to bike share programs (Embark, 2022).

METRO – the primary Regional Transit Authority operated by Oklahoma City – became EMBARK in 2014 with the goal of modernizing aspects of its service provision. While there has been additions and changes to the suite of services provided by EMBARK, there was also a focus on key technological upgrades to their existing transportation services. These upgrades included a partnership with Google Maps to create a trip-planner interface as well as the addition of *Wi-Fi* to all city buses.

Over nearly three decades, EMBARK (formerly METRO) has been implementing their *Metropolitan Area Projects* (MAPS) in order to build-out their transportation infrastructure. Through MAPS 1 (1993), MAPS 2 (2001), MAPS 3 (2009), and MAPS 4 (2019), EMBARK has built a robust and simplistic public transportation system. These voter-approved infrastructure development plans levied local sales taxes in order to bolster and expand bus service coverage areas, expand paratransit and bus schedules, and build-out streetcar infrastructure for the downtown core (EMBARC, 2022). EMBARK’s most recent project package – MAPS 4 – will seek to further interconnect the existing infrastructure through additional bus mass transit lines and key linkages with other aspects of the city’s transportation system such as the streetcar (EMBARC, 2022).

Organizational Governance

The organizational governance of EMBARK is rather unique, the *Central Oklahoma Transportation and Parking Authority* (COTPA) oversees both administrative and operational aspects of EMBARK, and functions as the primary governing body for the organization. As a public trust, COTPA is governed by an eight-person board comprised of elected officials from Oklahoma City (three members) as well as five members that are appointed to board positions by the mayor of Oklahoma City and approved by the city council (COTPA, 2022). The board holds oversight authority over EMBARK, setting organizational policy, fiscal policy, fare structures, managing property and facility usage as well as parking operations (COTPA, 2022).

With the semi-elected board of COTPA providing organizational oversight to EMBARK, the leadership within EMBARK consists of a director, and two assistant directors overseeing the operational and administrative aspects of the organization respectively. Additionally, EMBARK staffs a senior leadership team of approximately eleven people, each with a specific department to oversee – ranging from security to project management. The three person leadership team within EMBARK serve by appointment of the COPTA board and are primarily tasked with the implementation of COTPA policies and the operation of the Oklahoma City public transportation system at large (EMBARC, 2022).

Organizational Capacity

EMBARC staffs ~250 employees that range in expertise from management, to communications, to operations and maintenance, to administration and more. As the

primary public transportation service provider for Oklahoma City, EMBARK's organizational composition appears to place a strong emphasis on various aspects of the administrative and operational aspects of their organizational capacity. They also staff positions dedicated to customer service/relations and communication in order to serve their ridership (EMBARK, 2022).

While they do dedicate staffing positions to communication and customer service, a potential gap exists in the organization's leadership structure as the organization does not appear to dedicate a leadership position to customer service, outreach, public engagement, or public relations at the executive level (EMBARK, 2022). However, the *Central Oklahoma Transportation and Parking Authority* (COTPA), the organization that governs and oversees EMBARK, does dedicate a senior leadership position to aspects of stakeholder engagement through a *Public Information Officer* at the executive level (COTPA, 2022).

With a 2021 operating budget of ~ \$15.5 million dollars, ~ \$4.8 million was dedicated to administrative purposes while ~ \$9.8 million was dedicated to operational purposes. Within the administrative allotment, ~ \$960,000 was dedicated to "customer relations¹⁸" while a total of ~ \$3.6 million was dedicated to "Executive Leadership". While the budget certainly does not tell the entire story with regard to organizational practices, it can be a reflection of organizational priorities.

Stakeholder Engagement Practices

¹⁸ Customer relations is a broad term and it is acknowledge that it does not necessarily encapsulate all aspects of stakeholder engagement made by the organization

EMBARC's stakeholder engagement plan defines stakeholders as "*Transit customers, Individual or groups affected by a transportation project or action, Individual or groups that believe they are affected by a transportation project or action, traditionally under-served and under-represented communities, residents of affected geographic areas, Government agencies, Community-based Organizations (CBOs), [and] Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs)*" (EMBARC Public Engagement Plan, 2019, P.1). The organization's public engagement plan outlines various state and federal laws that detail the engagement requirements on the part of the agency. At the federal level, these laws amount to adherence to the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*, the *Civil Rights Act*, various executive orders that require access improvements for limited English, and various environmental laws. At the state level, Oklahoma has separate open meetings and records requirements that the public agencies must adhere to (EMBARC Public Engagement Plan, 2019). It is within this legal framework that EMBARK has built its public engagement plan, and in turn, their stakeholder engagement practices. It is the expressed goal of the EMBARK Public Engagement Plan (2019) to offer meaningful engagement to the entirety of the community through "quality input" – comments that are relevant and contribute to the overall goals of a given project or policy – "Diversity" and "Accessibility" – engaging stakeholders from a diverse ethnic and cultural background while creating increasingly accessible methods of participation (p. 2). Further, the plan is guided by a set of principles aimed at responsiveness, inclusivity, clear methods of communication, transparency and more (EMBARC Public Engagement Plan, 2019).

The EMBARK Public Engagement Plan (2019) also outlines various forms of outreach utilized by the organization. These forms include public hearings and meetings, open house forums to give project-based presentations, and workshops to engage stakeholders regarding a specific project or policy. EMBARK's engagement plan also outlines the potential utilization focus groups to solicit feedback on a particularly contentious project or policy.

While EMBARK's Public Engagement Plan (2019) outlines principles and potential outreach and engagement strategies, in practice, the apparent majority of EMBARK's stakeholder engagement strategies adhere primarily to traditional forms of customer-centric engagement that centers around public comments delivered in the public meeting setting. EMBARK has specific organizational policies that dictate the guidelines, and ultimately the nature, of these interactions. For example, the organization lays out how and when public address of meeting agenda items can take place, which items on the agenda are open to public comment (not all items are subject to public comment), and board member discretionary authority to disregard comments and even remove members of the public for violation of the board meeting code of conduct (EMBARK, 2022). Further, the organization requires pre-submitted comments at least 48 hours in advance of all public meetings and that those comments be relevant to a specific agenda item in order to be considered by the board. Here again, the relevance of a given public comment is a discretionary decision on the part of the board (EMBARK, 2022). Finally, in submitting the public comment form in advance, the member of the public must provide certain personal information such as their name and address (EMBARK, 2022).

Beyond the public meeting setting, EMBARK utilizes various avenues to solicit stakeholder feedback such as customer service lines and customer complaint/feedback forms. Additionally, the organization utilizes a project specific (MAPS 3) *Citizen Advisory Board* in order to bring citizens closer to the decision-making process and potentially access tacit community-based knowledge (City of Oklahoma, 2022). While the advisory board provides a potentially meaningful avenue for participation, the eleven-person board is comprised of eight members appointed by each of the eight members of city council, one member of city council, and two members appointed at-large by the mayor (City of Oklahoma, 2022). This appointment process is thus heavily influenced by members of the city government and subject to inherent accessibility limitations.

Limitations

Data collection for this case study location was limited to publicly available documents, and the review of public meeting packets. These publicly available documents include meeting minutes, meeting agendas from various types of leadership meetings, budgetary and planning documents accessible via organization website, and other types of informational material oriented toward informing the public of organizational service provision, projects, and policies. Utilization of this case study site faced three major limitation; (I) public meeting observations had to be done live with no archival meeting footage available directly from the organization's website, (II) despite the outreach and engagement strategies outlined in the organization's public engagement

plan, it was difficult to obtain documentation¹⁹ that supported the utilization of such strategies without a public records request, and (III) despite multiple inquiries, no conversation was able to be had between the researcher and an administrator from the organization.

¹⁹ Documentation was limited in general – especially as it pertains to itemized organization specific budgets. Embarks agency budget is rolled into the cities overall budget which made it difficult to obtain detailed departmental budgets specific to EMBARK and COTPA

Table 8: Organizational Stakeholder Engagement Rubric, Oklahoma City

EMBARC (Oklahoma City, OK)			
SE Dimension	Organizational Dimension	Applied Stakeholder Engagement Practices	Score
<p>Adequate Organizational Capacity Adequate Staffing Capacity, Budget, Organizational Expertise, Org structure</p>	<p>The EMBARK org chart includes expertise ranging from financial management to operations and technical planning, to community outreach. However, absent in their senior leadership team is a position dedicated to public outreach, affairs, engagement etc. Engagement efforts primarily take place at the admin level with ~ \$960,000 dedicate to outreach and engagement (including staffing customer service center)</p>	<p>In practice, the organizations stakeholder engagement efforts take the form of traditional participatory opportunities such as public meetings and customer service lines. The organization does utilize panels and committees that are project specific and limited in term.</p>	<p>3/4 Med (2-3)</p>
<p>Accessible and Representative Active, targeted stakeholder outreach and accessible leadership reflective of the community</p>	<p>COTPA board of trustees: “<i>Three members serve by position, the Mayor of Oklahoma City, the City Manager and the City Finance Director. The five remaining trustees are appointed by the mayor and approved by City Council.</i>” Accessibility is present in the form of a customer service center as well as ad hoc committees</p>	<p>In practice the leadership arrangement is semi-representative through some elected officials and some appointed by those elected officials. While the organization has multiple points of access through customer service lines and meeting/forums/panel participation, these access points are limited by their design and reach. For example, public comments need to be submitted in advance and be deemed pertinent to the meeting agenda by the board (board discretion). Attendance must be scheduled ahead of time and virtual participation is limited. Unclear participatory pathways for joining panels/committees, and customer service line holds no direct role in decision making process.</p>	<p>2/4 Med (2-3)</p>
<p>Equitable Dispersed influence over the decision making process</p>	<p>External partially appointed board holds almost all policymaking authority</p>	<p>Limited representation and accessibility (outlined above) results in limited influence over decision making processes despite a wide range of potential participatory pathways</p>	<p>2/4 Med (2-3)</p>
<p>Inclusive</p>	<p>Some substantive mechanisms to share localized knowledge beyond</p>	<p>In practice, these participatory pathways represent a way to</p>	<p>2/4</p>

Accounts for and utilizes tacit localized knowledge in decision making process	public comments – organization uses public meetings, community forums/meetings and citizen advisory boards on certain capital projects in addition to customer service lines	include stakeholders in decision making processes, but can be limited in their reach and influence by the discretion of leadership.	Med (2-3)
Frequency SE process is initiated early in decision making process and maintained throughout all phases of policy process	Advisory boards are formed ad hoc, public meetings are held on a regular basis and the customer service center is open daily.	While the addition of citizen advisory boards is exclusive to specific projects, they run for the entirety of that project. Additionally, the customer service lines and public meetings provide regular input opportunity despite their design and reach limitations.	2/4 Med (2-3)
Institutionalized Above practices are encultured and codified through organizational level policy (separate from mandates beyond the organizational level).	EMBARC public engagement plan details organizational stakeholder engagement strategy	In practice, the plan sets organization wide policy for stakeholder engagement processes and appears to prioritize high quality participation as an encultured value. Additionally, the plan identifies a wide range of community based stakeholders and sets organizational goals and principles for providing “meaningful” engagement as well as an expectation that the feedback is used by organizational leadership	4/4 High (4)
Score	11/20 – Medium (Excluding Organizational Capacity) 15/24 – Medium (Total)		

Chapter 3

Comparative Case and Data Analysis

Introduction

The primary question this research concerns itself with is: *How do organizational qualities affect stakeholder engagement practices?* To answer this question, this research used a *Most Similar* case study selection process and an inductive approach to data collection. The qualitative data provided detail regarding the organizational qualities and their respective expression of stakeholder engagement practices for each site across six organizational stakeholder engagement dimensions – *Organizational Capacity, Accessibility and Representation, Equity, Timeliness (frequency), and institutionalization* of stakeholder engagement policies. Each of the six dimensions and their respective stakeholder engagement practices were then scored on a scale of 1 to 4 and given a binary categorization of *Low* (1-2) or *High* (3-4). Finally, the scores across the six dimensions were summed to yield an overall stakeholder engagement score for each site and given the same binary categorization; *Low* (1-12) or *High* (13-24).

The primary analytical method used to analyze the qualitative data gathered from the case study sites was Mill's *Joint Method of Agreement and Difference*. Mill provides four inductive, logic based approaches to inquiry suitable for small *N* qualitative comparative case studies; the *Method of Agreement*, the *Method of Difference*, the *Joint Method of Agreement and Difference*, and the *Method of Concomitant Variation*. Each of these approaches have their own underlying assumptions and limitations, but have long provided an analytical basis for comparative analysis in the social sciences (Liebersohn, 1991). Overall, the goal of these inductive inquiry-based approaches is not to statistically

identify causality, but rather to infer causality of an event. Here, the *Joint Method of Agreement and Difference* combines the two base approaches of *Agreement* and *Difference*. That is, the *Method of Agreement* observes an event across cases and seeks to identify the common (or agreeing) trait, while the *Method of Difference* seeks to identify the uncommon (or different) trait across cases with regard to an event. By combining the two approaches, the researcher is able to observe an event(s), identify the common and uncommon traits with regard to either experiencing or not experiencing the event(s) and thus identify the potential cause.

Key Assumptions and Limitations

Mill's inductive inquiry-based methods have several key assumptions, as well as limitations in their analytical capabilities. Mill's inductive methods assume determinism as opposed to probability, error free measurements, single causality, and cannot account for confounding interactions (Lieberson, 1991). While these assumptions limit the analytical capabilities of Mill's methods, the inquiry-based approach is still able to provide base insight with regard to potential causal factors.

Applied to this research, for example, it is clear that there may be interactions between the six stakeholder engagement dimensions, and that all six stakeholder engagement dimensions additively contribute to the overall level of the organizations' level of stakeholder engagement – creating the potential for confounding interactions or interdependency. However, the six stakeholder engagement dimensions constitute separate features and activities of each organization, and the organizations themselves of separate and distinct from one another – allowing for base causal inquiry. That is, that

Organizational Capacity across unrelated cases agrees in every case with the overall level of stakeholder engagement.

Application and Results

Applied to this research, Mill’s *Joint Method of Agreement and Difference* examines the level of usage for each of the six stakeholder engagement dimensions in relation to the case study organizations’ overall stakeholder engagement score.

Converting the scores across the six stakeholder engagement dimensions as well as the overall engagement score to a trichotomous scoring categorization allows for the isolation of factor(s) that contribute to the organizations’ overall level of stakeholder engagement. The results of this process can be seen in the table below.

Table 9: Mill Joint Method of Agreement and Difference, organizational Stakeholder Engagement Categorizations

Case Study Site	Organizational Capacity	Accessible and Representative	Equitability	Inclusivity	Frequency	Institutionalized	Overall SE Score Categorization
Portland	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	High
Seattle	High	Medium	High	High	High	Medium	High
Denver	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Memphis	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	High	Low	Medium
Oklahoma City	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	Medium

The level of usage across the six stakeholder engagement dimensions – *Organizational Capacity, Accessibility and Representation, Equity, inclusivity, Frequency, and Institutionalization* – can be seen for all five case study locations. The above table presents results – both inclusive and exclusive of the Organizational Capacity dimension – along with the categorization of their overall usage of stakeholder engagement best practices. The table above shows that there is variation across the six

dimensions, resulting in two locations having high levels of usage and three locations having medium levels of usage regarding stakeholder engagement best practices at the organizational level. Further, the results of the analysis show that in five of the six dimensions, there is no consistent agreement with the overall usage of stakeholder engagement best practices across all case study locations. However, two stakeholder engagement dimensions align closely with the overall stakeholder engagement best practices across the five case study locations. Here, *Equity* and *Inclusivity* align in all but one location (Portland). While this, according to Mill's methodological approach, would not constitute the potential of a causal relationship, it does suggest that these dimensions might be seen as influential or necessary but not sufficient to be a determinative factor in an organizations overall use of stakeholder engagement best practices. Finally, in one of the six stakeholder engagement dimensions – *Organizational Capacity* – there is agreement between the levels of *Organizational Capacity* and the overall usage of stakeholder engagement best practices (even when excluding the *Organizational Capacity* dimension). This result suggests that *Organizational Capacity* is both necessary and sufficient as a determinant factor for the usage of stakeholder engagement best practices at the organizational level.

In order to account then for any undue influence of *Organizational Capacity* on the overall score regarding the usage of stakeholder engagement best practices, the scoring scheme was retotalled out of 20 possible points excluding *Organizational Capacity*. These point totals and their respective categorizations are reflected in the above OSER tables for each location. The table below represents the categorical value (1-4:

High, Medium, Low) for each location’s organizational capacity, and the overall score for the location (excluding organizational capacity – out of 20).

Table 10: Organizational Capacity and Stakeholder Engagement Categorization

Case Study Site	Organizational Capacity	Overall SE Score Categorization
Portland	High	High
Seattle	High	High
Denver	Medium	Medium
Memphis	Medium	Medium
Oklahoma City	Medium	Medium

The table above shows that even when *Organizational Capacity* is excluded from the overall point total regarding the usage of stakeholder engagement best practices at the organizational level, the categorical levels of *Organizational Capacity*, and the overall usage of stakeholder engagement best practices map directly onto one another across the five case study locations. This result confirms the findings that *Organizational Capacity* is both necessary and sufficient as a determinant factor for the usage of stakeholder engagement best practices at the organizational level. Essentially, when applied in this manner, this analytical method functions as a small N factor analysis wherein *Organizational Capacity* maps directly onto the usage of stakeholder engagement best practices at the organizational level.

Finally, due to the limitations of Mill’s methods regarding their ability to account for latent variables that may influence either independent or dependent variables, it is worth acknowledging here that differences in governance structures may influence overall organizational capacity. However, through the design of the case study selection criteria, this research worked to mitigate any undue influence of latent variables – including governance structure. Here again, there was see alignment between

organizational capacity and the use of stakeholder engagement best practices in both agencies that share similar governance structures as well as those that differ from one another.

Secondary Question A: Service area socioeconomic data

The secondary question this research concerns itself with is two-fold; (I) *how do exogenous socioeconomic factors impact the levels of organizational stakeholder engagement*, and (II) *how do stakeholder engagement levels impact organizational performance?* While socioeconomic barriers to stakeholder engagement – especially at the community level – have been well documented and researched (Fung, 2006), Less examined is the potential impacts of the external socioeconomic context on organizational stakeholder engagement practices and levels. In order to address the first part of this question, socioeconomic data was collected from each of the five case study locations using two common socioeconomic metrics; (I) median household income, and (II) median home price. Data was collected from the United States Census Bureau and represents the metropolitan service areas for each case study location (U.S. Census, 2022). Finally, each case study location was given a trichotomous socioeconomic categorization of either High, Medium, or Low. This categorization was based on the range of household income and price values for the five case study locations. The range was binned as follows; one-half standard deviation above and one half standard deviation below the mean constitutes the “Medium” categorical bin, while values for the two metrics that fall either above or below the medium bin cut points are categorized as “High” and “Low” respectfully. This approach mitigates outlier influences on the mean

that might otherwise be present if national level data was used. The socioeconomic categorization for each of the case study locations were used to explore the potential relationship between the exogenous socioeconomic context and the level of organizational stakeholder engagement. The socioeconomic data as well as the socioeconomic categorization for the case study locations can be seen in the table below.

Table 11: Case Study Socioeconomic Data

Location	Median Home Price	Median Household Inc	Categorization
Seattle	\$932,000	\$92,000	High
Portland	\$574,000	\$71,000	Medium
Denver	\$607,000	\$78,000	Medium
Memphis	\$142,000	\$41,000	Low
Oklahoma City	\$186,000	\$55,000	Low

Secondary Question B: *Agency-level Performance*

In order to address the second aspect of the secondary question – *how stakeholder engagement levels impact organizational performance* – common organizational performance metrics were collected for each of the five case study locations. Attempts to measure organizational performance are wide-ranging and present in nearly all subsets public administration literature. From management and organizational theory to research concerning contemporary forms of governance, to participation and stakeholder engagement, potential impacts on performance are the gold standard by which research findings and subsequent implications are often judged. There has been a plethora of metrics purposed as viable measures of performance across nearly all public administration subfields. For example, studies of collaborative governance often use

consensus agreement as a measure of the successful performance of the collaborative arrangement (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2014), while public management research has typically focused on more pragmatic outcomes such as the on-time completion of a project or delivery of a service. While scholars have developed enumerable ways to quantify and measure increasingly abstract aspects of performance, perhaps the most tried and true performance metric is adherence to budget (Neshkova & Guo, 2014). Budgetary performance spans the spectrum of public administration subfields and is widely applicable to research that seeks to explore the performance related impacts of a given variable or set of variables.

With respect to performance, public transportation serves as an ideal service model with well-established and long-standing performance metrics (Codd & Walton, 1995; Cascetta & Pagliara, 2013). These metrics include; ridership, on-time departures/arrivals, safety records²⁰, overall budgetary performance, project budget adherence, project timeline adherence, and more (Nieplowicz, 2016). For the purposes of this research, measuring performance will focus on longitudinal ridership as well as adherence to project specific budgets within the context of the overall budgetary performance of the case study agencies. While an in-depth review of the dominant public budgeting theories and literature may be beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is worth incorporating relevant concepts related to assessing budget performance specific to the public transportation sector. Foregoing any theoretical discussion of *Incremental Budgeting*, *“Garbage Can”* budgeting, or *Performance-based Budgeting*, the focus will

²⁰ Safety records refers to both accidents and incidents of crime.

instead be on the practical ways various projects, that differ in scale, are assessed with regard to their budgetary performance and whether or not that comparison is appropriate.

While *performance-based Budgeting* (PBB) features prominently in the public transportation performance literature due to its prioritization of increased efficiency of the public transportation system (Nieplowicz, 2016), it is within this subset of literature that questions relevant to this research are asked. In researching the impacts of Performance-based budgeting (PBB) on public transportation efficiency, Nieplowicz (2016) examined, among other things, whether or not it is reliable and appropriate to compare budgetary performance between agencies that undertook projects and tasks of varied complexities. In order to accomplish this, the authors used agency budgets to examine the relationship between projects/tasks, project/task goals, and agency established goal-oriented measures of success (Nieplowicz, 2016). Ultimately, the author found that comparative analysis of budgetary performance between locations that engaged in projects of varied complexities was appropriate as long as the performance (efficiency) metric was tailored to the task (Nieplowicz, 2016). That is, each task and sub-task should have individualized goals by which their efficiency is judged in addition to budgetary performance. While the author set out to establish the utility of PBB in varied environments, for the purposes of this research, the analysis provided by the author establishes a basis for using project budget adherence as a viable performance metric despite the slight variation in transit projects and systems between case study locations.

The two metrics in this research – ridership and budget – used to evaluate the performance of the five case study organizations were collected as follows. Ridership data was collected and compiled from multiple sources for each agency. Here, in addition to being a well-established performance metric in the public transportation sector, ridership was used because of its proximity to community level stakeholders. In this way ridership is responsive to community stakeholder preference signaling, and not as susceptible to policy change as other internal performance metrics might be. In collecting ridership data, reports and data sets published by the organizations were prioritized. While these datasets and reports differed across agencies, ridership numbers were able to be collected and compiled for basic analysis. Additionally, agencies sometimes used different units and time scales to measure ridership. That is, some might use total riders on a monthly basis, while others used compiled annual totals. Here, efforts were made to collect ridership data on a uniform scale or to scale the available data to create uniformity. Lastly, for the purposes of analysis, ridership performance was judged and categorized based on either the presence or lack of ridership growth. The presence of ridership growth was determined by averaging the percent change year over year from 2010 to 2019 to avoid any exogenous influence on ridership caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The ridership data for the ten-year period can be seen in the table below.

Table 12: Case Study Ridership Performance Data

Location	Ridership (2010)	Ridership (2019)	Average Percent Change (10 Year over Year)	Average Percent Growth Rate (2010-2019)	Performance Categorization
Seattle	~22,000,000	~49,000,000	+ 9%	+1.17%	High
Portland	~99,000,000	~95,000,000	- 0.51%	+1.53%	Medium
Denver	~323,000	~321,000	- 0.05%	+1.77%	Medium
*Memphis	~894,000	~775,000	- 13%	+0.77%	Low
Oklahoma City	~2,600,000	~3,000,000	+ 4%	+1.4%	High

The ridership data was then given a trichotomous performance categorization of either “Low”, “Medium”, or “High” based on the range of percent change between cases. The categories were binned as follows; “Low” equals -13% to -6%, “Medium” equals -5% to +1%, and “High” equals +2% to +9%. The between cases year-over-year percent change was used to create the categories in order to both account for the longitudinal ridership data and mitigate any influence that might be present when using national levels of ridership data as a baseline for comparison – thus providing a true between case comparison. In order to account for the potential of population growth to affect changes in ridership, population growth was included in the table – resulting in no distinguishable association between fluctuations in ridership and changes in population.

The next component of organizational performance used in this research was overall budgetary performance. Using the same evaluative logic as the above ridership, organizational budgetary performance was judged and categorized based on the average

percent change year-over-year. The average percent change year-over-year was binned using the same trichotomous logic – with the bottom third of the percent change range being categorized as “Low”, the middle third being categorized as “Medium”, and the top third of the range being categorized as “High”. The binned categorizations are as follows; -62% to -36% equals “Low”, -35% to -10% equals “Medium”, and -9% to +18% equals “High”. While it might be argued that negative changes in Net Position constitutes poor performance, this categorization scheme allows for both a true between case comparison in performance and mitigates any influence that might be encountered when using alternative approaches to operationalizing budgetary performance. Here again, there are many ways to operationalize budgetary performance. Average year-over-year percent change in Net Position serves as a metric that provides a more wholistic accounting of the financial health of the agency – even as it relates to latent elements of the budget (i.e. rainy day funds) – and mitigates the influence of windfall funding in a given year. Due to variation in budget methods, detail, and record keeping across the five case study locations, the year-over-year average went back as far as FY2017. Additionally, in order to apply a uniform metric to budgetary performance given the variation in budget methodology between sites, this research used percent change in *Net Position* year-over-year to categorize budget performance. Net position has a scalable definition that can be scaled from the contractual level – examining contract assets minus obligations – to the organizational level – total assets minus liabilities. For the purposes of this research, net position in the annual public budgetary context can be defined simply as; revenues minus expenditures (Tsujiyama, 2009). In the absence of available net position data, change in

net expenditure and revenue was used. The budgetary performance data and categorization can be seen in the table below.

Table 13: Case Study Budgetary Performance Data

Location	Net Pos. (2017)	Net Pos. (2019)	Average Percent Change (Year over Year)	Performance Categorization
Seattle	\$8.6M	\$12M	+ 18%	High
Portland	\$2M	\$1.8M	- 5%	Medium
Denver	\$3.3M	\$3.3M	+0.01%	Medium
Memphis	\$870T	\$124T	- 21%	Medium
Oklahoma City	\$365T	\$209T	- 62%	Low

Application and Results

In order to explore the potential relationship between both socioeconomic factors, stakeholder engagement practices, and organizational performance across the five case study locations, the categorizations for each were entered into a Mill table using Mill’s *Joint Method of Agreement and Difference*. In order to explore the two aspects of organizational performance, each performance metric was treated in separate tables, then together in the same table. The table below includes the socioeconomic, stakeholder engagement, and ridership performance metric.

Table 14: Mill Joint Method of Agreement and Difference, Socioeconomic and Ridership Performance Categorizations.

Case Study Site	Socioeconomic Categorization	Overall SE Score Categorization	Ridership Performance
Seattle	High	High	High
Portland	Medium	High	Medium
Denver	Medium	Medium	Medium
Memphis	Low	Medium	Low
Oklahoma City	Low	Medium	High

Across the five case study locations, there is inconsistent alignment between the socioeconomic categorization and the overall stakeholder engagement categorization. Based on the underlying reasoning of Mill’s *Joint Method of Agreement and Difference*, this suggests that there is no causal relationship between exogenous socioeconomic conditions and organizational stakeholder engagement. That is, exogenous socioeconomic conditions are neither necessary nor sufficient determinative factors regarding the usage of stakeholder engagement best practices at the organizational level. Furthermore, this finding strengthens the findings related to the determinative influence of *Organizational Capacity* on stakeholder engagement best practices by affirming that socioeconomic conditions are both not a proxy for organizational capacity as well as not the primary driver of governance activities in this context.

Perhaps more interesting is that while there is no consistent alignment in socioeconomic categorization and stakeholder engagement categorization, there is alignment between socioeconomic conditions and budgetary performance categorization in all but one case study location. This suggests that while not sufficient or causal, exogenous socioeconomic conditions may impact organizational budgetary performance.

Table 15: Mill Joint Method of Agreement and Difference, Socioeconomic and Budgetary Performance Categorizations

Case Study Site	Socioeconomic Categorization	Overall SE Score Categorization	Budget Performance
Seattle	High	High	High
Portland	Medium	High	Medium
Denver	Medium	High	Medium
Memphis	Low	Low	Medium
Oklahoma City	Low	High	Low

Finally, the table below combines the two performance metrics with the socioeconomic and stakeholder engagement categorizations. Here again, we can see close

alignment between exogenous socioeconomic categories and ridership performance categories. This suggests again that while not sufficient or causal, exogenous socioeconomic conditions may impact organizational ridership performance.

Table 16: Mill Joint Method of Agreement and Difference, Socioeconomic and Performance Categorizations

Case Study Site	Socioeconomic Categorization	Overall SE Score Categorization	Ridership Performance	Budget Performance
Seattle	High	High	High	High
Portland	Medium	High	Medium	Medium
Denver	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Memphis	Low	Medium	Low	Medium
Oklahoma City	Low	Medium	High	Low

Again, the table above demonstrates that while there is inconsistent agreement between socioeconomic categorization, stakeholder engagement categorization, and ridership and budgetary performance categorization across the case study locations – despite the close alignment between socioeconomic categorizations and each of the performance metrics.

Summary of Findings

This research utilized Mill’s *Joint Method of Agreement and Difference* across five case study public transportation service providers to examine the potential relationship between organizational qualities and applied stakeholder engagement practices. Additionally, this research was interested in the potential effect of exogenous socioeconomic factors on organizational stakeholder engagement practices as well as the potential effect of those practices on organizational performance.

Pertaining to the primary question posed by this research – *How do organizational qualities affect stakeholder engagement practices?* – six stakeholder

engagement dimensions were examined across five case study locations. These stakeholder engagement dimensions include; *Organizational Capacity, Accessibility and Representation, Equitability, Inclusivity, Frequency, and Institutionalization*. Of these dimensions, only *Organizational Capacity* aligned with the use of stakeholder engagement best practices across the five case study locations. That is, if a given site's *Organizational Capacity* was "High", so too was their use of stakeholder engagement practices; if an organization's *Organizational Capacity* was "Medium", so too was their use of stakeholder engagement best practices; if a given site's *Organizational Capacity* was "Low", so too was their use of stakeholder engagement best practices. Again these findings suggest that *Organizational Capacity* is most closely associated with the use of stakeholder engagement best practices at the organizational level. That is to say, that organizational capacity exerts a determinative influence on the use of stakeholder engagement best practices at the organizational level – being both necessary and sufficient for the use of stakeholder engagement best practices.

While *Organizational Capacity* was the only dimension that aligned directly with the overall level of organizational stakeholder engagement best practices, two additional stakeholder engagement dimensions aligned closely with the overall level of stakeholder engagement across the five case study sites. These dimensions were; *Equity and Inclusivity*. These two dimensions aligned with the overall level of organization stakeholder engagement in all but one case across the five case study locations. This suggests that while there is less support for a causal relationship between these dimensions and overall levels of organizational stakeholder engagement, they may yet

influence stakeholder engagement practices at the organizational level – while not being sufficient in and of themselves.

The second question(s) posed by this research concerns itself with the potential effect of exogenous socioeconomic conditions on organizational stakeholder engagement levels, and the potential effect of stakeholder engagement levels on organizational performance, asking two-fold; (I) *how do exogenous socioeconomic factors impact the levels of organizational stakeholder engagement*, and (II) *how do stakeholder engagement levels impact organizational performance?* Concerning the first part of this question, using common socioeconomic metrics, this research found that there was no consistent basis for a causal relationship between exogenous socioeconomic conditions and the use of organizational stakeholder engagement best practices.

Concerning the latter part of this question – *how do stakeholder engagement levels impact organizational performance?* – this research utilized two common performance metrics across the five case study organizations; (I) *Ridership*, and (II) *Budget*. Pertaining to *Ridership* performance, there is little to no basis for a causal relationship between the usage of organizational stakeholder engagement best practices and ridership performance. Likewise, pertaining to budgetary performances, this research found that there is little to no basis for a causal relationship between and the usage of stakeholder engagement best practices and budgetary performance outcomes. Additionally, based on Mill's *Joint Method of Agreement and Difference*, across the five case study locations, there is little to no basis for a causal relationship between the two performance metrics. That is, there is no consistent alignment between *Ridership*

performance and *Budget* performance across the five case study locations. However, it is worth noting that there was close alignment between exogenous socioeconomic categorizations and each of the two performance metrics – only being out of alignment in one location for each of the two metrics. This result suggests that while closely aligned – socioeconomic conditions are not sufficient in and of themselves to exert a determinative influence on organizational performance in this context.

Chapter 4

Discussion and Conclusion

Stakeholder Engagement in the Public Sector

Stakeholder engagement in the public sector is a broad and well-studied field that ranges in subject area from effective engagement practices (Reed, 2008) to power dynamics and communication methods in the public arena (Arnstein, 1969; Bartels, 2013). For over fifty years, researchers in the field of Public Administration and Political Science have been examining the various roles of stakeholders in public sector decision making processes as well as their relationship to administrators and elected leaders. One of the earliest researchers to develop a framework for understanding the role of the stakeholder in public sector decision making processes was Sherry Arnstein. Arnstein (1969) proposed a typological hierarchy of authority and interaction between administrators and stakeholders that detailed the various levels of interactions based on the level of authority granted to the stakeholder in the public sphere. Here, the citizen stakeholder that has no level of authority or participation in decision making processes is subject to manipulation by leaders, while those that participate but do not have substantive authority are subject to consultation and placation. Those that participate and have some level of substantive authority are able to substantively influence decision making and can achieve partnership, delegated power, and even control over decisions in the public sphere (Arnstein, 1969, P. 217). Arnstein's original framework has been extrapolated and built upon over the last fifty years, but remains conceptually foundational to the study of stakeholder engagement.

Since the foundational work of Arnstein (1969), there have been several notable governance reforms. While Arnstein's (1969) research was conducted within the legislative context of Lyndon B. Johnson's *Great Society* programs – which, in part, sought to empower specific communities to have a more direct role in localized decision making²¹ – perhaps the most notable governance reform took place in the late 1970s with the advent of *New Public Management* (NPM). While NPM is a set of multifaceted managerial and governance reforms, as it pertains to stakeholder engagement, NPM reshaped stakeholder engagement in two fundamental ways; (I) through the privatization of public goods and services, NPM reforms introduced private sector interests into public sector decision making processes, and (II) NPM reforms reshaped the role of the citizen stakeholder in public sector decision making processes (Harvey, 2005; Thomas 2013). Here, it is argued that under the tenants of NPM, the role of the citizen is limited to that of a customer (Thomas, 2013), with some scholars arguing that NPM had a more subversive purpose – to strip the citizen of their civic identity (Brown, 2015).

While useful facets of *New Public Management* (NPM) have become ingrained in contemporary forms of governance, the late 1990s and early 2000s saw a concerted effort on the part of Public Administration practitioners and scholars to reestablish civic participation in the public sector. This movement became known as *New Public Service* (NPS). NPS can be defined by a redefining of the role of the citizen that is more central to public sector decision making processes, a reimaging of the relationship between stakeholders and public administrators, and a refocusing of efforts to better understand

²¹ This dissertation acknowledges that the Great Society programs are widely regarded as unsuccessful and problematic in nature

the potential added value of civic and stakeholder engagement in public sector decision making processes (King et. al, 1998; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000). Here, NPS sought to reestablish the citizen as an essential stakeholder in public sector decision-making processes that was not limited in their role and authority to that of a customer who sought change through choice, but rather, through collective action, partnership, advocacy and the attainment of substantive authority – placing the citizen at the highest rungs of Arnstein’s (1969) *Ladder of Participation*. Furthermore, this governance philosophy saw the relationship between citizens and administrators as that of a partnership where citizens were essential and central both in consideration of decisions and function of decision making – giving rise to research concerned with the nature, form, function, and outcomes of the citizen stakeholder in the public sphere that is still being considered to date.

While *New Public Service* (NPS) might be more accurately seen as a governance *philosophy* rather than a set of concrete governance reforms such as those implemented under *New Public Management* (NPM), NPS did successfully reframe conceptualizations, and even public sector norms, around who should be considered as a stakeholder and how those stakeholders should interact in the public sphere. A substantial body of research has arisen within the field of stakeholder engagement as a result, and public sector organizations have devoted significant resources to public engagement activities (Fung, 2015). Perhaps one of the most interesting branches of stakeholder research and literature to come out of the NPS philosophy is the examination of coproduction models. Coproduction refers to the partnering of various stakeholder groups

– specifically community oriented organizations – to produce a public service. These services are limited to localized communities and the service provision most often takes the form of operation of community level services such as community centers and, in some cases, care for community spaces such as parks etc. (Bovaird, 2007). While researchers have touted the scalability and applicability of coproduction models in enabling co-design and co-management of providing large-scale public services between citizens and administrators, the challenges to executing such tasks are enumerable – including an oversimplification of government structure and processes, lack of technical expertise, and more (Carlsson & Berkes, 2005).

While co-management and co-production models as an outgrowth of *New Public Service* (NPS) research face significant challenges, and lack scalability and applicability, this research did demonstrate that, in some limited applications, coproduction as it relates to including members of a localized community in decision making and even provision can help to identify and provide for the unique needs of a community. However, contemporary forms of governance still wrestle with the role of the stakeholder and the added value of stakeholder engagement (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004). prominent forms of contemporary governance, such as collaborative governance seek to fold-in stakeholders from all backgrounds as collaborative partners with the explicit goal of reaching consensus in the decision making process whether that decision pertains to a policy, program, or the provision of a public service. Network governance adheres more to the remaining aspect of *New Public Management* (NPM) through the use of a network of stakeholders that have a specific role in adding to the efficacy of the decision making

process and eventual outcome (Chhotray & Stoker, 2009). Research in the area of collaborative governance has taken up this question with regard to the added value of stakeholder engagement and presented interesting findings – finding that when collaboration takes place between a variety of stakeholders in certain contexts, outcomes related to conflict resolution and consensus achievement are improved, while improvement of the more objective measures of performance remain unclear (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015; Fung, 2015).

While, more broadly, the added value of stakeholder engagement arguably remains up for debate (Fiorina, 1999; Innes & Booher, 2004; Irvin & Stansbury, 2004; Conner, 2017), researchers have made valuable contributions to outcome driven research on a case-by-case basis, touting claims of increased project effectiveness, equity, perceived legitimacy as well as more pragmatic improvements in performance (Romenti, 2010; Sherman & Ford, 2014). Here, researcher has shown that organizational autonomy and budgetary performance might be improved when stakeholders are involved in identifying budgetary priorities (Neshkova & Guo, 2012; Guo & Neshkova, 2013; Park, 2019). Additionally, in certain contexts, researchers examining the impacts of stakeholder engagement in public education have demonstrated that collaboration with stakeholders can positively impact student academic performance (Conner, 2017). Moreover, direct service provision of certain public services such as public transportation might be improved through stakeholder engagement (Cascetta & Pagliara, 2013; Lindenau & Böhler-Baedeker, 2014). Here, stakeholder engagement has been shown to aide in meeting the transportation needs of localized communities, and effectively designed

transit systems have been shown lead to economic growth and community development (Cascetta & Pagliara, 2013; Lindenau & Böhler-Baedeker, 2014; Cascetta & Pagliara, 2020). Perhaps one of the largest contributions researchers have made to the study of stakeholder engagement is the identification of potential pitfalls of stakeholder engagement, identification of the exogenous barriers that stakeholders face when attempting to engage, as well as the optimal organizational conditions and practices related to stakeholder engagement. Here, researchers have noted that when stakeholder engagement practices are not well designed they can become an impediment to the decision-making process and lead to poor performance related outcomes (Fiorina, 1999; Innes & Booher, 2004). Additionally, exogenous factors such as mobility and poor socioeconomic conditions can impede stakeholder engagement, negatively impacting the potential added benefits of stakeholder engagement at the organizational level (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004). Well-designed stakeholder engagement practices can be separated into two broad categories; (I) the organizational conditions within which engagement practices take place, and (II) the engagement practices themselves. Collectively, researchers have identified at-least six key organizational qualities (dimensions) linked to optimized stakeholder engagement practices; (I) *Organizational Capacity* (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004; Sherman & Ford, 2014), (II) *Accessibility and Representation*, (III) *Inclusivity*, (IV) *Equity*, (V) *Frequency*, and (VI) *Institutionalization* through policies supportive of stakeholder engagement practices (Fung, 2006; Reed, 2008). Finally, research suggests that there are a set of applied stakeholder engagement practices that have been upheld as effective when performing

stakeholder engagement at the organizational level. Here, these practice include; (I) targeted outreach of specific high impact or relevant groups, (II) designing engagement systematically in order to disperse appropriate roles and levels of authority, and (III) levels of engagement should be specific to the level of decision(s) being made (Fung, 2006; Reed, 2008). Research has also suggested that engaging stakeholders through a set of small group, policy-oriented learning sessions can be effective in educating stakeholders, garnering insight on the part of the organization, and reaching consensus in decision-making processes (Fung, 2006; Fung, 2015). Additional research supports the effectiveness of small-group deliberation, discussion, and education in improving the communicative effectiveness of participants – even in contentious environments (Bartels, 2013).

Research Summary: Questions, Activities, and Findings

While stakeholder engagement research has provided a robust body of literature with regard to subjects ranging from individual barriers to stakeholder engagement, to organizational qualities, to best practices, there are two primary challenges this research sought to address. First, attempts to define, categorize, analyze, and understand effective stakeholder engagement practices often utilize either semi-typological tools that contain an enmeshment of consummative and practical elements – creating a potentially conflated understanding of stakeholder engagement qualities and applied stakeholder engagement practices – or a set of limited applied practices that are accepted as effective across public sector settings.

These typologies range from Arnstein's Ladder of Participation (Arnstein, 1969), focusing on level of involvement, communication and power, to decision-making charts that focus on designing engagement based on pragmatic managerial need and resource management (Thomas, 1993; Beierle, 2000), to tools like Fung's (2006) *Democracy Cube* – designed to assess types of communication and level of involvement. Here, there is a need to clarify dominant understandings of stakeholder engagement by separating, yet accommodating, both consummative and practical elements when examining various aspects of stakeholder engagement at the organizational level.

The second challenge pertains to a gap in the literature that calls for a need to explore the potential connection between exogenous socio-economic conditions, organizational stakeholder engagement qualities and practices, and the subsequent impact of those practices on organizational performance. Here, each of these components have been well-researched, some in tandem with others, yet substantive research examining the potential relationship between all elements is lacking. This research examined the potential relationship between socio-economic conditions, organizational stakeholder engagement qualities and practices, and subsequent organizational performance, in part, through the utilization of a tool intended to account for both consummative and practical elements of stakeholder engagement at the organizational level.

Questions: In order to examine the relationship between exogenous socio-economic conditions, organizational qualities and stakeholder engagement practices, and organizational performance, this research asked three questions. Inductive in nature, the first and primary question posed by this dissertation was: *How do organizational*

qualities affect stakeholder engagement practices? This question was designed to separate, yet account for organizational qualities, and their potential effect on applied stakeholder engagement practices.

Two secondary questions were also of interest to this research: (I) *How do exogenous socioeconomic factors affect organizational stakeholder engagement* and (II) *Does the prioritization and practice of effective stakeholder engagement at the organizational level yield better performance outcomes?* These two questions were designed to explore the potential effects of socioeconomics on organizational stakeholder engagement and how organizational stakeholder engagement might affect certain aspects of organizational performance.

Activities: In order to answer the three research questions posed by this dissertation, this research used a *Most Similar* case study selection process, collected data from publicly available sources available at each case study location, performed content analysis with regard to the publicly available data collected at each site, designed a semi-typological tool indexing to organize and categorize data, and employed Mill's *Method of Agreement and Difference* as the primary analytical method.

A *Most Similar* case study design calls for the case study selection to be based on selecting case studies that resemble one another across as many variables as possible, while selecting on differences related to variables of interest (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). This was expressed in this study by selecting public transportation service providers that closely resembled one another while potentially differing in socioeconomic conditions, organizational stakeholder engagement practices, and performance levels.

Ultimately, five case study locations were selected; *Seattle, Portland, Denver, Memphis,* and *Oklahoma City.*

Publicly available data in the form of organizational documents, public meeting observations, and conversations with administrators tasked with various aspects of public engagement were collected from the five case study locations in order to perform content analysis. Of the three dominant approaches to content analysis, this research employed the primary tenants of *Direct* content analysis – focusing on the utilization of established categorizations of both organizational dimensions as well as applied stakeholder engagement practices (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). These categorizations were used to organize the content data for examination and analysis.

In order to organize, categorize, and eventually analyze the data collected from each of the five case study locations, this dissertation presents a semi-typological indexing rubric that separates organizational qualities from applied organizational stakeholder engagement practices. Organization of the data took place across six organizational stakeholder engagement dimensions. These dimensions were; (I) *Organizational Capacity*, (II) *Accessibility and Representation*, (III) *Equity*, (IV) *Inclusion*, (V) *Frequency*, and (VI) *Institutionalization*. Following the organization of content across the six dimensions, the data was separated into two categories; (I) *Organizational Qualities*, and (II) *Applied Stakeholder Engagement Practices*. An example of the resulting table can be found below.

Table 17: Example Organizational Stakeholder Engagement Rubric

Example Table: Transit Organization			
SE Dimensions	Organizational Dimensions	Applied Stakeholder Engagement Practices	Score Score out of 4 possible points
Adequate Organizational Capacity Organizational capacity indicators	Organizational indicators for the dimension listed to the left	How are these qualities expressed in organizational practices pertaining to stakeholder engagement?	
Accessible and Representative How does participation take place and who participates?	Organizational indicators for the dimension listed to the left	How are these qualities expressed in organizational practices pertaining to stakeholder engagement?	4/4
Equitable Who has power and how is that power exercised in the decision making process?	Organizational indicators for the dimension listed to the left	How are these qualities expressed in organizational practices pertaining to stakeholder engagement?	4/4
Inclusive How is SE knowledge used to inform the decision making process?	Organizational indicators for the dimension listed to the left	How are these qualities expressed in organizational practices pertaining to stakeholder engagement?	4/4
Frequency When and how often does stakeholder engagement take place throughout the decision	Organizational indicators for the dimension listed to the left	How are these qualities expressed in organizational practices pertaining to stakeholder engagement?	4/4

making process?			
Institutionalized Codified organization level policies	Organizational indicators for the dimension listed to the left	How are these qualities expressed in organizational practices pertaining to stakeholder engagement?	4/4
Score	20/20 (Excluding organizational capacity) 24/24 (Total)		

The rubric then yields a score out of 24 possible points across the six dimensions – or a score out of 20 possible points when excluding organizational capacity – resulting a summed score at the bottom of the rubric intended to indicate the overall level of stakeholder engagement at the organizational level. Here, the rubric serves four essential functions; (I) it separates consummative organizational stakeholder engagement qualities from practical stakeholder engagement practices, (II) provides a way to conceptualize the relationship between consummative organizational stakeholder engagement qualities and practical stakeholder engagement practices, (III) provides a way to encapsulate and quantify the presence and connection between consummative organizational stakeholder engagement qualities and practical stakeholder engagement practices, and (IV) provides a basis for analyzing the potential relationship between exogenous socioeconomic conditions, organizational stakeholder engagement qualities and practices, and organizational performance – specifically as it pertains to levels of organizational stakeholder engagement.

The coding scheme evolved over the course of the project from a dichotomous to a trichotomous scoring logic of “High”, “Medium”, and “Low” in order to account for variation in the coding of the qualitative data. Coding and categorical decisions were

based off of the interpretation of common indicators and best practices established in the stakeholder engagement literature. Below in an example table of coding and categorizing indicators for the qualitative data.

Table 18: Qualitative Coding Indicators

SE Dimension	High Indicator	Medium Indicator	Low Indicator
Organizational Capacity	Staff devoted to stakeholder engagement or other activities at the leadership level Budget allocation for specific stakeholder engagement efforts – including staffing support	Staff that are tasked with stakeholder engagement efforts but are not at the leadership level Single staff member/non department Limited funding	Absence of devoted staff position and insufficient funding
Accessible and Representative	Representation at leadership level Multiple opportunities and avenues to participate Targeted outreach strategies	Non-elected leadership Still multiple opportunities to participate No codified targeted outreach strategies	Non-elected leadership Limited participatory pathways No codified or implemented outreach strategy or plan
Equitable	Participatory pathways are imbued with influence or authority in decision-making processes	Participation takes place but there is limited authority or influence	Participation and authority is highly controlled by leadership
Inclusive	Multiple participatory opportunities that vary in form and mitigate barriers – all of which imbue the participants with some level of influence or authority	Participatory pathways exist but they are limited in their scope and ability to mitigate a range of barriers	Participation does not work to account for or mitigate a range of barriers
Frequency	Engagement initiated early and used consistently throughout the decision making process	Engagement takes place sporadically throughout the decision making process	Engagement assumes traditional forms and only occurs at the outset of the decision making process
Institutionalized Policy	The presence of a formalized and comprehensive engagement plan at the organizational level	Strategies that are made available but not comprehensive	No codified engagement plan or strategy

To examine the potential connections between the other two variables of interest – exogenous socioeconomic conditions and organizational performance – this research chose two widely accepted indicators for each. The socioeconomic indicators used in this research were; (I) median home value, and (II) median household income. For organizational performance indicators, this research focused on one indicator with broad applicability across the public sector, and one indicator specific to public transportation; (I) budgetary performance, and (II) annual transit system ridership. The four indicators were given a binary categorization for each case study location. If the median home value and household income for a given location was higher than the national average, that location’s socioeconomic conditions were categorized as “High”, if they were lower than the national average, that location was given a categorization of “Low”. A similar binary categorization scheme was used for the organizational performance indicators. If a given organization experienced a drop in their net position year-over-year, that organization’s budgetary performance was categorized as “Low”, if the organization experienced a positive net position, that organization was given a budgetary performance categorization of “High”. For ridership, if the organization experienced an increase in annual average ridership year-over-year, the organization’s ridership performance was categorized as “High”, if there was a decline in annual average ridership year-over-year, the organization’s ridership was categorized as “Low”.

Findings: In order to analyze the potential relationship between exogenous socioeconomic conditions, organizational stakeholder engagement qualities and practices, and organizational performance, this research employed Mill’s *Method of Agreement and*

Difference. Designed for small *N* comparative case studies, this inquiry-based analytical method seeks to establish a basis for inferential causation by observing events across cases seeking to identify the common (or agreeing) trait, while the Method of Difference seeks to identify the uncommon (or different) trait across cases with regard to an event. By combining the two approaches, the researcher is able to observe an event(s), identify the common and uncommon traits with regard to either experiencing or not experiencing the event(s) and thus identify potential causes.

Through the employment of this method, this research presents several key findings. First, regarding the primary question of *How do organizational qualities affect stakeholder engagement practices*, this research found that across all five case study organizations, the organizational dimension that aligned with overall levels of organizational stakeholder engagement was *Organizational Capacity* – suggesting that organizational capacity is both a necessary and sufficient determinant of the use of stakeholder engagement best practices at the organizational level. More specifically, elements of staffing capacity, budget allocation, organizational expertise and overall organizational structure. Additional findings related to the primary question posed by this research suggest that while not aligned across all cases, *Equity* and *Inclusivity* can be seen as potential contributors to an organization’s use of stakeholder engagement best practices.

Findings pertaining to the secondary questions posed by this research – *How do exogenous socioeconomic factors affect organizational stakeholder engagement*, and *Does the prioritization and practice of effective stakeholder engagement at the*

organizational level yield better performance outcomes? – offer equally interesting results. Pertaining to the potential effect of exogenous socioeconomic conditions on organizational stakeholder engagement best practices, findings show that there is inconsistent alignment between the exogenous socioeconomic conditions of a given location and an organization’s overall use of stakeholder engagement best practices—suggesting that socioeconomic conditions exogenous to the organization are neither necessary nor sufficient in determining an organization’s use of stakeholder engagement best practices. While there is inconsistent alignment between exogenous socioeconomic conditions and overall levels of organizational stakeholder engagement best practices, equally as interesting, results show that there is no consistent alignment between the use of organizational stakeholder engagement best practices and organizational performance in either the *Budgetary* or *Ridership* performance categories across the five case study locations. These results suggest that levels of organizational stakeholder engagement do not necessarily result in performance improvement (in the two areas measured). Finally, while not consistently aligned across all five case study locations, two locations saw close alignment between exogenous socioeconomic conditions, and both areas of organizational performance – suggesting that while not sufficient, socioeconomic conditions may influence various aspect of organizational performance.

Research Contributions

The findings and the research undertaken throughout this dissertation make several significant contributions to stakeholder engagement research. These contribution include; (I) contributions to stakeholder engagement practices specific to the public

transportation sector, (II) contributions that inform the established literature and practical understanding of public sector stakeholder engagement practices at large, and (III) contributions that extend to understandings of stakeholder engagement practices across the private and nonprofit sectors.

Contributions to the Public Transportation Sector: The public transportation sector offered a unique context within which to examine stakeholder engagement at the organizational level. This is due, in large part, to the unique and complex nature of public transportation as a direct public service that is both highly technical as well as highly dependent on ridership engagement with the system and user feedback with regard to system improvements (Cascetta & Pagliara, 2013; Cascetta, Cartenì, Pagliara & Montanino, 2015). Indeed, research has shown that stakeholder engagement specific to transportation system development and design, in some cases, can improve user experience and system design when tailored to a specific project (Cascetta & Pagliara, 2013). Additionally, well-designed transit systems have been shown to drive community and economic development, adding value to the importance of well-designed public transportation systems that benefit from stakeholder engagement (Cascetta, Cartenì, Henke & Pagliara, 2020).

The public transportation system has long been on the forefront of designing and implementing stakeholder engagement practices – recognizing the importance of engagement in designing effective systems. As a result, public transportation service providers at all levels of government have emphasized the development of *best practices* with regard to stakeholder engagement. Here, the United States Department of

Transportation (USDOT) has led the way, putting forward six guiding principles for “meaningful” (USDOT, 2022, P. 5) stakeholder engagement. These principles are; (I) *Understand Community Demographics*, (II) *Build Durable Community Relationships*, (III) *Understand Community Wants and Needs*, (IV) *Involve Broad Representation of Community*, (V) *Use Community Preferred Engagement Techniques*, and (VI) *Document and Share Communities Impact on Decisions* (USDOT, 2022).

All of the guiding principles set forth by the USDOT are imbued in *Organizational Stakeholder Engagement Rubric* (OSER). The goal in utilizing the public transportation sector as a service model to examine stakeholder engagement was two-fold; (I) to provide insight with regard to the application these guiding principles within the context of organizations that provide public transportation, and (II) to extrapolate these findings to broader organizational stakeholder engagement qualities and practices in the public sector and beyond. By applying the rubric to organizations that provide public service, the findings make three significant contributions specific to the public transportation sector. First, the rubric provides key insights into *How* the principles set forth by the USDOT are being applied at the organizational level. Here, it can be seen that while those principles might be important to “meaningful” engagement, the application of those principles might vary greatly from one organization to another. Second, the findings highlight the potential impact of organizational dimensions on applied stakeholder engagement practices. Here, while an organization might desire to enculture these principles and their underlying philosophies, various organizational constraints might limit their ability to do so. The findings highlight which organizational

diminutions or qualities might be prioritized to maximize the effective application of “meaningful” engagement practices. Ultimately, this dissertation makes an important point as a result of its findings: the literature on stakeholder engagement in the public transportation sector and, indeed the public sector as a whole, has too often asserted either a purely instrumental or a purely consummative justification for stakeholder engagement. However, the results here show that neither is sustained by the evidence. Not all stakeholder engagement results in improved system performance. Therefore, the strictly instrumental, or mean-ends, approach fails. On the other hand, not all forms of stakeholder engagement are equally valuable in and of themselves, thus the consummative or end-oriented approach also fails.

Broader Contributions to the Public Sector: While this research utilized public transportation service provision as a case study model for examining key aspects of stakeholder engagement, the findings make several important contributions to stakeholder engagement research in the public sector as a whole. The findings of this research extend to the public sector in three primary ways; (I) by informing dominant theories and practices related to stakeholder engagement, (II) by informing the continued examination regarding the potential impacts of socioeconomic conditions on stakeholder engagement, and (III) by informing existing literature related to the effects of stakeholder engagement on various aspects of organizational performance.

Stakeholder engagement research has established a robust set of consummative and practical elements of engagement that are widely accepted and implemented throughout the public sector. These consummative and practical elements are often

upheld as *effective* methods of stakeholder engagement – contributing to improved participation as well as improved performance outcomes (Sherman & Ford, 2013). However, at the same time, researchers have also highlighted the potential pitfalls of stakeholder engagement. Noting that organizational factors such as bad-faith deliberation, self-interested behavior, priority misalignment, reduced resource capacity as well as political power dynamics can inhibit the decision-making process, and marginalize certain stakeholders (Sherman & Ford, 2013; Krupa et al, 2020; Kujala et al, 2022). By accounting for both the consummative elements of stakeholder engagement as well as the practical implementation of those elements, this research makes a substantive contribution to the existing stakeholder engagement literature through the identification of organizational dimensions that consistently contribute to “High” levels of organizational stakeholder engagement across the selected case study sites. While research has shown that in order for stakeholder engagement practices to be *effective* they should be valued, prioritized and supported by the organization, imbued with equity and inclusivity, practiced throughout the decision-making process and so on... (Fung, 2006; Reed, 2006), there has been little evaluation regarding which of these elements might be most important. This research isolates the most consistent contributing dimension of organizational stakeholder engagement – *Organizational Capacity* – further informing the understanding of what drives *effective* stakeholder engagement at the organizational level. Finally, these findings provide additional support for similar findings in the public sector stakeholder engagement literature as well as the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) literature that emphasizes the importance of organizational elements in

implementing and executing decision making processes that involve stakeholders (Sherman & Ford, 2013; Krupa et al, 2020; Kujala et al, 2022).

Socioeconomic conditions are often cited in stakeholder engagement literature as both something that can inhibit participation (Fiorina, 1999; Krupa et al, 2020), as well as something that can be improved through decision making that incorporates tacit localized knowledge (Cascetta & Pagliara, 2013). Less explored is the potential impact of exogenous socioeconomic conditions on levels of organizational stakeholder engagement. Finding that there is consistent alignment between “High” and “Low” socioeconomic levels, and “High” and “Low” levels of organizational stakeholder engagement, this research makes a valuable contribution to the potential causal relationship between exogenous socioeconomic conditions and levels of organisational stakeholder engagement.

Finally, a great deal of attention has been paid to the impacts of stakeholder engagement on various aspects of organisational performance. Research across the public sector has yielded mixed results in this area and are often done within the context of differing areas of the public sector – often on a case study basis. For example, stakeholder engagement in the budgetary process has been shown to yield improved budgetary performance (Neshkova & Guo, 2014), and Stakeholder collaboration in certain public education environments have been shown to improve academic performance (Conner, 2017). Moreover, multiple case study examples exist that demonstrate the added value of stakeholder engagement for performance outcomes when attempting to address complex problems (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004; Reed, 2006; Sherman

& Ford, 2013). At the same time, research regarding the efficacy of collaborative arrangements that involve key stakeholders have shown that, in certain cases, pragmatic outcomes related to performance are not hindered or improved through stakeholder engagement (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015). Additionally, there is an ever present caveat that accompanies nearly all of these findings – that in order to be “effective”, stakeholder engagement must be done the right way (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004; Innes & Booher, 2004; Reed, 2006; Sherman & Ford, 2013). Here, research has shown that when stakeholders are over or under involved, when there is a lack of organizational capacity, when engagement is not substantive for the appropriate level of engagement, or the benefits of engagement do not outweigh the costs, stakeholder engagement becomes a detriment to the decision making process (Thomas, 1993; Reed, 2006; Sherman & Ford, 2013; The same conflict in findings can be observed with regard to process-oriented performance outcomes. Here, stakeholder engagement research has shown that in some cases, increased engagement and collaboration can lead to conflict resolution and consensus agreement along with a range of consummative benefits (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015; Fung, 2015), while other research found that increased engagement hindered aspects of problem-solving and collaborative learning (Conner, 2017). This research contributes findings related to the impacts of stakeholder engagement on organizational performance by demonstrating that there is no consistent alignment between levels of organizational stakeholder engagement and organizational performance among the cases studied in this research. Here, the findings contribute to the ongoing debate regarding the overall added

value of stakeholder engagement as well as the basis for a potential relationship between stakeholder engagement and performance.

Contributions Beyond the Public Sector: While the findings presented in this research pertaining to the potential impacts of *Organizational Capacity* on levels of organizational stakeholder engagement bolster previous findings in both the public and private sector stakeholder engagement literature, perhaps the most substantive contribution provided by this research is the potential application of the *Organizational Stakeholder Engagement Rubric* (OSER). The OSER has the potential to be applied in any public or private setting, allows for the inclusion of both consummative and practical elements in the examination of organizational stakeholder engagement, is adaptable to the needs of specific organizations, is reflective of dominant contemporary stakeholder engagement theory and practice, and yields interpretable data that provides insight into both individual elements of stakeholder engagement as well as an overall assessment of organizational stakeholder engagement practices.

Implications of Findings

The findings presented by this research carry with them a number of notable implications for stakeholder engagement research, theory, and practice in the public sector and beyond. These implications arise from findings pertaining to; (I) the role of organizational capacity in stakeholder engagement practices, (II) the role of the remaining five organizational dimensions in stakeholder engagement practices, (III) the impact of socioeconomic conditions on organizational stakeholder engagement, and (IV) the relationship between stakeholder engagement and organizational performance.

Organizational Capacity: Stakeholder engagement research has established a robust set of consummative and practical qualities that are needed in order to practice effective stakeholder engagement. Often included in these qualities is *Organizational Capacity*. Previous research has demonstrated that when capacity is reduced, stakeholder engagement practices might suffer (Sherman & Ford, 2013). This research has demonstrated that among the qualities purported to contribute to effective stakeholder engagement practices, *Organizational Capacity* might be the most consistent contributing factor for these efforts. That is, while other consummative and practical qualities might add to effective stakeholder engagement efforts, *Organizational Capacity* is perhaps the one quality that may always be needed in order for practice stakeholder engagement effectively.

Organizational capacity is comprised of a set of organizational features. These features range from budget allotment for stakeholder engagement related efforts, staffing capacity, personnel expertise, organizational structure, leadership attitudes toward engagement activities, to the history of conflict among stakeholders. Any number of these organizational capacity elements have the potential to impact an organization's ability to effectively execute stakeholder engagement practices. While this research was only able to account for budget allotment, staffing capacity, and personnel expertise, the findings imply a two-fold need; (I) a need to focus stakeholder research efforts on the various individual elements of organizational capacity as it relates to their ability to enhance or hinder stakeholder engagement efforts, and (II) a need for practitioners to examine the

various aspects of organizational capacity before designing and implementing stakeholder engagement practices.

Remaining Organizational Dimensions: The remaining five organizational dimensions explored by this research include; *Accessibility and Representation*, *Equitability*, *Inclusiveness*, *Frequency*, and *Institutionalization* of stakeholder engagement practices. Stakeholder engagement literature has identified all of these as having some role to play in the effective practice of stakeholder engagement. While none of these consistently aligned as contributing to either “high” or “low” levels of organizational stakeholder engagement, many of them aligned across most of the case study locations. Specifically, *Accessibility and Representation*, *Inclusiveness*, *Frequency*, and *Institutionalization* of stakeholder engagement practices aligned in all but one case study location – implying that these features, while perhaps not as essential as *Organizational Capacity*, still play a prominent role in contributing to the overall levels of organizational stakeholder engagement.

The presence or absence of these dimensions as consistent contributors to levels of organizational stakeholder engagement suggest an ongoing need for researchers to treat these dimensions as individual contributors in order to fully explore their potential impact on organizational stakeholder engagement practices. Additionally, beyond prioritizing organizational capacity, practitioners should focus resources and efforts on in these areas when designing and implementing stakeholder engagement practices. Of note here is the need to institutionalize stakeholder engagement practices through organizational policy to ensure consistency and compliancy over time.

Notably misaligned was *Equity* as a consistent contributor to overall levels of organizational stakeholder engagement. *Equity* only aligned with three of the five case study locations, and perhaps more interestingly, certain case study organizations achieved “High” levels of stakeholder engagement despite having “Low” levels of *Equity* in their engagement practices. This is not to say that equity is not an essential consummative organizational dimension, only that, in this particular research, *Equity* did not consistently align with levels of organizational stakeholder engagement. This suggests that either one or all of the following might be needed: (I) a more consistent definition and, more importantly, operationalization is needed for *equity* in stakeholder engagement research, (II) there is a need for practitioners to examine *how* equity is expressed in stakeholder engagement practices, and/or (III) that *equity* is highly consummative, making it difficult to operationalize and apply across multiple cases – highlighting a potential need for a more flexible definition and operationalization of the term.

Socioeconomic Conditions: Socioeconomic conditions are often cited in stakeholder engagement literature as both something that can inhibit participation (Fiorina, 1999; Krupa et al, 2020), as well as something that can be improved through decision making that incorporates tacit localized knowledge (Cascetta & Pagliara, 2013). Less explored is the potential impact of exogenous socioeconomic conditions on levels of organizational stakeholder engagement. Finding that there was inconsistent alignment between socioeconomic levels, and levels of organizational stakeholder engagement highlights the overall need for more research in this area. Further, the implication in this area offers a bright spot for practitioners regarding their ability to design and implement

stakeholder engagement best practices at the organizational level despite exogenous socioeconomic conditions. This highlights the need for practitioners to not only be aware of the barriers facing their stakeholders, but to also be aware that they have the power, authority and potential to engage stakeholders in a meaningful fashion despite socioeconomic barriers faced by stakeholders

Organizational Performance: Organizational performance as a term has broad application throughout the stakeholder engagement literature. Performance can include any outcome based result ranging from pragmatic outcomes such as improved service delivery, to process-oriented outcomes such as consensus agreement on policy, to consummative outcomes related to increased trust, accountability, transparency, and legitimacy (Fung, 2006; Sherman & Ford, 2014; Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015; Fung, 2015; Conner, 2017).

While this research did not assess performance on a process or normative basis, the findings contribute to the ongoing discussion regarding pragmatic performance outcomes by demonstrating that key performance metrics specific to the public transportation sector were not consistently aligned with levels of organizational stakeholder engagement.

These findings highlight the continued need, on the part of public administration scholars, to further explore the potential relationship between organizational stakeholder engagement practices and performance based outcomes across various areas of the public sector.

Emergent Questions

While this research took on questions related to the impacts of exogenous socioeconomic conditions on organizational stakeholder engagement, the impacts of

organizational dimensions (qualities) on stakeholder engagement practices, and the impact of organizational stakeholder engagement practices on pragmatic organizational performance outcomes, it also highlighted several emergent questions for stakeholder engagement research. Those questions are as follows: (I) *What elements of Organizational Capacity are most impactful on an organization's stakeholder engagement practices*, (II) *What exogenous socioeconomic conditions are most impactful to an organization's stakeholder engagement practices (and how)*, and (III) *How are sector specific pragmatic performance outcomes impacted by organizational stakeholder engagement?*

Organizational Capacity: Stakeholder engagement research has established a robust set of consummative and practical qualities that are needed in order to practice effective stakeholder engagement. Often included in these qualities is *Organizational Capacity*. Previous research has demonstrated that when capacity is reduced, stakeholder engagement practices might suffer (Sherman & Ford, 2013). This research has demonstrated that among the qualities purported to contribute to effective stakeholder engagement practices, *Organizational Capacity* might be the most consistent contributing factor for these efforts. However, *Organizational Capacity* is an organizational dimension that consists of specific organizational features that individually contribute to an organization's capacity. These features range from budget allotment for stakeholder engagement related efforts, to staffing capacity, to personnel expertise, to organizational structure, to leadership attitudes toward engagement activities, to the history of conflict among stakeholders. While some of these features have been explored in depth – such as

leadership and conflict features – there is a need to disaggregate the features of organizational capacity to explore, in greater detail, the features that are most impactful in building out organizational capacity that contributes to higher levels of organizational stakeholder engagement.

Socioeconomic Conditions: Socioeconomic conditions are often cited in stakeholder engagement literature as both something that can inhibit participation (Fiorina, 1999; Krupa et al, 2020), as well as something that can be improved through decision making that incorporates tacit localized knowledge (Cascetta & Pagliara, 2013). Less explored is the potential impact of exogenous socioeconomic conditions on levels of organizational stakeholder engagement. Findings presented in this research found that there was inconsistent alignment between socioeconomic levels, and the usage of organizational stakeholder engagement best practices. This research used a limited number of economic indicators to operationalize socioeconomic conditions, raising questions regarding the need for the expanded inclusion of additional economic indicators in the operationalization of socioeconomic conditions. Furthermore, there is an opportunity to examine the potential specific impacts varying socioeconomic conditions have on organizational dimensions (qualities) – specifically Organizational Capacity.

Organizational Performance: This research utilized pragmatic performance metrics specific to the public transportation sector in order to examine the potential impacts of organizational stakeholder engagement on organizational performance. The findings contribute to the ongoing debate regarding the added value of stakeholder engagement practices throughout the public sector and beyond. What is needed is

additional research in this area that operationalizes performance based on pragmatic performance outcomes that are specific to each area of the public sector, and even more granularly, specific to the individual organization.

Policy Recommendations: Two key policy recommendations arise as a result of this research; (I) there is a need to invest in leadership training, staffing development and training, and consistent funding for stakeholder engagement activities at the organizational level, and (II) a need to standardize and institutionalize stakeholder engagement practices more broadly in order to affect change pertaining to organizational performance. Policies that support the investment in stakeholder engagement resources such as staffing and funding, will differ from state to state based on their governance structure, but there is a need for those governing bodies to allocate resources across public transportation agencies in order to build-out the organization's capacity to carry out effective stakeholder engagement strategies. Furthermore, agencies that govern public transportation have an opportunity to standardize stakeholder engagement practices in order to ensure the efficacy of such practices – a blueprint for such policies already exists at the federal level through the stakeholder engagement best practices published by the United States Department of Transportation. In Oregon, for example, the Oregon Department of Transportation, the Oregon Transportation Commission, Metro, and TriMet all play a role in developing various aspects of transportation policy within the state. Here, there is an opportunity to develop consistent engagement standards and funding levels to execute those standards.

Next Steps for Stakeholder Engagement Research

In addition to taking on the above questions, there are several key next steps for stakeholder engagement research in the public sector and beyond. These steps include: (I) conducting research that clearly demarcates the difference between pragmatic outcomes, process-oriented outcomes and consummative outcomes as they relate to stakeholder engagement practices, (II) Refining understandings and applications of stakeholder engagement *Best Practices* in stakeholder engagement research, and (III) the continued development of broadly applicable analytical tools – such as the *Organizational Stakeholder Engagement Rubric* (OSER) – in order to both account for and separate consummative and practical elements of organizational stakeholder engagement, and provide a uniformed analytical tool for assessing organizational stakeholder engagement.

Performance based outcomes are essential in understanding the added value of stakeholder engagement in the public sector and beyond. These outcomes can pertain to pragmatic aspects of performance, processes oriented aspects of performance, or consummative based aspects of performance. The three broad types of performance outcomes are all worth consideration, but are often treated together in the same research. While that research might make a methodological, analytical, or findings-based distinction between the three types of outcomes, there is a need within stakeholder engagement research to continue to contribute to outcome-based findings specific to each type of performance outcome individually. Here, there has been a great deal of research pertaining to the impacts of stakeholder engagement on consummative outcomes such as trust and legitimacy, at times however, consummative outcomes are paired with

pragmatic or process outcomes in order to seemingly legitimize the research. Conversely, demonstrable pragmatic outcomes related to the added value of stakeholder engagement are desirable by researchers because they are perhaps the most measurable form of outcomes, and clearest indicator of added value. By separating these outcomes, there is potential to further both the dominant understandings well as legitimacy of each type of outcome.

The public transportation sector has established a set of *Best Practices* that mirror best practices that have been put forward by both stakeholder engagement research as well as public sector practitioners more broadly (USDOT, 2022). As such, these practices contain an enmeshment of consummative and practical elements. What is needed in stakeholder engagement research throughout the public sector and beyond is a continued refinement of these practices in order to separate consummative elements from practical elements – allowing for the prioritization of practical investments in organizational capacity at the organizational level as well as directed cultural investments in the development of institutionalized norms that contribute to pragmatic stakeholder engagement practices.

The enmeshment that can be seen in the established stakeholder engagement best practices is reflective of the methodological and analytical assessments provided in prevailing stakeholder engagement research. That is, public sector stakeholder engagement research often relies on either semi-typological tools that contain an enmeshment of consummative and practical elements – creating a potentially conflated understanding of stakeholder engagement qualities and applied stakeholder engagement

practices – or a set of limited applied practices that are accepted as effective across public sector settings. Here, there is a need within stakeholder engagement research to continue to develop new ways of examining, analyzing, and understanding organizational stakeholder engagement. Specifically, there is an opportunity to develop analytical tools – such as the *Organizational Stakeholder Engagement Rubric* (OSER) – that both account for and demarcate between consummative and practical elements of established stakeholder engagement best practices. The broad potential application of such tools will not only allow researchers to ask new questions of stakeholder engagement in new settings and in new ways, but it might also contribute a refinement of *best practices* and practitioner-led organizational reforms throughout the public sector and beyond.

References

- Aberbach, J. D., & Christensen, T. (2005). Citizens and Consumers. *Public Management Review*, 7(2). <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719030500091319>
- Andrews, R., & Van de Walle, S. (2013). New Public Management and Citizens' Perceptions of Local Service Efficiency, Responsiveness, Equity and Effectiveness. *Public Management Review*, 15(5).
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2012.725757>
- Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A Ladder Of Citizen Participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 35(4). <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944366908977225>
- Bartels, K. P. R. (2014). Communicative Capacity. *The American Review of Public Administration*, 44(6). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0275074013478152>
- Beierle, T. C. (2002). The Quality of Stakeholder-Based Decisions. *Risk Analysis*, 22(4). <https://doi.org/10.1111/0272-4332.00065>
- Bovaird, T. (2007). Beyond Engagement and Participation: User and Community Coproduction of Public Services. *Public Administration Review*, 67(5).
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2007.00773.x>
- Brown, W. (2015) *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalisms Stealth Revolution*. Zone Books, New York, NY. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt17kk9p8>
- Carlsson, L., & Berkes, F. (2005). Co-management: concepts and methodological implications. *Journal of Environmental Management*, 75(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvman.2004.11.008>
- Carothers T. (2002). The End of the Transition Paradigm. *Journal of Democracy*, 13(1).

Doi: 10.1353/jod.2002.0003

Cascetta, E., Cartenì, A., Henke, I., & Pagliara, F. (2020). Economic growth, transport accessibility and regional equity impacts of high-speed railways in Italy: ten years ex post evaluation and future perspectives. *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice*, 139. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tra.2020.07.008>

Cascetta, E., Cartenì, A., Pagliara, F., & Montanino, M. (2015). A new look at planning and designing transportation systems: A decision-making model based on cognitive rationality, stakeholder engagement and quantitative methods. *Transport Policy*, 38. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tranpol.2014.11.005>

Cascetta, E., & Pagliara, F. (2013). Public Engagement for Planning and Designing Transportation Systems. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 87. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.10.597>

Central Oklahoma Transportation and Parking Authority (2023). Adopted Budget
Central Oklahoma Transportation and Parking Authority (2021). General Meeting
Agenda

Central Puget Sound Regional Transportation District. (2021). *2022 Financial Plan and Proposed Budget*.

Central Puget Sound Regional Transportation District. (2022). *Board of Directors*.

Central Puget Sound Regional Transportation District. (2022). *Board Rules and Operating Procedures*.

Central Puget Sound Regional Transportation District. (2022). *Diversity Oversight Committee*.

Central Puget Sound Regional Transportation District. (2022). *Refreshing the Citizen Oversight Committee*.

Central Puget Sound Regional Transportation District. (2008). *Sound Transit 2: A Mass Transit Guide*.

Central Puget Sound Regional Transportation District. (2022). *Sound Transit Background*.

Chhotray, V., & Stoker, G. (2009). Governance: From Theory to Practice. In *Governance Theory and Practice*. Palgrave Macmillan UK.

https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230583344_10

City of Oklahoma City (2021), About Us

City of Oklahoma City (2022). Citizen Advisory Board

City of Oklahoma City (2021). *Adopted Budget*.

City of Oklahoma City (2021), MAPS 2: *About*

City of Oklahoma City (2021). MAPS 3; *About*

City of Oklahoma City (2022). OKC Moves Bus Study Final Report

City of Oklahoma City (2022). Oklahoma City Streetcar

City of Oklahoma City (2022). Taxes

Colorado Department of Transportation. (2022). *About CDOT*.

Conner, T. W. (2017). Exploring the Diverse Effects of Stakeholder Engagement on Organizational Performance. *The American Review of Public Administration*, 47(6).

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0275074015618785>

Denhardt, R. B., & Denhardt, J. V. (2000). The New Public Service: Serving Rather than

Steering. *Public Administration Review*, 60(6). <https://doi.org/10.1111/0033-3352.00117>

Diehl, M.-R., Richter, A., & Sarnecki, A. (2018). Variations in Employee Performance in Response to Organizational Justice: The Sensitizing Effect of Socioeconomic Conditions. *Journal of Management*, 44(6).
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206316671581>

Embark Oklahoma City (2023). ADA and Title VI Compliance

EMBARK Oklahoma City (2023). EMBARK Deepens Leadership Bench.

Embark Oklahoma City (2022). Public Engagement Plan.

Emerson, K., & Nabatchi, T. (2015). *Collaborative Governance Regimes*. Georgetown University Press.

Emerson, Kirk, & Nabatchi, T. (2015). Evaluating the Productivity of Collaborative Governance Regimes: A Performance Matrix. *Public Performance & Management Review*, 38(4). <https://doi.org/10.1080/15309576.2015.1031016>

Federal Transit Administration. (2022). *Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)*.

Ferlie, E., & Steane, P. (2002). CHANGING DEVELOPMENTS IN NPM. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 25(12). <https://doi.org/10.1081/PAD-120014256>

Fiorina M.P. (1999). Extreme Voices: A Dark Side of Civic Engagement. In Theda Skocpol & F. Morris P (Eds.), *Civic Engagement in American Democracy* (pp. 395–411). Brookings Institute Press.

- Firmstone, J., & Coleman, S. (2015). Public engagement in local government: the voice and influence of citizens in online communicative spaces. *Information, Communication & Society, 18*(6). <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2014.986180>
- Fung, A. (2006). Varieties of Participation in Complex Governance. *Public Administration Review, 66*(s1). <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2006.00667.x>
- Fung, A. (2015). Putting the Public Back into Governance: The Challenges of Citizen Participation and Its Future. *Public Administration Review, 75*(4). <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12361>
- Gross, R. (2015). MEASURING ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE: A NEW APPROACH TO TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE REPORTING AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT . *British Journal of Business and Management Research, 2*(1), 69–80.
- Guo, H. (David), & Neshkova, M. I. (2013). Citizen Input in the Budget Process. *The American Review of Public Administration, 43*(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0275074012443588>
- Harvey, D. (2005). *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press.
- Hinton, E. (2015). “A War within Our Own Boundaries”: Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society and the Rise of the Carceral State. *Journal of American History, 102*(1). <https://doi.org/10.1093/jahist/jav328>
- Hsieh, H.-F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis. *Qualitative Health Research, 15*(9). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687>
- Innes, J. E., & Booher, D. E. (2004). Reframing public participation: strategies for the 21st

century. *Planning Theory & Practice*, 5(4).

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1464935042000293170>

Irvin, R. A., & Stansbury, J. (2004). Citizen Participation in Decision Making: Is It Worth the Effort? *Public Administration Review*, 64(1). <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2004.00346.x>

Jones, P. (2011). Developing and applying interactive visual tools to enhance stakeholder engagement in accessibility planning for mobility disadvantaged groups. *Research in Transportation Business & Management*, 2. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rtbm.2011.08.001>

Jones E., Murillo C., Blankenship D., Bridges R., Frampton C., Millet J., Mullica J.D., Trussman K., White R., and Zavala D. (2021) RTD Accountability Committee Final Report.

King County Metro. (2019). *Meet Metro; King County Metro Department Guide*.

King County Metro. (2022). *Metro Transit Organizational Chart*.

King County Metro. (2022). *Milestones - The 1950's*. Metro Online.

King County Metro. (2022). *Milestones - 1970s*. Metro Online.

King County Metro. (2022). *Milestones - The 2000s*. Metro Online.

Metro. (2022). *About Metro*.

King, C. S., Feltey, K. M., & Susel, B. O. (1998). The Question of Participation: Toward Authentic Public Participation in Public Administration. *Public Administration Review*, 58(4). <https://doi.org/10.2307/977561>

Krupa, M. B., McCarthy Cunfer, M., & Clark, S. J. (2020). Who's Winning the Public

- Process? How to Use Public Documents to Assess the Equity, Efficiency, and Effectiveness of Stakeholder Engagement. *Society & Natural Resources*, 33(5).
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920.2019.1665763>
- Kujala J., Sachs S., Leinonen H., Heikkinen A., and Laude D., (2022). Stakeholder Engagement: Past Present and Future. *Business and Society*. Vol. 6(5) DOI: 10.1177/00076503211066595
- LEACH, W. D., & SABATIER, P. A. (2005). To Trust an Adversary: Integrating Rational and Psychological Models of Collaborative Policymaking. *American Political Science Review*, 99(4). <https://doi.org/10.1017/S000305540505183X>
- Levitan, S. A., & Taggart, R. (1976). *The Promise of Greatness*. Harvard University Press.
<https://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674714564&content=toc>
- Lindenau, M., & Böhler-Baedeker, S. (2014). Citizen and Stakeholder Involvement: A Precondition for Sustainable Urban Mobility. *Transportation Research Procedia*, 4.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.trpro.2014.11.026>
- Local Government Budget Law of Colorado, C.R.S. 29.1.
- Lynn, L. E., Heinrich, C. J., & Hill, C. J. (2000). Studying Governance and Public Management: Challenges and Prospects. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 10(2). <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.jpart.a024269>
- Minor, N. (2022, February 15). *I Made a Podcast About RTD: Here are some curious things I found along the way*. CPR News.
- Nabatchi, T., T. Goerdel, H., & Pepper, S. (2011). Public Administration in Dark Times:

- Some Questions for the Future of the Field. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 21(Supplement 1). <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muq068>
- Ndaguba, E. A., & Hanyane, B. (2019). Stakeholder model for community economic development in alleviating poverty in municipalities in South Africa. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 19(1). <https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.1858>
- Neshkova, M. I., & Guo, H. (2012). Public Participation and Organizational Performance: Evidence from State Agencies. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 22(2). <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mur038>
- Nieplowicz, M. (2016). The use of performance-based budget to measure the efficiency of public transport in metropolises in Poland / Wykorzystanie budżetu zadaniowego do pomiaru efektywności transportu publicznego w polskich metropoliach. *Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego We Wrocławiu*, 434. <https://doi.org/10.15611/pn.2016.434.13>
- Oregon State Legislature (2022). Judicial Examination to Determine the Legality of any Municipal Corporation's Organization and Action, ORS 33.710
- Oregon Transportation Commission. (2022). *About the Commission*.
- Park, J. H. (2019). Does Citizen Participation Matter to Performance-Based Budgeting? *Public Performance & Management Review*, 42(2). <https://doi.org/10.1080/15309576.2018.1437050>
- Putnam, R. D., Leonardi, R., & Nanetti, R. Y. (1994). *Making Democracy Work*. Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400820740>
- Pyrialakou, V. D., Gkritza, K., & Liu, S. S. (2019). The use of focus groups to foster

- stakeholder engagement in intercity passenger rail planning. *Case Studies on Transport Policy*, 7(2). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cstp.2018.12.009>
- Reed, M. S. (2008). Stakeholder participation for environmental management: A literature review. *Biological Conservation*, 141(10). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2008.07.014>
- Regional Transportation District of Denver. (2022). *ADA Advisory Committee*.
- Regional Transportation District of Denver. (2022). *Annexations into the District*.
- Regional Transportation District of Denver. (2022). *Board Committees*.
- Regional Transportation District of Denver. (2022). *Board of Directors*.
- Regional Transportation District of Denver. (2022). *Community Involvement*.
- Regional Transportation District of Denver. (2022). *Communication Tactics*.
- Regional Transportation District of Denver. (2022). *D-Line (Central Corridor Light Rail Line)*.
- Regional Transportation District of Denver. (2022). *Facts and Figures*.
- Regional Transportation District of Denver. (2021). *Notice of Budget; Regional Transportation District (RTD) 2022 Proposed Budget*.
- Regional Transportation District of Denver. (2020). *Regional Transportation District Operating Data*.
- Regional Transportation District of Denver (2021). *Operations*
- Regional Transportation District of Denver. (2021). *Proposed Redistricting Outreach Plan*.
- Regional Transportation District of Denver. (2022). *Rail System Map*.

- Regional Transportation District of Denver. (2022, January 4). *Special Board Meeting*.
- Regional Transportation District of Denver. (2019). *RTD Board of Directors Governance Manual*.
- Regional Transportation District of Denver. (2021). *RTD Gains Flexibility with Signing of new Legislation*.
- Regional Transportation District of Denver. (2022). *RTD Telephone Town Halls*
- Regional Transportation District of Denver. (2017). *State of the District*.
- Regional Transportation District of Denver. (2022). *Who We Are*.
- Riley, B. L. (2003). Organizational capacity and implementation change: a comparative case study of heart health promotion in Ontario public health agencies. *Health Education Research, 18*(6). <https://doi.org/10.1093/her/cyf051>
- Romenti, S. (2010). Reputation and stakeholder engagement: an Italian case study. *Journal of Communication Management, 14*(4).
<https://doi.org/10.1108/13632541011090428>
- Rowe, G., & Gammack, J. G. (2004). Promise and perils of electronic public engagement. *Science and Public Policy, 31*(1).
<https://doi.org/10.3152/147154304781780181>
- Seawright, J., & Gerring, J. (2008). Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research. *Political Research Quarterly, 61*(2).
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912907313077>
- Shaw J. S. (2008). Public Choice Theory. *The Concise Encyclopedia of Economics*.
- Sherman, M. H., & Ford, J. (2014). Stakeholder engagement in adaptation interventions:

an evaluation of projects in developing nations. *Climate Policy*, 14(3).

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2014.859501>

State of Colorado. (2020). *Independent Ethics Commission: Letter of Ruling 16-05*.

Thomas, J. C. (1993). Public Involvement and Governmental Effectiveness.

Administration & Society, 24(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/009539979302400402>

Thomas, J. C. (2013). Citizen, Customer, Partner: Rethinking the Place of the Public in

Public Management. *Public Administration Review*, 73(6).

<https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12109>

Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (2022). *Fiscal Year 2023*

Budget.

Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (2022). *A History of Transit*

in Portland.

Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (2022). *Fiscal Year 2023*

Budget.

Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (2022). *Organizational*

Chart.

Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (2022). *Organizational*

Governance.

Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (2022). *TriMet Advisory*

Committees.

Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (2019). *TriMet Public*

Engagement and Outreach Framework.

Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (2022). *The TriMet Story*.

The United States Department of Transportation (2022). *Promising Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision Making*.

Voorn, B., van Genugten, M. L., & van Thiel, S. (2017). The efficiency and effectiveness of municipally owned corporations: a systematic review. *Local Government Studies*, 43(5). <https://doi.org/10.1080/03003930.2017.1319360>

Washington Department of Revenue. (2022). *Regional Transit Authority (RTA) Tax*.

Municipal Corporations Defined, RCW 39.69.010 (2022).