

Guidebook for Establishing a Transportation-Focused Community Advisory Board



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About the USDOT Thriving Communities Program

This guidebook was originally prepared by the Shared-Use Mobility Center (SUMC) for the City of Waukegan, IL as part of SUMC's work under the FY2022 US Department of Transportation's Thriving Communities Program, a capacity building program that aims to ensure that communities have the technical tools and organizational capacity to access federal funding opportunities and deliver quality infrastructure projects that enable their communities and neighborhoods to thrive.

SUMC was part of the Capacity Builder Team for the Complete Neighborhoods cohort. The team was led by RMI and included the American Council for Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE), Equitable Cities, and Nelson\Nygaard.

Learn more about the USDOT Thriving Communities Program at:

<https://www.transportation.gov/grants/thriving-communities>

About the Shared-Use Mobility Center

The Shared-Use Mobility Center (SUMC) is a public-interest organization and a national thought leader in shared mobility. SUMC is working to replace car-centric transportation with people-focused shared mobility to fight climate change, promote equity and universal access, and strengthen community.

SUMC works towards this goal by mobilizing the sector, sharing knowledge, and equipping communities. through applied research, technical assistance, program evaluation, convening public and private sectors, and capacity building with cities and transportation providers across the country.

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Cover Image: community members gather to discuss bike education initiatives in Decatur, IL Credit: SUMC

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About this Project

Through the Thriving Communities Program, SUMC worked with the City of Waukegan, IL, on various transportation, infrastructure, and community engagement initiatives. Community engagement, in particular, was identified as a major barrier faced by the city. Waukegan has a large population of historically marginalized and underserved residents, and the city has historically faced challenges with building community engagement to inform transportation projects. The lack of community support poses a major barrier to achieving many of the city's goals. Waukegan, like many other cities in the country, has struggled to create and maintain forums for meaningful community engagement built on trust among local stakeholders.

Hearing these concerns, SUMC helped connect the city with resources and opportunities to develop its community engagement strategy and explore ways to build trust, incorporate community input, and foster effective and meaningful engagement.

A Community Advisory Board (CAB) was identified as one potentially effective resource in the community engagement toolbox. They provide a model for meaningful participation by allowing different community organizations and local stakeholders a forum to regularly discuss transportation projects and address barriers in a more comprehensive and consequential way.

This guidebook was developed as an effort to provide a roadmap for Waukegan to form and sustain a CAB.

Why Use this Guidebook

Communities across the country struggle to achieve regular, meaningful feedback from their communities to inform transportation projects. While traditional community engagement strategies like surveys and tabling at events can be effective methods to collect community feedback, they do not provide a consistent and recurrent forum to discuss projects and plans. CABs can enable a broader representation of different local stakeholders, and can complement other public forums to inform transportation and infrastructure planning.

This guidebook is a roadmap that provides a starting point for cities and communities to plan, launch, and sustain a CAB for transportation. It includes resources, examples, and tools from local governments, transit agencies, metropolitan planning organizations, and other organizing entities. This guidebook can be used by communities of different sizes and contexts. The guidebook also contains an accompanying checklist that can be used as a tool to guide decision making and track progress made during the development of the CAB.



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Introduction

A community advisory board ([CAB](#)) is a city-managed forum composed of community members, community-based organizations, and other key community stakeholders who provide feedback on various projects or issues. These boards are known by many names: citizen advisory boards, resident advisory committees, community task forces, etc., but typically bring together a diverse group of community members to share concerns and offer feedback on different community related topics. CABs meet regularly to familiarize members with various initiatives and incorporate diverse community perspectives throughout the course of a project, [leading to more inclusive, informed, and widely accepted decisions](#) on issues affecting the community.

CABs can be developed to serve a variety of purposes for different industries, including medical research, policymaking, direct service provision and private sector activities. Fundamentally, a CAB is one of the many vehicles through which the community shares local knowledge and lived experience, ensuring work of the lead agency or organization is guided by a robust understanding of the community and by relevant data that can lead to more effective research, programming and policymaking.



Credit: SUMC



Purpose and Structure of Community Advisory Boards

Advisory boards can serve many purposes and typically fall into one of two categories: those required by legislative statute and those that are strictly advisory. Legislative appointed boards often have managerial, supervisory, or investigative powers and may exercise decision making power on behalf of the governing body, for example [library, airport, zoning, or historical preservation boards](#). In contrast, CABs can also be established to support an issue, project, or sector of local government. These boards are generally created to respond to and provide input on studies or analyses conducted by the lead agency.

Even when not required by statute, a [community may choose to develop a CAB](#) for a certain project or subject to foster community engagement in the democratic process and gain diverse perspectives from community members that might not otherwise be heard. These boards can also assist in policy formulation, build public consensus, and provide an opportunity for community members to review complex matters. CABs provide a structured but open way for community members to participate in local government, providing their diverse views and expertise on issues.

The type or model of the CAB will impact how communications are managed both internally and externally. Boards required by legislation may have specific reporting requirements outlined in statute, while CABs developed for discretionary purposes typically have more flexible reporting procedures based on local policies. Regardless of board model, all CABs are generally expected to make advisory board meetings [open and public](#), unless an executive session is permitted by law.

Overview

This document provides an overview of relevant considerations when developing a Community Advisory Board for Transportation. The considerations are broken down into three main categories of board development:

Planning and Preparing
Building and Organizing
Engaging and Sustaining

Following the end of the document is an accompanying Community Advisory Board Checklist that can be used as a tool to guide decision making and track progress made during the development of the CAB.

Planning and Preparing

Before recruiting members and initiating work, careful planning and preparations are essential to ensure that the CAB can get off to a good start.



Internal Readiness

Prior to diving into the details of developing a CAB, lead agencies should be prepared on several elements of their internal organization. Key [considerations](#) include confirming the necessary personnel and financial resources are in place to support the development and implementation of the board; identifying local partners or community based organizations that can assist with formation, recruitment or hosting of board activities; and developing strategies to foster trust between the lead agency and future board members. Lead agencies should determine the most appropriate method to [formally establish](#) the advisory board, such as through a resolution, ordinance, or motion. For boards intended to be permanent, using an ordinance or resolution is recommended.

Stakeholder Identification

Identifying stakeholders early in the process sets the stage for [building relationships](#) with other organizations. This step involves creating an [inventory of stakeholders](#), detailing their previous engagement, and assessing their capacity for current or future involvement. It also serves as an opportunity to utilize networks and seek out [individuals with a strong interest and willingness to contribute](#) their time and expertise to the group. By conducting thorough stakeholder identification and analysis, the board's efforts can be better aligned with the community's needs.

A stakeholder analysis exercise is a valuable tool for identifying potential stakeholders, evaluating their interests and influence within the community, and developing tailored strategies for effective engagement. Here is a [sample Stakeholder Analysis worksheet](#) used by the US Department of Transportation Thriving Communities program to help communities identify and engage community stakeholders.

Additional tools and resources on stakeholder identification

- [Stakeholder Asset Mapping](#)
- [How to Perform a Stakeholder Analysis](#)
- [Stakeholder Analysis - Winning Support for Your Projects](#)
- [Community Asset Mapping](#)

Community Needs Assessments

Assessments are a tool commonly used to evaluate different aspects of the community, such as resources, unmet needs, stakeholder readiness and opportunities for improvement. Tools such as community readiness assessments, needs assessments, and environmental scans can [establish a solid foundation for understanding the community](#), which is an essential step in developing effective strategies. Each tool is designed to gather various types of information and can be useful to guide the future work of the board. By combining multiple assessment tools, it's possible to gain a more complete understanding of community needs and readiness.



Additional tools and resources on assessments

- [Conducting Needs Assessment Surveys \(Community Tool Box\)](#)
- [Community Readiness \(Community Tool Box\)](#)
- [Community Readiness for Community Change](#)
- [How to complete an environmental scan: avoiding rabbit holes](#)
- [Environmental Scan of Ride Share Services Available for Older Adults](#)



Credit: SUMC

Purpose and Mission Statements

Creating a purpose statement is an integral part of understanding the role and purpose of a CAB. An effective purpose statement should be a clear and concise declaration that outlines the board's origins and highlights how the board's work progresses its values, goals, and principles. Board members can use its purpose statement as a foundation to ensure that it aligns with and supports the committee's values. At the same time, community members outside of the CAB can look to the purpose statement as a synopsis of the board's work. Purpose statements should be written and approved by the CAB early on.



Some boards choose to develop mission statements rather than purpose statements, and others use both. Although similar, a mission statement often builds upon a purpose statement in a more action-oriented manner. If the purpose statement tells the *why* of the organization, then the mission statement might tell the *how*. Note that some boards might build both the *why* and the *how* into one statement, or use the terms “purpose statement” and “mission statement” interchangeably.

Example statements:

- [Citizens Advisory Committee for the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process for the Rapid City Area Metropolitan Planning Organization](#): “The purpose of the Citizens Advisory Committee, herein referenced as the CAC, is to serve as the primary public participation forum for the transportation products and plans of the Rapid City Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). It shall serve as the liaison between the Rapid City Area MPO and the residents of the urbanized area and its members will be vigilant to represent the citizens of their area, both geographically and ideologically.
- [Cleveland RTA's Community Advisory Committee](#): “The mission of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) is to serve RTA's Board of Trustees, management, staff, users, and the general public in a proactive role as the pulse of the community in the promotion and provision of high-quality transportation programs and services.”
- [Metropolitan Council Technical Advisory Committee \(TAC\) of the Transportation Advisory Board](#): “The Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) has established the TAC, for which the primary function is to provide technical advice to the TAB. The TAC shall include the following purposes and objectives:
 1. Provide the technical evaluation, advice, and recommendations necessary for the Transportation Advisory Board (hereinafter called the TAB) to carry out its duties and responsibilities;
 2. Assure state, regional, county and municipal involvement and coordination in transportation decisions of metropolitan significance;
 3. Provide a forum for professional staff from planning and implementing agencies to address metropolitan transportation issues facing the region; and
 4. Review MPO planning studies and programs, provided by the standing committees, for TAB.”

Goals and Objectives

Establishing goals and objectives is one of the first steps in guiding the work of the CAB. **Goals** are generally long-term outcomes the group can work toward, while **objectives** are measurable actions the group can take to achieve those goals. For example, a goal might be to *increase public awareness of transportation challenges facing Waukegan residents*. An objective addressing that goal may be to *develop an engagement program to educate and elicit feedback from community members*.



Other example goals could be:

- Build working relationships and promote collaboration between Waukegan and key community stakeholders
- Allow for in depth and technical discussions about city projects
- Educate the public about Waukegan's transportation or infrastructure projects and initiatives
- Ensure that CAB feedback represents community interests

Additional considerations for establishing goals and objectives:

- Consider how the goals and objectives reflect and address community concerns and needs.
- Goals and objectives do not have to be set in stone. They can be refined as the CAB and its priorities evolve.
- Consider developing an action plan to further define and distinguish discrete steps needed to meet objectives and goals.

Defining Membership

Clearly outlining membership requirements is essential for effective board formation and recruitment. The board should be diverse, reflecting the community it serves and consist of members representing various [community stakeholders](#), like community-based organizations, advocates, associations, and local businesses. Board members may play multiple roles within their communities; they may be community organizers, advocates, representatives of their employer or other organizations they are involved with, or simply invested community members. It is important for members to have a clear understanding of which roles they should or should not represent while serving on the CAB, which may require explicit direction from the city.

Geographic eligibility should also be defined; consider whether members must live within the city or if eligibility can extend to those who work in the city but reside elsewhere. Demographic representation is equally important, as the board should aim to reflect the community it serves in terms of age, gender, race, ethnicity and other relevant factors. Additionally, it is necessary to decide whether [specific expertise or experience](#) will be required for membership to ensure the board can fulfill its goals effectively.

Examples of Technical Requirements:

- The City of Mesa Transportation Advisory Board is composed of 11 volunteer members and requires members to have a [background or strong interest in transportation issues](#).
- The bylaws of the Regional Transportation Authority Citizens Advisory Board specify that all members should be [transit riders and knowledgeable of the regional transit system](#), but do not require other technical requirements like technical knowledge or expertise.

Examples of Residency Requirements:

- This group requires that members be transit riders from [each of the six metropolitan regions and two transit riders from the City of Chicago](#), as well as, the Commissioner of



the City of Chicago Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities and an RTA staff representative.

- The City of Redwood, California's Transportation Advisory Committee consists of seven members of which [at least five members must be residents of the City](#) and the remaining members either living in unincorporated areas of the City or being employed within the City.

Further structure the board by defining whether membership will remain open or follow a defined timeline, with members cycling in and out. Establishing [term limits](#) can be helpful with recruitment, ensuring regular opportunities for new members to join. This helps keep the board fresh by introducing new perspectives and rotating out members who may no longer contribute effectively.

Examples of term lengths and limits

- City of Naperville's Transportation Advisory Board: Details on board members' [term length and limits](#) are featured on the board's website. Term length is 3 years with a maximum of 2 terms.
- The Metropolitan Council of the Twin Cities: Board members serve 2 year terms. The bylaws [do not limit the number of terms](#) although there are provisions for resignation or removal if necessary.

Representation and Cultural Insights

As mentioned above in the *Defining Membership* section, the group should [represent the public](#) by including local stakeholders such as business owners, residents, representatives of interested organizations, local transportation agencies, and other decision making entities. It is important to engage with traditionally [underrepresented communities](#) and ensure participation from diverse backgrounds. The city should also demonstrate [cultural competency](#) and a willingness to value and integrate diverse perspectives when forming the CAB.

Example approaches for promoting inclusive representation in board composition:

- The City of Golden, Colorado intends its Mobility and Transportation Advisory Board to consist of a diverse and dedicated group of individuals emphasizing the [diversity in backgrounds, neighborhoods, and interests enhances the board's ability to understand community needs](#) and make recommendations that benefit the entire community.
- The Citizens Advisory Committee of the San Joaquin Council of Governments strives for its board to reflect the region's geographical, social, cultural, and economic diversity. The agency follows more [structured guidelines for member appointments to ensure diverse representation](#), specifying membership positions for representatives of organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the League of Women, the Sierra Club, and major industries including agriculture, trucking and business.

Size

The size of the CAB can impact its effectiveness. The board should have enough members to meet its objectives and provide adequate representation of community interests, while also



avoiding [the challenges associated with managing a large group](#). While there is no ideal number, it is advisable to keep the group to a [manageable size](#), typically no more than 20 to 30 members, to maintain its functionality and efficiency



Credit: SUMC

Building and Organizing

As the CAB takes shape, it is necessary to determine some of the details of how the group will function. These details include delineating the roles and responsibilities of members, establishing the meeting format, and other administrative and organizational considerations.

Roles and Responsibilities

Member Roles and Responsibilities

Board members should have a clear understanding of what their roles and responsibilities are. In addition to participating in meetings and providing input on key initiatives, members should expect to provide guidance and insights on projects based on their own personal experience and expertise. This guidance may come in the form of formalized documents that the CAB can prepare to present findings and recommendations to the city.



Members' responsibilities may extend beyond meetings as well, as they may have an expectation to review materials on their own time, perform research related to projects, or assist with outside engagement efforts. Members should also have a duty to report back to their own communities on project advancements and elicit feedback.

Leadership Roles

To keep meetings organized and on track, some members may take specific leadership roles within the CAB. Usually, the CAB votes on who should fill these roles. Below are example descriptions of some potential leadership roles.

- A **Chair** is generally responsible for leading the board and keeping the board on track toward its goals. A Chair may plan meetings, work with city officials to organize the meeting agendas, and resolve conflicts. If the Chair is not a city official, the position can be the main liaison between the committee and the city.
- A **Vice Chair** acts as the main point of leadership in the absence of the Chair, and has many of the same responsibilities.
- A **Secretary** handles many of the administrative aspects of the board. The Secretary may take and distribute meeting minutes, handle board communications, or manage record keeping duties.
- If the CAB has a significant budget, a **Treasurer** manages those finances. The Treasurer is responsible for overseeing the board's financial activities, ensuring appropriate use of funds, and maintaining the board's financial records.

Just like with any CAB member, it is important to make sure that expectations for these roles are understood from the beginning. Creating clear job descriptions for each leadership position can help and serve as a resource for board members to refer to.

Board Administration

Membership Recruitment, Communication, and Terms

Recruitment for board members should be [transparent and fair](#) and seek to include a diverse mix of perspectives. Prior to starting the recruitment process, key decisions must be made about who will oversee member selection, the best methods for extending invitations, and how to ensure the board [reflects the broader community](#). Clear expectations for prospective board members should be established. Some communities address this by providing [handbooks or guidelines](#) outlining the board's activities and membership responsibilities.

Decision Making Process

CAB [decisions are commonly made in two ways](#). CAB members can either reach a consensus on a decision, or decisions can be made by majority vote. If a CAB makes a decision by reaching a **consensus**, then all members mutually agree on the decision. This has the benefit of making sure everyone's views and ideas are supported, however, it is a potentially longer and more



arduous process, requiring more time to deliberate and debate. If the CAB makes decisions based on a **majority vote**, it is potentially quicker and more efficient, however the minority vote will likely feel that their views are less represented in the outcome. There are a number of ways to approach voting to mitigate this impact. A CAB can rule that for a decision to be made, it must receive at least a certain percentage of votes (for instance, 75% of votes rather than 50%). Members can also rank choices, ensuring that even if someone's first choice is not the winner, they may still be happy with the outcome.

Agendas

Each meeting should have a clear purpose; meetings can be centered around a specific project, community event, or engagement activity. To help stay on track and let members prepare, an agenda should be distributed to all members in advance of each meeting which clearly illustrates the topics of discussion.

Example meeting agendas:

- [McHenry County, IL Public Transportation Advisory Committee February 6, 2020 meeting](#)
- [Arlington, MA Transportation Advisory Committee January 8, 2025 meeting](#)
- [Houston-Galveston Area Council Transportation Advisory Committee January 17, 2024 meeting](#)

Meeting Minutes

Minutes are a formal record of meetings and should provide enough detail so that members of the community or CAB members who have missed the meeting can review them and easily understand the meeting and all of its discussions, deliberations, and decisions. The CAB should have a designated notetaker to compile, organize, and distribute meeting minutes to members shortly after each meeting.

Bylaws

The decisions made previously about the structure, organization, and format of the CAB should be formalized in bylaws. Bylaws are a set of rules and regulations that a CAB uses to organize and govern itself. Bylaws will include details about the organization's name, purpose, member responsibilities, meetings, and other operational elements. It may be helpful to form a committee to write the bylaws to divide labor and ensure that multiple perspectives are involved.

Example bylaws:

- [Citizens Advisory Committee for the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process for the Rapid City Area Metropolitan Planning Organization](#)
- [Orange County Transportation Authority Citizens Advisory Committee](#)
- [The Technical Advisory Committee \(TAC\) of the Transportation Advisory Board of the Metropolitan Council in the Twin Cities, Minnesota](#)
- [Transportation Advisory Committee of the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission](#)



Meeting Logistics

When and How Frequently to Meet

When deciding when to meet, consider that members may have other commitments during the day. For this reason, it is ideal to host meetings after regular working hours. However, keep in mind that some members may still have obligations like childcare that may limit their ability to attend even after 5:00 pm.

The frequency of meetings may depend on ongoing projects, needs, or initiatives. If there are urgent projects to discuss, or if projects are in phases where feedback is needed, the CAB may want to meet as often as once a month or more. More often may be too much of a burden for members. It is important to find a balance between respecting members' time and meeting often enough to stay relevant. If meetings are held too infrequently, it may undervalue the importance of the CAB.

In line with respecting CAB members' time, meetings should last no longer than necessary. This may vary, and depend on the particular meeting topic, but anticipate the time it will take to meet and note in the agenda so that members are prepared ahead of time. In general, meetings should last between 1 and 3 hours.

Meeting Location

It is usually impossible to cater to everyone equally, but attempts should be made to host meetings somewhere convenient and central. City Hall can be an acceptable location, as long as it has space that can typically be used after regular work hours. If it is difficult to get all members to meet in person, consider hosting meetings online via Zoom or Teams. However, just as members may have difficulty with reliable transportation to and from meetings, consider that some members may lack technological proficiency or otherwise face challenges in accessing the internet.

Budget

CABs and similar citizen advisory committees often do not have budgets, however if there is a source of funding available, it may be wise to consider how to leverage that funding to encourage CAB members to stay engaged, attend meetings, and continue the work of the board. Small amounts could go towards resources that make it easier for members to decide to participate, like member compensation, prizes or giveaways, catering for meetings, or childcare during meetings. Keep in mind that small amounts may also be needed for meeting materials or community engagement materials.



Additional Considerations for Meeting Facilitation

If meetings are not facilitated and managed well, members may feel that their time is not valued and be less likely to fully engage in the committee's affairs. Below are some additional considerations for holding engaging and effective meetings.

- Keep meetings focused. Ensuring that meetings stay on track is one way to respect members' time. Facilitators should keep track of the time and be able to push conversations forward when needed.
- Create an atmosphere of participation. The meeting facilitator should make sure that all CAB members are comfortable sharing their thoughts and insights. There may be a need to address disputes between members, and efforts should be made to do so in a respectful and productive manner.
- Consider and plan for any accessibility needs. Meetings, whether virtual or in-person, should be accessible for people with mobility, hearing, vision, or other challenges.
- If necessary, it may be prudent to establish general rules on meeting attendance. This can help keep members accountable and ensure a quorum at meetings.
- Remember to publicize and celebrate the work of the CAB whenever possible. While this is a relatively simple step to take, it can help members feel like their input is valued and help broader community engagement efforts.



Credit: [NADTC](#)



Engaging and Sustaining

After the advisory board is fully established, the focus shifts to the ongoing task of maintaining engagement and sustaining the board. Achieving this requires clear communication, transparency, and a proactive approach to overcoming challenges.

Communication

Effective communication is critical for ensuring CAB members are well-informed and meetings are productive. Therefore, establishing communication procedures that work for all members must be a priority. Find out what communication methods board members are comfortable with for both formal and informal communications, and create a communications strategy that is practical, reasonable, and respectful of members' preferences. Online communication tools like Teams or Slack may be useful for communicating between members, however, consider the barriers that these modes may pose to members with low technological proficiency.

Communication between the CAB and project managers or city leadership is equally important. The city should ensure that any recommendations and suggestions that emerge from the CAB are carefully reviewed, considered, and implemented utilizing regular procedures. If CAB recommendations are not implemented, the city should communicate why. Transparency is essential to ensure that members feel that their participation is valued.

Develop a process early on to facilitate communication between the CAB and project implementers. This may involve designating a main point of contact on the CAB side, potentially the Board Chair, as well as a point of contact from the city. At least one representative from the city should have a spot on the CAB permanently, and ideally, representatives from different city relevant departments can join on a temporary basis depending on what project the CAB is focusing on. This way they can directly represent the city's work to the CAB, and be a liaison between the CAB and project implementers. For formal communications, project implementers can give presentations to the CAB or distribute periodic status reports, while the CAB can prepare memoranda detailing recommendations and findings.

Community Engagement

As mentioned previously, CAB members should have a duty to report back to their own communities on project progress and elicit community feedback. In addition to providing input on projects, the CAB's main purpose should be as a liaison between the city and the wider community. Therefore, one of the most important tasks for the CAB is to develop a community engagement strategy. The importance of diverse CAB membership is reflected in the different community groups and networks that membership can reach. Each board member should leverage their own connections to engage with a wide range of stakeholders. There are a variety of methods for engagement (e.g. surveys, presentations, social media, mailings, interviews, tabling at events), and the best method will depend on the project and context. Note that a diversity of community voices will include a diversity of levels of interaction with projects. For



instance, even when getting feedback for a public transportation project, it is important to engage with community members who do not use public transportation.

Additional Resources on Community Engagement

- [Clean Mobility Options: Engage the Community: A Guide for Developing a Community Engagement Plan](#)
- [MetroQuest: 4 Survey Examples to Inspire your Next Transportation Plan Study](#)
- [N-CATT: Leveraging Social Media for Transit Communications](#)

Framing the Board's Work

Framing the CAB's work is useful to clarify the board's purpose and how the community views its work. When working with members of the community it's especially important to use inclusive language and provide accurate and [digestible data or information](#). Using inclusive language helps create a sense of shared interest. For example, use 'us' and 'we' instead of them and avoid using acronyms or technical terms to ensure everyone understands the information being shared.

Board members are motivated when given [meaningful, actionable tasks](#). This helps to challenge members and foster a sense of ownership within the group. To keep members engaged, emphasize the value of their contributions and highlight how their efforts align with broader community initiatives.

Overcoming Challenges

Sustaining a CAB can be challenging, and keeping members engaged may take effort and creativity. Some common challenges that cities can face when managing CABs include interpersonal tension, directionless meetings, a lack of diverse voices, or low enthusiasm. Uncovering these sentiments is the first step to addressing them and ensuring the CAB is as effective as possible. Thus, make sure to follow up with CAB members periodically to get their input on the board and its administration to uncover some of these sentiments. Listen to feedback on what is working or not working, and consider any ideas for improvement. Sustaining a CAB requires regularly revising and refining operations to ensure it can do the best work possible.



Conclusion

Community Advisory Boards can be malleable, powerful tools for communities and public agencies to engage in meaningful representation and participation in transportation planning. A CAB can serve as a forum to gather community input on specific transportation projects and also to foster broad, ongoing engagement in shaping the transportation decision making process. While many communities across the country have established CABs as a community engagement practice, CABs are not a widespread community engagement model. Furthermore, since CABs are not required by any law, the establishment of a CAB often originates on the initiative of—or demands from—community-based organizations' leaders seeking involvement in transportation projects, and/or from public sector champions committed to expanding community involvement in planning.

Because CABs are not mandated by law, public agencies and community leaders interested in developing this practice in their communities may not know how to establish and maintain a local CAB. This practical guidebook intends to provide a starting point serving as a capacity-building resource to help communities establish CABs to promote a more sustainable and meaningful community participation in transportation planning.



Additional Resources

General Resources

- [EPA: Public Participation Guide: Citizen Advisory Boards](#)
- [NADTC: Coordination Committee Toolkit](#)
- [City of Naperville: Boards and Commissions Guide](#)
- [NADTC: Creating a Transportation Committee that Reflects All Community Voices](#)
- [Community Toolbox: Developing Facilitation Skills](#)
- [Rooted in Rights: How to make your Virtual Meetings and Events Accessible to the Disability Community](#)
- [Change Lab Solutions: The Planner's Playbook](#)

Examples of Existing Transportation Advisory Boards

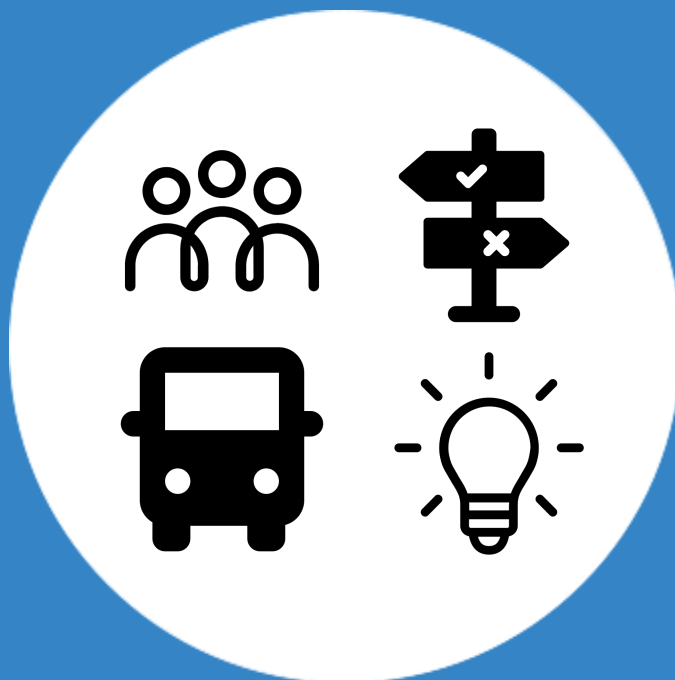
- [Regional Transit Authority Citizens Advisory Board](#)
- [Mid Ohio RPC \(MORPC\) Community Advisory Committee](#)
- [Metropolitan Washington COG Community Advisory Committee](#)
- [Olympia, Washington Intercity Transit Community Advisory Committee](#)
- [Orange County Transportation Authority Citizens Advisory Committee](#)



Community Advisory Board Development Checklist

- ☐ Gather details about resources your organization can provide to support a CAB
 - ☐ Personnel available to support the CAB
 - ☐ Finances you can allocate to the CAB
 - ☐ A space that can serve as a regular meeting location
- ☐ Identify stakeholders. Some potential stakeholders could include:
 - ☐ Invested residents
 - ☐ Transportation professionals
 - ☐ Community-based organizations
 - ☐ City representatives
- ☐ Conduct assessments. Possible assessments could include:
 - ☐ Community readiness assessments
 - ☐ Needs assessments
 - ☐ Environmental scans
- ☐ Draft CAB bylaws and organizing principles (these do not have to be set in stone, and can be refined by the group). Elements to record in bylaws can include:
 - ☐ A purpose/mission statement
 - ☐ Goals
 - ☐ Objectives
 - ☐ Performance metrics
 - ☐ Decision making process
 - ☐ Board membership requirements
 - ☐ Define any residency requirements
 - ☐ Define any technical requirements
 - ☐ Determine methods to incorporate representation from a diverse array of stakeholders
 - ☐ Board size
 - ☐ Member roles and responsibilities
 - ☐ Determine leadership roles for specific members
 - ☐ Set expectations for all members
 - ☐ Create guidance that define these roles and responsibilities
 - ☐ Relevant meeting logistics

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