

# A Better Way

## Spotlight on Transportation Management Associations

October 2017



Taking ACTION: Improving commutes, improving communities



## Acknowledgements

The Association for Commuter Transportation wishes to thank the following individuals and organizations for their contributions and time in sharing their experiences building successful TMAs in their regions: Thomas Butler & Alix Scarborough, Movability Austin; Andrea Leary, North Shore TMA; Karen Stuart, Smart Commute Metro North; Becky Heieck, North Natomas TMA; and Maureen Farrell and Rob Henry, GVF.



Association for Commuter Transportation

The Association for Commuter Transportation, (ACT), is an international trade association and leading advocate for commuter transportation and TDM. Commuting by bus, train, rideshare, bike, walking, or telework improves our world by contributing to energy independence, better air quality, sustainability, urban mobility, and reduced congestion. Through advocacy, education, and networking efforts, ACT strives to improve the lives of commuters, the livability of communities, and the economic competitiveness of businesses.

# Working together for positive change

For over 30 years, transportation management associations (TMA) have been helping communities deliver transportation options that benefit commuters and employers. In that time, often developed in partnership between the public and private sectors, TMAs have become powerful organizations to increase mobility, improve air quality, and strengthen livability and economic development in the regions they serve.

As defined in ACT's TMA Handbook, TMAs (or TMOs for Transportation Management Organizations) are legally constituted groups, often led by the private sector, applying carefully selected approaches to facilitate the movement of people within an area. They succeed because they are built on strong foundations of partnerships and community collaboration to solve shared transportation challenges.

In providing an institutional framework for transportation demand management (TDM), the Victoria Transportation Policy Institute says, TMAs are "more cost effective than programs managed by individual businesses" and that they allow small employers to provide Commute Trip Reduction services comparable to those offered by large companies. "They avoid problems that may be associated with government-run TDM programs, since they are controlled by members," the institute says. Common services and programming include:

- First mile/last mile shuttles
- Commuter assistance and incentives
- Ridematching
- Advocacy
- Marketing and promotion
- Transportation planning
- Parking management
- Strategic partnerships

While TMAs have similar goals and strategies, each is unique, focusing on specific concerns of their community. In the case studies featured in this paper we dig deeper into the varying reasons for a TMA's establishment. We learn how **Austin, Texas**, supported the launch of **Movability Austin** to address the impacts of rapid growth, and why leaders in the northern **Denver** suburbs established the **Smart Commute Metro North TMO** to help spur economic development in an area battling worsening congestion. We hear from the mayor of **Salem, Mass.**, about how the **North Shore TMA** plays a critical role in spurring broad thinking about sustainability and growth, how **North Natomas TMA** in **Sacramento** uses its unique position to foster lasting relationships that improve transportation options, and how **GVF (Pennsylvania)** leverages its diverse board to be a statewide model for transportation analysis.

With more than 100 TMAs operating in dense urban cores, suburban job centers, highway corridors, and residential neighborhoods, the ACT believes TMAs play an important role in how communities large and small work to achieve their transportation, sustainability, and economic development goals. We encourage communities without TMAs to learn from the case studies and to look at the benefits that may be achievable by bringing together the public and private sector through the formation of a TMA.

To start or strengthen a TMA in your region, visit: [actweb.org/act-councils/tma](http://actweb.org/act-councils/tma)

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## Creating partnerships to serve commuters

Austin's built a reputation for innovative thinking and outside-the-box perspectives, and the mobility sector is no exception. In car-heavy Texas, the City of Austin works proactively to expand awareness and use of commuting options. In the transportation management space, Movability Austin has emerged as a national leader for the creative public and private partnerships it has built.

Amid rapid growth – Austin's population increased 45 percent in the last 15 years – Austin civic and business leaders began to think hard about how they could address their growing transportation challenges. Austin has prioritized the most congested intersections and begun targeted road improvement projects. Additionally, a wide range of commuter focused options have been promoted but all of those approaches require many years to accomplish. In an effort to identify what could be done immediately to improve the situation, one important initiative was the creation of Movability Austin, a transportation management association formed in 2012.

"The idea was that we can't build our way out of our traffic problems and heavily trafficked areas," says Jim Pledger, the volunteer Movability Austin board chair, partner at Jackson Walker LLP, and self-described "not a transportation guy." "It's pretty clear that Austin has historically had a lot of competition for dollars with Houston, Dallas and San Antonio and El Paso vying for highway dollars. Austin didn't always come up on top of the list," Pledger says.

**Movability Austin**  
Austin, Texas

Formed: 2012

Area Served: Austin  
Metropolitan Area

Number of Companies  
Served: 53

Total Employee Base:  
80,000

Annual Budget: \$325,000

[movabilityaustin.org](http://movabilityaustin.org)



The City of Austin, transit agency Capital Metro, and the Downtown Austin Alliance – all Movability founding partners – fund the TMA and its common goals, like reducing single-passenger car commuting. To keep it going, Movability has relied on the sweat equity of a small staff known for providing quality service to members and constantly pushing the transportation conversation.

“The TMA’s board is proactive and is always looking for ways to improve, grow, and create partnerships,” says Tien-Tien Chan, Transportation Demand Management program manager at the City of Austin Transportation Department, citing Movability Austin’s launch of a strategic planning process to guide growth and its examination of the membership fees structure to create a stronger revenue base. The TMA has a five-tiered partnership program from \$500 to \$50,000 and welcomes individual members for \$75 and corporate members on a sliding scale from \$250 to \$1,500.

“We get companies to look at this not just about mobility but about business,” says Thomas Butler, program manager at Movability Austin. Mobility plans help with employee retention and recruitment, and, by reducing parking needs, save businesses money on real estate.

Getting businesses to think about the cash-savings in commuting takes a new degree of creativity. In Austin, that’s where the Mobility Challenge comes in. With \$100,000 from the city of Austin, the Mobility Challenge is a partnership between Movability Austin and the mayor’s office, and aligns with city goals to decrease the number of single-passenger car commutes by 2020.

Under the Mobility Challenge, companies survey employees to determine current commuting habits and learn what would motivate them to try new options. The TMA then outlines a strategy to expand commuting.

“Movability has successfully recruited companies in the downtown core and at other business hubs to accept the challenge,” Chan says.

Movability Austin works with companies to find ways to best engage their employees, sometimes using a happy hour destination to get them to hop on a bus or try a new mode of transportation for their first time.

“Texans likes their vehicles,” Pledger says, “and a large part of this has been trying to help people know what their options are and how much they may enjoy them once they try them.”

As a result of its involvement in the Mobility Challenge, Silicon Labs created an employee-led transportation committee, added more information on its intranet on ways employees can get to work using alternative transportation, and also worked with Capital Metro to host quarterly “transit adventures,” where employees ride the bus to and from lunch or happy hour venues.

Forty-one percent of Silicon Labs participants said they were more inclined to use public transportation after the experience. To further encourage commuters to change behavior, Silicon Labs also offers employees a monthly stipend if they give up their parking spaces in the company’s downtown parking garages.



In a commuter lunch competition (above), the bikers beat the carpoolers to the destination. Partnering with Austin’s Capital Metro has led to other “transit adventures” that make it fun to try out new commuting options.

“Austin is a vibrant, exciting place to work, but we have to make every option possible to ensure easy access,” said Tyson Tuttle, president and CEO of Silicon Labs.

Movability Austin depends on champions like Silicon Labs and its 30 other corporate members and affiliate supporters. But when it comes to promoting transportation change, there’s nothing that can replace their direct-to-employer engagement.

“Our biggest task is to get the word out,” Pledger says.

That positions the TMA in a complimentary position with city transportation officials. Helping employers connect with existing infrastructure investments like bike lanes and transit, or using infrastructure-lite options like teleworking, means more people can access a bigger variety of options immediately, Butler says. “We are promoting the use of facilities we have.”

At the City of Austin, Chan adds, “We also continue to look for opportunities where Movability can add value and be a part of city processes. We are actively looking for opportunities with our economic development department, as well as opportunities in our land development code rewrite process.” Those actions create opportunity for Movability and its members. Movability’s consulting activities are one of the most cost efficient ways for an employer or a developer to build transportation demand management options into their plans and projects.

These continual relationships are at the heart of Austin’s success, and Pledger says it need not be unique to the self-proclaimed capital of weird. Any community could grow a successful TMA as Austin has in the past six years. “I encourage people to participate in the trade associations related to TMAs,” Pledger says. “We had some experienced board members. We looked at what worked in other communities and try to take advantage of that experience.” ■

*“Austin is a vibrant, exciting place to work, but we have to make every option possible to ensure easy access.”*

**Tyson Tuttle**  
President and CEO  
Silicon Labs



## Putting smart in the driver's seat

"There's really only one way to go north and south through Denver," says Erik Hansen, an Adams County Commissioner and the founding board chair for Smart Commute Metro North Transportation Management Organization (TMO). "You're forced to drive I-25."

With just one major north-south artery and a growing metro region, Hansen saw first-hand congestion getting worse amid an 18 percent increase in vehicle miles traveled in the region, especially north of the city. In 2012, he joined with other community partners—including the 15 primarily municipal members of the preexisting North Area Transportation Alliance—to do something about it. Smart Commute Metro North was formed to not only address the congestion problem, but also encourage economic vitality through continued development.

"We wanted to, one, get people out of their cars and into alternative modes of transportation, and two, be a strong advocacy group for creating new capacity on the roadway," Hansen says. "Congestion hurts economic development. People don't want to bring their businesses to a place where it's hard to get their employees to work and they can't get customers to their door."

Considering Smart Commute started just five years ago, the TMO has made impressive strides. It has expanded from 15 to 45 members, including local governments, private companies, and organizations like the Regional Transportation District and the Metro North Chamber of Commerce. Smart Commute has successfully promoted an aggregate 16 percent increase in daily ridership on three key mass transit routes since 2014, helped coordinate new carpools and vanpools, and supported more than two dozen Bike to Work Day stations to provide food and drinks for cyclists and promote bike trails. Through policy input, community outreach,

**Smart  
Commute  
Metro North  
TMO**

**Smart Commute  
Metro North TMO**  
North Denver Suburbs,  
Colorado

**Formed:** 2012

**Area Served:** I-25  
Corridor north of Denver,  
CO, as well as SH-7,  
US-85 and Fast Tracks  
North Metro Rail

**Members:** 45 partner  
members, including 9  
local jurisdictions

**Total Employee Base:**  
Approx. 25,000

**Annual Budget:**  
\$298,000

[smartcommutemetro  
north.org](http://smartcommutemetro<br/>north.org)



and strategy-meeting facilitation, the TMO has also championed the completion of the North Metro Commuter Rail, set to open in 2020 running north from Denver Union Station to 124th Avenue in Thornton.

As of mid-2017, the TMO had reached out to 133 regional businesses about their free employer services. With each business employing an average of 221 people, almost 30,000 individuals have had the opportunity to learn about the TMO and its programs. Perhaps most impressively, Smart Commute's regular activities reduced vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by an estimated 696,000 miles in 2016. This is in addition to a reduction of nearly 1.5 million VMT over the course of a targeted program Smart Commute ran during 2015-2016, while construction was underway for new express lanes on a particularly congested portion of I-25 north of Denver.

Construction of these express lanes has been one of the organization's biggest projects to date. One phase of the project was finished last year, and another is ongoing to extend the lanes farther north. Special transponders allow cars with three or more passengers to use the lanes for free, while solo or two-person vehicles must pay a toll to use the lanes.

The express-lanes project has been a major collaboration with many stakeholders, including Smart Commute and the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT). CDOT brought the TMO into the project to help provide a transportation demand management perspective that would promote safety and reduce congestion, according to Smart Commute Executive Director Karent Stuart. CDOT projections predict that the new lanes will save express-lane users up to 20 minutes of travel time, and general-lane users up to 4 minutes.



Beyond large-scale regional projects, Smart Commute is tasked with working directly and individually with community partners to address their unique needs. According to Irene Tynes, another Smart Commute board member and the manager of outpatient education at Centura Health's Saint Anthony North Health Campus, that's one of the main reasons her health campus decided to join the TMO.

"We're the anchor institution of the City of Westminster," Tynes says, "but our patients come from all over. If we're really looking to make a difference in the community and for the patients who come here, we have to look at all the components of health. We have to figure out how to get services out to patients and how to get patients here, and the one thing we've decided on is transportation."

Tynes said it took her "about five minutes" to figure out that becoming a member of Smart Commute would provide the transportation expertise she was looking for. "They have the relationships with all the governing organizations," Tynes says. "I thought, 'they're going to be our voice.'"

Soon after Saint Anthony North Health Campus joined the TMO, Smart Commute worked with the Regional Transportation District to get an extended local bus route for the facility. Now, Tynes says, Smart Commute is helping the health campus and other members look into paratransit solutions by conducting a feasibility study and

#### I-25 North Express Lanes



New carpool lanes for cars with 3 passengers or more are expected to save commuters 20 minutes





coordinating with other communities and businesses in the area that have similar needs.

Tynes says she's seeing less tangible benefits, as well. She especially is impressed with the participation of employees—whom Saint Anthony calls associates—in events like Bike to Work Day and Go-Tober, a regional challenge that encourages workers to commute smarter through the month of October.

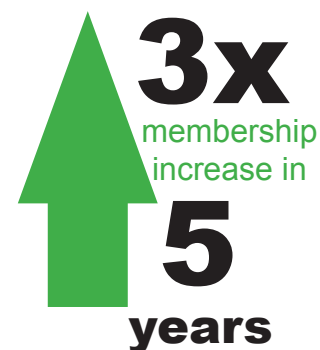
“Our associates are proud to participate in these programs,” says Tynes of her 800 coworkers at the health campus. “We’re doing the environmentally correct thing, we’re doing the right economic thing, but we’re also doing the fun thing. This is the cool stuff that people want to do.”

When it comes to the effectiveness of Smart Commute, Tynes emphasizes that the diversity of its 12-member board, in terms of including both public and private partners, is vital to its success. “We have a diverse board that comes together and can make things happen,” she says. “I’ll bring this to the table; you’ll bring that. The ability to leverage the work by membership and board makeup is huge.”

Commissioner Hansen agrees that diversity of membership is important. He attributes Smart Commute’s success to not only having a clear purpose and regional focus, but also bringing together the right people.

“It’s about partnerships, bringing local governments and the private sector together,” he says. “You have to engage the community. Those are the people we’re trying to serve, so getting them involved is the key to success.” ■

### Momentum for Mobility





## Bringing options to the suburbs

In historic Salem, Massachusetts, transportation planners face a daunting challenge: how to move modern traffic through a 400-year-old city laid out for horses and buggies?

In nearby suburban Beverly, tech company Axcelis has plenty of parking, but to meet environmental goals needs to encourage employees to choose transportation options other than driving alone to work.

Even in more distant Salem Harbor, a nearby power plant renovation project has managers asking how they can get hundreds of construction workers efficiently to and from the job site daily?

For each question, the answer involves the North Shore Transportation Management Association (TMA). In Salem, the North Shore TMA has helped connect commuters to public transportation and expanded bike options, including promoting a new bikeshare program, and enhancing cycling infrastructure between Salem and Beverly 10 miles away.

Axcelis asked the TMA to evaluate employee commutes and develop incentives for workers to use share rides, bike, and public transportation. And at the Footprint power plant, the TMA led the coordination of a “last mile” shuttle to take workers from commuter rail and off-site parking to the project site.

First established by five regional cities, North Shore now has eight dues-paying members, including the cities of Salem and Beverly, Salem State University, and five private companies. The three other founding cities—Danvers, Lynn and Peabody—have representatives on the eight-person board of directors, but do not

**North Shore TMA**  
Salem, Massachusetts

**Formed:** 2008

**Area Served:** Salem, Beverly, Danvers, Lynn, and Peabody

**Members:** 11 (8 dues-paying; 3 municipalities)

**Total Employee Base:** 9,600 (+10,000 students)

**Annual Budget:** \$84,000

[northshoretma.org](http://northshoretma.org)



pay TMA dues. This allows them to be involved in important policy conversations that affect the entire region, though they don't receive the same consulting services or commuter programs that are provided to dues-paying members.

Salem Mayor Kimberley Driscoll, who was instrumental in the formation of the North Shore TMA in 2008, says the TMA has been critical in spurring more broad thinking about sustainability and growth.

"Having a partner that could be solution-oriented and reframe thinking around transportation at a time when most communities were trying to get greener dovetailed nicely with our commitment to wanting to be a place that was mindful of the environment," she says. "We want to grow. We need new businesses coming here, but how do we manage all that traffic and flow? [The TMA] evolved from those kinds of discussions."

The TMA has been active in everything from promoting the use of public transportation and ride-sharing to providing guaranteed rides home and organizing an annual bike week challenge, says Matt Smith, a North Shore board member and Director of Traffic and Parking for Salem.

"We work with the TMA as a partner to better understand how to reduce congestion and get people out of their cars," Smith says. "The more people we can get to start switching their modes and thinking differently, the more people outside of even the [TMA] members will start thinking about it, because it's right there in front of them."

Steve Roberge, board president of the North Shore TMA and Senior Director of Environmental Health and Safety at Axcelis, points out that the TMA is not only vital in providing expertise and doing the "on-the-ground work," but also important to employee morale at the semiconductor parts manufacturer.

"Employees like that we're an environmentally-minded company," Roberge says. "They like the fact that we offer some options and have some incentive programs around commuting."

Another private sector TMA member, Eastern Bank, has found a similar benefit.

"We try to maintain an awareness and expand our practices to encompass more sustainable practices, and the TMA has been key to that locally," says Eastern Bank Senior Vice President Tom Dunn, also a North Shore board member.

"The biggest benefit I've seen from the TMA is getting assistance in developing programs—hearing how others do it and getting a different perspective," Dunn says. "They've been good about getting our employees excited," he adds, through events, incentives, and programs.

In fact, Eastern Bank was part of an award-winning program developed by the TMA called "Commute Another Way." North Shore TMA Executive Director Andrea Leary says the program was intended to address a significant parking shortage at Eastern Bank's regional office in Lynn, about 11 miles north of Boston. North Shore TMA held focus groups to gather information about how employees commuted and then



North Shore TMA takes its message on the road to show the ease of bike commuting and other transportation options.

offered mode specific incentives for individuals to try out their new commutes. The success of this program led Eastern Bank to offer a transit subsidy for employees who give up their parking space. More than 50 of the office's 450 employees participated in these programs, a ten percent shift in employee commuting behavior.

Mayor Driscoll of Salem sees only more success in North Shore's future. For example, the TMA is being brought in to support feasibility studies for a regional shuttle, a new commuter rail station at Salem State University, and to identify the needs of residents, employees, and employers in the larger TMA service area.

To ensure new employers are engaged with the TMA on transportation demand issues, new members will be required to join the TMA in order to have municipal approval of certain large development projects. This is how Footprint Power became involved in the TMA initially. In the next two years, the North Shore Medical Center in Salem and a new retail mall development in Beverly will also join the TMA.

"Always, first and foremost, we're trying to provide the services to our members and grow our membership," says TMA board president Roberge, of Axcelis. "If you can have ten to twenty companies participating in a TMA, all of us will reap more benefits." He notes that municipal partners are also crucial to the synergy and logistics of the endeavor.

"Banding together is always a way to lessen the burden," he says. "As a member, you have someone you can turn to. They have the expertise, and they're doing it every day." ■

*"We want to grow.  
We need new  
businesses coming  
here, but how do we  
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and flow? The TMA  
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kinds of discussions."*

**Mayor Kimberley Driscoll**  
City of Salem, Mass.







## Creating a team to depend on

The people of Southeastern Pennsylvania know a thing or two about regional connections. Whether people are commuting across town or across state lines, the people of the Greater Valley Forge region have turned their solutions-oriented approach to transportation into a statewide cause célèbre.

So what's working so well just outside Philadelphia? To hear it from members of the 27-year-old GVF, their success is driven by constant community engagement, talented staff, diverse leadership and high quality programs that continue to prove of value to members and beyond as transportation options evolve.

In the 1980s, as the Greater Valley Forge area was growing, congestion was becoming a common concern, and increasingly large employers were hearing complaints from their employees about construction projects, traffic and a lack of communication about when projects would be completed. To answer the needs to have an organization that could advocate for regional funding, help advance transportation infrastructure projects, while effectively managing and leveraging private sector relationships, the TMA was formed in 1990.

From its founding, as the first TMA of its kind in Southeast Pennsylvania, GVF committed to involving the business community. Transportation engineering firm McMahon Associates was among the first to join. "We wanted to get our arms around how a transportation engineering firm could help guide and implement transportation demand strategies," says Casey Moore, principal and vice president, McMahon Associates, and one of the TMA's four officers.

Involvement proved a good business opportunity. Since then as the TMA has grown, it has become known for its coalition building. For example, the GVF-built 422 Corridor Coalition brought together municipal managers and major employers along the state's busy US route 422 to improve the mobility challenges along the corridor.

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation has come to see GVF and its coalitions as a resource for the state. "We at PennDOT address roads and bridges, we count on GVF and other TMAs to help us provide more choices for commuters," said Brian Hare, PennDOT chief of planning and contract management. "They help the public become more aware of the options."

Occasionally, when the state is looking for mobility solutions in the King of Prussia region, they look to collaborate with GVF to conduct research for those challenges

### GVF

King of Prussia, Penn.

Formed: 1990

Area Served: Parts of Chester and Montgomery counties in Pennsylvania

Members: 135 employers

Total Employee Base: 600,000

Annual Budget: \$1,200,000

[gvftma.com](http://gvftma.com)

*Above: The 2017 GVF Transportation Demand Management award recipients. GVF has awarded more than 200 public and private organizations, helping each recipient customize TDM plans and achieve transportation goals.*

– bringing local expertise and stakeholders to the table. Through GVF’s TDM Awards program, it has recognized 215 public and private organizations that are investing in TDM programs. Through GVF’s analysis, it develops customized TDM plans for each of the recipients to help them achieve their goals (2017 TDM recipients are pictured on previous page).

“They’ve been fortunate to have had some really talented people and helped ensure the TMA is a nucleus of bringing people together to focus on our transportation needs,” says Moore.

GVF has built long-standing relationships with elected officials at the local, state and federal level. The TMA is very in tune to the issues affecting the whole region, from the neighborhoods to the businesses, but never seen as overtly political.

“A lot of the companies and agencies we deal with really see this as a positive. It’s a forum where you can help advocate and you’re not really mired in the same political ties,” says GVF board president Jeff Guzy, senior director with engineering firm RK&K.

Aside from the praise heaped on executive director Rob Henry and deputy executive director Maureen Farrell by the region’s transportation community for their dedication and leadership, TMA members say it’s the programs they put their energy toward that really defines GVF’s community work and outcomes.

“Rob and Maureen being so engaged through ACT and on a National level hear so much about the rest of the country and they try to bring that back,” says Moore.

From education and policy to on-the-ground traffic information and shuttles, there are times it’s hard to see what the TMA is not involved in.

GVF has managed corporate, university, government and residential shuttles over the past two decades. Whether operating a weekday shuttle or providing 24-hour service, the goal has always been to use their TDM experience and help provide an amenity for people versus driving alone.

In the case of investment company Vanguard, which employees nearly 10,000 people, GVF’s partnership resulted in a shuttle the company still operates today.

“With the major construction project in the corridor servicing Vanguard, there was a need to reduce the number of cars traveling on the roadway,” Farrell explains. GVF analyzed the Vanguard population to see where employees were commuting from and who would be able to take the shuttle, and then developed a shuttle schedule and route to meet the employee needs. The shuttle was partially funded with federal funding (Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality funds specifically).

Other shuttles, like the Rambler, offer residents in Upper Merion Township a better quality of life by providing them an outlet to get to errands, doctor appointments, or work. This continual with the community is part of what helps

*“The TMA is a nucleus of bringing people together to focus on our transportation needs.”*

**Casey Moore**  
GVF Board Treasurer  
Principal & VP, McMahon Associates



the TMA remain relevant to residents.

“Periodically we would step back and reassess where we were going and where we wanted to be down the road. The business has changed over the years,” Guzy says. Transportation management conversations that focused on simple carpooling in 1990 are now increasingly high-tech with ridesharing apps and autonomous vehicles looming. “The TMA has been good at not staying in the same role but reinventing themselves,” Guzy says.

At PennDOT, Hare credits GVF’s diverse membership, exceptional marketing, and embrace of data-based performance measures with helping other regions in the state replicate the TMA’s success. The state actually created a guide book to forming a TMA based largely on GVF.

Part of that guide includes ensuring the TMA represents the whole community – advice any region could benefit from, Moore says. When establishing a TMA, “look for a strong leader who is willing to think outside the box and build a diverse board.”

“If you are trying to make the pitch to the state capital in Harrisburg or in DC, if we show up with diversity of businesses represented from our board it says a lot more than if you just show up with engineering firms that are obviously just trying to move some legislation,” Moore says.

In Pennsylvania the state has noticed, when GVF shows up, it really looks like the whole region has been included in their efforts. “I’m blown away by the amount of members they are able to pull in,” Hare says. ■



Pennsylvania Secretary of Transportation and GVF board member, Leslie Richards, with GVF Executive Director Rob Henry at GVF's 2017 legislative breakfast.



# Preparing for growth

The people of Sacramento faced a common challenge in the late 1990s. The region was growing rapidly, and for transportation options to keep pace, new funding strategies were essential.

Many regions had successfully experimented with various forms of impact fees, where governments approve new housing developments contingent on developers funding supporting infrastructure. But as Sacramento extended out its urban boundary, adding some 9,000 acres to the urban footprint, the city council decided to take a slightly different approach.

“Adding 60,000 people to the city was going to produce a ton of traffic and air quality issues,” says Becky Heieck, North Natomas Transportation Management Association executive director. “The city council had the foresight to form a TMA that they then handed to community and businesses.”

The process of creating a transportation management association to deliver programs and services to address the anticipated impacts of development started with the master planning of North Natomas and dialogue with incoming businesses and residents.

Sacramento City Council voted to approve a tax as part of the development agreement for this new master-planned community in 1998, to fund transportation services, air quality mitigation, bicycle and other transportation, with money from property owners in the region. The tax rate – tied to the consumer price index – is currently about \$27 per year for a single-family house and collected through property taxes. In 2017 that brought in \$1.2 million, 78 percent of the TMA's budget.

Sacramento City Council member and North Natomas resident Angelique Ashby

**North Natomas TMA**  
Sacramento, California

**Formed:**1999

**Area Served:**  
Neighborhood, 11 sq miles, 5 miles north of downtown

**Number of Members**  
-66,000 residents  
-71,000 employees  
-32,500 dwelling units

**Total Employee Base:**  
71,000

**Annual Budget:**  
\$1,400,000



says for a community concerned about easing congestion on roads and improving air quality, it's an easy fee for people to support. "At the center of creating the TMA was, 'What can we do to reduce car transportation and increase bike and shuttle use?'" she says. The TMA's own shuttle service, known as the Flyer, is a 30-passenger shuttle that runs peak-period scheduled routes between North Natomas and downtown Sacramento. The \$2-a-ride service (Wi-Fi included) handled 93,465 passenger trips in 2016.

"If you told people outside the TMA that they could have all the services of the TMA for this fee, they would do it," she says.

The TMA is largely credited with helping create bike paths, off-road trails, increased lighting and traffic signals, and "lots of crosswalks," Heieck adds. But for every transportation option strengthened in the area, North Natomas is equally proud of the partnerships they built to bring them about.

"The tax is not enough," says Ashby. "The other success is the partnerships with the schools, city, county, and regional transit. They've been able to build relationships."

When the community sought \$250,000 to light a bike path through the North Natomas Regional Park, the local school district and city council could not finance the project alone and the NNTMA stepped in to help. "Having a common goal to get kids to and from school and to have safe off-road paths was a commonality between the city, schools and the TMA," Ashby says.

For one of the most diverse zip codes in the United States, where most people are commuting about 8 miles to work downtown or at nearby Sacramento State University, the TMA's work has been unifying.

"The TMA is a point of pride," says Ashby. She advises other communities looking to replicate the success of North Natomas to create partnerships with government, transit agencies and local schools. "If you want to change behavior, there's no better way than starting with kids," she says. "They urge the family to try new options and make those changes."

While several community actors may have similar interests, sometimes it takes one person or group to rally the rest around more specific goals. That's where the work of the TMA's five-person staff has been essential, helping to define regional transportation goals and communicate them relentlessly.

Volunteer TMA president Derek Chernow, who by day is chief of staff to a California State Senator, says part of the TMA's success is its focus on measuring and sharing progress. "We keep careful tabs on the measurable impact," he says. Through a four-pillared approach of advocacy, programming, education, and services, the TMA is a constant voice promoting transit in the region and showcasing increases in ridership, safety, and student and parent involvement in their programs.

"People in this community place a high value on spending time outdoors with their families. That sentiment is driven by the TMA," says City Council member Ashby,

*"If you want to  
change behavior,  
there's no better  
way than starting  
with kids.  
They urge the  
family onto the  
bike path or their  
parents onto  
the shuttles."*

**Angelique Ashby**  
Sacramento  
City Council Member  
North Natomas resident

highlighting the TMA's work to schedule staff and volunteers to be at high-visibility events to help the community draw the connection between the TMA and its transportation-related services.

For a new neighborhood of 60,000 to feel connected to a larger community, it takes persistent outreach. Chernow says for other TMAs to successfully integrate with suburban commuters, they should start with communication and transparency. NNTMA's annual report shares where finances go and robust and constant through many other channels keep the community up today. "It's easy to come up with ideas, but we engage the community, get feedback and buy in from the beginning to assure success," Chernow says.

Other regional players have noted North Natomas' success – the suburban area is a regular winner of May is Bike Month competitions – and when staff like executive director Heieck get calls from peer organizations or neighboring jurisdictions, they are quick to credit their board of directors for giving them the freedom to pursue creative commuting solutions. Heieck says the board has fostered a culture that allows appropriate risk-taking.

"We're not afraid to test new programs" Heieck says. In one case that meant running with a concept of a new bike program with donor support. Though the program would have benefited the donor and the community, TMA staff realized it was going to be expensive to maintain the program. "We were glad we only started on a trial basis," Heieck says. While that particular idea didn't pan out, the spirit behind it keeps the TMA perpetually creating new concepts that are successful.

"We want a complete off-road spine," Ashby says, dreaming of a regional trail connecting communities. "We want to increase shuttles to new destinations. We want to replicate this in the region." ■



Council member Angelique Ashby with leaders from the North Natomas TMA, City of Sacramento, Sacramento Police Department and a local bicycle club open the last one mile of Jackrabbit Trail, a north/south connector to downtown Sacramento.

# Conclusion

ACT hopes that these case studies will serve as a resource and inspiration for public and private sector leaders looking to develop true partnerships to implement shared transportation strategies. The benefits of collaboration through a TMA can include cost savings to the private sector, positive impacts on quality of life for commuters and residents, and improved economic activity by improving access to jobs and movement of goods and services.

As the nation's leading advocate for transportation demand management strategies and supporter of the organizations and professionals that develop and implement TDM programs, we welcome the opportunity to assist your community in its efforts to establish and/or grow its own TMA/TMO. We invite you to learn more about ACT and join our TMA Council, which provides a platform for networking, sharing, and learning.





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