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DEBRITTANY MITCHELL:

Good afternoon, everyone. We are giving a couple of minutes for people to get connected and then we will start. I think we are ready. Good afternoon everyone, my name is DeBrittany Mitchell, and I'm a transition manager for the... Welcome to today's virtual roundtable. On the Transit Planning 4 All products lessons learned for communication for inclusive transit planning.

Just a few slides, as we get ready to watch the virtual roundtable. And a couple of webinar logistics. First, this event is being recorded and will be posted for to the Transit Planning 4 All website at a later date. Please keep your sound on mute through the presentation to prevent any background noise. This session is being live captioning, and we hope to also have an ASL interpreter join us momentarily.

We want this to be as interactive and engaging as possible, so if you have any thoughts, questions, comments, feel free to put them in the chat area during the presentation we will address them as they come up. Will also have a few myths at the end for people to ask questions verbally if you prefer to unmute yourself and chime into the discussion.

Last but not least, please identify yourself when speaking.

So again, this is a transit planning for all project, which is (Reads) The Transit Planning 4 All's project partners are the Institute for Community Inclusion, where I'm from, the community transportation Association of America, US aging, DJ B evaluation consulting and a special thank you to our funders at the administration for community.

The Transit Planning 4 All website is Transit Planning 4 All.org. There's also a twitter, feel free to tweet throughout this presentation and the Twitter handle is at transit planning. If you have any questions or comments or like to follow-up with any resources, is an email address for you can contact us, transit planning for all@cta.org.

So today's virtual roundtable discussion will feature two of the Transit Planning 4 All's projects, we have four rounds of projects going this project. There have been 41 sites in total, all of them are different types of projects, different geographical locations, different sizes of transit locations, and we have all had various roles in planning and advocacy.

So for today's discussion, this is the second virtual roundtable in a series of four. Today, we will be featuring our esteemed guest, Staci Sahoo and Karen Estes. Each of the virtual roundtables will result in an accompanying written brief that will be shared on the Transit Planning 4 All website. As I mentioned, the hashtag for today is (Reads).

Let's get started. I want to start by giving Staci and Karen an opportunity to introduce themselves before beginning to question. Staci, would you like to introduce yourself and give a brief overview of your project?

STACI SAHOO:

Absolutely, thank you to DeBrittany and thank you all for having us. So excited to be here today and talk of this topic. Many Staci Sahoo, I use she/her pronouns, I am the disability manager at HopeLink which is a community action agency based in the greater Seattle area and in the Pacific Northwest.

In our project, we received funding back in 2018 and it was really to look at how does an individual find a secure transportation in our region. The friction between knowing what transportation and what is available for an individual. It focused on older adults, people with disabilities and caregivers, but we also had a very specific lens looking at older adults, people with disabilities and caregivers, particular with line witches as well as immigrants and refugees. I will talk a little bit more about it soon, thanks.

DEBRITTANY MITCHELL:

Fabulous, thank you, Staci. Karen?

KAREN ESTES:

My name is Karen Estes, I'm the director of transit for the Knoxville Knox County community action committee. We were one of the first recipients for project back in 2013, I have over 33 years of transportation experience and our project was a meeting in a box approach of how to facilitate inclusive transportation throughout our region and we partnered with the University of Tennessee and with the other disability agencies in our region for our project.

DEBRITTANY MITCHELL:

Thank you Karen and Staci, welcome. As I said, this session will focus on commit authentication strategies that affords more inclusive project. Staci, I'm wondering if you would jumpstart the discussion, just giving a couple of thoughts of what has worked well for you?

STACI SAHOO:

Yeah, thank you, thanks DeBrittany. It's interesting, commit authentication is such a large conversation, right? It matters so much and it's so intertwined, so I hope I can do justice to this topic, as big as it is. I want to give it your medicine amount of gratitude to the inclusive process, the project we receive in 2018, we have carried forward and really exciting about the various projects that we learned about through the inclusive planning lands of how we carried inclusive planning and integrated into our processes and are still learning, but we are just taking on some great projects right now that are the results of the inclusive planning.

When we received these funds, the grantors were very focused on inclusive planning, and we did and we've definitely had great results because of it. With communication and inclusive planning. I want to talk a little bit about some of the lessons learned and best practices, but the most aborted thing, I guess I would say, is to actually care about the process. Be so genuine and authentic with the

process. If you're being told, "You need to figure out planning," Your communication strategies going to fall flat.

I think you're such an important piece of removing the power dynamics as well, and understanding that my role as a mobility manager and trying to connect people to our system. Through the inclusive planning process, I am seeing individuals with disabilities and older adults and caregivers are the experts. If they know what needs to happen in order to make change, so as much as I can be humble and listen and learn, again, our projects are only going to be the result and we will only actually be responsive if we are learning what it is we need to change. With communication, what we've seen different best practices

Is there is a difference between people who know you and are impressed versus completely new individuals that have never heard of our organization. Where a community action organization like Karen, but we also have mobility, so we oversee a (unknown name) Mountie coalition, that is been a 15 year relationship so we are very lucky in that when we formed our steering committee, it did include new members but we already had many years of coordination under our belts to be able to foster that.

Communicating with our steering committee, we really matter to have that trust and build that relationship. Again, just generally care about individuals and what it is we are going to be planning in that process. Communicating often, you know, obviously, we did a lot of communication but in person meetings, this was pre-COVID, but that mattered. Getting to know people in their homes and cases that they frequented in order to communicate.

Honestly, the harder one was commuting to people who didn't know about our work, who didn't have that trust with us, so making sure our marketing and our messaging, we talk about plain language, we talk about inclusive language, but what does that really mean? How does a flyer promoting an event we are hosting strike somebody as, "Oh, this will be for me and I can be a part of this."

I will put in the chat some of our flyers that we developed through inclusive planning project, but being able to promote ASL will be there as well. Making sure people know that they don't even need to request it, this will already be provided for you, and making sure, we also had in the promotion, RSVP is encouraged but not required. Trying to remove those barriers of bringing people to our table, but doing it away, again, if it was a flyer or email to munication, how to build that trust as quickly as possible.

I want to briefly mention about the back loop concept, then I will stop talking (Laughs). With feedback loop, my background is in urban planning, we hear about this and community engagement. You need to go back to your customer, you need to let them know what you found and it's absolutely easy to see that that, -- say that, it's even easy to include in your project planning, but what does that mean and how do you make sure you do feedback loop in?

One of our lessons learned, it's a lot harder to go back to all the people we've communicated with, all the people we've learned from. We did surveys, we did community café forums, we did focus groups during our inclusive planning. There's a lot of people be engaged with and it's very easy to get

distracted and complete phase 1 and move on to phase 2, try to move into action, right? We are hearing so much needed the community and you want to get things done.

Trying to embed that feedback loop and being very mindful of how are you going to be going back to people, trying to collect email addresses, sign-up for our newsletter or sign-up and we will follow-up with you and disseminate that information. That will reach everybody, not everybody will become true with that, but leaving that door open.

When we did our survey, \$50, you could be entered into a raffle and include your email address so you can sign up to receive more updates. Something like that, you don't go back at the end of phase 1 at your project and ask how to reach them again, that's different obviously if you have a steering committee or group of people that you're constantly engage with, that communication will be different. But if you want to follow up with people who are experts and you want to do due diligence, this is what I've learned.

Documenting, another thing that we did that I thought was so important was every piece of feedback we received through the inclusive planning was documented in an Excel spreadsheet. I'm not going to say my team love that process in terms of the amount of work, but we were able to literally say, "We took your feedback and we turn that into action." Our action plan was developed solely on the feedback, every line, every committee we had. Every focus group we had, every email exchange, put that in the Excel spreadsheet and our feedback log.

We want to make sure when you asked, "Did you actually hear me?" We can point at your feedback and say that it resulted in action. If anyone's interested in learning more about that feedback log, I can share it. You need to be prepared when you communicate with people and making sure people are really listening. That's just some of the communication strategies. Thank you.

DEBRITTANY MITCHELL:

Thank you, Staci, I think you started us off strong highlighting some of the importance is of maintaining a consistent feedback loop and building trust with the stakeholders that you want to engage. I want to talk to Karen and asked Karen, if you had any strategies that worked with any new strategies of engaging with older adults as well?

KAREN ESTES:

Thank you, DeBrittany. We started our project back in 2013, our executive director was fixing to retire to another agency so she crated this project so that she would be able to still, in her retirement, have a purpose and wanted to give back to the program. This was rerouted, she was planning on it, she would work for the University of Tennessee with a grad student as part of their dissertation, he was helped by the project.

We had our first meeting in May, 2013, tragically, later passed away two days later. So that whole project, we had to revamp again. (unknown name) also passed away because he had cancer, during our project, it was a lot of struggles in terms of the meaning of the project in terms of affairs we had to overcome because of people that were really so involved, gave their whole lives to seniors in transit,

passed away in the process.

What we decided it was a concept called meeting in a box. The meeting in a box concept is tailored to reach out to groups of individuals include seniors and people with disabilities, and we took the meeting directly to the participants. We would contact organizations, support groups, and support -- request presentations when they had set the schedule. What they did for us was it gave participants the help and advantage, we didn't ask to go anywhere, we had over 31 meetings at locations for seniors where every disability placement went faster than we accounted for.

We always provided food, and we all share the same information at meetings. The meeting would consist of a facilitator and some of the project, we would have a group discussion and we would always give every participant a chance to share their thoughts. We would let them speak freely, and without the fear of retaliation. But it offered people with disabilities and seniors a voice, it offered them a vision, and basically, we wanted to find out how transportation services could be more inclusive to them.

Our goal was to overcome communication barriers with people with disabilities in public transportation. We quickly learned that seniors with disabilities would have a different meaning based on their initial needs, and our overall goal was once we had, as been said before, we kept copies of all the information. We kept it all down but with the help of the University, we had a writing criteria method where we could scientifically evaluate our responses and come up with the top areas and solutions in our region.

Meeting in a box is a neat approach, most of the community meetings, people in wheelchairs can get there, people have cognitive disabilities or intellectual disabilities, it's hard for them to come to a meeting. So we went to them and we felt was very successful in finding out what their worries for transportation was.

DEBRITTANY MITCHELL:

Thank you, Karen, that was very helpful. I'm wondering, in terms of getting people to actually come to the meetings or to sign onto the virtual discussions that you're having, and Karen, you mentioned food, what other incentives have worked to get people to really come to the table and engage in give their honest opinion about where things stand transportation in your communities?

STACI SAHOO:

Karen, did you want to go? I can start. Yes, Karen, think of saying food, such a good one. It always brings me to the table. Again, I would say, that trust is so important. I know, in our region, we do really amazing work, we have wonderful transit agencies that take a lot of time to understand community need but that results in a lot of opportunities to give feedback.

I feel that when we communicate, making sure they understand the purpose of it. Where is this going to go, what is going to do? We do include other incentives now, because again, we've centered them as our experts. Our region has been very thoughtful and not only food, but how do you get other needs met? How do you find childcare? How do you fund transportation?

We had on our flyer, "Do you need a ride there?" We are promoting a world café, so making sure it's all comedic in the flyer or the promotional material that you're using. Absolutely, food, and then what those accommodations you will need. ASL, CART, we had a couple of world Café models that have brought some people together, and a number of older adults that spoke Mandarin. We brought in interpreters and continuous headsets so they could participate just like everybody else, continuously in the process.

Again, making sure it's for them and that we are making good use of their time.

KAREN ESTES:

I would say, since we took the meetings to the individuals and we knew what they were prepared for, that was an issue. We had one committee meeting where we offer transportation, but we went to them on their own terms. They were there, and they were willing to share because I think... They were special to us because we were coming to them and not just saying that it's on the table, we give them free reign for whatever they want to share and that's what we went back to. We learned a lot from the process because if you're not in their shoes, you'd understand some of the barriers and thought processes that filter through some individuals. In their own personal minds.

Going there really helped us, and we didn't have a problem. Food was always a hit, but we didn't take anything else with us except for the food. DeBrittany Mac thank you,

DEBRITTANY MITCHELL:

Thank you, Karen and Staci. To all of our attendees, please feel free to put your questions in the chat box and raise your hand, you can join the discussion as well. The thing came up about cultural commute case and is engaging with diverse cultural groups. Karen, I think you really good point about meeting people where they are. So I'm wondering what approaches you to have taken to make sure that you're being inclusive about diverse cultural groups and including various linkages, cultural considerations, etc.? Karen, let's start with you and then will go to Staci.

KAREN ESTES:

In terms of our project, we were looking so much of the culture as much as the disability groups. That was our focus, I think Staci focus more on the culture than we did. We found that every meeting we went to, we had to quickly read the groups. For example, in our example of plain language, we would have boards and barriers on the board, barriers and they would come up with solutions.

Well, we found out that the people who have low vision need more verbal prompts. We found sometimes that we had to engage one on one. We found that sometimes, we had to personalize so some of the individuals will be called by name and given the chance to speak and really appreciate that concept.

We found that sometimes people couldn't even place the dots, if they had mobility devices and they couldn't navigated around the room to get to the board. Some people can even see the board, so every time we had a meeting, we always had to adapt. We learned that with some of our people with

individual intellectual and develop mental divisive -- disability, we had to draw pictures. Where to draw the captions to understand "Being on the bus," And things like that.

We did reach out to our Spanish community because it's growing in our region, we reach out to grassroots organizations in terms of meeting on their turf. We also wanted to have those good relationships with other service providers that deal with all the disability groups, they were very helpful. We have really good community groups in our county, so they gave us information on how to commit it with the groups we work with.

You had a change of the meeting was different, there is no standard meeting but you are able to get the same information across but just in different ways across our region.

STACI SAHOO:

Thanks, Karen. I do want to give a shout out to Karen, this is Staci speaking. When we got the grant, we look back and inclusive playing projects in the past and Karen, your meeting in the box concept really helped us. We did a number of focus groups and really went where people were. I know we say that, but being able to set up focus groups with individuals, we worked with a Spanish speaking organization that represented workers and caregivers, but instead of me leaving a focus group and interpreter, we have someone on our steering committee who spoke Spanish and was able to lead it and was very familiar with the topic but people felt more comfortable with them.

Of course, going where people are but doing it in their own space and being mindful. Even with the food, what food are you bringing that they would appreciate versus making people come to your own space? As we did, we did a world Café model for a couple of meetings, and we had a couple of successes in bringing people from different cultures with a variety of disabilities. This is a Saturday event, we included a resource fair at the event, and I put the flyer in the chats you can see how we promoted it.

Really trying to make sure that we want to learn from you but we also want to add value as well and provide resources. We had about 20 individuals who only spoke Mandarin, I think one of them brought their grandchild. It was so fun. It was alongside ASL interpreters, tactile interpreters for individuals who joined us who were blind. Bringing all that can authentication together and talking about the topic together was so valuable.

I think having that mix of learning about people's needs in a safe space through stakeholder interviews or focus groups is really effective, especially when trust is possibly broken. Then, also bringing everybody together to talk about this and have shared dialogue. It really was effective with that continuous interpretation, having an interpreter where a headset and have those individuals so they were able to move around the room and participate just as much as anybody else.

Our focus was on languages, so he put the flyer that included the different languages as well.

DEBRITTANY MITCHELL:

Thank you, Staci and Karen, that was grateful to the point you made, one of them was about the

materials for your meetings, whether in person or online, are provided in a variety of formats. The second is really building partnerships with trusted members of the community.

So I want to turn the conversation a little bit in a different angle, and talk about some of the lessons learned, and some of the times were you may not have gotten it right. What has been challenging for you when it comes to inclusive communication strategies for your transportation projects? Staci, let's start with you.

STACI SAHOO:

Thanks, DeBrittany, this is Staci speaking. To be clear, I made so many mistakes. I like that you call that lessons learned, what we learn from it? If you are paying attention and you care about this work, it's an opportunity. An opportunity to reflect and say, "We messed this one up but how are we learning? Where to begin?"

To focus a bit on languages, because I know you're very mindful on how to be inclusive with older adults in that area, we were very fortunate that we were able to bring in older adult who only spoke Spanish into our steering committee. Normally, you're just having them complete a survey or have an individual that doesn't speak English and make a one-time thing, but bringing someone into our steering committee, providing such valuable feedback. Challenging in the sense that I don't speak Spanish, so every communication and email and phone call, we had to be very mindful that we had to get that translated so they were able to participate for

Eventually, they ended up having a family situation that prevented them from coming, I don't feel like I ever got to build that relationship with that person, that I really got to know them as opposed to somebody who might've been, if they had spoken English. I think there's more and making sure that our steering committee and our staff continue to reflect our communities so you can make sure that that communication remains strong. We also translated, as you saw, the flyer.

We did a survey in multiple images, we were proud of all the linkages we translated. We got zero from the Somali community, we have a number of Somali refugees in our area, a number of families in older adults and people disabilities amongst Somali refugees. Again, we were very proud of transiting those flyers and that messaging, but it didn't go anywhere, we got zero survey responses in zero participation. Again, it goes back to inclusive planning, I love, getting closer to level VI of Oprah's patient and then you go back down with something else. You are constantly moving and learning from inclusive planning.

There's still more we can do and since this time, we focused a lot on engaging with the Somali community because of those experiences. It takes more than transiting a survey.

DEBRITTANY MITCHELL:

Speaking of, Karen, one of the things that I heard about your meeting in a box approach is that you actually went into the community and met people where they were. I see a question in the chat box from Kenneth Lantz, he is asking what some of the pros and cons were to undertaking this communicate -- community outreach approach Inca judgment other events. Karen, you are saying that

you sometimes leverage other events happening in the community and use that as a way to market your efforts to the community. Kenneth is wondering what the pros and cons were taking that kind of approach?

KAREN ESTES:

Well, I think some of the pros are, it was a safe place for individuals to share their spring to transportation. I think they felt compelled to share, they felt empowered because you were coming to them, they weren't hiding in the back of a room, they were right there. It's always hard to schedule meetings with groups, especially when going to different groups. The cons are, it's a lot of meetings. 31 meetings is a lot of meetings.

I can't think of a lot of negatives because there were so many benefits to it, because you got to see and experience so much. Some of the things we learned about lessons learned, we learned several things. One, we're able to talk about what repetition services were available. That would defuse a lot of the problems or concerns because we would kind of share what services were available see you aluminate that barrier to begin with.

We learned about how sensitive people with disabilities and seniors are. I think one of the things we learned with the people that are Deaf, they were the most sensitive group and 40% of them said they would never use public transpiration again because of a negative experience. For example, they said they just know that driver is overlooking their house because they don't want them to ride and don't even go after them. We had groups that would say, "I have very good hearing, I know when the bus comes down my street. And I know that bus came so far and would turn around and not even make it to the corner where I live."

There's other transportation providers in our region, so it was for five transit agencies involved but we shared everything that we were seeing with every transit agency in our region so we would know the concerns. We know how to train our drivers, sensitivity training was the number one barrier that most individuals face. They don't understand me, they don't care about me, they're doing this on purpose, and we also learned from the negative comments that that was a way for us to be a stronger transportation provider.

That's what we want to be, and I think sometimes we take for granted that the people that depend on us, everyone has needs and we have to be able to adapt to make those needs no matter what they are. In terms of cultural barriers, at the University of Tennessee, all of the students who are helping us for international. That was a real cultural barrier for me, to be able to communicate with seniors when they are 19 or 20 and young adults.

There were some negative barriers there, and we did have to help them learn how to communicate. Overall, we all learned a lot. We just think that taking the meeting in the box to people is effective in communication.

STACI SAHOO:

If I can also just add with festivals, Karen, as you said with meeting in a box, meeting people where

they are so effective. Something I like about our project is the variety of ways to engage somebody for the setting up this world Café, no one was planning on going to the community stone that day. That took a lot of work and people don't have time for that, right? Versus going to them.

I think it was Kenneth who said in the chat about festivals, I don't think that should be your only method but someone is already there and joining with their family and opportunity to provide quick feedback or understand your brand a little bit more. Sometimes you just need people to hear about your work, what, seven times? Need to hear it multiple times. Nothing that festival should be the only thing you do, but if you're going places where some is already frequenting, we have a number of farmers markets that pop up during the summertime.

Being able to show up there as you're getting your groceries and talking about this, knowing that it will always be the same feedback you get if you go to some his place using the meeting in the box concept, or another way, it's one commute authentication channel that you can use./Thank you, Staci. Speaking of places that people frequent, cannot have another question. If you youths contact with faith-based organizations as a means of candy outreach. Staci or Karen, do either of you have comments on that?

KAREN ESTES:

Repeat that question? Different? Have you use contacts with faith-based organizations?

KAREN ESTES:

We did not focus our project on faith-based organizations, we did use our community center for one group meeting. It wasn't well attended. Back to the first question, we had a guaranteed audience when we went to the groups, we knew they would be there. When you have a community meeting in a Public Pl., Micah 20 professionals, to participants that may not be a affectional, but we are guaranteed attendance, which is great.

We didn't focus on faith-based, in terms of this project.

STACI SAHOO:

I would say, faith-based organizations are great method and is also not a focus of ours, but over time in mobility management, I think sometimes we get a little nervous on if we are part -- prioritizing one, but being able to go to a mosque or temple, getting people to have that trust.

As another example, in our COVID-19 and vaccine dissolution work in the Seattle area, faith-based organizations were a huge trusted messenger for public health information. Not that it was a focus of our project, but I've seen this being used more and more. Many of those informal volunteer drive programs. They go to their neighbors, they go to people they trust when they need transportation, so being able to engage with them in inclusive ways is a great idea.

DEBRITTANY MITCHELL:

Thank you both. We have another question from Joanne, we talked a bit about your marketing and outreach efforts. For example, the flyer that you shared, Staci, Joanne is wondering beyond the

translation of materials into different linkages, if you found ways to address people who might have a low level of literacy. Who may speak another language are also not able to read the materials?

STACI SAHOO:

Thank you, Joanne, for bring that up. That's an excellent point and not making the assumption, and with digital literacy. Not making the same assumptions, just like with mobility,, absolutely, Joanne. One of the things we did as part of our methodology during the inclusive phase when we were doing a lot of outreach, we did a survey to tradition, we did in person. We did want to give an option for people to read the survey people, as well as filling it out yourself or together.

Not to say that that's the bathroom -- best method, but translating itself is not always the most effective method. Again, being mindful because then you can find other tools and ways. Great point, thank you.

KAREN ESTES:

I would just like to say that we had a survey... We had to make sure it was on survey monkey, we were very selective about the questions we asked. We did one on one, we tried to get every which way we could. A little bit of a different spin on things, one of the best parts of the project, we were in the middle of communication tools, and medication drivers. We turn -- learned a lot in terms of how to make it simple.

You can't have multiple pieces of a puzzle for someone who is a single focus. You can see every thing one-on-one, you couldn't limited groups of four and say pick one. We learned a lot with every group that we had to communicate with. Some people can double tap on a tablet because they couldn't tap at their hands. You had always swipe to the right. Sometimes you have to swipe certain way. We learned you had to communicate with every disability and seniors in a different way.

DEBRITTANY MITCHELL:

Karen, you talked about commuting with everyone and I think that's a good segue into our next question from David. What techniques you used that have worked well in communities and individuals that might be uncomfortable sharing a larger group versus a one-on-one discussion. This could be for cultural reasons or other reasons. Have you come across that or experience that in larger groups, people are quiet versus preferring one-on-one commit authentication to get their feedback?

KAREN ESTES:

We did find that out, a lot of armies were small. Some of our meetings were individual people, but some were 10, seven, nine. They still felt comfortable because we were at their space, in their group homes. I would even ask them by name, "Would you like to share? Was quote and then we got back with them, we would talk one-on-one with some of them. Some of them would have issues, so we built trust with a lot of individuals who are still using our services today. We took it to heart, especially with the comments from passengers and their struggles and will be help them what we could do. We took all that training to make sure that we took that onto account. Our people were really vocal, they shared a lot, and I encouraged it.

I used tape cards a lot, to make sure to have their names and to make a personal introduction. The

people that we targeted were groups that would never go to a group meeting, probably had never even been to a group meeting. Personalize it, bring it to them. I think they got involved and they want to be involved, but it's hard if you think about someone from their home to the senior center, they don't come to those group meetings.

We give them ample opportunity to share and they were ready and willing to share more so than if they were in a large meeting. They can talk clearly, have people think about them, we were very accommodating.

STACI SAHOO:

Thanks, David, for the question. I want to think about from our Steering Committees, what does it mean to bring different forces. Some voices stronger than others, experts, introverts, whatever you want to call it. We did set up and establish take community norms, one of them being monitor the airtime.

We had to adapt during each of the meetings, did that meeting feel, did people feel their voices could be shared? We try to be very reflective of every single meeting. So establishing some of those meeting norms help, are going to break out and small group discussions, the steering committee was between 10 to 15 every meeting. It wasn't huge, but again, you want to make sure you can hear everybody.

I think for our steering committee, there is a way of facilitating that and providing feedback. If you know someone isn't speaking about all, being able to follow up with them one-on-one. Or people who can't attend a meeting, again, just caring. That authenticity of, "I really want to get this feedback from you. Following up with people afterwards or before. Making sure they felt comfortable.

We did have a wonderful partner of ours that, because of develop mental disability, takes a lot longer to process information. Being able to, before meeting, go through the agenda and what we are going to be talking about so they can be more empowered to participate during the meeting. That was definitely a great tool that we use.

Lastly, I think thinking about cultural differences. I don't remember this coming up during our inclusive project, but I think we are always doing it now, so I'd say we never stopped (Laughs). We did recently to a stakeholder interview with a few women that didn't know, what is it about building that trust? That was of South Asian descent, and not wanting to complain, no one to be frustrated, not wanted to say all the negative things.

They were in a safe space, the two of them knew each other, and our partner who also knows them saying, "Be mad! This is not working, you're not able to get your temple or your grocery store, you can't get out. Be vocal!" Recognizing the different cultural groups are not going to want to be as vocal as others. So how you can get that feedback in a safe space and inclusive manner so we are just hearing from one group. Those are some of the things we used but again, always learning.

DEBRITTANY MITCHELL:

Thank you, Staci, very important increasing a safe space for people to share their honest feedback. I

have another question, because you mentioned feedback and follow-up after the meetings, so I'm wondering what strategies have worked for you guys? What communications tragedies and work for you to keep your stakeholders engaged between meetings and events?

KAREN ESTES:

I will share that our project went for meaning in a box, -- meeting in a box, we had to go back because we needed help with that tool. We would get feedback from us but to Spence, then we would see what was what with our design method, how it's going to work. I think we also let them know that we valued all their feedback, and I'm just looking at something right here that said, people with disabilities, they reported to us that mobility limitations and communication with drivers were the biggest barriers.

We empowered them to have a voice in our project and we couldn't ask for anyone to be more supportive in our projects. I guess our project went for three years, and we kept going back to the groups to help them to be a better transportation provider and be more involved in our project.

STACI SAHOO:

I know I talked about the feedback log earlier, so being able to go back. Like you said, Karen, you want to take what you've learned and turn that back out. There is a lot of this shouldn't be done, but you have to be very mindful of staffing capacities and making sure you have the time and commitment. When you hear feedback, whether in the steering committee meeting or in a focus group and falling back on taking time to reflect and say, "We hear this and now what are we going to be doing?"

I appreciate also, in our steering committee, as part of this grant, we did a survey to ask how you felt. How inclusive was that meeting? Taking those lessons every sickle time, what something we can do to make it better? Just this constant process of improvement to try to get better every sickle time, and know that you are going to have a meeting or havoc medication method that will fall flat, that won't work.

As long as you recognize that and keep moving forward, it will be the best thing. Communicating often enough so that people can know that you care and you're still working on it. It's so important and we kept that philosophy to this day. The project we are working on right now as a result of what we learned back in 2018, we are still communicate based on our inclusive planning work. Now here's where were at the state. It's exciting./Thank you

DEBRITTANY MITCHELL:

Thank you, Staci and Karen. We are about to wrap up in a few minutes, so Jeremiah the audience, if you want to chime in via the chat box or verbally, please raise your hand or come in the chat box as well. So one of our closing questions is of course the million-dollar question: (Laughs) I wish I had \$1 million. If there was one thing that you want people to know about communication for inclusive transit planning, what would that one last thought be that you would want to share with the attendees today?

KAREN ESTES:

I will share that when you take a meeting in a box, when you have a meeting and you're trying to involve seniors, people disabilities, even the general public, you have to take the scan and not take it

personally that they are trying to target you. It's just an issue and you can't get defensive. You have to take everything they say, but take it and realize that whatever they tell you will make you better.

That's hard sometimes and they're dogging you out, and you have to be prepared for that. Don't be defensive, and some people can't do that. I think it's one of the lessons learned, you had to learn to take those criticisms and realize that inclusive transportation is important but it is a useful tool that can make transportation a lot better regionally as a whole.

STACI SAHOO:

Yeah. Thanks, Karen, I think he said that well. If we can get to a point where an individual, whether I know them or not feels comfortable sharing feedback with us, again, that trust has been built. That someone can say, "You did this wrong," Or, "This came off wrong," When you're giving feedback about the trepidation system. You are being humble and accepting that sometimes it is me, sometimes I did facilitate the meeting poorly and is on me, but not taking it in that way. Thank you.

If someone is able to open up and share that feedback with you, that's amazing. Someone, during one of our events, came and told that the bathroom door to that meeting wasn't accessible. It was a little too heavy for them and they were using a mobility device. They could have just not said anything, but the fact that they came to us, that stayed with me. You felt comfortable enough to share that feedback and let us know what's happening. Again, that trust and being really genuine, I guess, is how you will have very strong medication. Different?

DEBRITTANY MITCHELL:

I agree, how you respond to negativity and criticism is how you create a space of honesty. I see that (unknown name) has her hand raised, did you want to ask a question?

SPEAKER:

Yes, thank you for having me, I happen to be an advocate for homeless veterans in the Valley. I just want to give you heads up, we haven't been going a lot of feedback from our immigrant community because they are scared of deportation. Yes, I'm not going to lie, it's a huge issue nationwide especially in California.

We were unsuccessful, and visually impaired myself, I may transit dependent. We are trying to improve the city, but people don't want to do those surveys and they feel that their information will be shared with ICE. Thank you for this, it's very important to make them comfortable and start ahead of time. With the community, I have access to find someone in the community that is engaged with their community and that they can trust. Thank you.

STACI SAHOO:

Thank you so much for sharing that. Karen and I both being with committee action agencies, agencies are doing everything they can to make it incredibly clear who is welcome, but that still might not make a difference in terms of people filling out a survey or giving email addresses. How can we create that space to give feedback and recognize that this will be really hard in billing the trust relationship will be so important. Thank you, (unknown name), we've been dealing with that here ourselves.

KAREN ESTES:

One thing that we didn't expect from this project is partnering with the University of Tennessee and the Department of engineering, it really was the head of the department. He became involved with our citizens disability issues in Knoxville, and his goal, even though he had never been with anybody with disabilities, that was our goal is to make our city disabled friendly. It was actually on this project that made it important to him and to make our community realize that seniors have a list and make sure everything that we can, whether it's a library or any public service, that we can communicate and get their services.

We have to figure out if it's a kiosk we need or anything we need to do to make their voices heard, need to make those medications and that's what we set out to do in their spare time, that was one thing, a positive outcome that came from our project.

DEBRITTANY MITCHELL:

Thank you, Staci and Karen. Looking at the time, we have a couple of minutes and we have a few comments in the chat box. Reiterating some of the key points made today, one is to the point about surveys, keeping the feedback from surveys anonymous and separating the contact information and separate from the result is a key strategy that works.

Another is appreciating the importance of trusted allies in the committee. Being very vital to outreach and communication. A couple of thank you's, I am going to echo the thank you's that are already there and say thank you so much to Staci and Karen are taking the time to present with us today. We hope you all and a wealth of information and resources from both of the experiences of Staci and Karen.

There is a survey that Darren posted in the chat box, thank you Darren. They are asking for your feedback on today's Roundtable and if there's any information that will help us inform future roundtable event. As a reminder, this session is recorded, and will be posted on the Transit Planning 4 All website at a later date.

Thank you for attending, and I hope you have a great weekend, everyone.

STACI SAHOO:

Thank you, DeBrittany, thanks everyone.

DEBRITTANY MITCHELL:

Thank you.

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