

Strategic Planning in Rural Transit Agencies

William Bivin

Nebraska Safety Center

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to allow rural transit agencies and their partners to describe in their own words what they see as most important in the strategic planning process for their agencies.

RESEARCHER METHODOLOGY

- Qualitative Case Study
- Purposeful Sampling
 - Agencies
 - DOT's
 - Industry

THE FRAMEWORK

5 Critical Questions for Strategic Planning

1. Who are we?
2. Where are we?
3. Where do we want to go?
4. How will we know when we get there?
5. How do we get there?



Fritz, Don., The FGR Group, 2019.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What is the most important step in the strategic planning process for Rural Public Transit Agencies?

THEMES

Who are we?

- Understand the needs of your community and your region
- What does the client want?
- Define your system
- Gather the right people and the right players
- Participants need to have a learning mentality
- Too many like-minded people will result in decisions being made in a vacuum
- Intergenerational understanding and representation

Where are we?

- Need a shared understanding of information
- Different ideas of a problem lead to different ideas for solutions
- What do present and future riders need?
- It's a liability if you don't define exactly where you go

Where do we want to go?

- Think BIG: The strategic planning process is the time for big ideas, not for constraining yourself
- Don't worry about money during the strategic planning process
- Need shared understanding of the information

How will we know when we get there?

- Shared understanding of goals and how to measure progress.

How do we get there?

- Shared understanding of how we get there
- Need consensus on the goals and objectives and purpose.
 - No way to build a roadmap without consensus on where we are going.

WHAT WAS LEARNED

- Every participant gave a slightly different answers as to what was the most important step in the strategic planning process.
- The largest number of themes were categorized into the initial phases of the strategic planning process: "Who are we?" and "Where are we?"
- Participants not only identified these things as most important, they also identified them as the most often overlooked or neglected.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Agencies can understand who they are by defining their systems and organization, and reviewing mission, purpose, and values.
- Follow up with agencies to ask if they need assistance (perhaps facilitation) with the strategic planning process.
- Further research needed into how best to prepare agencies for successful strategic planning.

RESOURCES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

William Bivin
Nebraska Safety Center
2125 Transformation Drive, Suite 1260
Lincoln, NE 68508
402-570-0491
bivinwd@unk.edu

