

FasTracks Messaging Group Work Citizens' Academy 2009-01

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

QUESTION: What are the key messages and people missing for a potential campaign to increase the sales tax to ensure completion of FasTracks by 2017?

TABLE #: 1

- *Lower pollution*
- Denver as a hub of light rail access will be attractive for tourists.
- Building community – makes your world smaller when you can hop in a train and arrive quickly to a regional destination.
- Being one of the “Great Cities” in the US, like NY, San Francisco, Chicago – that have transit systems.
- People Missing: Alliance for Sustainable Colorado

TABLE #: 2

- I don't use it why pay for it. (STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT)
- Pub credibility into the project by cost/benefit and cost of time. Government loses credibility by asking for more taxes. (COST/BENEFIT)
- Research shows economic growth benefits of TOD/Transit. (JOB CREATION / ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT)
- FasTracks is more sustainable in the new energy economy that did not exist as positively in 2004. Climate change – regulation for carbon emission. (ACCOMMODATE FUTURE GROWTH / HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES)

TABLE #: 3

- Accountability – money – transparency.
- Mascot figure – i.e., figure head spokesperson
- The system needs to be built out because it will unify the metro area in total.
- Will help attack businesses which equals jobs.

TABLE #: 4

- Jobs now. Has large picture impact; stimulates economy.
- Additional tax hurts small business.
- People missing: National elected officials, across the aisle coalition (senators and representatives).

TABLE #: 5

SUPPORT

- Talk to average citizen – how does it directly affect their life?
- Have a spokesperson that will resonate with average voter.
- Gas prices – attracting more businesses and creating high quality jobs.
- People don't like traffic congestion.
- Transit options will decrease household costs – more disposable income.
- Curtail sprawl – look for more opportunities to go dense and reinvest in neighborhoods.

OPPOSE

- Opens doors to political pay-to-play
- Where's the money coming from for upkeep/maintenance in 25 years?

TABLE #: 6

- Affects quality of life.
- Positively based arguments.
- Choice of how we grow instead of being reactionary.
- Less traffic jams on the train.
- What is the true cost of mobility – roads/streets/transit??
- Riding transit helps an average family SAVE money.
- General apathy is a huge obstacle.
- Clean air –pollution.
- Lifestyle.
- People do not realize that Denver is an urban area.
- Succinct message.

TABLE #: 7

THEMES

- Need to show how it benefits regional economy and citizens. Highlight success stories (if they drive I-25 south of Mile High they see it in action).

OPPOSITION

- Marginal return on investment – will need to rebut/preempt

SPOKESPERSONS

- Mayor Hickenlooper
- Major Businesses/Employers (Come to Denver, improve profits)
- Chamber of Commerce – Small Business

TABLE #: 8

MESSAGES

- Health issue is missing from discussion.
- Overcome perception of adequate management from RTD.
- Highlight what has been done/accomplished to date (light rail)
- Highlight array of financial resources that are being used to fund program.
- More jobs being created.

PEOPLE MISSING:

- Business voice is missing from organizations speaking out.
- Offices of Economic Development
- Grass roots approach rather than top-down (churches, synagogues)
- Representatives from outside government
- Project champion that is easily identifiable/recognizable

TABLE #: 9

MESSAGES

- Not a poor use of money already – throwing good money at bad. Need to counteract this message.
- Throwing around billions of dollars for nothing – hard to fathom all that money.
- Needs to be done because we need to change habits.
- Needs to say it benefits whole metro area – no just pre-planned lines.
- T-REX was a successful project
- Show examples of other lines in cities that worked.

PEOPLE

- News media and Hickenlooper – believable.
- Group of private citizens would be believable – both liberal and conservative (like Phil Anschutz)
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TABLE #: 10

PEOPLE

- Mayors
- Business People