

ENO TRANSIT BOARD MEMBER SUMMIT
American Public Transportation Association's
**Transit Board Members Seminar and
Board Support Employee Development Workshop**
July 20, 2010 • Hilton Eugene and Conference Center • Eugene, OR

Board Support Responses, Insights ...

Work day ...

- Every day is different ...
- cover for CEOs when away;
- records retention/management;
- in charge of policies, procedures;
- attend/schedule meetings;
- calendaring for CEO;
- attend to brush fires;
- customer complaints;
- community involvement;
- write letters for board and CEO;
- reports for executive team.
- Prioritize work according to deadlines.
- Meet unexpected management requests.
- Handle day-to-day tasks.

Difficulties, rewards in job ...

- Interruptions; multi-tasking;
- getting cooperation;
- getting information on time;
- liaison between board, CEO, co-workers
- Making the correct executive decision when needed.
- Working with executive staff.
- Board consensus or direction when at odds with staff/public.
- People! High-quality people.
- We provide an excellent service; believe in our mission, feels good to be part of that.
- Mentoring others; being part of something bigger than you are.
- Positive changes over the years.
- Like doing different things all day.
- Being respected for knowledge and professionalism.
- Receiving appreciation, respect. Having the trust of the board members;
- Handling irate customer calls satisfactorily is rewarding.
- When board members make requests, fulfilling them is rewarding.
- Educating the new board members about transit and them showing interest.

Ask for help ...

- Blessed with a wonderful board. Board appreciates staff and says so often; does a lot for staff morale. (We take hits from the public.)
- Appreciate quick responses from board members;
- Appreciate attendance at meetings & involvement in the agency. (One board member last year wasn't very engaged.)
- Be flexible, show appreciation, attend meetings.
- Want board to follow the rules of ethical behavior.
- Run efficient meetings.
- Help meet staff needs in order to serve the board.
- Compensation!
- Responsive to e-mails and correspondence.
- Communicate needs earlier, so it isn't a crisis.
- Mutual respect.

Board Members' Responses, Insights ...

When work, how balance work

- Keep calendars organized, pocket calendars, helps to know where we are supposed to be and when. We value the staff in their help with this.
- Board meets once a month or twice. Committee meetings.
- Balance by setting aside a time block to work on the transit business. Some deal with it the next day after the board meeting.
- Judge when things are really emergencies.
- We don't micro-manage; we don't dispatch the buses.
- Want to make our decisions with enough time for study and consideration.
- Our board members have flexibility because most are self-employed (in getting the balance.)
- Balance is a challenge but most of us are pretty flexible.
- Predictability helps. Schedule meetings well in advance, rather than so many random meetings.
- Regularly scheduled meetings helps.

Difficulties, Rewards

- We are building something for the next generation, building a legacy. Lot of hard work; relish the accomplishments when this comes to fruition.
- Controversy comes with decisions; balancing everything, think we had it all covered ... then someone disagrees. We listen, it takes a lot of time, but we listen.
- Time commitment can be hard sometimes.
- But putting in the time can make it more rewarding at the end of the process.
- We are doing good things for people who appreciate and need what we are doing.
- In regular job, deal with other things. But at the transit system, people are friendly and really like each other.
- Accomplish something, e.g., a fleet going entirely natural gas.
- Hard part is the press.

- Rewarding to help the transit dependents, people with disabilities. The effect of expanding service can have on someone's quality of life.
- Getting to things that are not regularly scheduled.
- Work and preparation, document review.
- Raising fares and cutting routes difficult. But if had been inefficiencies, this serves the community more effectively.
- Providing the transportation choices on which people do depend.

Asking for help...

- Moving to paperless society with computers, blackberrys, text messages. Still appreciate a written summary that we can take into the board meetings. "A friendly dinosaur."
- Really appreciate the board support staff members.
- Tell us what you want. When.
- Information in a more timely manner.
- Concise information – succinct.
- We get the mailed packet but also now get the emailed packet. Thrilled with our board support staff.

Setting and Communicating Expectations

- At planning session each year, our board talks about its expectations, e.g., going to meetings, coming prepared to meetings. They have formally done that.
- Want to start with mutual respect for staff and board members.
- Make sure the information from both points of view is readily available.
- Try to anticipate questions and help CEO and executive staff prepare for those questions, so the staff doesn't feel like the questions was a "gotcha."
- Expectations regarding receiving information back from CEO and staff.
- Have a list of expectations that can be adopted.
- Most issues are worked out in committee meetings rather than at the full board meeting. So very little disension when we get to the board meeting.
- We get board packets electronically and have time to review them.

List of Expectations

- Be upfront and let board staff know
- Positive or negative feedback is appreciated
- Board members review packet items and come to meeting prepared
- Ask the questions and review the issues
- At first, help to understand the terminology for public transportation; don't talk in shorthand. Explain the issues 100 percent.
- Make sure staff is included in the new board member orientations so they know people's names.
- Communication – open lines, don't want things to fester
- Mutual respect
- Timely responses very important
- No surprises – board members know what is happening; staff tells them what is coming, what is on the agenda, the information they need
- Staff should also communicate their expectations
- Call if you cannot attend the meeting
- Board members who are here at this meeting ... would be great if they can carry this message back
- If there isn't business enough to hold a meeting, don't have the meeting

- Keep the information equitable between staff and board members
- All board members need to have the information, e.g., when one board member requests information, it goes to all of the board members, but keep in mind we have open laws – all emails are public record.
- Clearer roles.
- Everything runs through the board support person to make sure everyone has what they need.
- Some board members and others are not as computer savvy, e.g., Excel spreadsheets ... so make sure people have what they need in the form they need.
- Board members read the material, show up at meetings, show courtesy – do not attack the speaker, shoot the messenger.
- Trust the material, don't make up facts
- Respond in timely manner
- Communicate questions before the meeting
- Chain of command important
- Who speaks to media, whomever
- Keep emotions out of the discussion
- Mutual respect
- Responses to requests in timely manner
- Concise information to board (not too much detail, but detail available)
- Keep board informed with timely, accurate information
- Schedule meeting with sensitivity to our schedules
- We want to see all sides of the issue, not only the staff perspective; we'll ask for it anyway
- Avoid crisis voting
- Ethical behavior of board members
- No private agendas
- Respect the staff and their professional roles
- Respond when staff asks for a meeting
- Tell board members what is expected