

Innovation Advisory Workgroup – decision-making part 2

November 10, 12:00 – 1:00 PM

Room 301

Driving question: how can Metro make its decision-making process more transparent, relevant and accessible?

Meeting goals:

- Brainstorm ways in which Metro can open up its decision-making to increase accessibility
- Prioritize ideas and discuss how to get leadership on board
- Review ideas for community guide on how to access and influence Metro’s decision-making process

Participants: Becca Uherbelau, Cliff Higgins, Lisa Frank, Noelle Dobson, Olena Turula, Darwin Eustaquio, Nyla Moore, Peggy Morell, Erin Pidot

Meeting notes

Introductions and overview

- Everyone introduced themselves – name, title and organization
- Erin – last time we met we discussed our current decision-making process—where decisions are made and the points of access for community members. This time we will focus on how we can change the decision-making process to create increased access for community members.
- Erin – we brought a list of the ideas we’ve collected so far—from innovation team meetings, external advisory workgroup, the 2015 community summit report and other sources. We will review this list, discuss and add to it, and then prioritize the ideas that we think are both feasible and will help move the needle the furthest.
- Erin – the innovation team has been asked to provide recommendations to include in the Community Relations (CR) budget recommendations – we want to hear from this group which recommendations we should advocate for
- Becca provided an overview of the CR budget recommendation process. Some recommendations will require a change in process, others will require additional funding. Communications Department has identified five strategic priorities and the first one is inclusive engagement. The CR team has a 28-point-plan (and growing), which includes feedback from innovation and youth projects as well as community summit.

How can we open up decision-making processes to create increased access for historically underrepresented communities?

- Participants reviewed the list of ideas we’ve heard so far
- Darwin - #9 and #5 feel really important – if advisory committees represent diversity—making them diverse would be part of something institutionalized and ongoing

- #9 Adopt Metro Vision for 2020 – inclusive public engagement practices and a decision-making body that is representative of the region’s diversity
 - #5 increase diversity of advisory committees
- Noelle – when think about what we mean as “advisory committees” – can be at different levels
- Peggy – how can we open up processes? This can happen in a lot of different places and formats
- Noelle – the relationship piece is key – staff need to be accessible – staff capacity building – add a recommendation around staff capacity building for things like creating a feedback loop as to how input was actually considered
- Lisa – have chart with every comment listed – providing response and feedback before decision gets made
- Cliff – demonstrate multiple levels of engagement – value in comment, but higher levels of engagement will be more influential
- Noelle – hard to know how to manage and not sound defensive when stakeholders say we don’t feel heard – because stakeholder input really can influence decisions – ex. of Hillsborough Tunnel.
- Darwin – gets back to feedback loop
- Erin – would be great to capture these success stories of when community input has directly influenced a decision and catalogue them – need to tell this story
- Noelle – what are best practices for this? One recommendation could be – commit to better exploring this – this feels more innovative than some of the recommendations on list that feel more like best practices
- Peggy – how really push change – need to propose something that changes experience of engaging with Metro – what would it take to push those changes?
- Cliff – cultural shift – we don’t want this to fall flat – keep having same conversations, we know all of this – what is the approach?
- Noelle – cultural shift piece is so challenging and so important – so many people at Metro not thinking about this at all
- Olena – has to happen at several levels – at leadership level and at staff level – maybe structure recommendations at each level and recognize that community members have value at all level s
- Lisa - #4 is pre-cursor to #3 – more experiences for elected leadership to interact directly with community is what leads to leadership capacity
- Noelle – staff needs to create situaions for council to interact with community members – this experience piece is so important
- Peggy – rather than us telling decision-makers, direct interaction. Provided example of innovation meeting focused on Metro’s decision-making process – got a lot of feedback that this was the first time community members sat side-by-side with Metro staff and leadership to work on something – positive feedback from both community and staff about this experience

- Lisa – relationships are key – shift culture by making relationships part of the process → identify where Metro needs to develop new relationships
- Erin – one of our five strategy areas is focused on the relationship piece
- Olena – if way to model quarterly trails forum for communities – learning about grants, etc. – can learn about opportunities to engage
- Noelle – really like that idea – distinction between what we’re doing that is cross-agency vs. project specific. I hope that recommendations can call out very specific strategies at project level - like hold a panel of decision-makers at forum, have community members present to decision-makers rather than you present what they told you, etc.
- Lisa – how are you judging success with all of this? Takes real work – has to be part of someone’s job – publishing demographic information is a good start, but need to have some measurable goals – if haven’t hit goals, the job isn’t done.
- Noelle- did you create opportunities for community members to interact with decision-makers? (“shoulder-to-shoulder” experience), what did you do to advance equity? → quarterly staff survey and PACE goal
- Erin – another strategy area is entirely focused on evaluation
- Olena – what decisions came out of community input? What doing to engage historically underrepresented communities?
- Noelle – “decisions reflect community input” is very different from “input meaningfully considered” – we have more control over one of those outcomes
- Lisa – that’s why people get engaged – to change the results
- Lisa – when first forming project team – who are we actually talking about? What communities will be impacted and who among those would be underrepresented/EJ group/etc.
- Olena – for some projects hard to define that community – is it geographic? Identity-based? Regional? Make sure asking those questions – this isn’t just an issue for Metro
- Noelle – when asked to review for on-call lists – some contractors had community-based partners on the team – we could require this
- Nyla – this could be included in staff workshop around how to write an RFP/scope of work – the workshop doesn’t include anything around inclusion or equity

Which of these should we advocate for to senior leadership and council?

- Each participant put stickers next to three recommendations that they would prioritize

Next steps

- Erin – I will send out notes
- Erin – are participants willing to continue being advisors offline for this work over the next two months? I will send out draft documents such as updated list of recommendations, guiding principles, etc. for your feedback.
- Most members indicated that they would be willing to do this
- Thank you!