

to change and the flexibility opportunities offered by the ISTEA have not been fully or universally explored. Adopting a transportation approach — rather than a modal approach — to decision-making and problem-solving has not been accepted by all our current transportation leaders, nor by all of their advisors. There are too many transportation officials who would prefer to return to pre-ISTEA programs and procedures. You can help in convincing them to change their minds.

The members of the panel of general managers have varied experience and varied backgrounds. They represent different operating environments and organizational structures. They have moved into transit from teaching, counseling, and law, civil engineering, and business administration. Their varied perspectives on the challenges and issues in this changing environment are most enlightening.

#### TEACHING TRANSIT THE IMPORTANCE OF PRINCIPLES

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##### Introduction

In each of my careers, be it counseling, law, or public transit, I have applied a multidisciplinary model that requires bringing partners to the table for problem solving. Who are the people we need at the table? Who are the stakeholders? At Alameda-Contra Costa (AC) Transit, we try to answer these questions and explore other new approaches.

##### Innovations at AC Transit

We have tried some innovative strategies at AC Transit. I could speak about organizational change: changing the heart and soul of this organization for the people there and our customers. I can talk about how exhilarating that process is and how exasperating it is, because it is really tough work. I could talk about our union/ management collaborative effort. I could report on our partnership efforts that work, most times. "Partnering" is tough, particularly when we are looking at layoffs and cuts. It is difficult to be schizophrenic, i.e. to collaborate on one hand and litigate on the other, but it is possible.

I could review the recently formed partnership between the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) International to create new, nonadversarial approaches to labor/management relations. I could discuss the Bay Area Partnership strategies developed in support of Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) with transit agencies, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), FTA, ports, congestion management associations (CMAs), the metropolitan planning organization (MPO), the Bay Area Air Quality District, and others in bringing partners to the table to look at transportation/transit issues from a regional point of view.

##### Lessons From Saturn

Instead, I would like to consider some new models for organizations. When I traveled to the new Saturn plant in Spring Hill, Tennessee, I was expecting to see something different; but what I saw was a revolutionary approach to working with people. The reason that I believe Saturn is so successful is because they are built on some guiding principles. They did not start and end with a vision of a new building. Saturn is built on these strikingly simple guiding principles:

*Saturn team members are trustworthy. Saturn team members want to be involved in all decisions that affect their lives. Saturn team members are responsible. Saturn team members are competent.*

These principles are not just platitudes that are placed on the walls and become mere slogans. The principles are fully incorporated into and woven into the fabric of Saturn's way of doing business. For example, when designers were putting the finishing touches on the new Saturn facility, someone said, "We didn't figure out where we're going to put the time clocks. Where will we put the time clocks at this late stage to accommodate the flow of workers?" Then it occurred to them that they had a guiding principle, "*Saturn team members are trustworthy.*" When they held time clocks up to the light of this principle, they saw inconsistencies. So, based on the principle, there are no time clocks at Saturn. Eight-thousand people come to and leave from work at Saturn without time clocks.

### Models to Live By

I would like to propose a hypothetical organization that has broken out of all the boxes and established a new way of doing business. To do so, the employees of this organization live by a set of principles.

The first guiding principle from this organization is:

*We move quicker when we share a common direction and a sense of community.*

What does this mean? What strategies should the organization adopt in order to live by these principles?

1. Press for direction.
2. Emphasize every avenue of communication.
3. Press for commitment.
4. Develop two-way communication.
5. Set up a schedule."
6. Stay grounded on the goals.
7. Stay focused on the goals.

Yes, new strategies and innovations can be developed from new principles.

Another principle applied by this organization is:

*We stand by each other in tough times.*

What does this mean?

1. Cross training.
2. Break down traditional silos.
3. Stop the blame game.
4. Become more flexible.
5. Provide training.
6. Schedule employee meetings to discuss mission and direction.
7. Get rid of year-end evaluations.
8. Give constant feedback to employees.

Another principle that was adopted by this organization is:

*It pays to take turns doing the hard tasks and it pays to take turns sharing leadership.*

How can the organization follow this principle?

1. Require vacations.
2. Cross training.

3. Sharing duties and responsibilities continuously so people formally and informally receive the training they need to step into leadership roles.
4. Change the reward system.
5. Share information.
6. Give people the chance to walk in the shoes of the leader.

Leaders need to figure out a way to replace themselves. This is accomplished in other industries. We certainly have to explore ways to do this in transit.

Can you guess which organization we were studying? The answer is geese. Yes, geese. One of our board members gave me an article written by an unknown author about geese. A week later, one of our road supervisors sent me the same article. Receiving the same article within two weeks can't be a coincidence. There is a message in "geese" that I am supposed to learn.

If we look at geese, you will see these principles. Geese fly in a V-formation. Each goose flaps its wings and creates an "uplift" for the other geese. They get 71 percent more flying power from flying in that formation than they would if they flew alone. Whenever one goose is hurt, two of them fly down with the injured goose and stay with that goose until it dies or is able to come back. After it dies, those two fly off and find another flock or the flock that they were with. Whenever a goose falls out of formation, it immediately feels the drag, being out of synch with the rest of the formation, and it pulls itself back because it wants the benefit of the lifting power. If we have as much sense as geese, we will stay in formation with those who are leading us.

Regarding the issue about leadership, when the lead goose gets tired, it rotates back into the formation and rests. Another goose always moves up into the lead role and carries that formation forward until the lead goose is rested. If we learn from geese, we will learn to take turns with the hard tasks; we will learn to take turns in the leadership roles.

Finally, geese honk all the time. They are constantly honking. The honk is to encourage the leader, not to discourage it. Honking says to the leader: "We know you may be tired, but keep going, keep the pace. We'll get there."

If we can break out of the mold and look at innovative models, even look at geese as a model for organizational change, we will have accomplished a great deal. After all, I have never known a flock of geese to get lost. Our challenge today is to keep breaking out of the box, keep stretching the envelope. If we do this together, we will develop real strategies for innovation in transit.

### INSIGHTS FROM LAS VEGAS

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I would like to offer some perspectives on the changing environment. Certainly a lot of changes are taking place today, but if you look back in history, there's always been changes in the environment for any public service, including public transit.

#### The RTC System

The RTC in Clark County, which is headquartered in Las Vegas, Nevada, serves three roles and has been serving these three roles for almost thirty years. RTC predated the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) model, showing the way before 1991. We are the metropolitan planning organization for the urbanized Las Vegas area, which has now reached one million in population. We are also the public transit agency for Clark County. We actually operate the public transit service that we plan as the MPO. We are also a road building funding agency with a county-option motor fuel tax that comes directly to the RTC. Our budget split is roughly one-third transit and two-thirds highway funding, so that gives you an impression we're multimodal, but, at the same time, most of our funds go into the highway construction area.

By way of organizational background we have four employees managing that highway building program of about \$90 million a year and we have, inside the RTC, about 100 employees managing that one-third transit program. In the start-up of the first public transit system in Clark County, the Citizens' Area Transit System (CATS), the Commission adopted a policy of contracting out all of its transit services. That is why we only have 100 employees dealing with the transit arm. These are employees of the RTC. We actually have in excess of 650, now reaching 700, new jobs created in the transit sector,

but they are all employees of private contractors. Weigh that against the four employees that deal with our \$90 million road building program. We contract with the local entities, the cities, the county, and the state Department of Transportation. They then actually go out and acquire and build the arterial roads with our money, so we have a hidden work force there in the other agencies.

#### The RTC and Organizational Change

Change has defined our organization, certainly in the last five years, and I think all the way back to its beginning in 1965. Las Vegas is the fastest growing community in the country today. It has been for the last ten years, consistently, both in terms of job growth and in residential growth. It is likely to continue in that category for the foreseeable future.

With an initial fleet of about 108 vehicles and 18 routes, the CATS start-up in December 1992 was the largest single bus new start in North America in twenty years. We have since grown to 161 vehicles and are constantly on the run to catch up with the growth of the community demands for new transit services. We have some very unique situations in Las Vegas. One is with the resort corridor in the central part of the community. We have a ridership base that is not duplicated anywhere else in the world with up to 400,000 tourists and about a quarter of a million employees in that corridor on any given day. We have contracted out all of that transit service. It has been contracted out on a competitive basis. It has been a model not only in Nevada, but also in the rest of the country for the privatization and the use of entrepreneurial services in providing a government service.

#### Customers and Change

Whether they are the fare payers who ride our vehicles, or the automobile occupants who pay their gas tax that helps us build the roads, or the taxpayers who support the tax subsidies to either of these services, the voters are saying they want governmental services to be efficient and responsive. They have to be delivered on time or they are going to look for an alternative, not modally, but in terms of service delivery. Costs are very important to the fare payers as well as the taxpayers, and they are very sensitive to those costs or to decisions by their elected or appointed officials that affect those costs. We see increasingly among the electorate, if it cannot