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# Community Engagement:

*How have funding-constrained local governments in other parts of the world successfully used community engagement techniques to understand the service level expectations of their communities and has this helped these organisations remain relevant to their communities?*

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Municipal Engineering  
Foundation Victoria  
2015 USA & Canada  
Study Tour

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Ken Bott

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## Forward

The Municipal Engineering Foundation Victoria (MEFV) annually allocates scholarship awards to successful Victorian municipal engineering practitioners to research a wide range of internal and overseas study topics, with a focus of the award being attendance at the American Public Works Association Annual Congress as part of a study tour of municipal service organisations within USA and Canada. The purpose of the scholarship is to provide opportunities for engineers working in local government in Victoria to enhance their technical and managerial skills. The awardees are required to prepare a detailed report on the experiences and knowledge gained from the study tour on their return to Australia to share with Victorian Local Government and Public Works professionals.

The 2015 MEFV USA & Canada Study Tour involved four Victorian Local Government Engineers, consisting of three scholarship recipients accompanied by an MEFV Trustee. The scholarship recipients and respective study tour topics are:

Ken Bott  
Manager Infrastructure Assets  
Bayside City Council

*How have funding-constrained local governments in other parts of the world successfully used community engagement techniques to understand the service level expectations of their communities and has this helped these organisations remain relevant to their communities?*

Simon Kinsey  
Design and Construction  
Coordinator  
Whitehorse City Council

*Emerging environmental sustainability innovations and trends in design and construction for municipal engineering projects.*

David Moloney  
Manager Works  
Corangamite Shire Council

*The effects of preventative and proactive maintenance strategies on asset life.*

Mark Varmalis, Director Environment and Engineering Yarra Ranges Council, accompanied the scholarship recipients in the role of MEFV Trustee.

## Acknowledgements

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to the Trustees (past and present) of the Municipal Engineering Foundation of Victoria for selecting me to participate in the Study Tour. This was a once in a lifetime professional development opportunity that exceeded my expectations in advancing my technical, leadership, organisational and networking skills and knowledge. Furthermore, the opportunity to attend the 2015 APWA International Public Works Congress and Exposition in Phoenix was invaluable, as I was exposed to numerous educational sessions on topics ranging from community engagement, asset management and leadership and a number of networking opportunities in the exhibitor's hall. I am also grateful to Bayside City Council in supporting the study tour by providing financial assistance for my attendance at the APWA Congress and study leave.

An unexpected benefit that emerged for me throughout the study tour was how differently each respective host organisation interpreted our study tour topics, both in the material and format of their presentations. This gave me a broader and deeper understanding of the community engagement issues faced in the regions we visited than I had anticipated at the outset of the tour. There were also several opportunities for me to reciprocate the knowledge transfer and allow our hosts to benefit from the Victorian experience. The experience, knowledge acquired and opportunities for improving my approach to delivering local government infrastructure services as discussed throughout this report are immediately applicable to the Victorian context.

## **Study Tour Cities and Host Organisations**

The 2015 MEFV USA & Canada Study Tour visited the following 8 cities and 16 host organisations:

### **San Francisco**

City Of San Francisco

### **Napa Valley**

City of Napa

### **Phoenix**

City of Mesa

City of Scottsdale

### **New York**

City of New York Department of Transport

### **New Jersey**

City of New Jersey Department of Transportation + Rutgers University

### **Chicago**

APWA Chicago Chapter + Baxter & Woodman Consulting

Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

City of Chicago Department of Transport

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning + Chicago Mayor's Caucus

Chicago Metropolitan Planning Council

### **Seattle**

City of Seattle Department of Transportation and Department of Public Utilities

Greenroads + HDR Consulting

Alaskan Way Viaduct Bypass (Bertha)

### **Vancouver**

City of Vancouver

City of Burnaby

## Executive Summary

Public participation in the setting of local government funding priorities is not a new phenomenon. Neither is the challenge for municipalities to provide a range of core services with insufficient funding, resulting in a persistent reduction in the levels of infrastructure-based services provided to communities across the globe. Particularly since the global financial crisis in 2008, municipal spending on operating, maintaining, renewing and constructing new infrastructure has declined significantly due to budgetary restraint and the level of service that public infrastructure provides to local communities has declined as a result. Although the Cities we visited during the Study Tour were well serviced with clean and fresh looking streetscapes and parklands, we didn't have to venture too far beyond the central business districts to get an appreciation that there is an infrastructure renewal crisis in the U.S.

A paradigm shift in regards to community engagement and public participation was observed during the Study Tour, which provided valuable insight to the approaches and techniques that need to be employed by local government infrastructure managers to increase the level of understanding a community has about what services their Council provides and to demonstrate the need and relevance of those services are determined by listening to the views of the broader community. These approaches and techniques are best summarized by 3 core themes of 'outreach', 'promotion and 'participation'.

The State Government's intentions to implement rate capping for all Victorian Councils has the potential to significantly reduce the range and quality of services that Councils provide to their communities, as observed in the U.S. For the local government sector to remain relevant in this cost-constrained context in the future, it is essential that Council officers acquire engagement skills and actively consult with their community to understand the service level expectations that are representative of the broader community, rather than making funding decisions that focus on vocal minority interest groups. Robust and current information on community service level expectations can then inform asset management and planning processes, which are key determinants of Council's long term financial plan.

This report lists several recommendations for short and medium term actions to be implemented to achieve the following goals:

1. Understanding Community Expectations of Core Services
2. Improve Project-Based Community Engagement
3. Activate Before Investing
4. Don't Be A Silent Service





## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Report Scope

Preparations by the Victorian State Government to implement rate capping will impact local government funding sources and has the potential to significantly reduce the range and quality of services that Councils provide to their communities. For Councils to remain relevant to their communities in a context of prolonged cost-constraint in the future, it is essential that Council officers develop sophisticated stakeholder engagement skills and effectively engage with the communities they serve. Furthermore, it is essential that municipalities understand the service level expectations of their communities and use this data to ensure funding decisions support the needs of the broader community, rather than appeasing the fixed views of politically influential vocal minority interests groups. Furthermore, local government services need to be promoted to develop an understanding within the community of the value provided by Council's services and the challenges faced in delivering these services so that communities are willing to support their municipalities in advocating for higher levels of funding to improve service levels. Robust and current information on community service level expectations can then inform asset management and planning processes, which are key determinants of Council's long term financial plan.

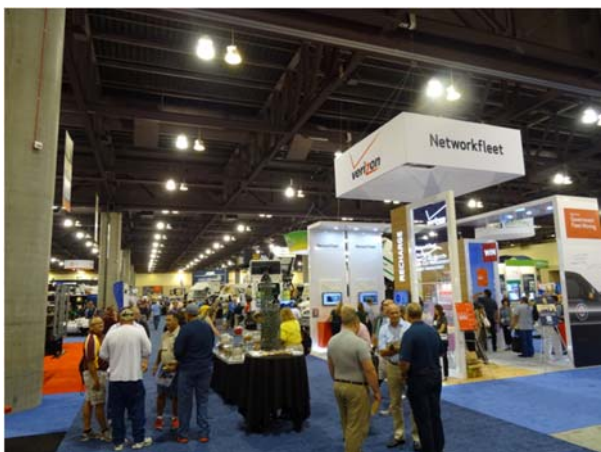
The scope of this report involves:

- Causes of financial austerity in municipal budgets and the consequences of prolonged budget shortfalls on infrastructure-based services to the community
- Observations of the effectiveness of community engagement practices in North American municipalities
- Recommendations for application to the Victorian context.

### 1.2 2015 APWA International Public Works Congress and Exposition

The 2015 APWA International Public Works Congress and Exposition was opened by a key note address by Marcus Luttrell, with his inspirational story and reflections on life and what is important as is told on film and in his book "Lone Survivor and Service: A Navy Seal at War". The general morning session on Day 2 involved technology experts discussing intelligent transport solutions, drones and other leading innovations. The final day commenced with a key note address from Diana Nyad, a long distance swimmer, sports journalist and broadcaster who provided another inspirational presentation on her successful 110 mile swim from Cuba to Florida at the age of 64 after four earlier failed attempts.

The APWA Congress as a professional development and networking event is unmatched, with an impressive ability to inspire and entertain the thousands of congress delegates. The Phoenix Convention centre was expanded in 2008 to provide more than 83,600 square metres of meeting and event space and is more than 185,800 square metres in total, making it one of the top 20 convention venues in the United States. The exhibition hall within the Convention Centre housed 357 exhibitors.



*Fig 1 Exhibition Hall - 2015 APWA Congress Phoenix*



*Fig 2 Keynote session – 2015 APWA Congress Phoenix*

The APWA Congress also offered parallel education sessions with diverse topics covering:

- Leadership
- Sustainability
- Asset management
- Construction and technical engineering
- Emerging technologies
- Emergency management
- Facilities and fleet
- Innovation
- Park management
- Waste management
- Transportation
- Water
- Young professionals

The sessions that I attended that provided relevant and useful input to this study tour report include:

- Public Outreach in Mexico
- Use of Trees in SW Management
- Greenroads and Complete Streets
- Sustainability & Collaboration – City of Berkley
- What a City Manager Wants in a Public Works Director
- Request for Personality
- Leadership Development for Public Works
- Innovation in Public Works

### **1.3 Report Preparation**

This report has been based on information presented at the 2015 APWA Congress, by our hosts during visits to municipal agencies during the study tour and from other sources listed as references within the report.

Summaries of notes taken during host's presentations are compiled in the attachments to Section 8.0.

## 2.0 Funding Shortfalls and Decline of Asset-Based Services

The tension for municipalities to provide core services with insufficient funding is not a new phenomenon and the consequences of this has been a gradual reduction in the levels of infrastructure-based services provided to communities across the globe. Particularly since the global financial crisis in 2008, municipal spending on operating, maintaining, renewing and constructing new infrastructure has declined significantly due to budgetary restraint and the level of service that public infrastructure provides to local communities has declined as a result<sup>1</sup>.

The following sections provide a context to and reasons behind a reduction in public spending and the consequences to infrastructure services to the community.

### 2.1 Consequences of Funding Shortfalls in U.S.

Following the Global Financial Crisis in 2007/08, the U.S. entered a period of severe economic recession that was characterised by high unemployment, low consumer confidence, a continuing decline in property values, increases in loan defaults/foreclosures and personal bankruptcies, increasing government debt, inflation and rising fuel and food prices<sup>4</sup>. As recently as early in 2015, a majority of Americans still believed that the nation remained in a recession<sup>5</sup>.

Political pressure to provide economic stimulus and freeze or even reduce taxes at all levels of Government has resulted in a reduction of public spending on maintenance, renewal, upgrades to and the provision of new infrastructure for most communities in the U.S. Commonly, any expenditure that is provided for capital works is for the construction of new assets. This tendency toward funding new infrastructure at the expense of funds that are necessary to maintain levels of service provided by existing assets is due to the powerful influence that ribbon-cutting opportunities that new projects offer to political decision makers with limited tenure and uncertain futures to be associated with a new project "rather than extending the life of someone else's old one"<sup>7</sup>. Indeed, such ribbon-cutting opportunities do not inspire a commitment to maintenance and renewal activities.



*Fig 3 Ribbon cutting events for new assets are attractive for political gains (source: <http://fresnochamberambassadors.blogspot.com.au/>)*

As the services that are provided by public infrastructure decline with degrading condition and as public safety risks mount, a paradigm is shifting in the U.S. where the Local Government sector is forced to engage with their communities to build an understanding of the issue and to gain permission from the public to raise revenues to fund necessary infrastructure to provide services and deal with the risks. The engagement approaches and techniques used by municipalities to develop greater understanding and public buy-in are discussed in Section 3 below.

### 2.2 A Mandate for Cost Constraint in the Victorian LG Sector

In May 2014, the Labor Party in opposition announced a platform for the coming Victorian State government election in late 2014 of capping growth in property rates as a means of reigning-in unsustainable rate increases by Victorian Councils<sup>2</sup>. Considering the 2014 election win as a clear mandate to the introduction of rate-capping, the State Government has introduced a bill entitled The Local Government (Fair Go Rates) Bill 2015 that will make rate capping effective as of July 2016<sup>12</sup>.

Rate-payer advocacy groups consider the introduction of rate-capping as giving ratepayers greater value, more of a say, and a better understanding of the work their councils are doing<sup>11</sup>. This suggests that the community expects to influence decision making about levels of service, which requires Councils to actively communicate,

promote and educate the value of municipal services and Council's performance in delivery. This was a commonly occurring theme arising from discussions with hosts during the study tour and was typically referred to as *"don't be a silent service"*.

### **2.3 Previous Experiences of Rate Capping**

Rate-capping by State Governments has been implemented before. In 1995, the Victorian Government embarked on a Local Government reform package that resulted in council amalgamations, rate capping and mandated cost reductions in the order of 20% across the sector. Rate-capping continued until 1999 when the incoming Labor Government responded to the emerging evidence of declining local infrastructure service levels, particularly in regional communities<sup>9</sup>.

The New South Wales State Government implemented rate capping in 1979 which ensured increases in rates rose modestly during the period since, during which an "enormous infrastructure backlog built up" and some regional NSW councils became financially unsustainable<sup>13</sup>.

### 3.0 Community Engagement to Inform Levels of Service

The following sections provide insights into a paradigm shift that was observed during the study tour in how municipalities 'reach' their communities, listen to what their needs are, develop works programs relevant to those needs and identify appropriate funding sources to deliver services. Examples of effective project-based engagement approaches and techniques to ensure successful project delivery and to test the potential for public activation of a site before capital upgrade investment is allocated are also provided. Insight into how municipalities promote their projects and outcomes to ensure they are not 'silent services' is included in this section.

The examples below demonstrate an understanding of a key principle developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2): the stakeholder participation spectrum. The spectrum identifies an increasing level of involvement for stakeholders in decision making, progressing from 'inform' at one end of the spectrum to 'empower' at the other. Understanding stakeholder's perceptions about their level of influence on the spectrum is crucial to successful engagement.

#### 3.1 Outreach During Funding Campaigns

*"Residents who experienced ... 'operational transparency' in government services – seeing the work that government is doing – expressed more positive attitudes toward government and greater support for maintaining or expanding the scale of government programs." Harvard Business School study, 2013*

A common experience between U.S. municipalities visited during the 2015 study tour was the need for capital works budgets for public infrastructure to be funded by new tax or public debt (bond) initiatives that are either supported or rejected by public referendums. Using elections to adopt public works programs indicates a new paradigm of public involvement in decision making...but with a supermajority (two-thirds) needed for typically 20% election participation rates, is this indicative of the needs of the broader community?

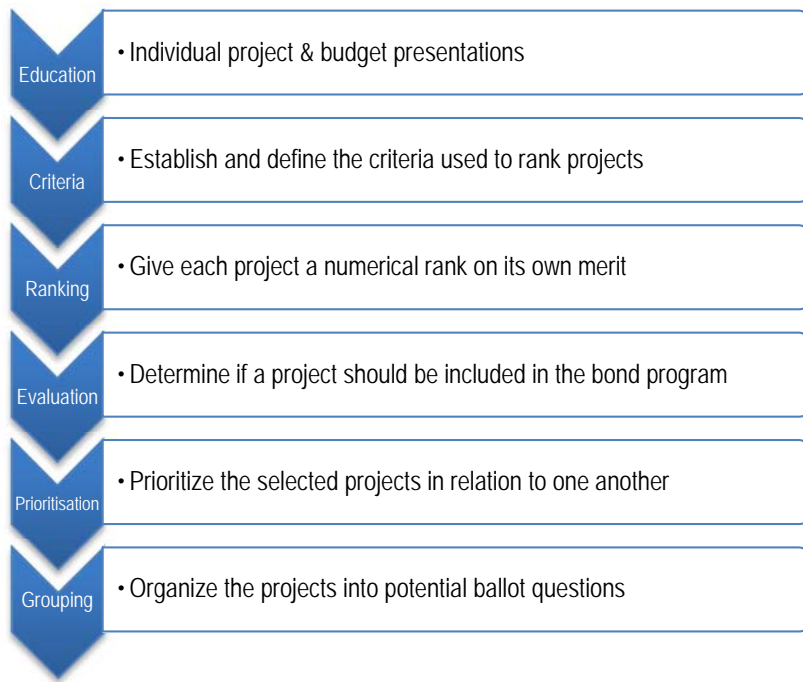
Extensive community engagement processes that tackle the challenge to represent the broader community by reaching the *hard-to-reach* and igniting public support for capital works programs are now commonplace in the U.S. Hence, these processes are collectively referred to as 'Outreach'.

##### 3.1.1 City of San Francisco

The City of San Francisco increased public debt by issuing General Obligation Bonds to fund long term infrastructure works programs. The current bond proposal is to raise funds needed for a 10-year works program to the value of \$32 billion. To share the capital program with the community, staff arrange public polling with 610 residents each year to gain feedback on what the community's needs are and satisfaction levels with the services provided by the City of San Francisco. In this way, a 100 point Pavement Condition Index was developed and a 70% target score set as the level of service set by the community. In terms of public communications, all the needs identified during the polling process are collated, prioritised and funding allocations are made to these priorities. The development and implementation of a communication strategy to advise the public on what is funded, what is not and why is a crucial step in demonstrating transparency to the community.

##### 3.1.3 City of Scottsdale

The City of Scottsdale finance infrastructure programs through a combination of new sales taxes and bonds. An extensive community engagement framework is used involving a Bond Task Force attended by community representatives to inform the Council on budget priorities. The Bond Taskforce follows a citizens jury format and is conducted by the following process:



The 2013 Task Force workshopped 9 times in 5 different locations throughout the City that was formed both from recruitment and self nomination and was supported by a variety of other public outreach activities including:

- 4 press releases,
- 10 media articles in Scottsdale Update and 22 articles placed in other internal and external publications,
- Dedicated web presence at ScottsdaleAZ.gov
- 7 tweets/Facebook posts and
- 11 presentations to community groups
- 8 community-generated project ideas forums
- 5 hosted topics on Speak Up Scottsdale
- Coordinating with SUSD to seek additional resident input on bond program

The 2013 Task Force reached consensus agreement for a \$239.9 million program delivering 45 infrastructure projects. Although this Bond initiative failed at the 2013 election, the City responded through a new initiative of 'Communicating the Core', which was a community education campaign to increase awareness about the City's core services and focussing on communicating services through images rather than text and numbers. Facebook also played a crucial role in raising awareness on the City's services<sup>15</sup>.

### 3.1.4 City of Seattle

The City of Seattle Department of Transport (SDOT) are in the final year of a 9 year levy funded package of public works totalling of \$365 million. The City is currently proposing a new 9 year levy for a total of \$930 million. This would cost the average home owner about \$275 per year. The levy requires a simple majority support and goes to a vote in November 2016. The community engagement process from the previous 9 year levy and the transport/asset master planning exercises gave SDOT a solid foundation to be able to prepare a draft levy proposal to undertake a 6 week/45 day outreach process involving:

- Online survey (that attracted 8,000 responses)
- Informal coffee hour and happy hour sessions
- Community meetings
- Neighborhood farmers markets
- Ethnic media sources
- Focus group workshops with various interest groups

SDOT assign resources during the outreach period by using an outside consultant team and a flying squad of internal staff, which need training on the package details (cheatsheets etc)

### 3.2 Engagement to Ensure Project Support

Presentations from our study tour hosts also provided insight into how municipalities attract and maintain community support for and promote the delivery of their infrastructure projects.

#### 3.2.2 City of Napa

Our presentation from the City of Napa provided insights to community education on the introduction of roundabouts to alleviate congestion at intersections of local streets with adjacent freeway accesses. Very few roundabouts exist in U.S. and this project has involved significant community engagement and education, using 3 public workshops to attract and obtain input from the residents in the neighbourhood. The first workshop was carefully developed without any design information presented and focussed on general themes of congestion, safety and possible solutions. Issues and concerns raised at this workshop were presented back to the successive workshop as interpreted concept options for the community to ask questions about and provide feedback. The workshops provided an education and learning process as part of the delivery of the project.

Napa also use long-term iterative workshop cycles to support the delivery of streetscape upgrade projects.

Using their recently completed First Street Streetscape Upgrade project as an example which was a complex project involving converting existing one-way streets that have been in place for many years to two-way with reduced traffic speeds, improved pedestrian access and integrated multimode travel options, a 3-year long process of community engagement process was undertaken to achieve design concepts prior to a final works package being funded and implemented. Similar iterative workshoping processes to the roundabout example above were identified as an effective means of developing understanding of the issues between stakeholders, involving stakeholders in the development of design concepts and maintaining support for the project through regular contact.



*Fig 4 First Street Upgrade – City of Napa*

#### 3.2.3 City of Mesa

The City of Mesa explained how door-to-door communication was essential to reach the broader community and ensuring that project-related information was received by members of the community typically considered to be hard-to-reach. This often involves after hours and weekend work for City Staff (not contractors). Although door-to-door engagement was time consuming and labour intensive, the use of contractors for such purposes introduces a risk of the people delivering the engagement not being able to handle the high quality dialogue arising with stakeholders who would expect to be dealing with a person that knew what they were talking about. Indeed, City staff know more detail about a project and a broader understanding of the implications of the project in serving the community. Should residents not be available during door-to-to visits, door hangers are an effective way of ensuring stakeholders that are not reached during door knocking can still be informed about the project and get in contact with project staff. It also avoids mailed out project material being grouped with and disposed of with other junk mail in resident's letterboxes<sup>16</sup>.

In engaging the community in support of project delivery, Mesa typically use the following as a broad spectrum to activate interest, attract stakeholders and maintain relationships:

- Celebrate Mesa (a free family event that brings the community together to enjoy games, carnival rides, entertainment, contests and give-aways, information vendors, food vendors)

- Public Service Announcements for newspaper, radio, TV and YouTube
- Engineering Week promotions
- Public meetings and workshops
- Door-to-door communication
- Stakeholder meetings
- Signage, banners and posters
- Facebook/Twitter/McTraffic
- Free advertising
- A 24 hour construction hotline

### 3.2.4 City of Chicago

Representatives of the City of Chicago Department of Transport (CDOT) explained the innovative engagement approaches using technology web-based platforms such as Textizen during the development of placemaking guidelines in CDOT's Complete Street's document. Participation is promoted and encouraged with a single, simple survey question that is presented in an attractive, funky advertisement in a high profile location such as a bus shelter or on the backside of a bus that can be responded to via SMS. Following this initial contact from a respondent (the hook), another question can be asked and their number can be accessed for future engagement messages. Textizen was proven to be effective for CDOT in accessing feedback from the hard-to-reach busy members of the community that typically do not respond to conventional engagement techniques.

In contrast to other web-based platforms that require respondents to be motivated to interface directly with a webpage, Textizen sends, receives and analyses text messages from mobile phones to reach members of the community with the technology already in their pockets, 24/7. As mobile phones are virtually ubiquitous among most communities, Textizen is accessible to everyone, irrespective of demographics. Representatives from CDOT explained that the main benefit of Textizen was how interest on a bite-sized piece of information/ education on a topic could then easily attract further responses to further follow-up information and questions that could be sent, allowing the level of engagement to build based on the growing interest of the participant<sup>17</sup>. This approach is particularly relevant to longitudinal studies and event reminders. An application called Mindmixer was also mentioned as another useful technology for reaching the hard to reach in similar ways.

### 3.2.5 City of Vancouver

Discussions with the City of Vancouver provided valuable insight into the psychology of engagement and their approaches to maximising the effectiveness of engagement activities. Using the example of workshop dialogue within stakeholders on transport planning and projects, City staff were conscious of framing the discussions on cross-modal issues, such as safety or time wasted in congestion, which tended to unify stakeholders that would have been polarised in a mode-based discussion (i.e. cars vs bike/mass transit).

Representatives from the City of Vancouver advised that the key to getting public attendance at workshops is to always provide highly professional sessions, which tended to attract around 50 participants. Such sessions are normally 2 hours long, held monthly (at predictable, regular times) and are set up for presentations, workshops or Q&A formats, depending on the stage of the project. It was also emphasized that starting the workshops early in the project timeframe (ie for scoping of goals and aims) and demonstrating the sessions to be open and inclusive were important in attracting and maintaining interest from stakeholders. They also endeavour to maintain the same community representatives (through incentives) to demonstrate changing views and developed understanding from participating in the process.

As reported by the City of Mesa, effort is placed on door knocking to invite participation where they anticipate the project has been shown to have an impact on hard-to-reach stakeholders. They also use novel technology approaches such as the MOVES app for activity tracking, which is an example of tapping into data collected by engagement participants to reduce the tedium of record keeping in active travel engagements and also increases the 'fun' value for participants.



Staff at the City of Vancouver are also investing more time and resources in collecting and analysing data to address (confirm or deny) the feedback received from respondents, which is effective in managing the fixed views of vocal special interest stakeholders with political influence. This was presented in the context of the Vancouver Transport Plan, where vehicle growth is clearly at capacity and cannot grow anymore, but significant capacity for growth in public transport patronage, pedestrian and cycling trips exists.

*“Having a focus to use data to base decisions on helps to say we know what is happening and demonstrate that we care and be more effective in what we do and what funds are spent on.”*

### 3.3 Activation Before Investment

Termed by urban designers over recent years as *Tactical Urbanism*, a common theme that occurring in cities across USA and Canada is the improvement and public activation of civic spaces with temporary, low cost initiatives to test if there is community support for the change<sup>20</sup>. Examples of tactical urbanism observed in San Francisco, New York and Seattle are presented below, with information presented by the Metropolitan Planning Council (Chicago) and representatives of the City of Seattle.

Often, the temporary approach is enough on its own to stimulate public use of a site. In other cases, the success of the trial becomes the basis of further development and investment in capital expenditure to undertake significant improvements to the streetscape.

#### 3.3.1 Examples observed in San Francisco, New York and Seattle

The following images depict temporary, low cost initiatives that were observed during the study tour to improve the amenity of and activate civic spaces. These initiatives ranged from simply providing tables and chairs for the public to use to positioning of public art, providing music, children’s corners, street games and market stalls. All examples appeared to be successful in the aim of testing the benefits of public activation through temporary, low costs means.



Fig. 5 Public square activation -San Francisco



Fig. 6 Use of traffic lane for public open space in New York



Fig. 7 Public square activation -Seattle



Fig. 8 Children's Corner, public square -Seattle



Fig. 9 - Street games - public square in Seattle



Fig. 10 Street games – Seattle waterfront

### 3.3.2 Comments by City of Seattle and Chicago Metropolitan Planning Council

Discussions with representatives of the City of Seattle gave insight into how innovative ideas on streetscape changes, such as bikeway improvements, are done by trialling low cost pilots to test ideas and community responses prior to investing in heavy infrastructure. The public space achieved in the 'parklet' shown in Fig. 11 below is an example of how expenditure on a quality urban design feature is supported by the community after a temporary low cost trial is shown to be successful. As these initiatives are readily reversed, community stakeholders that would normally oppose formal permanent changes are less inclined to reject the idea or are more tolerant to trialling a change in the knowledge that data collected on the impacts will inform a final decision on the matter



Fig. 11 Street Parklet - San Francisco

The Chicago Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) identify low cost and temporary activation of public places as a key planning tool in gaining broad support for streetscape upgrades and other highly valued public assets, such as the Route 606 shared active mode corridor.

The MPC regularly host events such as the Urban Think & Drink sessions where the community are invited to learn from and network with leaders in urban planning. The next session in early 2016 is with Janette Sadik-Khan, author of "Streetfight: Handbook for an Urban Revolution", and will focus on how cities can successfully reallocate space for everyone<sup>18</sup>.

### **3.4 Don't Be A Silent Service**

The final element of the community engagement paradigm shift observed during the study tour was in the effort local governments put into promoting their services and the benefits this achieves in community support for the services they provide.

#### **3.4.1 City of San Francisco**

Representatives of the City of San Francisco explained how data and statistics are not only important in asset management decisions and planning, but also essential in communicating with the public about measuring change and improvement of infrastructure based services.

#### **3.4.2 City of Scottsdale**

The City of Scottsdale Public Works Department mission:

*"To consistently exceed customer expectations in providing the quality public works infrastructure and services our community demands"*

Representatives of the City of Scottsdale explained that a regular training session called 'Scottsdale 101' was held to give residents, new Councillors and other key stakeholders insight about local government in the Scottsdale context. This course provides a pathway for citizens to volunteer for community boards and/or run for Council and serves to build an understanding within the community of the services provided by the municipality and the challenges faced in delivering those services. Furthermore, a citizens survey undertaken every 2 years demonstrates the City of Scottsdale sits in the 90th percentile in regards to community satisfaction with municipal services. These results are benchmarked against other local governments and are presented on the International City/County Management Association website, a body that also advocates for municipal performance information for the public<sup>14</sup>.

After a bond initiative was rejected by the Scottsdale community at the election in 2013, the City responded with a new engagement initiative referred to as 'Communicating the Core', a community education campaign to increase awareness about the City's core services and focussing on communicating through images rather than text and numbers.

The City of Scottsdale also has a progressive attitude to using the media whereby the aim is to tell their (the municipality's) story, rather than "waiting for others to do so in a negative light". All staff are encouraged to talk to the media, which has resulted from a cultural change in the leadership of the organisation to "let the experts talk". This has also required a change in the attitudes of staff from feeling that 'this is just what I do' to being prone to telling their story about how their role serves the community.



Figure 12 Using the media explain how City of Scottsdale is tackling municipal challenges

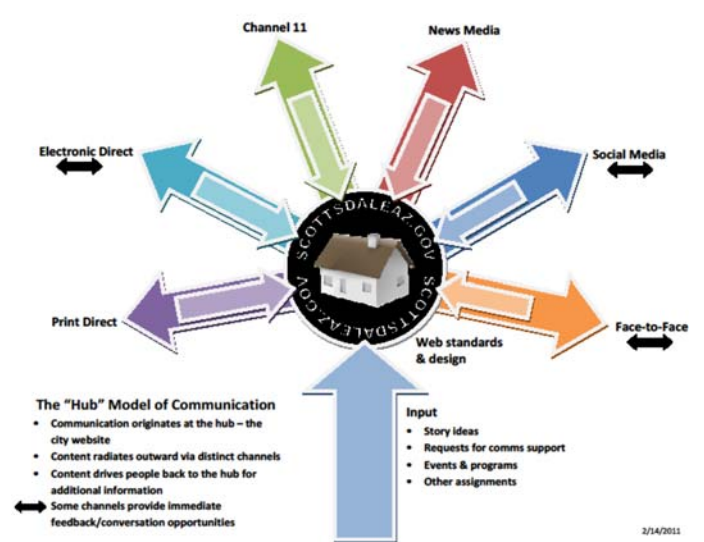


Figure 13 Scottsdale's Communications model

### 3.4.3 City of Seattle

A presentation on asset management provided valuable insight into how the City of Seattle Department of Transport (SDOT) ensures they are not a silent service by using data to tell their story. Performance indicators and measures presented on their <https://performance.seattle.gov/> webpage provides access to current data that tracks the City's performance in providing core services to the community<sup>19</sup>. Through being transparent with presenting this information online and communicating service performance to the community allows SDOT to effectively manage expectations and build rapport.

#### **4.0 Implications for Victorian local governments under rate capping**

With reduced capacity to fund local infrastructure-based services under rate capping, Victorian Councils need to prioritise the funding available to cover services their communities consider as 'core', which will require effective community engagement. This will improve an understanding within the community of the services Councils provide, the challenge of having insufficient budgets and the need to prioritise and make comparative judgements between services.

Should such engagement determine that a rate increase beyond the nominal CPI rise is required to deliver the services required by the community, a Council will be better placed to advocate to the Essential Services Commission and the Minister for Local Government for a variation to the rates cap by having the data on community needs available to substantiate such a request.

#### **5.0 Conclusions**

Prolonged periods of budgetary constraint and declining expenditure on infrastructure based services in the U.S. and Canada has resulted in a paradigm shift regarding the role community engagement plays in ensuring local government services remain relevant to their communities.

For Victorian municipalities facing the introduction of rate capping, it is essential that Council's undertake effective community engagement to understand the service level expectations of their communities. This will ensure adequate data on level of service expectations is collected to inform funding decisions that support the needs of the broader community, rather than appease the fixed views of politically influential vocal minority interests groups. Furthermore, local government services need to be promoted to develop an understanding within the community of the value provided by Councils services and the challenges municipalities face in delivering these services so that communities are willing to support their Council's in advocating for higher levels of funding to improve service levels. Robust and current information on community service level expectations can then inform asset management and planning processes, which are key determinants of a Council's long term financial plan.

## 6.0 Recommendations

As a result of the observations, experiences and information acquired during the 2015 MEFV USA & Canada Study Tour, I intend to undertake the following list of actions that will achieve specific broader goals listed in Table 1 below. Short term timeframes refer to actions that can commence immediately and be implemented within the first six months (if not ongoing). The timeframes of Medium term actions are between 1-2 years.

Table 1 Recommended Goals and Actions

Goal	Action	Timeframe
Understanding Community Expectations of Core Services	Seek feedback from the community on the level of satisfaction with infrastructure-based services to enable decision-making on service levels that will result in service level improvement, process efficiencies and savings.	Medium
	Develop skills and build capacity in community engagement for relevant Council staff involved in developing strategy and policy on infrastructure-based services to the community.	Medium
	Support the use of a coordinated mix of engagement techniques and approaches relevant to specific situations and the perceived level of influence of stakeholders.	Short
Improve Project-Based Community Engagement	Attract interest from and engage with hard to reach community stakeholders through novel approaches to recruitment.	Short
	Seek out the views of stakeholders with the aim to continue dialogue and build a shared understanding of an issue between opposing parties.	Short
	Plan for earlier and longer engagement processes to support the funding and delivery of infrastructure projects.	Short
Activate Before Investing	Encourage and plan for the trial of temporary, low cost changes in the street to achieve a range of benefits involving active mode transport, public placemaking and improved community surveillance.	Med
Don't Be A Silent Service	Promote Council's infrastructure-based services through a coordinated mix of communications channels.	Med
	Maximise opportunities in media releases and press articles to communicate to the community about the value of Council's services and challenges faced by the sector.	Short
	Continue to develop and refine measurable community focussed performance indicators for Council's infrastructure-based services and make these results easily accessible to the public.	Medium

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## 8.0 Attachments

### 8.1 Blog Extracts and Notes from Host's Interviews

City Of San Francisco

City of Napa

City of Mesa

City of Scottsdale

New York Department of Transport

City of New Jersey Department of Transportation and Rutgers University

APWA Chicago Chapter + Baxter & Woodman Consulting

Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

City of Chicago Department of Transport

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning + Chicago Mayor's Caucus

Chicago Metropolitan Planning Council

City of Seattle Department of Transportation and Department of Public Utilities

Greenroads + HDR Consulting

Alaskan Way Viaduct Bypass (Bertha)

City of Vancouver

City of Burnaby



## Attachment 8.1 Blog Extracts and Notes from Host's Interviews

The full blog is accessible at [www.mefvictour.com.au](http://www.mefvictour.com.au).

### 8.1.1 City of San Francisco

We met with a team of 9 representatives of the City of San Francisco Department of Public Works and City Administration and were presented with interesting and pertinent information on:

- the SFDPW's integrated and sophisticated asset management systems (asset registers, GIS and Project Management system), level of service for pavement condition and their approach to long term road pavement management. Of particular note was their visibility of utilities works programs to ensure that following street resurfacing or reconstruction works, no utilities upgrades can disrupt the road within 5 years – this is known as the Excavation Code. In circumstances where utilities do have to return to undertake works within the 5 year period, they are required to reseal the whole block during reinstatement following their works.
- roadway structures – over 360 significant structural assets such as bridges, retaining walls, ramps and stairs. This topic included discussion on the condition assessment inspection regimes and risk management approaches to these critical asset types.
- Capital works planning and funding opportunities through General Funds and General Obligation Bonds were discussed in the context of high level local government financing and the interface with the political body. Of particular note was how community needs were understood and collected, funding was allocated and the communication with the community on what was funded, what wasn't and why. City of SF have a \$32B 10 year capital works program that is funded by public debt through grants from other government agencies, property taxes and the General Obligation Bond system. 610 residents are polled each year to provide feedback on what the communities needs are and satisfaction levels with the services City of SF provide.
- Community outreach and engagement as part of the scoping of streetscape improvement projects. Examples were given illustrating how the community were involved in conceptual design of streetscape upgrade and how this was achieved over 3-4 workshop cycles that typically spanned a year before detailed design and construction commenced.
- Sustainability regarding stormwater quality improvement projects, involving bioretention and infiltration, permeable pavements, pavement storage/detention systems. The City of SF are taking climate change and sea level rise very seriously, with a report due to be released next month which informs how the City intends to deal with 3ft of sea level rise by 2050 and 5ft by 2100.



### 8.1.2 City of Napa

We met a team of 7 representatives of the City of Napa Department of Public Works and City Administration and had an impromptu discussion comparing notes about Local Government functions, roles and responsibilities, and organisational structures, covering the following:

- the implications of inadequate road maintenance renewal and upgrade funding over many years on levels of service (expressed as PCI)
- the approach Napa have used to address their backlog of roadworks and increase PCI with their '10 mile' rule (funding is allocated for 10 miles of the network to be renewed each year)
- how the drive to improve air quality, limit greenhouse gas emissions and address climate change has resulted in a focus on changes to streetscapes that favour pedestrian access and active transport modes over conventional traffic flow enhancements as a by-product
- earthquake damage to public structures and issues around accounting for expenditure to claim state emergency funding.
- introduction of roundabouts to alleviate congestion at intersections of local streets with the freeway (very few roundabouts exist in USA and this project is involving significant community engagement and education to ensure success)
- Napa Renewable Resources Project – where compressed natural gas (methane) produced by the anaerobic digestion of food and green waste supplies the fuel needed to run waste collection vehicles!!



We also had a walking tour of downtown Napa to inspect recently completed projects including:

- First Street Streetscape Upgrade – 3 year community engagement process to concept!
- 9/11 memorial – consisting of steel girders salvaged from ground zero.
- Napa River flood mitigation – Q50 flood immunity for downtown area leading to renewed investment.

### 8.1.3 City of Mesa

We travelled to the City of Mesa on Thursday on the Valley Metro Light Rail, which has just been extended from the western (Phoenix) boundary to downtown Mesa. First impressions of this service were that it was comfortable (a/c – phew!), fast (priority over traffic lights) and highly accessible (DDA and bikes). On reflection, the success of the Metro service as a truly integrated transport solution was due to its design within the streetscape. The stations are quality public spaces with attractive landscaping and sense of place/public artwork – the City of Mesa explained to us how much effort they put into their collaboration with Valley Metro to ensure the stations in Mesa were distinct from other municipalities on the network.

Furthermore, adjacent traffic lanes are narrow/pedestrian-friendly and the priority for bike traffic is obvious.

We were introduced to a team of 11 senior representatives of the City of Mesa covering Transportation, Engineering, Project Management, Community Engagement and City Administration functions and had a valuable two-way exchange in the impressive Mesa Traffic Management Center (Centre) on the following topics.

- The improved sense of connection that the new Light Rail system provides to the community
- Accelerated works programs where projects interface with other agencies from county/regional/ state jurisdictions through the issuing of bonds to finance the works – the Mesa community then can benefit earlier from services and the interest payments are covered by the City until the time when the agency would have scheduled the works (impressive intergovernmental collaboration!)
- Drainage upgrade projects required to address significant under capacity to convey stormwater runoff from the east of Mesa and beyond

- How Mesa has no primary property tax (rates) basis to City revenue and relies on sales tax and utilities fees/charges along with secondary property taxes where bonded projects are concerned to deliver services – this is unusual in the U.S.
- Mesa has a 5-year Capital Improvement Program consisting of 288 active projects totalling \$341 million that sits within an 8 year long term financial plan. These projects have focussed on the older parts of the City to the west, whereas recent infrastructure has been delivered by recent development growth in the east.
- A bond election in 2008 was supported by 68% of voters (representing 20% of the population) following a significant program of community outreach and education activities including media releases and public service announcements, door-to-door communication (involving Mesa staff), advertising, social media and public/stakeholder meetings/workshops.
- Commitment to Low Impact Development to improve stormwater quality through structural measures and streetscape design elements – akin to our Water Sensitive Urban Design approaches
- Asset management and maintenance systems that interface with customer requests (CityLink)

We were given a tour of the city with a particular highlight being one of their regional playgrounds. The playground included a variety of play items that would capture the interest of a broad range of age groups.

Mesa is home to the 'cactus leagues' – with the Oakland Athletics and Chicago Cubs adopting Mesa for their pre-season training and warm up program when it is still too cold in northern States (Feb). This provides a major injection to Mesa's economy. We inspected both the A's and the Cubs' facilities, which were impressive to say the least. Although these facilities are primarily used from Feb to April in the pre-season, the facilities are used all year round for rookie and local leagues and other sporting codes and provide substantial economic injection to the local community.

#### 8.1.4 City of Scottsdale

The City of Scottsdale treated us to door-to-door transport from our hotel in downtown Phoenix to the Scottsdale Public Works offices/depot on Friday.

We were introduced to a team of 9 senior Scottsdale representatives covering Capital Works, Fleet, Traffic Management, Pavement Asset Management, Community Engagement and Solid Waste Management functions and had a valuable discussion on the following topics:

\* 'Scottsdale 101' – a course available to residents, new Councillors and other key stakeholders to provide insight about local government in Scottsdale's context. This course provides a pathway for citizens to volunteer for community boards and/or run for Council.

\* Expenditure in sense of place and public artwork approximates 1% of the total budget for capital improvement projects – this initiative was supported by a majority vote from the Scottsdale community

\* Residents have voted for increased sales tax for the purpose of improving infrastructure – over 50% community participation in the budget election!!

\* All staff are encouraged to talk to the media – this has resulted from a cultural change right from the top of the organisation (let the experts talk). Also, Scottsdale's attitude to the media is to use all media channels to tell their story...rather than waiting for the media to point out issues in a negative light. This has required a paradigm shift from staff feeling that 'this is just what I do' to being prone to telling their story about how their role serves the community.

\* A Bond Task Force (citizens jury format) is used to inform the Council on budget priorities. The 2013 Task Force work shopped 9 times in 5 different locations and was supported by a variety of other public outreach activities including 4 press releases, 10 media articles, 7 tweets/Facebook posts and 11 presentations to community groups. Although this Bond initiative failed at the 2013 election, the City responded through a new initiative of 'Communicating the Core' – a community education campaign to increase awareness about the City's core services and focussing on communicating services through images rather than text and numbers. Posts on

social media has also become a major communication mode. The 2015 bond election will be for a \$95M capital improvement program.

\* A 6% tax to hotel room bills is used to support marketing of Scottsdale and to fund capital works that enhance tourism potential

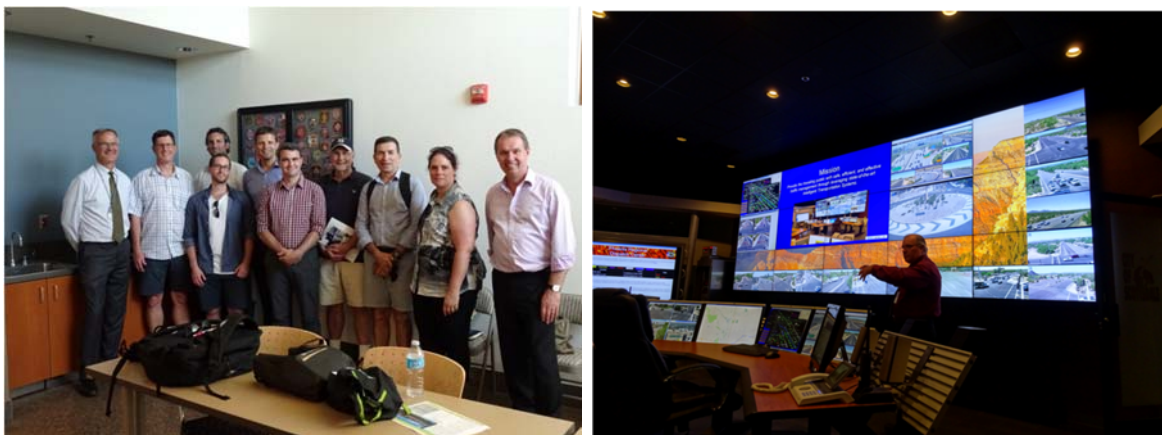
\* On-street parking is a challenge due to the City's commitment to providing free parking, and thereby being a victim of its own success

\* Scottsdale is the home of the invention of the side loading solid waste collection truck – a necessity to address the difficulties with manual loading due to the hot climate

\* A citizens survey undertaken every 2 years demonstrates the City of Scottsdale sits in the 90th percentile with regards to community satisfaction with municipal services – benchmarking displayed on <http://icma.org/en/icma/home>

\* Pavement condition index is steadily increasing due to a focus on pavement asset management following the vision/mission of 'the right treatment to the right road at the right time'. Pavement condition assessments are undertaken every 3 years for arterial roads and every 5 years for local roads. When roads are identified for renewal works, checks are made that DDA elements comply (pram ramps, footpaths etc). The application of an innovative fibre-reinforced sealing treatment that was particularly useful for treating alligator (i.e. Crocodile he he) cracking was also presented.

\* Fleet maintenance focus on ongoing improvement and performance measurement was showcased through Scottsdale's monitoring of production against time standards and how significant change management was required to align staff to this customer service approach to daily work



We inspected the impressive Scottsdale Traffic Management Center and after being treated to a delicious lunch, we inspected a recently completed sustainable Fire Station building project (designed to stringent LEEET standards) and the site future storm water quality improvement project concepts that have been developed within a major floodplain within Scottsdale.

### 8.1.5 City of New York Department of Transport

Thursday we visited the New York Department of Transportation. We were staying in the Financial District so it was an easy stroll from our hotel via Trinity Church (as seen in the movie National Treasure) and along Wall Street with high security evident around the New York Stock Exchange.

The security was also a priority through the doors of the Department of Transportation where we had to produce photo identification and screening similar to passing through the airport. After we all got our clearances we were warmly greeted by Michael Replogle who is the Deputy Commissioner for Policy and we were treated to some very interesting presentations.

The first presentation was from the road maintenance team. We were amazed to learn that they are responsible for over 20,000 miles (32,000 kms) of roads throughout the five boroughs that make up New York City. A big

issue for road maintenance is the extreme weather conditions and in particular the harsh winters. Temperatures vary during the year from mid 30's like we were experiencing to -12 degrees or less. Pavement damage in winter is a major concern and they patch over 470,000 potholes per year. The water gets into the pavement and freezes causing the asphalt to pop out. They explained their various methods of pavement management and treatments.

The next presentation was about sidewalk management. We are getting used to the local lingo of sidewalks and not footpaths, park strips and not nature strips. An interesting note is that in the case of properties with four or more owners (e.g. apartment buildings) as well as commercial properties, the property owners are responsible for the condition of the sidewalk in front of their property and not the City. All sidewalk maintenance is complaint based. If there is a complaint then the City will inspect the sidewalk and if the condition is not suitable then the City will issue a violation notice to the property owners to repair the footpath within 45 days. They may elect to pay the City to undertake the work or engage a private contractor.

After the presentations we were taken to the dock for the Staten Island ferry. This is a free ferry service run by the Department of Transportation. The service runs every half hour during the peak times and can carry up to 5,000 passengers per trip. With our contacts at the Department we had the fortune to meet the Captain of Ferry Captains who kindly took us up the wheelhouse for the trip. This was a real treat as we got to meet the crew. They even diverted the ferry a bit closer to the Statue of Liberty for our benefit.



The fantastic New York City hospitality continued on Staten Island where we were met by the Staten Island Borough Commissioner, Thomas Cocola. Thomas and his staff showed us around the island with a focus on all the great work they have done in response to the effects of Hurricane Sandy that devastated the area in 2012. Houses were completely removed from their foundations and roads and other infrastructure were totally washed away. We had a great discussion about all aspects of municipal engineering. They also showed us the famous Verrazano Narrows Bridge. At the time of its completion in 1964 it was the longest suspension bridge in the world, with a span of 1,298 metres, surpassing Golden Gate Bridge by 20 metres. It still stands as the 11th largest span in the world and remains the largest in the Americas.

#### 8.1.6 City of New Jersey Department of Transportation & Rutgers University

We boarded a series of trains to travel from New York to New Jersey. This visit included chance to visit Rutgers State University Centre for Advanced Infrastructure and Transport (CAIT). Patrick Szary, Associate Director, Brian Tobin and Nick Viillo, Presented on Rutgers CAIT And some research which they are working towards for transportation solutions. One such development is the bridge evaluation accelerated structural assessment "Beast". This the worlds first facility that can quantitatively measure the effects of environmental and traffic loading on full scale, real world bridge system. Rutgers also showed us the Rabbit device. This device is used on bridge decks to identify areas of voids and de lamination of the concrete deck. We discussed their connections with other universities around the states and how they were working together by bringing their own areas of expertise rather than duplicating.

Also in attendance was from Robert Blight from New Jersey Department of Transportation. Robert spoke about the NJ DOT pavement preservation program. He spoke about treatments that they are using such as slurry seals and rubberised asphalt. Robert brought up their North East Pavement preservation program. It is a group is made up of several counties and the NJ DOT as part of the Federal government's funding of pavements which requires a regional plan.

### 8.1.7 APWA Chicago Chapter and Baxter & Woodman Consulting

Our time in Chicago commenced with a bike tour along the active mode transport corridors including the Bloomingdale Trail Route 606, which is more of an active transport corridor than the NYC Highline.



### 8.1.8 Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

The day commenced with a presentation by the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago. The organisation manages the stormwater and sewer for the city. Chicago is like San Francisco and a few older cities in the USA that have a combined sewer and stormwater system. This presents some unique challenges especially during high rainfall when the sewer system gets overloaded.

Apologies to the non-engineering types following this blog for the discussion about the unfavourable topic of sewerage but the history of Chicago is a great example of how public works engineering can make a huge difference to the community. For those of you who may not know the layout of Chicago, it is located on Lake Michigan and Chicago River flows through the city. Lake Michigan is part of the Great Lakes that contain around 20% of the earth's fresh water and 90% of the fresh water in the USA. It's a huge lake.

In the 1800s as the city developed, all the waste flowed into the Chicago River and then into the lake. The city also took its drinking water from the lake. It's no surprise knowing what we know now, but people started getting sick from water borne diseases. One option would have been to clean up the river but the option taken instead was to reverse the flow of the river. Instead of flowing into the lake, the river was reversed to flow the other way, into the Mississippi River. Bad luck about the residents along the Mississippi, but at least the city of Chicago had clean drinking water. This happened in 1900 and remains the case today. Of course, Chicago now has modern sewerage treatment plants with one of them being the largest in the world.

### 8.1.9 City of Chicago Department of Transport

We then visited the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT). Chicago is the transportation hub of the USA. Rail roads and major highways from the east coast to the west coast pass through Chicago. In previous times there was also shipping from Gulf of Mexico through the Mississippi River to the Great Lakes and beyond. It's no wonder that transport planning is a major focus of the city.

We had the pleasure of a presentation by Janet Attarian who is the Liveable Street Director. They have done some fantastic work on streetscape and urban improvements with a focus on improving liveability with great facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. The day before we had the pleasure through our hosts from the Chicago Chapter of the APWA to ride bikes from the city's bike share program and experience some of the 250 miles of bike paths throughout the city.



Janet explained the innovative engagement approaches CDOT have used, particularly during the development of CDOT's placemaking guidelines. A prompt inviting a respondent to the on-line connection is advertised in a funky attractive format in a high profile location (on a bus shelter/back of a bus etc). The on-line connection is a web-based platform such as Textizen and following initial contact from a respondent answering a survey question or providing a statement (the hook), another question can be asked and their number can be accessed for future engagement messages. Textizen was effective for CDOT in dealing with the hard to reach busy community members that typically do not respond to conventional engagement techniques. In contrast to other web-based platforms that require respondents to interface directly with a webpage, Textizen sends, receives and analyses text messages from mobile phones to reach members of the community *with the technology already in their pockets, 24/7*. As mobile phones are virtually ubiquitous among most communities, Textizen is accessible to everyone irrespective of demographics. Janet explained that the main benefit of Textizen is how you can attract interest on a topic by a bite-sized piece of information/education on a topic and then once the initial response is received, send further follow-up information and questions that allows the level of engagement to build, based on the interest of the participant. This aspect is particularly important for longitudinal studies and event reminders. Mindmixer was also mentioned as another useful technology for reaching the hard to reach in similar ways.

Janet also explained details of sustainable initiatives they have implemented including a huge amount of green infrastructure including extensive permeable pavements.

#### 8.1.10 Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning & Chicago Mayor's Caucus

The next stop continued on the theme of strategic planning and was a session with the Executive Director of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) and the Executive Director of the Chicago Mayor's Caucus. Also attending was a Mayor from one of the 273 municipalities that make up the greater Chicago area. It was a great discussion about the benefits of regional partnerships and planning on a broad scale.

Mayor Shelly spoke about promoting the silent service of water supply through the documenting of the history of the development of water supply infrastructure in Chicago, which were first built in the 1830s.



#### 8.1.11 Chicago Metropolitan Planning Council

We then continued our planning discussions at the Chicago Metropolitan Planning Council, an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization partnering with various levels and agencies of government, communities and businesses to address the area's toughest planning and development challenges and has made the Chicago region a better place to live and work over the past 80 years. MPC sees its work as serving communities and residents by developing, promoting and implementing solutions for sound regional growth.

*"We care about the entire Chicago region—from its people and businesses, to its neighborhoods and transportation networks, to its lakes, rivers and parks. We understand that all of these regional assets need to work together effectively so that the Chicago metropolitan area can continuously unlock its potential."*

By bridging gaps between government, community and business leaders, MPC enables these stakeholders to more positively collaborate and collectively improve the liveability of the Chicago region. Peter noted that

focussing on strong partnerships rooted in respect, listening and trust are critical to creative, effective problem-solving. The problems that MPC tackle involves a broad range of today's urgent problems, including

- sustainable economic development,
- vibrant neighbourhoods,
- quality housing
- transportation choices
- well-managed natural assets

Peter Skosey focussed his presentation on the Placemaking Chicago project, which was all about "Helping People improve communities one place at a time". He spoke about the need to promote this through the use of measurable performance indicators for the work MPC are doing.



A noticeable difference of the MPC that Peter based his entire presentation on the content of the MPC website, which was potent and well structured – an excellent model for Victorian LG websites

Peter explained that MPC's role is not to see the projects they are involved in through to completion – they set up the initiative and hand it over to the relevant agency for implementation.

#### 8.1.12 City of Seattle Departments of Transportation and Public Utilities

We are joining the dots on our trip. Today we visited SDOT, after previously visiting SFDOT, NYDOT, NJDOT and CDOT. All Departments of Transportation of course. We had the fortune of a number of fascinating presentations by various teams in SDOT.

SDOT's Mission is to deliver a high quality transportation system for Seattle and a Vision for connected people, places and products. It is committed to 5 core values to create a city that is:

- Safe
- Interconnected
- Affordable
- Vibrant
- Inclusive...for ALL

A common theme for all the cities we have visited is the challenge of funding infrastructure projects. There is a mechanism in USA that municipalities can propose a levy or a bond and take it to the residents to vote on. The measures below track how well the City's departments are performing at these goals. On the goal pages, you will also find links to further data and information on these programs.

They previously had a 9 year levy for a total of \$365 million which is about to expire. They are currently proposing a new 9 year levy for a total of \$930 million. This would cost the average home owner about \$275 per year. The levy requires a simple majority support and goes to a vote in November 2016.

We had a great discussion about the community engagement involved in developing the proposed levy and how the priorities for the levy were determined. The community engagement process from the previous 9 year levy and the transport/asset master planning exercises gave SDOT a solid foundation to be able to prepare a draft levy proposal to undertake a 6 week/45 day outreach process involving:

- Online survey (that attracted 8,000 responses!)
- Informal coffee hour and happy hour sessions
- Community meetings
- Neighborhood farmers markets
- Ethnic media sources
- Focus group workshops with various interest groups

- Distribution of Fact Sheets

SDOT assign resources during the outreach period by using an outside consultant team and a flying squad of internal staff which need training on the package details (cheatsheets etc)

Strategic transport planning is a high priority of SDOT. Seattle is currently the second fastest growing city in USA and this is likely to continue. For example, Amazon is expanding its central headquarters and predicted to generate around 100,000 new jobs in the next few years. So like many cities, they are seeking sustainable transport solutions. Priority is being given to public transport, walking and cycling. They showed us around some of the great bicycle projects they have recently introduced throughout the city.

Seattle's 10 year strategic vision for transportation is referred to as Move Seattle. From website: *Seattle today is facing the challenges that come with being one of the fastest-growing major cities in the country. At the same time, global trends are reshaping our transportation needs and the tools available to meet them. We are ready to meet these challenges head on as we progress towards the Seattle of tomorrow.*

*Move Seattle is a strategic document that lays out the work we will do and how we will do it over the next ten years and into the future, through three key elements:*

**1. We will organize our daily work around our core values.**

*A safe, interconnected, vibrant, affordable, and innovative city are the pillars of Mayor Murray's vision for Seattle. These values support our vision for transportation in Seattle.*

**2. We will integrate our modal plans to deliver transformational projects.**

*The four modal master plans (20-year visions for freight, transit, walking and bicycling) are complete or nearly complete. We are integrating them into a nearer-term strategy for improving our streets and sidewalks for all travellers. We want to improve the transportation system for all people, whether walking, driving a car or truck, taking transit, or riding a bike.*

**3. We will prioritize our projects and work to identify funding.**

*With the expiration of Bridging the Gap in 2015, a replacement for a core source of funding for transportation maintenance and improvement in Seattle will be needed. At the same time, we have a clear picture of the highest priority projects that require replacement funding to be built.*

We also had a presentation about asset management in the department and the challenges of managing infrastructure assets valued around \$20 billion. SDOT have really impressive performance indicator info available at <https://performance.seattle.gov/> that gives instant access to how well the City of Seattle performs in providing services to the community. Through being transparent with presenting the planning online and through communicating to the community allows SDOT to effectively manage expectations and build rapport.

Don Ho explained how some of his ideas on bikeway improvements is done by trialling low cost pilots to test ideas and community responses prior to investing in heavy infrastructure, which mirrors the tactical urbanism approach for supporting streetscape upgrades.



The afternoon was then spent with the Seattle Department of Public Utilities (SPU). Bob Spencer and Tracy Tackett took us on a trip to inspect some of their Green Stormwater Infrastructure. SPU is a leader in this field in USA and continues to innovate with new ideas to improve the health of our waterways.

### 8.1.13 Greenroads & HDR Consulting

If green buildings why not green roads? This was the question posed to us from our host for the day Jeralee Anderson from [www.greenroads.org](http://www.greenroads.org). Jeralee is an inspirational engineer who runs a not for profit organisation challenging project teams to go above



and beyond minimum environmental, social and economic practices by providing an independent, third party review. The organisation provides a rating system to measure and manage sustainability on transportation projects, similar to a green star rating system for buildings or for appliances. The organisation has projects in 6 countries around the world, including New Zealand, but not Australia, not yet anyway.

Jeralee took us on a tour of some completed Greenroads projects around Seattle. Key features of the projects we saw included the use of recycled materials, systems for the filtration of stormwater and connection to sustainable transport alternatives including public transport and providing improved facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. The tour was a great chance to see some of the outer areas of Seattle. The city was once dominated by the offices of Boeing. They still have some presence, but the big players in town are now the high tech companies. We passed the area where Bill Gates lives and saw some of the whole communities provided for the Microsoft empire. They are such a huge company that they run their own commuter system of buses. Then there is their neighbours, Amazon who have also taken over a few suburbs.

Our tour then took us to the offices of HDR which is an engineering consulting company where Jill Marilley works, who is on the board of the American Public Works Association. She hosted us for a presentation by the City of Pasco on their process water reuse facility. The City has a number of large scale food producers which generate a lot of waste water. The facility treats the waste water and uses it for irrigation of farmland.

### 8.1.14 Alaskan Way Viaduct Bypass (Bertha)

We were then introduced to big Bertha. Bertha is the world's largest-diameter tunnelling machine.

In 2001 there was an earthquake in Seattle that damaged the viaduct (elevated roadway). It was repaired and is still being used but needs to be replaced. The viaduct runs along the waterfront of Seattle and acts as a barrier between the city and the developing waterfront area. The decision was made to remove the viaduct to open access to the waterfront and replace the roadway with a tunnel. This is the job for big Bertha.

The project is a 20 metre diameter tunnel for 3.2 kilometres. The tunnelling was going well and around 300 metres of the tunnel was completed when trouble struck. There was a problem with the bearings of the cutter and it ceased up. This is not a machine that you can just pull out and take to the nearest garage for repair. The machine cannot go backwards. It is a massive machine weighing over 70 tonnes and it was stuck about 40 metres underground. Fortunately it was located under a place where they could dig down and access the cutters. They had to dig a big hole and get a 300 tonne crane to erect a 600 tonne crane to erect a 2,000 tonne crane so that they could access the cutters. It is now 18 months later and they have now repaired the cutters and plan to resume tunnelling in November. We were fortunate to have a tour of the site and saw the cutters of big Bertha.



### 8.1.15 City of Vancouver

Today we visited the city whose goal is to become the greenest city in the world, Vancouver.

How about the following for just a few of the inspirational goals taken from the Vancouver Greenest City 2020 Action Plan:

- Reduce community-based greenhouse gas emissions by 33% from 2007 levels.
- Reduce solid waste going to the landfill or incinerator by 50% from 2008 levels.
- Reduce Vancouver's ecological footprint by 33% from 2006 levels.
- Reduce per capita water consumption by 33% from 2006 levels.

A further key document to support the leadership that Vancouver is showing their community and the rest of the world is the City of Vancouver Transportation 2040 Plan.

We had the fortune of meeting the Directors of the Engineering Services Department which is a large department of around 1,800 employees. We were kindly hosted by the Acting City Engineer, Jerry Dobrovlny. The main difference between the functions of the Vancouver engineering department and those of Victorian Councils is Vancouver also manages the water distribution and collection of sewage.

The day started with us joining in on the Director's Meeting and then each of us meeting with individual directors to discuss topics in further detail. We had a great discussion and sharing of ideas on topics including asset management, funding for infrastructure projects, climate change, community engagement and strategic planning.

Lon explained that when it comes to community engagement on transport planning and projects, they don't get into mode-based discussion, but cross model issues, such as safety that unites rather than polarises discussions. A key to getting attendance to workshops is always provide highly professional sessions – they will come (usually get around 50 participants). Sessions are normally 2 hours long, held monthly (at predictable times) and are set up for presentations, workshops or Q&A depending on the stage of the project. It is important that the workshops start early in the process (ie for scoping of goals and aims) and are open and inclusive. They also go to the trouble of door-to-door knocking to invite participation where they anticipate the project will have

an impact on those stakeholders. Lon explained that they try to maintain the same community representatives (through incentives) to demonstrate changing views and developed understanding from participating in the process. They also use novel technology approaches such as the MOVES app for activity tracking, which is an example of tapping into data collected by engagement participants to reduce the tedium of record keeping in active travel engagements – and also increases the fun value.

Lon explained that Vancouver are also investing more time and resources in collecting and analysing data to address (confirm or deny) what the respondents are saying, which really helps to manage vocal minority stakeholders. An example Lon gave of this is the bar charts on P10 of the Transport Plan where vehicle growth is at capacity and cant grow anymore, but peds and bikes can. "Having a focus to use data to base decisions on helps to say we know what is happening and demonstrate that we care and be more effective in what we do and what funds are spent on."

Lon expressed a worry about engagement fatigue within the community. He didn't have any ready solutions, but stated that it needed to be recorded as a corporate risk (the risk is that their engagement efforts will be watered down or ineffective because of too much uncoordinated engagement) so that engagement approaches can be coordinated and improved through connected up thinking across the organisation. Lon explained that they tend to do bigger events that target more people and have bigger impacts in terms of connecting with more of the community and promoting more of what they do.

Another useful insight Lon gave was that before you talk about the one, be ready to talk about the many – the whole program, to help stakeholders with their planning. This needs to be both in map and multi-year program format. Another approach is pop-up stalls such as lemonade stands used on a bridge project, stalls at markets etc



In the afternoon we drove out to Kent Yard which is the City owned and managed asphalt and concrete facility. They supply the City with around 100,000 tonnes of asphalt per year and recycle around 200,000 tonnes of concrete. They are undertaking some great work in recycling and finding alternative uses for products that would otherwise end up in landfill.



To finish the day we were treated to a bike tour of some of the City's great cycling infrastructure. Vancouver has some of the best facilities for bicycles that we have seen. The key features include:

- Separating bicycles from moving vehicles.
- Separating bicycles and pedestrians along busy paths.
- Providing alternative paths for commuter cyclists away from recreational cyclists.
- Providing bicycle paths that can be accessed by all riders of all abilities.

It was an inspirational day at the City of Vancouver which has given us plenty of ideas for consideration.

#### **8.1.16 City of Burnaby**

The last stop on our tour was to the City of Burnaby. It's the third largest city in British Columbia, surpassed only by the nearby Surrey and Vancouver. It's home to a couple of famous Michaels, Buble and J. Fox. We didn't get a chance to catch up with them but did catch up with another talent, a talented engineer, Jonathan Helmus, Assistant Director Engineering Infrastructure and Development. Jonathan took us through the operations of the city engineering department. Burnaby is a city of around 235,000 residents and is a unique local government agency in that it has large funding reserves, in excess of \$900 million.

Jonathan explained a recent transit referendum for a 0.5% sales tax was lost with a 60% opposition to the initiative from a 40% voter turnout. Unfortunately, voter turnout at the City of Burnaby elections are not as representative...normally 25%, which impacts on the level of feedback from the community on what the right LOS is.

They have impressive asset management systems and this combined with the available funding, they are able to maintain a high level of service for their public infrastructure. "From Pipe Dreams to Healthy Streams", this is their catch phrase for the city's integrated stormwater management plans. In the afternoon, Jonathan kindly took us on a tour to show examples of stormwater treatment projects.