



6 May 2016

Facilitator Observations

Engagement Supporting Transportation Review

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Purpose

Having concluded substantial in-person and online engagement, CBE is now in possession of a large quantity of stakeholder input and faces the challenge of “making sense” of it all in order to make a difficult decision. The purpose of this document is to provide insights from the engagement facilitators to add a social dimension to the data.

Context

Delaney + Associates (D+A), a community and stakeholder engagement company, was commissioned by the Calgary Board of Education to design, facilitate and report on a series of in-person and online engagements in support of developing a long-term Transportation Services Strategy. The purpose of this report is to provide “observations” from the three independent, third-party D+A professional facilitators who facilitated in-person engagements. These observations are subjective and completely uninformed by technical expertise in the area of transportation planning and management.

Observations

Values

Engagement supports public decision making. Values are important in engagement because they support the interests that define the positions people and communities bring to discussions. The engagement team observed the following values present in the in-person discussions they attended (outlined alphabetically):

- a. Accountability - people need to take personal ownership for the choices they make
- b. Choice - within a public system, people value the ability to choose from the options that are presented to them
- c. Egalitarian - within a public system, all participants are treated equally
- d. Fairness - when making decisions, one group should not be disadvantaged over another
- e. Quality - the quality of education is the most important thing to consider when making decisions

Relations

No members of the engagement team live or have ever lived in Calgary. As such, we believe we are able to identify and distinguish unique and important traits about Calgarians and the communities they form. During the engagement discussions we attended, we observed that Calgarians are:

- a. Appreciative of the world-class educational system their children enjoy;
- b. Committed to collaborating with the CBE in order minimize the negative impacts on the quality of life for families and hardship for students, in terms of travel to and from school;
- c. Largely congenial with each other when discussing opposing values-based subjects that will impact their quality of life;
- d. Passionate about fairness, so the Transportation Strategy should not disadvantage one group (riders, non-riders, alternative programs) over another
- e. Resolved that changes will take place that will have a negative impact on transportation services, either by decreased service levels and / or increased costs;
- f. Respectful of each others' opinions and the right to disagree;
- g. Hopeful these measures are temporary in nature and will be adjusted as the economic climate changes.

Common Ground

Stemming from the values and the relations Calgarians hold with each other is an unspoken social contract that aspires to sustain high quality public education. In an engagement context, we refer to this as the common ground between and among the parties – a place where there is very little disagreement. For the purposes of decision making, this is the decision maker's common ground for action; a part of the social license the decision maker holds to act decisively.

The facilitation team has reflected collectively and discerns the following principles that are acceptable to the majority and, as such, could help to navigate the complexities of decision making and communicating that decision to stakeholders:

- a. The quality of education for all should be safeguarded to the greatest extent possible;
- b. Meeting the unique learning needs of each child is an important ideal to strive for;
- c. Safety is paramount;

- d. Negative impacts should be on parents before children;
- e. As stewards of public funds, CBE needs to use business / financial logic in decision making; that is, many people should not be disadvantaged to sustain the interests of a smaller group;
- f. Those who do not respect the needs of the many should be penalized for making that choice and, alternatively, those who embrace collective needs should be rewarded if possible; (i.e. penalties for late transportation registration)
- g. Education is a partnership between home and school, and this extends to transportation aspects;
- h. The education community extends beyond the CBE, and every effort should be made to collaborate with transportation partners such as Calgary Transit;
- i. There is recognition that, given the complexity of the pending decision, it will be very difficult to “spread the pain” evenly.