



# Rail-Volution

Building Livable Communities with Transit

# Words Still Matter

**Ann Becklund**  
Moderator

**Jim Middaugh**  
Metro  
Portland, Oregon

**Ilana Preuss**  
Smart Growth America

Rail~Volution

Building Livable Communities with Transit

# Words Still Matter

**Jim Middaugh**  
Communications Director  
Metro

[www.oregonmetro.gov](http://www.oregonmetro.gov)



Rail~Volution

Building Livable Communities with Transit

# Special thanks to:



Public Works  
*Building Public Will for the Common Good*

[www.publicworks.org](http://www.publicworks.org)



*Building Livable Communities with Transit*

# TRANSIT





Building Livable Communities with Transit

J FKFB INAT OUP SNA SAI RS



Building Livable Communities with Transit

**JFK FBI NATO UPS NASA IRS**



Building Livable Communities with Transit

J FKFB INAT OUP SNA SAI RS

JFK FBI NATO UPS NASA IRS

*Made to Stick*, Chip Heath and Dan Heath -- 2007

# What are “frames”?

“...*organizing principles* that are socially *shared* and *persistent* over time, that work *symbolically* to meaningfully *structure* the social world.... Frames structure. That is, they impose a pattern on the social world.”

- Stephen Reese in Framing Public Life



Building Livable Communities with Transit

# Frames influence credibility

"Every frame **defines the issue**, explains **who is responsible**, and suggests **potential solutions**. All of this is conveyed by images, stereotypes, or anecdotes."

- Charlotte Ryan, Prime Time Activism

# Three steps to good frames

**Step 1**

Identify the values

**Step 2**

Identify the problem

**Step 3**

Identify the solution

# Frames about government

Google

government scandal

Search

About 212,000,000 results (0.28 seconds)

Web

Images

Maps

Videos

News

Shopping

More

## News for **government scandal**



[Scandals Show California Is Broken, Not Broke](#)

Bloomberg - 5 hours ago

First, nonprofit groups and local **governments** came up with the money to ...

The **scandal**, combined with bad publicity over a multibillion-dollar ...

[Attorney: NY watchdog has issued \*\*scandal\*\* subpoenas](#)

Wall Street Journal - 5 hours ago

[Police chief whose defection to United States triggered major political \*\*scandal\*\* is charged...](#)

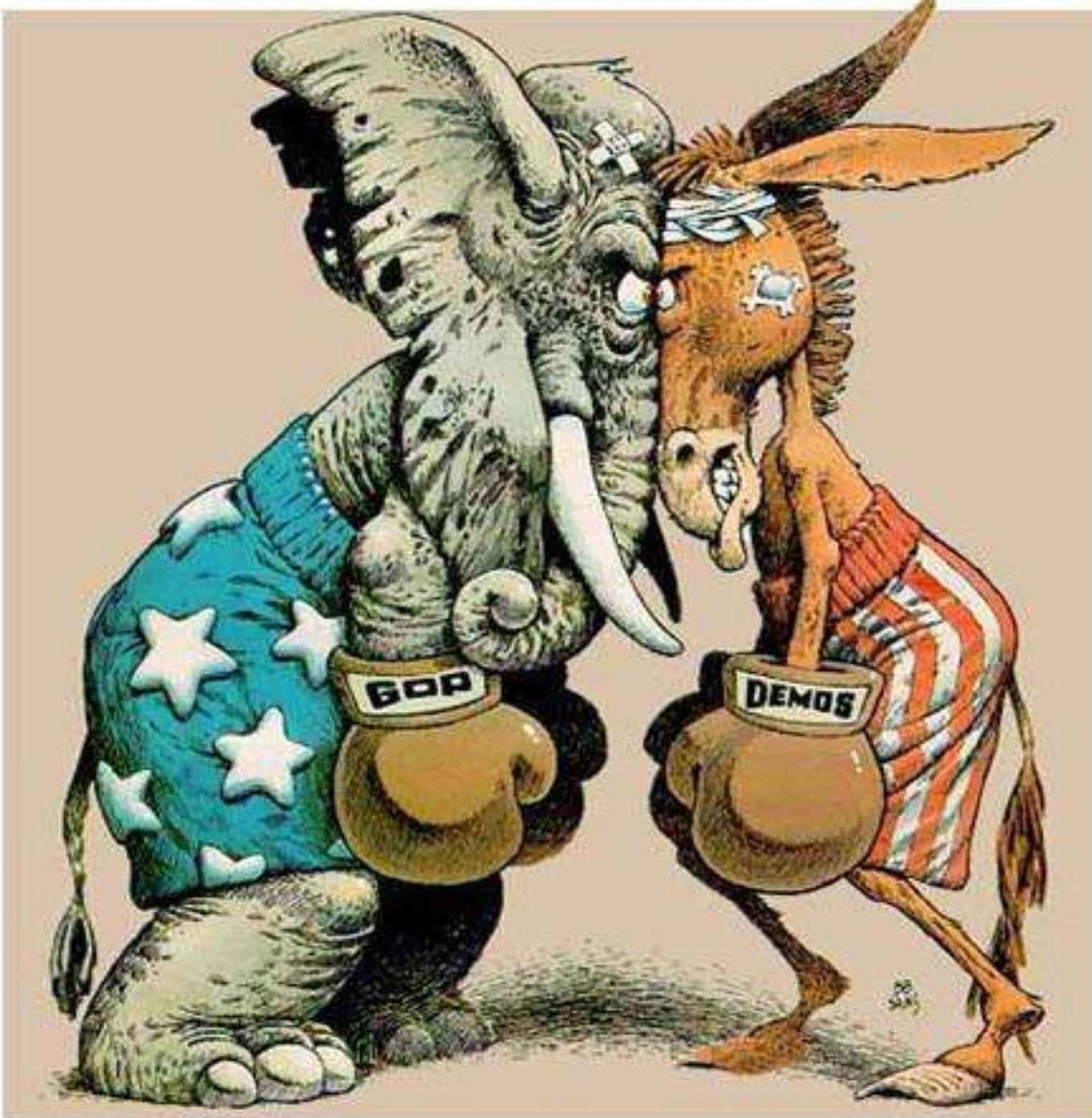
Daily Mail - 1 day ago

**IF GOVERNMENT IS  
THE ANSWER, IT WAS  
A STUPID QUESTION**

01/03/2010



**GOVERNMENT**



**GOV  
PORK  
& WASTE**

HURRY UP  
AND SIGN THE  
CHECK I'M  
getting  
HUNGRY.

Pat Bagley  
www.suckit.com

1040

PICKUP





**“Bi-Partisan”**  
Steve Benuezue

# patterns of association

cultural models

media

frames

knowledge

stories

experience

stereotypes

myths

We are not blank

at all

Rail~Volution

Building Livable Communities with Transit

**Framing with values  
directs thinking**

# Values matter

- We reason first from values
- Values answer: “Why this matters”
- Start with **values**, not details



Building Livable Communities with Transit

# Core values

- **Family**
- **Career and job opportunity**
- **Being charitable**
- **Independence**
- **Religion and spirituality**
- **The environment**
- **Community**
- **Being economical or thrifty**
- **Solitude, privacy**
- **Diversity**



Building Livable Communities with Transit

# Levels of thinking

- **Level One – *Big ideas***  
protection, prosperity, justice, equality
- **Level Two – *Issues***  
housing, environment, transportation, jobs
- **Level Three – *Policies***  
pay equity, light rail, parking fees, congestion pricing

# A test: Why does this matter?

“Every child should have access to immunizations but too many families in our community are not bringing their children in to our clinics. This is why we are proposing a new agency rule requiring more clinic hours . . .”



Building Livable Communities with Transit

# Speaking to values first

"The health of our entire community is **protected** when we ensure that our children are immunized.

One of the ways we do this is through **our public health agencies** that provide free and low cost **immunizations for all children**.

We need extended clinic hours to keep up with growing demands. "



Building Livable Communities with Transit

# The importance of metaphors

“Metaphors influence the way we reason about complex issues and forage for further information.... A metaphor (via a single word) can have a powerful influence over how people attempt to solve social problems....”

*Metaphors We Think With: The role of metaphor in reasoning*  
(Thibodeau and Boroditsky, 2011)



Building Livable Communities with Transit

## Beast preying on community

- Catch and jail
- Enact harsher laws
- “Capture/kill/cage the beast”

## Virus infecting community

- Investigate causes
- Treat problem
- Inoculate community (eradicate poverty & improve education)

Thibodeau and Boroditsky, 2011



Building Livable Communities with Transit

# Covert effects of metaphor

- Provided framework for understanding crime
- Persuasive effects not recognized by subjects
- Statistics most “influential” part of report
- Greatest power if presented early in report
- Later information chosen due to metaphor bias

# And more surprisingly...

We find exposure to even a single metaphor can induce substantial differences in opinion about how to solve social problems; differences that are larger, for example, than pre-existing differences in opinion between Democrats and Republicans.

Thibodeau and Boroditsky, 2011

## Beware of “elephants”

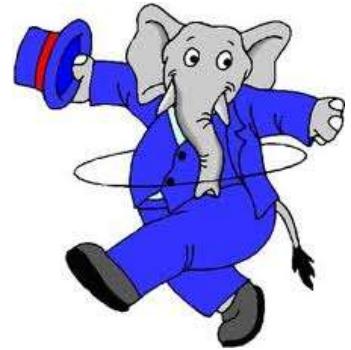


By raising the precise frames we are trying to counter, even to refute them, we create hurdles we must jump over.

Moreover, we may be suggesting arguments to people who had not yet considered them.

- Based on work by George Lakoff

# “Elephant” indicators



## **Not**

“This is not about...”

“We are not...”

## **Don’t/Won’t**

“We don’t intend to ... rather...”

“Metro won’t regulate...”

## **But**

“This can be an issue of...but...”

“It is expensive but...”



Building Livable Communities with Transit

“The governor is not talking about taking away people's French fries. He just wants to offer them the choice of having carrots.”

*Oregon's governor wants healthier state work force, but vendors say don't take the Snickers,*  
*The Oregonian*



Building Livable Communities with Transit

“I was at a meeting the other day where someone said 'Metro never approves anything that has anything to do with highways,' so I will happily support this project that actually has to do with highways.”

*Metro approves \$6 million for 1/2 mile of new lane on I-84 freeway,  
Bike Portland*



Building Livable Communities with Transit

“Every corridor plan does not necessarily have to end in a giant EIS (environmental study) for light rail. Most corridor plans are not going to end that way for a long time.”

*Metro eyeing quicker, cheaper process for review of  
Powell-Division transit corridor,  
Metro News*

# Safety Phrase

It is important to have a safety phrase to have “on reserve” in the event that you get tangled or forget where you were headed; a phrase that will always bring you back to your main point.

# Pivot Phrase

A pivot phrase is something you say to quickly move from a question you don’t want to discuss to the main point you want to make. You can do this without reinforcing the opposing frame.

Note that these can be similar, or even the same. Develop your phrases with your overall strategy in mind.

# Safety and pivot phrases

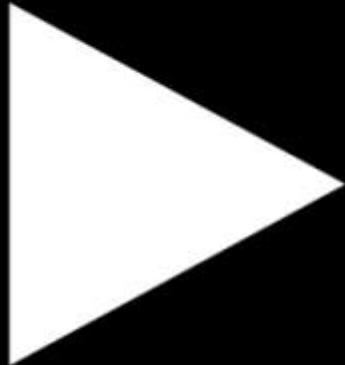
- The important thing to remember is.....
- What we are talking about here is....
- What matters most is...
- To put this in broader perspective...
- The larger issue is...
- I would like to emphasize that...
- Let's not lose sight of the core problem....
- At the heart of the matter is...
- Taking a closer look what we see is....



Rail-Volution

*Building Livable Communities with Transit*

# Testimonial from a planner



Click to play

# Conclusions

- The starting point is not a blank slate
- Values are central to social change
- Move from values to policy/program
- Metaphors are extremely important
- The ultimate goal is to reshape larger narrative







Rail-Volution

Building Livable Communities with Transit

# Key Steps to Building Success: Bringing it all together

**Ilana Preuss**

Vice President & Chief of Staff



**Smart Growth America**

Making Neighborhoods Great Together

August 11, 1970

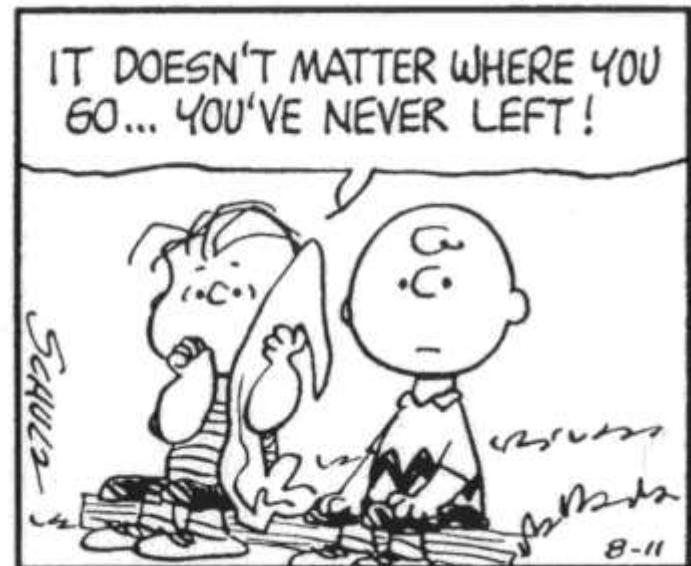
PEANUTS



ALL I SAW WERE SHOPPING CENTERS  
AND MOTELS... EVERY TOWN  
LOOKS LIKE EVERY OTHER TOWN..



IT DOESN'T MATTER WHERE YOU  
GO... YOU'VE NEVER LEFT!





Building Livable Communities with Transit

You got to be careful if you don't know where you're going, because you might not get there.

- Yogi Berra, baseball player

**24  
HOUR**

# **FITNESS**







# **Key Steps to Success**

1. Create a sense of urgency
2. Create a values-based narrative
3. Get stakeholders and champions engaged and leading
4. Identify short-term wins

Rail~Volution

Building Livable Communities with Transit

# Urgency

1.

2.

3.



*Building Livable Communities with Transit*

# Urgency

1. Save money for our community
2. Bring businesses back to town
3. Preserve what people love about their hometown
4. Win allies and deter opponents

# Opposition

“Right now, in your town and neighborhood, policies are being implemented that will ultimately eliminate your freedoms and destroy your way of life.”



Building Livable Communities with Transit

Urgency

# Opposition's Plan: Divide & Conquer

- United Nation's Agenda 21, New World Order,
- The three “E”s: Environment, Equity, Economy
- Sustainability, climate change is a hoax
- Federal government coming in and taking your land away
- Social engineering designed to make us all live in dense city apartments, get rid of cars



*Building Livable Communities with Transit*

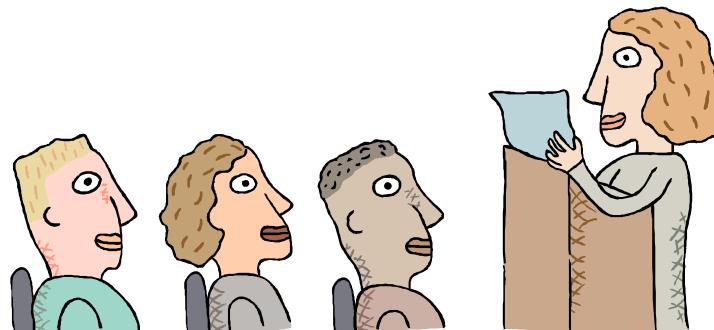
Urgency

# Opposition's Plan: Divide & Conquer

- In almost every state
  - Disrupt
  - Confront
  - Attack
  - Make it personal

## Why the attacks?

- Primary Reasons:
  - Audience is very skeptical of government and is responsive to an anti-smart growth message
  - Organizational and messaging failures by coalitions





Building Livable Communities with Transit

Urgency

# Organizational Failures

- Lack of friendly audience participants
- No strong moderator
- Weak coalition
- Lack of local champions and spokespeople



Building Livable Communities with Transit

Urgency

# Trends

- Changing market
- New local leaders

A photograph of a young woman with curly hair, wearing a blue top and a necklace, taking a selfie with a black smartphone that has a pink protective case. She is outdoors in what appears to be a park or public square. The background is blurred, showing other people and greenery.

Urgency

# Attracting new residents



Urgency

## Attracting new residents





Urgency

# Signs of demand

1 pt in  
WalkScore =  
\$700-3,000  
increase value



Urgency

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE | FEBRUARY 23, 2011

### Suburban Office Markets Trail Downtown Rivals

By A.D. PRUITT



Mack-Cali Realty Corp., one of New Jersey's largest commercial landlords, for example, saw its occupancy fall to 89.1% at the end of 2010 from 90.1% a year earlier.

## THE OKLAHOMAN

July 17, 2011

Office market thriving in downtown Oklahoma City, observers say

## Detroit Free Press

**Blue Cross has moved 3,000 workers to downtown Detroit offices**

Jul 14, 2011 |

Comments

Recommend 1

Tweet 2

## LAS VEGAS SUN

Zappos CEO envisions a new community downtown

Thursday, March 17, 2011





Building Livable Communities with Transit

## Values-Based Story

I believe in our community and I want opportunities for my children when they are older.

I want to preserve what is special about our area – I don't want to turn into Anywhere USA

Our kids are leaving the area because there are no job opportunities – I want to change that.

# Finding Your Values

Utahns have prospered under the vision of the pioneers who first entered this state. But by 2050, our population will double to five million, two-thirds of whom will be our own children and grandchildren. As one of America's fastest growing states, we cannot take our high quality of life for granted. How we grow will affect how we and our children will live. Will we just sit back and see where growth takes us, or will we be visionary, like those who came before us, and actively secure our future?



Building Livable Communities with Transit

Values

## Using Your Values

Utahns have **prospered** under the vision of the **pioneers** who first entered this state. But by 2050, our population will double to five million, two-thirds of whom will be **our own children and grandchildren**. As one of America's fastest growing states, we **cannot take our high quality of life for granted**. How we grow will affect how we and our children will live. Will we just sit back and see where growth takes us, or **will we be visionary, like those who came before us**, and actively secure our future?

# Stakeholders & Champions

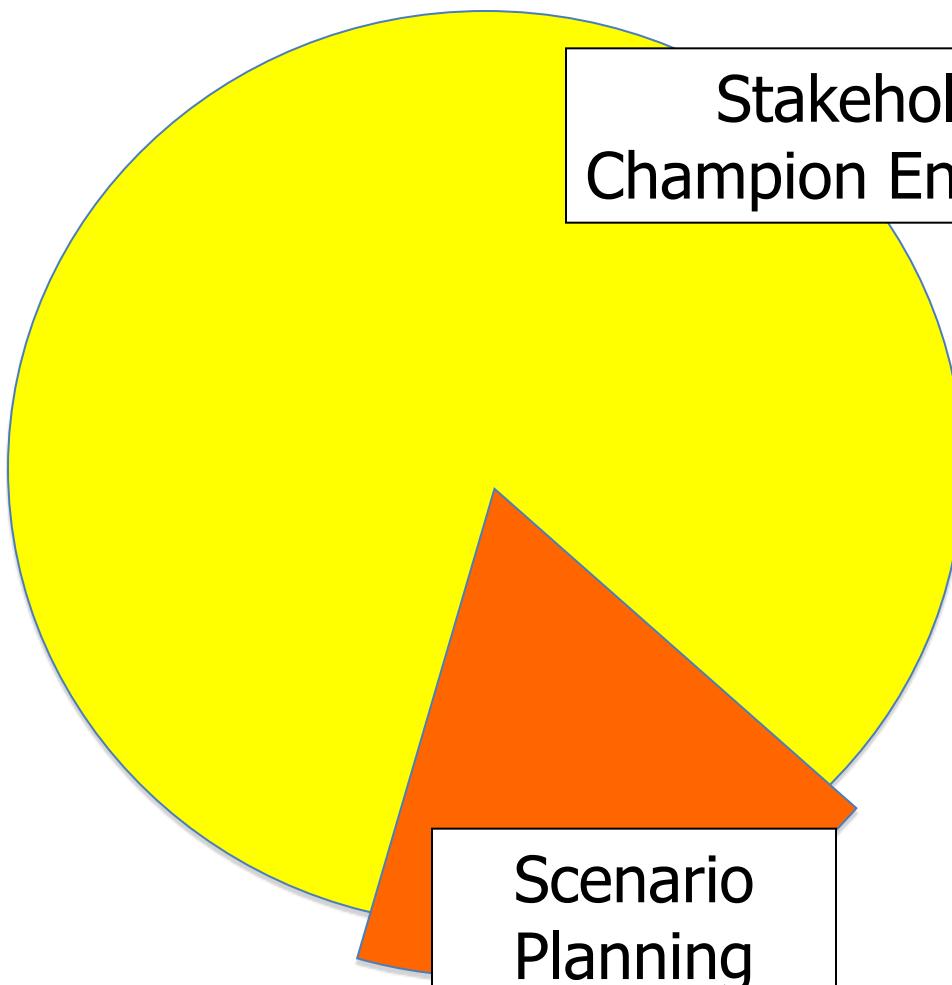
1. Create leaders – this is not a staff led project
2. Need diverse representation from all different sectors, neighborhoods and community types – stakeholders – interest holders
3. Public face of your process - champions

## The 80/20 Split

Stakeholders

Stakeholder &  
Champion Engagement

Scenario  
Planning



Stakeholders

## Community Groups

- Community based organizations that serve and organize in diverse cultural communities
- Non-English speaking communities
- Faith-based organizations
- Residents of a particular geographic area
- Racial or Ethnic Groups
- Diverse Socioeconomic Groups
- People affected directly or indirectly from potential decisions or plans
- Community Advocates and Activists
- Local Foundations

And more!

Stakeholders

## Housing & Business Groups

- Housing Coalitions
- Fair Housing Groups
- Renters Associations
- Homebuilders
- Residents of Housing Project
- Economic Development
- 'Buy Local First' groups
- Landowners
- Chambers of Commerce
- Business Owners
- Community Reinvestment Act officers
- Financiers
- Realtors
- Developers

And more!



Building Livable Communities with Transit

Stakeholders

## Role of the Champion

- Spokespeople for the process
- Recruiters for new stakeholders & champions
- Defenders
- Presenters at public forums
- Media personalities



Building Livable Communities with Transit

# Short Term Wins

- Start seeing your community in a different way
- Educate people about the history, assets and uniqueness of your region
- Highlight new community leaders (of all different kinds)
- Get people engaged and thinking

## Short Term Wins

- Walking history tour
- Community story telling
- Festivals
- School activities
- Temporary use of a vacant lot
- Food Truck-meet up





1. Tell Your Story – No Jargon!



## 2. Define Your Terms



3. Base it on the Economy and Local Leadership



4. Find local spokespeople (and local wins)



*Building Livable Communities with Transit*

Ilana Preuss

[ipreuss@smartgrowthamerica.org](mailto:ipreuss@smartgrowthamerica.org)



**Smart Growth America**  
Making Neighborhoods Great Together

Smart Growth America is the only national organization dedicated to researching, advocating for and leading coalitions to bring smart growth practices to more communities nationwide.

[www.smartgrowthamerica.org](http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org)

1707 L St. NW Suite 1050, Washington, DC 20036 | 202-207-3355