



Transportation Task Force
Elements of a Successful Referendum

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Factors that affect outcomes (quantitative analysis)

- Most measure pass
- Adding a new rail component *may* decrease likelihood of success
- Communities with high percentage of elderly are more likely to approve measures
- Communities with lower sales tax rates are more likely approve measure
- More notable for LACK of significant predicting factors



Caveats on quantitative data

- Quantitative variables are poor predictors of success or failure
- Most variables not significantly associated with success
- Overall success rate includes many small projects
- Many communities fail in their first attempts



Factors that affect outcomes (Case study data)

- Based on in-depth analyses of ten elections with a rail component, 1997-2000
- Included site visits with interviews of key stakeholders
- Includes factors that are difficult to quantify, but intuitively important
- Results not scientifically reliable
- Multicollinearity a concern



1. Perception of traffic congestion “crisis”

- Description: voters perceive a traffic congestion “crisis” such that it is a high priority
- Rationale: provides motivation for many voters
- Evaluation: Excellent data fit; failed to predict outcome in one community. Necessary, but not sufficient?



2. Support of business community

- Description: local business organizations actively support the measure
- Rationale: helps legitimize measure and may help rally employees of some businesses
- Evaluation: very good fit (1 anomaly, 3 ambiguities). Necessary, but not sufficient?



3. Support/leadership by key elected official(s)

- Description: one or more key elected officials take visible leadership role
- Rationale: voters to look to community leaders for cues
- Evaluation: excellent data fit. Necessary, but not sufficient?



4. Fundraising \$1 million

- Description: fundraising near or over \$1 million for campaign
- Rationale: effective campaigns are expensive.
- Evaluation: excellent data fit (exception: Salt Lake City had public funds for education campaign)



5. Recent Initiative Experience

- Description: measure placed on ballot shortly after a failed effort
- Rationale: experience improves campaign performance; voters may prefer “new offer.”
- Evaluation: Good data fit (3 anomalies). Seems to help many campaigns.



6. Enthusiastic support from environmental groups

- Description: local environmental groups endorse and/or campaign for measure
- Rationale: provides legitimacy and cue for some voters.
- Evaluation: Data fit mixed (most campaigns have this, but not all succeed).



7. Multimodal proposal

- Description: measures contains funding for more than one mode of transit.
- Rationale: multiple modes attract different kinds and groups of voters.
- Evaluation: excellent data fit, but may make transportation package too expensive.



8. Highway funding

- Description: proposal contains funding for highway improvements as well as transit.
- Rationale: helps allay criticism from transit opponents and may spread benefits.
- Evaluation: data fit mixed (3 anomalies).



9. Benefits distributed throughout area

- Description: benefits from measure dispersed throughout a wide portion of jurisdiction
- Rationale: creates broader base of support.
- Evaluation: excellent data fit. Necessary, in some cases sufficient?



10. Sunset provision ≤ 10 years

- Description: time limit of ten or fewer years on tax increase.
- Rationale: voters prefer finite tax periods.
- Evaluation: very poor data fit (6 anomalies).



11. Extension of existing rail project

- Description: community has a rail line prior to measure.
- Rationale: voters more likely to support an incremental improvement.
- Evaluation: good data fit (3 anomalies).



12. Lack of problems with existing transit system

- Description: local transit agencies have a positive image and are not controversial.
- Rationale: positive image instills public trust.
- Evaluation: excellent data fit. Communities with beleaguered transit systems often fail to pass measures.



13. General or congressional election

- Description: measure coincides with presidential or congressional election
- Rationale: expands base of support; special elections vulnerable.
- Evaluation: good data fit (3 anomalies).



14. Consultant with initiative campaign experience

- Description: campaign managed by consultant who has successfully managed past efforts.
- Rationale: complex arena requires judgment of experienced professional.
- Evaluation: excellent data fit. (Experience not necessarily transportation-related.)



15. Extensive use of targeted direct mail AND television ads

- Description: use both media to target selected and general audiences
- Rationale: television raises general awareness; direct mail may activate “swing” support.
- Evaluation: Excellent data fit. May not overcome negative transit agency publicity.



16. Lack of effective opposition

- Description: opposition is disorganized, unfunded, or nonexistent.
- Rationale: opposition must rely on grass roots communication of its message.
- Evaluation: Very good data fit (3 ambiguities). Effective opposition is not rare, however.



Profile of a successful campaign

- Perception of traffic congestion crisis
- Support from business community
- Support by key elected official(s)
- Fundraising > \$1 million
- Multimodal proposal
- Benefits broadly distributed in area
- Lack of existing transit system issues
- Direct Mail + TV ads
- Experienced consultant