Passenger Transport

APTA NEWS & EVENTS

Transit Board Members, Support Staff Gain Insights

More than 150 public transportation board members and board support staff gained insights into best practices in governance and excellence in their leadership roles during the recent APTA Transit Board Members Seminar & Board Support Workshop in Montréal.

The host systems for the seminar were Montréal's rail and bus agencies, the Société de Transport de Montréal and the Agence Métropolitaine de Transport, which also offered urban and technical tours. APTA Chair Howard Silver joined host system representatives on the program at the opening session.

Sandy Bushue, deputy administrator for the Federal Transit Administration, gave a presentation on FTA's actions to implement the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act-A Legacy for Users, and the agency's plans for the coming year.

The seminar program included a public agency director training session, presented by the School of Professional Studies at the City University of New York. The instructors were

Bushue

Robert (Buz) Paaswell, a former chief executive officer of the Chicago Transit Authority and head of the City University Institute for Urban Systems, and Fred Lane, an expert on the management and accountability of public organizations.

This session, mandated by New York State law for all public agency boards, highlighted the standards of responsible governance and provided an overview of the board's duties and responsibilities; the structures of effective boards; a board's relationship with management; and evaluating board effectiveness.

The seminar program also included two opportunities for interaction among board support staff and board members: a lunch discussion organized by size of transit system, and a role-playing session with breakout groups working on scenarios that require a board's

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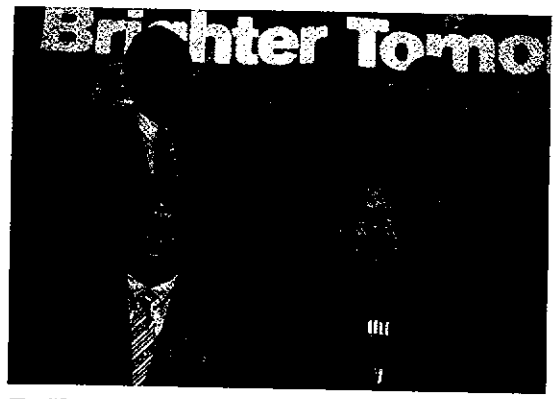

The "State of Transit in Canada" session brought together, from left: standing, Marvin Hunt of the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority, Joe Mihevc of the Toronto Transit Commission, and CUTA President and Chief Executive Officer Michael Roschlau; seated, Gordon Chong of GO Transit and Bernard Blanchet of Montreal's STM.

response to a major event.

In a media training session for board members, public relations professional Mary McCormick of MBI Media in Diamond Bar, Calif., described the variety of media now available, going beyond traditional print, broadcast, and narrowcast (cable) to blogs and podcasts. She used examples from the experiences of transit agencies in her overview of reporters' tricks of the trade; dealing with rude or aggressive reporters; staying on theme or message; successful media interviews; what the public wants to know; and surviving both smoldering and sudden crises.

Cynthia Nikitin, vice president of the Project for Public Spaces, led a discussion of transit-oriented development and downtown renaissance. The session moderator, Mattie P. (M.P.) Carter of the Memphis Area Transit Authority, offered examples such as her agency's mixed-use Central Station and other innovative projects.

Paul Geisel, Ph.D., board chairman of the Fort Worth Transportation Authority, moderated a session on what boards can expect throughout the entire capital planning and construction process. Speakers represented major transit agencies and APTA business members.

An educational session on best practices in cost containment for paratransit services covered new procedures and stressed what board members need to know to help lead their agencies. The moderator was Donna McNamee of Laketran in Grand River, Ohio, chair of the Americans with Disabilities Act Subcommittee of the APTA Transit Board Members Committee.

Michael Roschlau, president and chief executive officer of the Canadian Urban Transit Association, led a panel comprised of transit board members from Vancouver, Toronto, and Montréal. Their topics included the new direction in Canadian federal funding, accessibility, and governance models and practices.

Another topic addressed during the seminar was leadership development, including succession planning in cases where a transit property suddenly loses its chief executive officer. Rhodetta Seward of Intercity Transit in Olympia, Wash., spoke about a report she co-authored, *Securing Future Leaders: Strategic Leadership Development Program.*

The board support workshop featured a day-long Authentic Leadership© class presentation based on a leadership and communication styles inventory that participants distributed to six others prior to the workshop. The class, conducted by Terri Bianco of TB Enterprises in Nevada City, Calif., focused on discovering how one is perceived as a leader and how to adapt one's leadership style to be more effective. It listed the qualities of an authentic leader as aligning oneself with the organization, empowering others, congruency, ethical standards, understanding how stress affects leadership, and powerful communication skills.

Participants in the board support workshop also participated in a simulated board meeting and discussed the basics of parliamentary procedure, agenda packet preparation, and working with the board's committees.

APTA introduced its new Transit Board Member Handbook at the seminar. Covering topics such as board members' roles and responsibilities, the job of the chair, committee structure, and a board's relationship with the CEO, the handbook also includes a primer on SAFETEA-LU. Copies of the handbook are available through the bookstore on the APTA web site, <www.apta.com>.

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