Communicating the Value of Mobility Management in the MAP-21 World

Meredith Highsmith

I'm very passionate about not only mobility management, but also performance measurement and developing appropriate performance measures. So, if we don't get to some of those things today, I am here as a resource and I'm happy to sit down with any one of you guys and talk about performance measurement for your program, what the impacts are. Not only that, but we can talk about communicating things out, we can talk about your audience, who you're communicating to, how to get the right people in the seats, and so on and so forth.

So, that said, let's dive right in. I wanted to open with a couple of quotes that are meaningful to me. and I'll tell you why. This first one ("If you can't measure it, you can't manage it." by Lou Earle, Austin FIT") for obvious reasons. The whole point is, I see a lot of mobility management programs where there are no performance measures. And it's kind of a big deal because we're talking about value added and how you're communicating out, not only to your customers but your stakeholders and funding programs. The value that you add on a day-to-day basis. So it's important to be able to manage that, manage your program, and as such, have performance measures.

Now, this next quote is significant because it's talking about outcomes. and I'm going to go ahead and read it to you: "In most endeavors, measuring, monitoring, and tracking results are among the most crucial elements of understanding real outcomes." (by Lou Earle, Austin FIT). Why this quote matters to me is because the person who said it isn't even a mobility manager; he's a fitness guru. He's talking about fitness, but the important takeaway here is that he's looking at the actual outcomes of any activity that you pursue in your day-to-day endeavors. So, it could be the outcome of a meeting, it could be the outcome of your mobility management program, it could be your fitness endeavors. But it's really looking at what the real outcomes of any given endeavor are and the impact that you make. The impact from day to day that you make as mobility managers, whether that's for one single individual or a whole community. And, so, that's kind of what we're going to be discussing today.

I want to start with an outline:

- What's at stake? we're going to talk about that.
- How do we get started?
- And then we're going to dive into a discussion and forum.

What's at stake?

What is at stake if we are not communicating our value added? Go ahead, shout it out (answers from the audience:

- Funding
- Credibility
- Health care
- Human lives

Other things? This is not an exhaustive list, but there are so many things at stake.

- *Program success. I* know some mobility management programs that are struggling to communicate value-added. It's a very significant thing, and when we talk about types of performance measures and why it's important to measure, this is one of many things. Not only does it impact the success of our program, but it helps motivate us as mobility managers.

- *Conducting activities that will not achieve desired outcomes*. I call this scope creep. I also call this lack of focus. Sometimes we get so excited about the day-to-day activities of coordinating transportation and just general mobility management, sometimes we forget about our desired outcomes. And, so, we're going to talk about that. What does that mean? And what does it mean if we lose focus? It's time and money. It's valuable resources that are very limited. And, so, this is a crucial one.
- *Not meeting customer needs*. Customer lives are at stake in some cases. We are impacting their day-to-day existence. and we just want to provide good customer service. As mobility managers, I keep repeating over and over again, that's why we're here. If it's not for the customer, then what?

From the audience: “The ability to attract new mobility partners.

Meredith: As a mobility manager, you're trying to work with as many different partners as possible to be able to meet all kinds of needs.”) Absolutely. I think one of the things we sometimes forget in the day-to-day business of mobility management is the fact that we are a business. Sometimes we have to put on our business hats and operate like a business. And what are we doing to attract those new partners? How are we bringing them in? How are we selling ourselves? How are we selling our services? Have you all thought about that?

From the audience: “Diversify, more options.”

Meredith: It's a very good point. How are you guys selling your services? How are you attracting more partners?

From the audience: “Information We're providing our partners with information that they didn't have and connections, really, is what I’m finding right now. We've really just started in the last six months. but right we're finding that that's the most important thing, to keep our partners interested.”

Meredith: Keeping them interested with information. What else?

From the audience: “Working to a common goal, if you can show we have a common goal serving the same customer needs even if our customers aren't the same.”

Meredith: That is great. That's what we're talking about a lot today. Thanks

From the audience: Common goals. common outcomes. what are we universally seeking to achieve? does our community share the same outcome?”

Meredith: Accountability, transparency, reputation. Someone somewhere or a group of people or more than one are holding us accountable. and we have to keep that in mind. Not only that, but if we're being funded through federal or state funds, local government funds, transparency. and just in general, if we want to keep bringing in new partners, our reputation is at stake. We need to show that we really truly have value-added within our communities to make that happen. So that's a critical one. Your reputation's on the line.

Funding. And then the biggy, the number one that everyone always thinks of first, funding. We need funding. Sustainable funding sources would be great.

But those are all the things at stake. This is not by any stretch of the imagination an exhaustive list. This is kind of like the five big ones, I just wanted to touch on these with you guys.

MAP-21 and performance measurement.
So, MAP-21 essentially established this performance-based planning process and it's based on national goals. And if you've read MAP-21, . . . we have this precedent for a performance-based process. It's based on national goals. But considerations that we need to make as mobility managers are

- What are the goals of our community
- What are the goals of our stakeholders
- What are the goals and objectives of our funding agencies if they're different

These are all considerations that need to be made. So then I'm going to throw this back to you. How is your agency or your program reacting to the process laid out by MAP-21?

From the audience: We're still feeling that MAP-21 is very new. We're collecting all the information that we can, but, in truth, we're waiting for guidance from our state. But I think that's an important part because so much of our funding comes through our state that we're waiting to see what is imposed on top of whatever so that we can prepare and do things correctly. Our quarterly reporting to the FTA is going through our state, so we have to get our ducks in a row and information is what it's all about for us right now. We still need some more.

From the audience: I was just going to add, our county includes an urbanized section and a rural section. The urbanized section is required to have an MPO, a metropolitan planning organization. Rural areas are not. We have benefitted, you know, from the MPO in the urbanized area, extending voluntarily its work for planning in the rural area. And that's been very beneficial to the whole planning process. We've got professional planners involved now in both the rural and the urban. And planners are a unique breed. They think about things in a different way. But that is very helpful to developing outcome measures. So, I just would point out, if there's an MPO anywhere near you, invite them to take on the task of assisting you in your rural area to provide those kinds of services.

From the audience: I'm from a state DOT even though I can't and don't want to speak for the entire grant process, but for us I think the problem with the change in the federal law is one to communicate all those changes to the partners, let alone including performance measures in how people should be planning. What we did as a first step and the first time in the competitive grant process, which is mostly 5310 that comes through us, is we changed the application in such a way so that we are asking for performance measures as well as the partnerships people are trying to create, based on a project think propose. So, it's a long road, I think. The first time was this grant cycle, which started in January and ended four weeks later. And 90% of the applications we got were just the same old same old. People didn't know how to answer the question. But what we are doing next year, going around, is to go out to the communities and actually doing some technical assistance and try to teach them what this is all about and how to apply. So that's a change for us.

From the audience: I work with several states, and one of the things that has been pretty consistent is at the state level waiting for the 5310 circular, which came out last friday, but even things as basic as quarterly reports, all those requirements, we have a sense of what they were going to do but nothing final. So, I think that process has slowed down states in producing guidance. And, meanwhile, I think the grantees in one state, anyway, kind of get frustrated with us for trying to be more performance

oriented. We want goals. Because it's a new way of doing business. And some are okay with it. And some are just really, you want us to report. So we really have to change that whole mindset.

Meredith: That's a very good point. Sometimes mobility managers and regional coordinated efforts are just flat out intimidated by the process of even developing performance measures and where do I begin, which is kind of what we're going to talk about here in just a second.

Mary Leary: Hopefully a number of you participated, but we did an online dialogue before I joined. I joined FTA about four weeks ago, and many of you know I was running technical assistance centers on the human services side before that and then before that I was at the Department of Health and Human Services. But there's a report due to congress to make recommendations on performance measures, and there's an initiative to gather information nationally through this online dialogue. But if anybody has additional information, we're writing that report over the next couple of weeks, just send an e-mail to me, mary.leary@dot.gov, we'd love to hear from you.

Framework for Success
So let's talk about the framework for success. For those of you who have been through the performance measures training, you probably recognize the framework for success. It just never ends; that's the whole point. It's an iterative process.

But it starts out with consideration of overall vision and mission. What you're trying to achieve, very high level. And then goes to goals and objectives—high-level goals, mind you. Now, it's important to point out that a lot of our goals are going to be similar. We want to provide safe services, we want to provide customer-driven services. We need some level of financial sustainability. And so on and so forth. So, while the high-level goals may generally be the same, each program is unique. And, so, these are going to be unique to your individual program and the services that you're providing.

From the goals go to those objectives, which are very specific. They're going to be targeted at perhaps even updating on an annual basis, depending on how aggressive you are in moving forward.

And then desired outcomes. Now, that's the one thing that we're here to talk about today—outcomes. Because before you can really go into developing some of these things, you need to think about what it is that you're seeking to achieve. And what it is that your community is looking to achieve. Are those outcomes shared? In some cases, they're not.

Performance Measures.
You know, when we talk about the development of performance measures, you know, a lot of the mobility managers will come up and say, okay, well, I really need to develop performance measures. Or can you give me an example measure? Well, yes, I can. We need to know what we're measuring first. What are we trying to achieve? Okay? And, so, again, you'll go through this iterative process of developing goals, objectives and measures and then you don't just end there. You keep going. You tweak. You want to improve. t. But the point today is to look at what the desired outcomes are.

Considerations
So, considerations for developing the wheel or the framework for success. What is your vision and/or mission? I'm not saying you have to have both. Just consideration of some high-level foundation by which to conduct business. These are questions that you need to be asking yourself to develop your goals, objectives and outcomes. What are your priorities? What are the priorities of partner agencies

that you have? And then what are the priorities of the communities that you serve? What kinds of services do you offer? In some cases, especially if for health and human service providers, the services may be more than just transportation and connections. It could be a whole new level of service. Who are your customers? Who are you serving, both internally and externally? And who are you reporting to? What are your available funds? What are your constraints (also known as barriers). What's holding you back? What are those items that you need to take off or clear out of the way so that you can do business? Where do you want to be five years from now?

Now, for the purposes of today, the two most significant questions that we need to look at are what are the priorities of your partner agencies, what are the priorities of the communities that you serve. This is significant because they may very well be different from the priorities that you have within your program or as a mobility manager. So, consideration should be given to those partner agencies that you have. We talked about partnering with the MPO. What are the priorities of the MPO? Because they're going to be different than the priorities that you have as mobility manager. If you are funded by a transit agency or a health and human service agency, what are their priorities? And have you given consideration to what their focus is and how that might be different from yours and where you can meet in the middle? To continue to communicate your successes and value-added.

And then where do you want to be five years from now? So, all things considered, if you had plenty of funding and you didn't have any of those barriers in the way, where would you want to be five years from now? Dream big. This is that dream big question. As a mobility manager, I see myself meeting the needs of every citizen within my county that needs it. Okay, so you need to really do a deep dive and ask yourself these questions in order to develop relevant goals and objectives and then subsequently performance measures. So, in developing your framework, these are the considerations.

Outcomes

So today we're going to talk about outcomes. What's the point? Why are we here? Why are we providing these services? How is it meeting the goals of the key stakeholders that you're looking to show your value to?

From the audience: Give people rides. Enhance the overall well-being of the communities we serve. We're also here because we know there's so much more need. There's so much more to do and we have to prove success and find ways to meet the need that's out there. Continuing our passenger's quality of life. We're impacting people's day-to-day existence.

Carolyn: So, I just want to say, a lot of times when you peel away the onion, you keep asking, why? When you said yours is “to give people rides,” why? To what end?

From the audience: Well, the why would be in order to enhance the quality of life and to allow people to be able to continue to live independently, in order to get where they want to go. I view mobility management is about something I've called life mobility, which is basically giving people the opportunity to get wherever they want to go and at the same time maybe give them the opportunity to do it in different ways rather than using the automobile.

Carolyn: You were making sure they got to their jobs, you were making sure that people got regular paychecks, right? I mean, that, I think, is really not the question why, but to what end. And I think if we can get to the "what end," to what ends, we're going to be meeting our partners' outcomes a little bit quicker and have a union of shared outcomes.

What's the Point

Meredith: So, we're going to talk a lot about what's the point. Considering the outcomes, you know what services you offer and we're obviously very passionate about it. We love our services, we love our customers. We love the day-to-day existence of being a mobility manager. How do we communicate that out? how are you going about communicating this value-added? how do you avoid being the best-kept secret in town? have you considered the outcomes of your stakeholders and your funding agencies and how they might be different than yours? and what that means. the one thing that I hear frequently from regional transit coordination efforts and mobility managers is, well, we have these services, but no one knows about them. right?

Carolyn: As we heard yesterday, it's about outcomes and costs. So in job access issues, what does it mean to have regular, reliable employees? Is there a dollar amount for employers? Is there turnover? How can we access -- how do we demonstrate that we're accessing a broader and more diverse labor market? Are we covering more geographic area where eligible, trained workers are. How do we improve existing and new employees' travel times due to improved services? There might be some cost-related savings, in terms of employee turnover. Usually it's a third of a person's salary to do all those things, like reinterviewing, getting people another uniform, getting them on board. Are we helping to improve worker productivity? You know, time is money in a lot of places. Are we able to reduce absenteeism and delayed starting? All that is bottom line information. What are we doing to improve like surface parking costs because that costs money, too, about $4,000 a spot. How by bringing people to work are we improving the community's ability to collect revenue and taxes from employees? They end up buying things in their communities. How do we keep businesses in business?

On the health care side, we've got huge rates of missed appointments, emergency room visits, hospital stays. We saw yesterday that the cost for any type of readmission is $11,200. By keeping two people out, you just saved your community $22,000. How do we increase aging in place? How do we encourage people to have full treatment so they don't leave their treatment early
to what end,

From the audience: So our reframe question is, How can we enhance communication among stakeholders to address the flexibility needed for unpredictable trips home from dialysis? so the measures -- or the outcomes that we talked about are better patient health outcomes, reduced health care cost, to reduce the number of unmet needs, and to reduce missed appointments. And some of these are longer-term outcomes, some of them are more immediate that lead to the longer-term outcomes.

From the audience: I'm working with a health insurance company that's now required to provide nemt and they're in the perfect position to see their data, see their investment in nemt, if they wanted to, they could literally do a cause and effect study.

From the audience: Our reframe question is, How do we coach customer/client responsibility and accountability? So, the first thing we did is we brainstormed several things, that it increases the overall well-being of the community, it takes the burden off of the family emotionally, financially. To the community, it reduces the financial cost to the community. It increases the economic health for the individual and the family. By doing this coaching, you raise the education and awareness of the whole community about options that are available for improved life. And after all of that -- you empower the individual. You're probably able to utilize current resources instead of making up more resources

because you think that that's what's needed when, really, you can save money by utilizing current resources and, finally, the funding will follow. So then we started digging down into the very first one, increases overall well-being of the community. And what does that look like? How do you measure that? So you measure it by the financial cost to the community, which is looking at readmits to the hospital. If you're not properly educating and empowering and coaching the customer or client, then their readmits are going to be higher. So there should be a way to measure that. And the other thing is, people are healthier and more able to contribute to the financial well-being of the community by their -- by being able to go to work and raising their income and then the tax base raises. I mean, you know, you just have to look at lots of different things. So that's what we discussed. That's as far as we got.

Meredith: One of the considerations that you need to be looking at with your outcomes is the ripple effect. Because -- that's where you get into your economic impact, your quality of life and what that means and then the community quality, and what that looks like, so, it's a very good point.