

Winning Transit Referenda: Some Conservative Advice

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Contents

Winning Transit Referenda: Some Conservative Advice.....	1
Winning Your Transit Referendum: Initial Steps.....	2
How To Talk To The Public	5
Two Other Tasks At The Outset: Fund-Raising And Determining The Best Timing For Your Referendum.....	7
Timing.....	8
The Mechanics Of Winning.....	8
Mobilizing Precinct By Precinct.....	9
Voter Identification.....	9
Getting Out The Vote.....	10
Conclusion	11
Appendix A: Campaign Audits.....	11
Overview.....	12
Campaign School	12
The Audit	13
Collateral Items.....	14
Campaign Audit Outline.....	15
Appendix B: Previous Weyrich and Lind Reports	17

Winning Transit Referenda: Some Conservative Advice

By Paul M. Weyrich and William S. Lind

Karchoke, Kansas, is a typical American city. Decades ago, its citizens could travel pleasantly and safely without an automobile. Streetcar lines ran everywhere. Interurbans connected the city with outlying towns and the countryside. Dozens of intercity trains called every day at its imposing downtown station. Sadly, after World War II Karchoke's fine public transportation system withered away. All that is left today is a skeletal system of bus routes.

What Karchoke now has in abundance is cars. It has so many cars that in recent years traffic congestion has become a major issue. Rush-hour commutes take more and more time. Worse, driving time has become unpredictable; one day a resident's trip to or from work may take half an hour, the next day more than an hour. People hate the traffic. They hate the stress, the missed meetings or day-care pick-ups and the need for everyone in the household to own a car.

Fortunately, a group of civic-minded citizens knew there was a better way. Other American cities had brought back rail transit, and Karchoke could, too. Rail transit would relieve traffic congestion. It would also help re-develop Karchoke's somewhat decayed downtown.

These progressive citizens formed a group, Citizens for Better Transportation (CBT). They came up with a plan that would really make a difference to Karchoke's traffic congestion. Their plan included 120 miles of commuter rail, 86 miles of Light Rail and some modest improvements to the bus system. It would cost \$20 billion spread over fifteen years, and it required a referendum because it would raise sales taxes substantially. But CBT was sure it could win its referendum; early public polling showed that more than 70% of Karchoke's citizens favored "better public transportation."

CBT knew it needed money for its campaign, and it raised several million dollars, almost all of it from a few large donors who also believed in better public transit. They put most of that money into a slick television ad campaign. The campaign stayed away from specifics; it just promoted "Better Transportation Now." It was hard to be too specific anyway, because CBT's commuter rail and Light Rail proposals didn't specify exactly where the lines would go. They would leave that to the experts once the referendum was won.

A number of Karchoke's prominent political leaders strongly opposed CBT's plan, but that didn't worry them too much. Others were on board, or at least said privately they were for it when they talked to CBT. CBT also stayed away when transit critics came to town. They knew people were too sensible to believe all those false charges, like "Light Rail just carries former bus riders." And they had that poll showing 70% support.

Some local political types who really did favor rail transit told CBT that they needed to understand referendum politics. They talked about things like "segmenting" the public and talking to each group in terms of its own interests. CBT replied that they had put so much money into TV ads they were sure they couldn't lose. After all, their opponents had very little money and no television advertising. When the political types talked about Voter ID and Turnout, the good people in CBT looked blank. Didn't everyone agree that traffic was a problem in Karchoke? What more could be needed than to point to a comprehensive solution?

On election day, when their proposal for better transit for Karchoke went down to defeat with just 38% of the vote, the folks at CBT could not understand why. They guessed that all those people who had voted "No" were just idiots who liked being stuck in traffic. What a shame that God hadn't made everybody as smart and sensible as themselves...

Too often, the authors of this study have watched transit referenda go down in defeat. Often, the referendum lost because its proponents did not understand referendum politics. They broke some (or many) of the not-so-simple rules you have to follow if you want to win.

In this study, we lay those rules out. As always, we look at the subject through a conservative lens. But as Senator Lamar Alexander likes to say, "How do liberal dog-catchers and conservative dog-catchers catch dogs? The same way." The rules of referendum politics are the same for liberals and conservatives. If there is a difference, it is that because conservatives pay more attention to grass-roots politics, we know those rules better. And referenda are **all** grass-roots politics.

Winning Your Transit Referendum: Initial Steps

If you want to win your referendum, there are some things you need to understand up front. And, there are some things you need to do up front. These will not alone give you a victory, but if you misunderstand these points or fail to take these actions, you will set yourself up for defeat. So, what do you need to know and do up front?

- First, you need to understand that a referendum is very different from an election between candidates. In an election between candidates, people may dislike both, but in the end voters have to vote for one of them, even if they choose the lesser of two weevils. In contrast, in a referendum, if voters have doubts they vote "no."

This means that your opponents have an easier job than you do. All they have to do is create doubt (and the travelling "anti-transit troubadours" are very good at doing that). In contrast, you have to create certainty, or at least near-certainty, that your proposal is worth people's tax dollars. Further, as we will discuss later, you have to **organize** your supporters, while your opponents can let the doubt they generate just go out there and do its thing.

You can see how this disparity has led to the defeat of many transit referenda. Often, the proposal has had great initial support in opinion surveys, maybe 70%. But then the attacks start.

The proponents make the mistake of ignoring the charges instead of replying to them. By election day, that 70% has become maybe 40% and the referendum is lost.

The proponents took false comfort from the initial 70% support. They failed to understand that their support was **broad** but **shallow**. So what do you need to do up front?

- **Don't** get misled by favorable initial polls.
- Work from the start to build deep support, not just broad support (we will talk more about how to do that).
- Answer every attack, every charge. Do so immediately and forcefully. No charge is "too absurd" to need a fast answer; remember, **you** know about transit but most people do not. Use the same media your critics use, e.g., answer radio ads with radio ads. If voters see and hear you answering the attacks, they will often go with you. The public as a whole is very fair. When they first hear a charge, they don't believe it. They wait to hear the reply. If the reply makes sense, they dismiss the charge. But an unanswered attack is a valid attack. An attack they think is valid raises genuine doubts, and if they have doubts, they vote "no."
- You need to explain what Light Rail or commuter rail is to people who have no idea what the terms mean. Does "Light Rail" mean you can pick the tracks up and move them around? Many, perhaps most voters may never have ridden a train of any kind in their lives. (Note: People do seem to know what "streetcars" are, even if they have never seen or ridden one. And, they have a favorable opinion of them. That is why streetcars are a good way to start to introduce rail transit into an area that has none.)

Ways to explain rail transit include:

- Take local leaders on trips to cities that have rail transit.
- Put on slide shows at community meetings.
- Show mock-ups of the rail vehicles and let people walk through them, or bring one from another city.
- In most cases, you will have a much better chance of winning your referendum in a city that has no rail transit if your initial proposal is for a modest, inexpensive "starter line." If you go to people who have little understanding what you are talking about with a grandiose, multi-line, multi-billion dollar complete system, you will probably fail. Voters also tend to be skeptical about "twenty-year plans;" they doubt your promises, they doubt your cost estimates and they figure that by then they will be dead anyway. The KISS principle (Keep It Simple, Stupid) is important here. Examples:
 - Denver, Colorado. In 1997, the Denver Regional Transportation District (RTD) went to the voters with a plan it called Guide the Ride. Costing \$6 billion, Guide the Ride included a massive, five-corridor Light Rail system in a city that had not had any rail transit for decades. Guide the Ride was defeated by 60,000 votes, getting only 42%.

Wising up, Denver RTD went back to the voters in 1999 for approval of a 19.7-mile Light Rail starter line in the city's Southeast Corridor. No tax increase was involved. This proposal passed with 66% of the vote.

Then, in 2004, RTD again asked the voters for a tax increase to build a 119-mile Light Rail and commuter rail system (with some bus system improvements) called FasTrack. By this time, with the starter line up and running (and expanded), people in Denver knew what rail transit was. FasTrack won with 57% of the vote.

- Austin, Texas. In 1985, Austin voters approved a large, one-cent dedicated transit sales tax, with the understanding that it would fund Light Rail. But the Light Rail was never built. Not surprisingly, this soured voters on rail transit. In 2000, the city again asked voters to approve Light Rail, with no tax increase; this was defeated by fewer than 2,000 votes out of more than 200,000 cast. (Had Light Rail's proponents in Austin done some of the things recommended in this study, they unquestionably would have won.) In 2004, Austin's Capital Metro asked voters to approve a modest, single-line commuter rail system; that passed with 62% of the vote.
- Salt Lake City, Utah. In 1992, voters defeated Light Rail in a referendum. Despite the defeat, the local transit authority cobbled together some local funding, got some more federal money and built a 15-mile starter line. The line was so successful and popular that in 2000, a proposal to extend Light Rail and add commuter rail passed overwhelmingly. The key here, as elsewhere, was that people had to see Light Rail before they could understand what they were being asked to vote for.

Utah Senator Robert F. Bennett tells a story that illustrates the challenges of introducing rail transit to a place where the memory of what it offers has been lost. Because Salt Lake City's starter line was built despite defeat in a referendum, it was highly controversial. Bennett, a conservative Republican, championed the new line. Within the local Republican Party, he was reviled for doing so. He was booed at Party gatherings, and critics threatened to nominate a Light Rail opponent to run against him in a primary. Bennett refused to back down. Now, with Light Rail wildly popular throughout the Salt Lake region, Bennett's courageous stand is applauded by many of the same Republicans who once condemned him for it.

- Phoenix, Arizona. In 1989, Phoenix asked voters to approve a .005 sales tax, with no sunset date, to fund a 103-mile Light Rail system. They turned it down by a 60-40 margin. A similar tax for a plan that included unspecified Light Rail was defeated in 1997. In 2000, voters finally approved a tax increase for a broad package of transit improvements, including a 24-mile Light Rail starter line. In a variation on the usual story, in 2004 Phoenix voters approved an extension of the original Light Rail line before the first line was up and running. The key to success may have been the fact that the referendum was on a program that included not only transit but also 78 miles of new freeways.
- You must make the exact alignment of the line and the station locations clear from the outset, even if your city already has rail transit. Don't say "trust us experts" to the voters; they won't. They demand to know exactly what their money will be spent for.

St. Louis offers a good example. In 1994, voters approved the original MetroLink starter line by 60% of the vote. Overconfident transit proponents went back to the public in 1997 for an extension of MetroLink in which they did not specify the exact route. They were defeated by a 58% to 42% margin.

- You must at the outset explain the project to key local opinion leaders and get them on board, **early**. If people hear these leaders disagreeing among themselves, it creates doubt. Doubt means people vote "no."
 - Start with an "audit" that identifies all the key local leaders and their interests. Identify those who will benefit from your proposal.
 - Approach them systematically, explaining to each how the line will benefit them. That differs case-to-case.
 - Get them on board before your opponents get active, and get them on board **publicly**. That makes it hard for them to change their positions.
 - Stress the economic development a rail line brings; use examples from other cities. The Dallas system (DART) has fostered billions in redevelopment, including in suburbs such as Garland. In Portland, Oregon a streetcar line only 3.5 miles long has generated some \$1 billion in new development. A tiny vintage streetcar line in Charlotte, N.C., has led to restorations and the construction of new apartment buildings all along the line. One study reported that "property values in the (trolley) corridor have increased by 89.6%. Today, more than \$400 million in private funds have been invested in the development of over 800,000 square feet of space along South End's trolley corridor."
- From the outset, explain how your system will benefit people who do not ride it – which may be a majority of voters (see our earlier study on this subject). Again, stress property values, development and increased business. Also, rail transit can reduce traffic, benefiting those who still drive.

Remember, you need to do **all** these things, not just some of them, **up front**. If you leave them until late in your campaign, or worse, overlook them entirely, you will reduce your chances of winning.

How To Talk To The Public

From the outset, you need to explain your proposal to the general public. But as any successful marketer will tell you, there is not one "public." The key to success is **segmentation**. You need to identify the many "publics" you must address, and offer the right message to each (making sure all your messages fit together without contradiction, which is not a problem unless your proposal is badly thought out; if it is, go back to your drawing-board **before** you go public).

- Again, begin with an audit. Identify all your various "publics." Identify those who will be inclined in favor of your proposal, those possibly inclined against and those who will probably start out neutral.

- Then, determine which aspects, services or results of your proposal will appeal to each "public." Approach each with the most relevant arguments in favor.
- There can be no "one size fits all" definition of what segments your community will have and how they will initially incline. Remember, **all politics is local**. Accurate segmentation for New York City will not be accurate segmentation for Peoria. **Your leaders have to know their own community well**, and your initial coalition must include leaders who **do** know their community.
- Segments must be specific. For example, there is seldom one "business community." You must identify in your audit the segments of the local business community and what aspects of your proposal will benefit each.
- Examples:
- Minority communities. Most use transit, but that does not mean your proposal will automatically appeal to all. Some minority communities may see rail as a threat to their bus service. You have to explain why that isn't the case.
- Transit unions. Again, some may fear threats to bus-related jobs. You must answer that wherever rail has been added, bus ridership has risen, not fallen. Your own union members can be great salesmen for your proposal – if you treat them right and ask for their help.

A good example of what transit unions can do for you comes from Salt Lake City. There, the union made a real difference. One union leader told this story:

What happened was – about four weeks before we got into the election, we had a poll that said we're behind, we're losing. That quite frankly alarmed me So I sat down and I pumped out a newsletter that said, "the referendum is coming. It's important to our future. If we don't get off our butts, we're in trouble."... we could pass this out on the buses because it was not done by the company. The union published it. That is not against the law. I can do anything I want. So, it was all over the company. It was all over the buses. It was all over town....

A week before the election, I would have one or two of my members standing out on a street corner or out on a highway, and they were doing a one man or two man honk and wave, with the lawn signs that we had "Vote for Measure One." It was a honk and wave. And these guys were, I mean, out all over the place doing this kind of stuff.

- Another rule: don't write any segment off. A good example is non-riders. You can appeal to them with the right arguments, and they may be a majority of voters.
- Also, no segment is too small. Example: church-goers. Explain how your proposal may help them get to church, especially in bad weather. Or how it may be useful when groups from their church want to go together to the ball game. Be creative in your segmentation audit.

Segmentation builds **deep** support, not just broad support. People who see clearly how your proposal benefits them can become your champions. Each can answer a different critic or criticism; in answering your critics, you want polyphony. And deep support is what will stand up when the critics get in gear, as they will. Remember, even groups that oppose each other on other issues can sing together in your choir (example: developers and environmentalists).

One final point about talking to the public: you need to do opposition research. Opponents of rail transit tend to say the same things everywhere. If you look at what they have said and done in other cities, you can be pretty sure they will say and do the same in yours. Prepare in advance to answer them, then do so immediately when they surface.

Two Other Tasks At The Outset: Fund-Raising And Determining The Best Timing For Your Referendum

For fundraising, there are two different approaches, which may to some extent be combined:

- Identify major beneficiaries of your proposal who have money (e.g., developers) and raise the money you need from them. This is in some ways the easiest way to raise money, and it is also the fastest. But it is not necessarily the best.
- Raise (most) of your money at the grass-roots level, through direct mail to the large number of "little people" who will benefit from your proposal. This approach takes time – at least a year-and-a-half – and it is a lot of work. But in many cases it is also the better approach, because in addition to raising money, your direct mail campaign builds support that is both broad **and** deep. In effect, for your extra work you get a "two-fer."

This second approach to fund-raising has several steps:

- Start by using the first approach to raise some seed money – at least \$50,000.
- Develop two direct mail lists, a "house list" of people you think will give (possibly because they gave to a related cause before) and a "prospect list" of people you are approaching for the first time. You can mail to your house list six times a year, and expect them to give two or three times a year. Individual amounts will usually be small: \$25, \$50, maybe \$100. Your house list will grow as it is augmented by people who gave in response to your prospect mailings.
- If mailings to your prospect list get a 2% return (2% of those you mail to send a donation), you are doing fine. Remember, even those who do not give are often reading your appeal, which may influence how they vote. Sometimes, people will respond with comments (with or without a donation), which are useful for the voter ID and turnout program we will discuss below.
- In writing your direct mail letters, you have to use the established "direct mail style" to get results. This style uses emotional as well as rational appeals, and to those not accustomed to it, it seems odd. Writing it is an art not many people have (you will probably need to hire a specialist to do it for you). But in direct mail, it works, and more "normal" styles do not work. For example, long letters get much better results than short letters. Unless you have successful experience in doing direct mail, remember that your own instincts are likely to be wrong.

Again, you will probably raise funds either with the first approach alone, or with a combination of the first and the second. The first is easier and faster, but the second builds that key deep support. If you have the time, a combination of the two approaches will usually be your best bet. The more you rely on the second approach, the better your chances will be on election day.

Timing

What should that election day be? When do you want to hold your referendum, in a special or general election? Again, the answers depend on your community and the specifics of your proposal. But there are some general rules you should take into account:

- Timing depends on who you think will turn out to vote. If other contests on the ballot will tend to bring out your opponents, that is not a good choice. If other contests will tend to bring out your supporters, then that might be good timing for you.
- In general, our sense is that transit referenda tend to do better in general rather than in special elections. Special elections tend to bring your opponents (who are often more strongly motivated than the bulk of your supporters) out in droves.
- A stronger general rule is that you do not want to be on the ballot with other proposals to raise taxes. If voters have to choose between transit and, say, local schools or libraries, they tend to go for the schools or libraries. Voters usually do not like to vote for all of the tax increases on a ballot; often, they will vote for their top priority (which usually is not transit) and against all the others.
- Consider your demographics carefully. If your proposal will appeal mostly to Democrats (e.g., increased bus service for the inner city), then pick an election that will bring out more Democrats, like an exciting Democratic primary contest. Or, if your proposal serves more conservatives in a Republican area (perhaps commuter rail), look for a contest that will bring them to the polls.

The question of timing for your referendum should be discussed widely. Other people may see factors you do not. You need to be open and listen, especially to members of your own coalition who are specialists in areas other than transit. Transit specialists are usually not specialists in electoral politics.

The Mechanics of Winning

Here is where so many transit referenda are lost: the people in charge of them simply do not understand the mechanics of winning. You can have the greatest proposal since the Shaker Rapid, poll after poll showing you are ahead, plenty of "feel good" TV advertising and so on, and still lose because you did not know or you neglected the mechanics of winning the vote.

The starting point is to study other successful referenda. You should look at transit referenda that won in other cities, and non-transit issues that won in your own city. How did they do it? There is no need to re-invent the flanged wheel (or worse, think you don't need a wheel at all, like Maglev). As Bismarck said, "Only a fool learns from his own mistakes. A wise man learns from the mistakes of others."

Mobilizing Precinct by Precinct

Now for the mechanics themselves. The first thing you need to do is **organize precinct-by-precinct**. There is **no substitute** for this if you want to win. The steps to organize on the precinct level include the following:

- Project the total vote you expect in your referendum.
- Calculate how many of those votes you need to get 52% of the total (you will want to set your goal higher than that to allow for supporters who get sick, go out of town, etc.)
- Determine precinct-by-precinct what your vote goals will be for each precinct. This includes precincts you expect to lose as well as those you expect to win. For example, if you expect to win a precinct, you set a goal of winning by let's say 300 votes. If you expect to lose a precinct, you set a goal that you will lose by only (for example) 60 votes. Remember, you can win overall while losing some precincts. These **vote goals** for each precinct are vitally important. They shape much of the rest of your political mechanics.
- Recruit volunteers for each precinct. Each precinct must have a **precinct captain**. His job is to meet the vote goal for his precinct. He will normally need to recruit other volunteers to help him to this.
- The precinct captain and his assistants must identify **vote-by-vote** where he will get the votes to meet his vote goal. This is done by door-to-door canvassing – what is called "Voter Identification." This process can be exciting and fun. A captain in a "bad" precinct can still win by meeting his vote goal even though he loses the vote overall. Remember that people who are willing to work in difficult areas often deserve greater praise than people who work in good areas.

Voter Identification

Voter Identification is so important we should look at it here in more detail. If you want to win your referendum, you can't just hope your supporters will somehow materialize on election day. You need to know before the election who they are, house-by-house. This sounds like a lot of work because it is a lot of work. It is also the difference between hoping to win and winning. How do you do it?

- Volunteers go door-to-door in each precinct, in the evenings and on weekends when people are home. They take brochures describing your proposal. The brochure must be written **in neutral terms**. Otherwise, people will give you the (often false) answer they think you want to hear, which can throw your vote count way off.
- The volunteer gives each person or household a brochure and asks if they plan to vote. He then asks them to check one of three boxes on the brochure indicating how they will vote: yes, no, or undecided. He may have to visit the house more than once to get this, as people may want to read the brochure and think about it before they answer.
- If a person checks "Vote Yes," your campaign stays in touch with them and reinforces that "Yes" vote.

- If they check "No," thank them and go away. **Do not try to convert them.** You will probably fail and you will increase the probability they will vote. Let sleeping "No" voters lie.
- If they check "Undecided," then you work on them. Address their specific questions and concerns. Send them a personal letter that talks to their issues, signed by the mayor if he is a supporter or by another public figure. If they remain undecided at that point, leave them alone. If they now say they will vote "Yes," add them to your total.

Keep adding up your "Yeses" until you make the vote goal for that precinct. Then, keep adding to it until you have a margin of 10% to 15% over your goal. You will need that "padding" on election day, because not all your "Yes" voters will turn out.

Like fund-raising through direct mail and small donors, building this kind of precinct organization takes a minimum of one-and-a-half years (the direct mail effort reinforces building the precinct organization, which is why we recommend it as the better choice). Again, the result is support that is not only broad but deep, support that will stand up when the attacks on your proposal start.

What if you don't have that much time? Then, instead of canvassing door-to-door, you hire a company to do it by telephone. Again, the questions they ask must sound neutral or you will get many "false positives." As in a canvas, the phone poll will ask for yes/no/undecided. We emphasize that this is not nearly as effective as door-to-door canvassing. You should choose this option only if you do not have enough time to canvas.

Getting Out the Vote

So you've done everything we suggest and it is now election day. Time to sit back and enjoy the results, right? Wrong. You still have a key task facing you: Voter Turnout, which means actually getting your "Yes" voters to the polls. As in canvassing, there is no substitute here for large numbers of volunteers.

- Some volunteers go into the polling places, where this is permitted by law. They have a list of all the "Yes" voters you have identified in that precinct. As they hear the names of the voters called out, they check the names they are expecting off their list (this is legal in most places).
- Toward the end of the voting day, when there are still a few hours left that the polls will be open, your volunteers in each precinct total up their list. They identify the remaining "Yes" voters who have not voted, and you contact them. You may have them get a phone call from the mayor or another prominent supporter. Your volunteers may also call, asking if they need a ride to the polling place.
- If local laws do not allow your volunteers to hear or see who has voted, then call all the people you expect to vote "yes" late in the day and ask if they have managed to get to the polls. Do not ask if they have voted; people resent this. If they say they have not gotten to the polls, tell them that "We (or mayor so-and-so, if he is popular) are counting on you to pass the transit referendum." Ask if they need a ride to the polling place. If they do, be organized so you can immediately send someone with a car to get them to the polls.

This part of the job, Voter Turnout, is the "bottom line" that determines whether you win or lose. Unless you have a good Voter Turnout effort, only around 50% of your supporters will turn out and vote. Your opponents are usually more motivated on an individual-voter basis, so their turnout will probably be higher. This is why transit referenda that the opinion polls predict will win so often lose.

The polls have closed, and election day is over. You're done, right? Not quite. After the polls close, you should have a big party for all your supporters. Remember, most of them are volunteers. At the party, you have a big board that shows each precinct and its vote goal. When that goal is achieved, everybody cheers and the precinct captain and his volunteers come forward for the big round of applause they have earned. (Hint: make sure everyone knows early in the campaign that you will do this. It is a motivator for your volunteers, because no one wants to be there and have everyone see that their precinct did not meet its vote goal.)

All this can be fun for volunteers, not just drudgery. It is a great introduction to politics for young people. It is also a great way for older, retired people to have something to do and make new friends. A successful grass-roots campaign does more than win your referendum; it builds an organization you can use for future referenda as well. Yes, most people now are busy people. But you will also find that busy people usually do the best job.

Conclusion

If you do everything we have suggested in this study, there is still no absolute guarantee that your transit referendum will win. As the old German artilleryman's saying goes, "All efforts are in vain if an angel pees in the touchhole." Your city can go bankrupt a week before you request a tax increase because the treasurer skipped town for Rio and took the treasury with him. The largest donor to your campaign can get arrested by the FBI as an al Qaeda operative. Your most prominent supporter among local politicians can be found in bed with a goat. These and similar events fall in the category of "acts of God," and we offer no insurance against them.

What we can guarantee is that if you do as this study has suggested, **you will have maximized your chances for winning**. A badly flawed original proposal may still fail (and probably should), but you will still have maximized the chance it will win. A sound proposal will have a good probability of winning. Perhaps most important, a sound proposal that should and could have won will not lose because its proponents did not understand referendum politics. That is what we see happen all too often, and that is what we have written this short primer to prevent. If you take the advice we have offered here, that will not happen to you. And we pro-transit conservatives will have made our small contribution to the large cause of helping us all to get around.

Appendix A: Campaign Audits

In the 1970s, Paul Weyrich worked closely with a number of other grass-roots politics specialists to create the coalition that became known as the "Religious Right." One of those specialists was Marc Nuttle. Marc's specialty was campaign audits – something we have referred to a number of times in this study on how to win transit referenda. Paul wrote to Marc Nuttle and asked him if

he still had his notes on those campaign audits. This appendix reproduces an edited version of his reply; it is the best discussion of campaign audits we know of. Marc drew on what he laid out here when he served as a consultant for a recently successful right-to-work referendum in Oklahoma. That referendum passed despite the fact that its proponents were outspent 13:1.

Memo

To: Paul Weyrich

From: Marc Nuttle

Date: November 17, 2004

Re: Campaign Audits

Overview

You have asked for examples and explanation of how I audited campaigns for the Committee for Survival of a Free Congress (CSFC). I did find notes which allow me to reconstruct the process.

The audit was built around the campaign school. In fact, at the end of each session of the schools, we informed campaigns what to have prepared when an audit was conducted..... The audit then became a part of a completed training and execution process.

For the record, in our early experience, we found that most campaigns would not go through the discipline of applying our training to complete a detailed campaign plan....

Campaign School

We built the campaign school around the theme of "Nine Points of a Campaign." They included:

- Survey Research
 - District analysis (for transit referenda, area covered by referendum)
 - Key Issues
 - Opposition potential
- Strategy
- Organization
 - Vote goals
 - Precinct organization
 - Coalitions
- Direct mail
- Media
- Press
- Budget/Cash Flow/Finance/Fund Raising

- Election day process
- Calendar

We gave them clear direction on exactly what we were looking for on each segment in a campaign plan. We handed out generic examples. We gave them actual campaign plans and segment statements....In my presentations, I would reiterate exactly what they were to produce on an audit. This was to make them go through the process. Many never did....

I would like to note that what we taught is what in fact is being rediscovered today. The Seventy-Two our PrograHouHour Program is nothing more than our election day process and the 60-day operation that accompanied it....

The Audit

The audit was conducted in this order. I started with vote goals. I checked not only the vote goals but the work product (how the goals were determined). In other words, I validated them. Next we examined precinct prioritization. Then I examined the precinct organization design. This included: number of volunteers per precinct, managers for volunteers, etc. We knew that it took about 2,000 volunteers per congressional district. Twenty key captains were required to manage these volunteers by area. I would demand to see the cards and names. I did not allow a campaign to just say they had so many volunteers because they knew what I wanted to hear. If possible, I tried to meet the key volunteers to see if in fact they understood their obligations. By examining all materials, like precinct packets, it was impossible for a campaign to fake it. Most wanted help in staying on track. The time necessary to produce a precinct operation was nine months. From this detailed examination, I could determine, based upon the time left in the campaign and their progress to date, what they would be able to produce by election day. This became a key component to my overall analysis.

Next I asked for a presentation on their survey research conclusions, a one paragraph statement of who was going to vote for them and why, a one page analysis of what they expected their opponent's plan to be, a simple statement on theme and message, and then their strategy overview. I wasn't there necessarily to change their campaign plan, but to make sure that they had one.

The next segment of the audit covered the tactical portions of the plan to be executed by staff and consultants. This included direct mail, media and press. These are the primary voter contact vehicles to carry the message and where the bulk of the campaign budget was spent.

The next segment was a detailed examination of the budget. We would finish the plan and I would remind them that you always put a budget to a plan, not a plan to a budget. The plan is what is necessary to win. The finance plan is what is necessary to carry out the plan. Without the money, and the money on time, you cannot execute the plan. This is where experience comes in. Every campaign needs help raising money....

The last segment of the audit involved helping them reduce the plan to a detailed calendar. This is a critical management tool. It also allowed us and our field team to consult by phone. We had

a benchmark calendar that we would set before each other and review the progress by campaign division, on any given day, based on the agreed upon plan.

The election day process was its own separate 60-day calendar. It required its own chairman, its own volunteer recruitment process and its own accountability. If the campaign had been successful in recruiting volunteers, this was the only segment of the campaign plan that could be implemented in the later stages of the cycle.....

Collateral Items

In addition to reviewing the application of our training materials, I would also conduct in advance my own research on the district in question. This would cover party registration, voting trends, past campaign histories, media markets, whether the district was impacted by statewide or adjoining district races, impact of national issues, etc. Further, I would do an analysis of the potential for coalition development in the district....I would familiarize myself with the activities of all potential coalition groups and field operations so that I could help the campaign integrate their energy.

I would also analyze the district on what I thought would occur in a vacuum, in other words, if both campaigns (our candidate's and the opponent's) were executed without any sophisticated training. Prior to our schools, many campaigns were run that way....

In effect, I would build a book on each district with pages of analysis that overlaid each other, starting with the foundation, all other outside elements impacting the campaign outside of the campaign's control, other assets that we could bring to bear to help, like coalition development, and the campaign talent and progress to date. My audit report reflected the overall situation of that campaign, at that time, in that state, in that cycle....

The end result, I believe, is that we won about 80% of the races to which we fully committed. A large part of that success is attributable to the campaigns who in fact had the discipline to research, write and executive a focused campaign plan....The primary purpose of the audit was to confirm that the campaign was actually using our techniques. I do not remember a single example of a campaign who used our techniques and was not viable or in fact did not win.

The following attached sheet is an outline of my checklist. From it, I made my reports.

CAMPAIGN AUDIT OUTLINE

Review Executed With Candidate, Campaign Manager & Organizational Chairman

Vote Goals		Press Plan	
	<p>Overall</p> <p>By precinct:</p> <p>Check calculation process</p> <p>Precinct prioritization</p>		<p>Urban v. Rural (for transit referenda, urban core v. suburbs)</p> <p>Aggressive v. non-aggressive press</p> <p>Interview press secretary</p> <p>Review issues that need special press attention for this district (area covered by referendum)</p> <p>Review press releases</p>
Organization		Finance Plan	
	<p>Rural v. Urban (for transit referenda, urban core v. suburbs)</p> <p># of volunteers required</p> <p># of captains required</p> <p># of volunteers & captains recruited to date</p> <hr/> <p>Review names & database</p> <p>Spouse & family feelings and responsibilities</p>		<p>Budget</p> <p>Cash Flow</p> <p>Fund Raising</p>
Coalitions		Calendar	
	How defined		Campaign division lines

Potential members	Benchmark projects (critical)
Endorsements to date	Detailed & complete from election day back to the day of the audit (E-x, <i>i.e.</i> E-180, E-179...)
Opponent's endorsements	
How are coalition members integrated into our plan?	
Research Conclusions	Election Day Process
Strategy	60-day calendar
Statement of 51% (who is going to vote for you and why?)	Chairman selected – yes or no
	# of volunteers required _____
	# of contacts committed to making on election day _____
	Campaign Mechanics
Theme & Message Statement	Job descriptions in writing
Opposition Strategy (simple-one-page)	Volunteer packets
Direct Mail Plan	Key volunteer instructions
Electronic Media Plan	Training procedures for volunteers
	Prepared letters to the editor
	Issues statements & fliers
	Brochures
	Coalition materials
	Outside Issues, Concerns & Opportunities

Appendix B: Previous Weyrich and Lind Reports

Over the past several years, Paul M. Weyrich and William S. Lind of the Free Congress Foundation have written five studies of public transportation, each of which looks at an aspect of the subject from a conservative point of view. All five earlier studies are still available from the Free Congress Foundation or from the American Public Transportation Association. In order of publication, they are:

- **Conservatives and Mass Transit: Is It Time for a New Look?**

This study looks at three common conservative perceptions about mass transit -- that the current dominance of the automobile is a free market outcome, that no conservatives actually use mass transit, and that transit does not serve any important conservative goals -- and finds that each is open to question. It also offers a number of conservative suggestions for improving the efficiency and quality of public transportation.

- **Does Transit Work? A Conservative Reappraisal**

In this paper, the authors address the "one percent argument:" the argument that transit is not important because it only carries about one percent of total trips. They find not only that the number is wrong, but that the yardstick itself, total trips, is inappropriate and misleading. They propose a new measure, "transit competitive trips," which is defined as the trips for which transit can compete. By this measure, the importance of transit to virtually every American city becomes clear.

- **Twelve Anti-Transit Myths: A Conservative Critique**

Here, conservatives Weyrich and Lind take on the libertarian transit critics and their usual arguments, such as "Light Rail has been a failure everywhere," "Transit does not relieve congestion," "Most Light Rail riders are former bus riders," and the greatest chestnut of all, "It would be cheaper to lease or buy a new car for every rider than to build a new Light Rail system." The study refutes them all, giving transit proponents useful arguments when the critics' flying circus hits town just at referendum time.

- **Bring Back the Streetcars! A Conservative Vision of Tomorrow's Urban Transportation**

Rail transit's greatest challenge may well be explaining what it is and what it can do to people who have never ridden a train of any sort in their lives. When those people are asked in a referendum to vote money for "Light Rail," they often have no idea what Light Rail is. The solution? According to Weyrich and Lind, start with what people do know: streetcars. Building a new streetcar line, with Vintage, Heritage or modern equipment, is far cheaper than Light Rail and provides a way to introduce rail transit that most people welcome. Three case studies illustrate alternate approaches that fit almost any city's needs and resources.

- **How Transit Benefits People Who Do Not Ride It: A Conservative Inquiry**

Successful passage of a transit referendum is dependent upon the votes of citizens who may not expect to use the new transit investment they are being asked to support. In order to gain their support, local authorities and transit advocates must explain the real benefits of transit to people who do not expect to ride it. Weyrich and Lind fully explore five major benefits of transit for people who do not ride it. Non-riders encounter less congestion, their families save money, and they see the values of their homes go up because of transit service. Transit also has a positive impact for conservation of the environment and provides needed alternative transportation to major events where driving and parking is difficult or when your car is in the shop.