## \*\*\* File Explanation

This evidence supports the importance of high school students engaging in policy debates about transportation and transportation infrastructure. Debaters can use this evidence to bolster their arguments on “Framework” or Topicality. The basic argument is that the policy-focused debates that students will have over the specific details of transportation policy will equip them with the knowledge, skills, and motivation to become more active and engaged citizens.

The block titles are for convenience only and are just examples of how the evidence could be used. Students are encouraged to review all of the evidence carefully and to be creative about applying it to debates.

## \*\*\* Evidence

### Best High School Curriculum

#### Debates about transportation policy are important and valuable—our evidence contextualizes this as the best curriculum for high school students.

Marshall 98 — Margaret Marshall, Research Associate at the Center for Urban Transportation Research at the College of Engineering at the University of South Florida, 1998 (“High school transportation curriculum being developed,” *CUTRlines*—The Newsletter of the Center for Urban Transportation Research, Winter, Available Online at http://cutr.usf.edu/pubs/news\_let/articles/winterC98/news933.htm, Accessed 07-30-2012)

As a state that has experienced rapid population growth as well as intense development pressures in recent decades, Florida faces unique transportation challenges. Given that the number of transportation-related jobs is expected to increase significantly in the next decade, Florida must prepare its future professionals and enlighten the next generation to the critical transportation issues that will continue to face the state. By raising awareness of transportation and public policy issues among students at the high-school level, educators can help generate a more enlightened workforce and citizenry for the 21st century.

In addition, by introducing high school students to transportation issues, a secondary benefit may be increased interest in future career opportunities. CUTR recently completed a review of transportation curriculum programs around the country and has proposed that development of similar curricula be advanced at the senior high school level in Florida.

The project considered how best to introduce high school students to public policy questions related to transportation, expand their knowledge as citizens, and enable them to make educated transportation decisions in the future. Of primary consideration was examining the feasibility of developing a transportation course module that could be offered to senior level high school students.

### Civic Engagement/Democracy

#### Engaging in debates over the nuts and bolts of transportation infrastructure policy is key to civic engagement and democracy.

Brown 10 — Ernest C. Brown, recognized authority in construction litigation, public works projects and contract management who has resolved more than 2,500 construction disputes, holds a B.S. in Civil Engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, an M.S. in Construction Management from the University of California-Berkeley, and a J.D. from the University of California-Berkeley's Boalt Hall School of Law, 2010 (“California Projects & Delivery Systems,” *California Infrastructure Projects: A Guide to Successful Contracting and Dispute Resolution*, Published by Ernest Brown & Company, LLC, ISBN 9781576253663, Available Online at http://constructionlawyers.com/CM/book/chapter-01.html, Accessed 07-30-2012)

While the word “infrastructure” rings widely in public speeches of every political stripe during every election cycle, the nuts and bolts of such projects remain largely inaccessible and obscure to the voting citizenry.

Yet, a keen understanding of the implications and costs of public infrastructure projects is essential to democracy and the shape of the future in California. The creation of infrastructure is a vital process that requires a healthy dose of California sunshine and the participation of local citizens.

A knowledgeable citizenry will assure that public projects are responsive to public needs, whether they are schools, parks, marinas, sports arenas, convention centers, public buildings, highways, hospitals, schools, water and wastewater treatment facilities and conveyances, public golf courses or sports fields. These facilities promote a unique and healthy life for our children and a beautiful, unique and pleasant environment for all of California’s 35 million residents.

Each potential project encompasses a unique recipe of planning, architecture, engineering, project finance, construction management and inevitable conflicts and sticky dollops of state and local politics. There are winners and losers. These projects are the heart and soul of the public expenditure budget. The accomplishments of public projects are built to last, as are their mistakes, and, unlike many current government programs, will be paid for by future generations.

The creation of public infrastructure involves making tough choices about civic priorities. The public trough is not limitless. It takes careful stewardship of public funds to meet the essential public needs of transportation, safe water, education, law enforcement and healthcare. While the immediate beneficiaries of a project may be the local residents (neighborhood parks) or the region as a whole (airports), these projects should nurture a larger community and improve public safety, economic security and business prosperity.

### Key To Effective Activism

#### Debating about transportation policy equips students with the knowledge and skills for effective civic engagement.

Thomas 8 — Ren Thomas, Doctoral Student in Community and Regional Planning at the University of British Columbia, 2008 (“Engaged or Disinterested? Youth Political and Civic Participation in Canadian Transportation Planning,” *Critical Planning*, Volume 15, Issue 1, Summer, Available Online at http://renthomas.ca/wp-content/uploads/2008/02/thomas-article.pdf, Accessed 07-30-2012, p. 16-17)

Education and Participatory Action Projects

Education is essential to the development of engaged citizens (O’Neill 2007). Educating young people is crucial to their participation: it provides the skills and knowledge that allow them to navigate complex political processes, access the social networks that anchor them in the political system, and develop interest in engaging political issues. CPRN’s youth workshop on civic and political participation revealed a desire for early civics education, integrated throughout the curriculum (CPRN 2007).

Several participatory action research (PAR) projects have addressed youth and transportation. Generally, these projects have the goal of educating young people on sustainable transportation and the larger planning process, but their secondary goal is empowerment. They teach young people research skills and encourage them to inform and motivate their peers. Again, these cannot be classed as either civic or insurgent political participation, since they contain elements of both. While only one of these examples is Canadian, the others illustrate the possibilities of combining education and action-oriented participation. The St. Lucie Transportation Planning Organization in Florida conducted a PAR project that aimed to involve youth in the transportation planning process by “bringing them to the transportation planning table, and giving them tools to intelligently participate in the process.” (Bonet 2004, no page number available). The goals were to give youth the tools to understand and make recommendations for their transportation future, and to develop a sustainable transportation plan for their community. The students researched transportation systems on the Internet, brought guest speakers into the classroom, and interviewed experts outside of the classroom. They job shadowed staff in transportation careers, participated in two leadership conferences, and ended up producing a transportation survey and eight videos on different transportation issues. They presented their long-range transportation plan to the county commissioners, Florida DOT officials, school board members and legislative delegates in June of 2002. [end page 16] As a result of their efforts, the commissioners and city council eventually agreed to create a Municipal Service Taxing Unit to fund long-term transit costs.

“Catching Them Young,” a project undertaken in Manchester, UK, was a one-year attempt to influence young people’s modal choice through a short-term intensive educational intervention (Pilling et al. 1999). The target age range was 12-23 years old. Phase One involved gathering travel data from young people across Greater Manchester on current travel behavior and attitudes towards different travel modes. Phase Two was the development of educational/awareness-raising materials, drawing on thoughts and ideas from the youth themselves, with local youth workers and a university visual arts department. Phase Three measured their response to the materials. Ninety percent of the young people changed their attitudes about cost and image; 95 percent said that the environment had increased in importance as a factor in their travel decisions. Ninety-five percent perceived the car more negatively, 90-95 percent perceived all of the alternative modes more positively. Because the intervention involved lifestyle changes, the integration of the participants into the creation of the materials was instrumental. The authors recommend that this type of educational intervention be used in tandem with increased youth participation in transportation planning.

offramp is a Canadian youth-led initiative that encourages youth to change attitudes and circumstances so that high school students increasingly walk, cycle, take transit, skateboard, rollerblade and carpool to school (Orsini 2003). Better Environmentally Sound Transportation (BEST), a federal charity that promotes sustainable transportation alternatives, started the program in 1991. High school student leaders in offramp are encouraged to investigate the barriers and incentives to alternative modes of travel and create projects that can raise awareness, reward good behavior and generate opportunities to use alternative travel modes. Between 1991 and 2001, fifteen British Columbia schools piloted the student-led transportation demand management program. Student leaders select from an ever-growing list of activities to run at their school: bike fashion/bike trick shows, the creation of videos, and a “how slow can you go?” bike race where the slowest bike wins. Each student leader is also asked to lead a longer-term initiative, like fundraising for a bike rack or petitioning for a bus shelter in front of their school.

These examples show that educating young people about the political processes associated with transportation can change their perceptions and encourage action-oriented civic participation.

### Specialized Knowledge Prerequisite

#### Student involvement is key to transportation policy activism—our framework is a prerequisite to effective civic engagement.

Thomas 8 — Ren Thomas, Doctoral Student in Community and Regional Planning at the University of British Columbia, 2008 (“Engaged or Disinterested? Youth Political and Civic Participation in Canadian Transportation Planning,” *Critical Planning*, Volume 15, Issue 1, Summer, Available Online at http://renthomas.ca/wp-content/uploads/2008/02/thomas-article.pdf, Accessed 07-30-2012, p. 19)

Canadian youth already participate in civic groups and insurgent political activities around sustainable transportation. Planners need to build on these strengths. The integration of youth perspectives, as one of many voices in pluralist democracies, can help change existing policies and foster more positive attitudes towards youth. Integrating young people’s perspectives into transportation policy development, marketing and communications can play a role in youth education and help develop new services. Involving youth in decision making creates links between an important transit demographic and those working both inside and outside the state. Greater knowledge of transportation decision-making processes will enable young people to advocate for better services for themselves and other marginalized groups, continue to make good transportation choices, and provide them with skills for a career in transportation planning if they so choose. With more education on political processes, an introduction to a network of transportation professionals, and their own civic initiatives, young people could be part of a more active citizenry.

#### Debates about the topic are crucial to give students a foot in the transportation policy door—specialized knowledge of the policymaking details is a *prerequisite* to political participation.

Thomas 8 — Ren Thomas, Doctoral Student in Community and Regional Planning at the University of British Columbia, 2008 (“Engaged or Disinterested? Youth Political and Civic Participation in Canadian Transportation Planning,” *Critical Planning*, Volume 15, Issue 1, Summer, Available Online at http://renthomas.ca/wp-content/uploads/2008/02/thomas-article.pdf, Accessed 07-30-2012, p. 9-11)

Although young people do not typically show high rates of participation in formal political processes, a [end page 9] brief overview of public participation in transportation planning is useful to illustrate the difficulties citizens face in becoming formally involved in transportation planning. This overview also highlights the role youth advisory committees play in the context of top-down political processes.

Transportation planning is a complicated process, giving rise to a variety of ways to address political and civic participation. Many public and private actors are typically involved in the provision of public transit. While transit is generally the responsibility of municipalities, other actors are often involved: private rail or bus companies, regional planning authorities, and transit boards with both public and private appointees. Voting in provincial elections influences transportation decisions and funding, since money ultimately comes from the provincial government, but in an indirect fashion; the Minister of Transportation is appointed by the provincial Premier.

Transportation decision making is political in nature because there is constant conflict between those who want more funding for roads and highways, and those who want funding for transit, walking, and cycling infrastructure. Politicians and transit authorities are frequently in conflict over this issue. Municipalities, and neighborhoods within them, often compete for new transportation infrastructure, or protest against it. The appointment of the Minister of Transportation and funding decisions for municipalities have become increasingly politicized in the past decade as this conflict combines with air quality, climate change, and peak oil concerns.

In the Vancouver region, the South Coast British Columbia Transportation Authority (TransLink) is a regional body created by the provincial government. As a provincially created body, TransLink is vulnerable to the whims of the Premier and Minister of Transportation. As of October 2007, board members are private business people appointed by the province; municipal mayors also have a limited voice in the board’s decisions. TransLink’s mandate to manage road infrastructure, highways, bridges, and public transit makes it particularly political, and there is frequent conflict between members of the board and between the board and the provincial government. There is no place for citizens to get involved in formal decision making.

In contrast, the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) is owned and operated by the City of Toronto, although it receives provincial capital funding. Its operational costs are generated by transit fares. The Chair of the TTC is a city councillor appointed by the mayor. This means that the commission functions as a city committee, with regular meetings that are open to the public. There is also considerable public consultation for proposed projects and funding. While the decision making process is still political, and there is constant opposition to major infrastructure projects, the TTC only handles public transit infrastructure and is not responsible for roads and highways. As a permanent Committee, there is less vulnerability for major restructuring or governance reviews.

These are just two examples of the complex transportation planning governance in Canada; other cities and regions have different structures. In most cases, the formal political process for youth to have a voice in transportation infrastructure or funding would require a considerable knowledge of governance, the format of public meetings, and the [end page 10] details of the issues being discussed. In other words, the exact type of knowledge that young people have admitted they don’t have, which prevents them from participating politically.