

# Coalition Building

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A key strategy for getting what you want is working others in your community who have an interest in the same thing. There's power in numbers and diversity. You may want to effect change but lack the time, resources, or political power to accomplish it on your own. Working together, groups can accomplish much more than each could alone.

## Construct your Power Wheel

Take time to identify all the other groups you know who might join forces with you and yours to support your goals.



# Developing a Campaign and Action Plan

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This Section describes how to activate a network of key players from your neighborhood to the State House. The strategy chart helps you think about what it is that you want to accomplish (Goals), the resources you have to work with, who your partners are (Allies and Constituents), who you need to persuade to deliver what you're requesting (Decision makers), and what you and your coalition will need to do to get results.

Goals	Resources	Allies Constituents	Decision Makers	Tactics
Short Term				
Mid Term				
Long Term				



## Set a Goal:

Choose goals with a reasonable chance of success. This will allow you to build a strong network of supporters and form the lasting relationships with other stakeholders.



## Access Resources:

List the resources you have to influence decision maker. These can include your time, your neighbors' energy or skills, the ability to print materials, etc. (e.g. "two hours per week of my time", or "Rochelle's printer to print 100 flyers". One goal of the strategy chart is to be realistic about what you have at your disposal, so you can leverage your resources as efficiently as possible.



## Identify Your Targets:

While your end goal is to win over decision makers, your targets should also include those who can influence them. Build a list of those individuals or committees in key decision maker roles. Follow the calendars and agendas of relevant committees and identify where there is opportunity to provide public comment, or seek an opportunity to present your request on the committee's agenda.



## List Your Tactics:

Tactics are action that you and your partners take to convince your target audience to do what you want. Tactics include petitions, coalition letters, one-on-one meetings with your target, rallies and press coverage.

# Presenting Your Request

## Sample Coalition Letter



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Dear Candidates for The Office of Governor of Rhode Island,

We, the 36 undersigned organizations, call on Rhode Island's next Governor to make bold changes to bring our state's transportation infrastructure into the 21st century.

Rhode Island's outdated transportation system is failing to keep pace with the needs of our residents, our economy and our planet. We believe that Rhode Islanders deserve a transportation system that provides for their diverse mobility needs, reduces air pollution, improves local economic development, supports affordable housing development, and cuts greenhouse gas emissions.

# Develop a Pitch



## Introduction:

Think about the best way to introduce yourself. Tell who you are, and provide some very basic information about the neighborhood or service routes where you most want to see improved transit and how.



## Action:

You should have an “Ask” or specific request – this could include signing on to your coalition letter, signing a petition, or coming to a meeting. Make your ask clear and get people to join you.



## State the Problem:

What’s wrong with the status quo transit? Does it not get you where you need to go in a reasonable time? Is it not reliable or do the service hours end too early?



## Urgency:

Why should your audience act on this now? Is a lack of funding going to cause disruptive service cuts, cutting you off from your job?



## Solution:

What’s the solution you’re proposing? Is it adequate funding to maintain or enhance service? Is it earlier or later hours of service?



## Personal Story:

Close with your personal motivation for working on this issue. Your story doesn’t have to be directly related to the issue at hand – it just has to help connect people to you and your cause for better transit.

# Present to elected or appointed officials, community boards

This can be an informal coffee meeting with your representative on the city council or in the state legislature. Remember that YOU are their constituent.

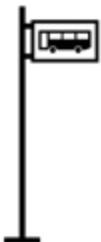
**Timing is everything.** The best time to engage an elected official is general once you already have a base of community support. Demonstrating that key players in the community support your initiative will show the elected official that it's safe to sign on to your effort.

**Be yourself, but be prepared.** Making your pitch concisely with a direct and clear 'ask' will help you stand out from the crowd and demonstrate that you respect the decision maker's time.

**The power of We.** If possible, bring others from other groups who support your initiative. Have each mention the number of people, businesses, etc. that they represent to demonstrate the influence they wield in the community.

**Always have an "Ask."** Remember to always close a meeting with a specific request. An effective request will be realistic and concrete. And ask should be actionable, specific and reasonable. Signing on to a letter, recruiting their colleagues to co-sponsor a bill, or approve the installation of a bus shelter in your neighborhood.

When presenting to public bodies, remember to keep it brief. Encourage your group members to make impassioned remarks, but to keep them short. Fill the room if you can, but make sure no one drones on, especially if they're repeating what others have said. If someone else said what you wanted to say, simply say that you second their point.



## TIP-STOP

**Make it easier for you and your group:** Use the resources and templates in the digital appendix where you'll find sample letters, links to others' public comments to decision makers, and ways to connect with your government representatives.

# Engage the Media

Media can be a helpful tool to raise the profile of your issue, recruit new activists and hold public officials accountable for supporting your cause.

Get to know the journalists that cover transportation in your local and statewide news media.

Make an Impact: News outlets looking to cover events or topics love stories that have a strong visual message. It helps attract reporters illustrate a story for them.

Have data ready: Be prepared to provide as much data as practical to demonstrate your point (e.g. buses along X route stop at 9PM leaving second shift workers without a ride home, or the trip time for workers to travel from Central Falls to manufacturing jobs at Quonset is 1 hour, 35 minutes one-way).

Leverage conflict: While it's important to begin running a positive campaign, a journalist's job is to identify opposing views on a topic. Don't be afraid to expose conflicting opinions. For example, a recent and popular move to eliminate the local car tax now means the State of Rhode Island budgets \$230 million annually to reimburse local municipalities for stopping the practice. Yet, State decision makers still have not allocated funding to implement the state-approved Transit Master Plan. How is that equitable for those who rely on public transit?

A Personal Touch: Reporters know that readers respond to a personal story. Do your best to find a person with a powerful story to speak with a reporter on behalf of your initiative. Or, tell your own personal story – it's probably more relevant and moving than you think.

