

Case Study



Client: Maryland Transit Administration

Industry: Transportation

Objective: Revise its capital planning process across eight transit “modes” to ensure that capital investments are aligned with agency objectives and that the budget is optimized.

“We are driving our capital planning process for 2009-2014 through the Decision Lens platform. Decision Lens is helping us to prioritize our capital needs and ensuring that our resources are being optimized to meet state objectives. It provides us with an innovative, streamlined approach that takes advantage of our managers’ diverse knowledge of our needs and provides a platform for them to participate in a meaningful way.”

Henry Kay, Deputy Administrator for Planning and Engineering, MTA

SUMMARY

The Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) faces numerous transportation needs with a fluctuating budget of several billion dollars. Each of the eight modes of transportation relies on a separate director to make critical decisions regarding the investments that will be made by his or her respective mode.

Across the MTA, this creates a challenge. The organization is divided, which slows down the decision-making process, creates conflicting priorities and makes it difficult for the administrator to ensure that the capital investments are meeting the objectives of the overall organization. MTA has numerous competing goals, such as growing ridership, preserving the system infrastructure, reducing costs, improving efficiency, making environmental enhancements and increasing partnerships and economic development across the state.

With Decision Lens, MTA was able to bridge the gap between each modal director, quantify the value of each project and develop an optimal budget that met the needs of the agency and its parent organization, the Maryland Department of Transportation, across a six-year budget cycle.

CHALLENGE

MTA relies on the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the state to dictate the level of expenditures and their overall budget. MTA faces frequent budget cuts with very little warning, forcing it to constantly shuffle its resources. Deciding on which projects to invest in, which ones to delay and even which ones to abandon is a daunting task.

MTA must assess the impact of its actions on commerce, passengers and major stakeholders. It must invest to achieve the continued goals of the organization, while balancing the needs of multiple modes of transportation to ensure the highest level of service at the most efficient cost.

SOLUTION

MTA worked with Decision Lens to develop a rigorous and repeatable approach to capital planning decision making. Using the Decision Lens platform, MTA integrated the priorities of every stakeholder as well as the entire group of decision makers. This earned the support of all the players involved in the process because, while they each voted their own positions, they knew that their priorities were integrated into the overall relative prioritization of objectives and initiatives.

Decision Lens allows flexibility to deal

with changing priorities and other business dynamics that MTA may face. While MTA's budget may change any time, Decision Lens is able to handle the shifts "on the fly" to re-allocate resources towards the best-value projects.

The separate modal directors are now able to meet the needs of their customers while taking each other's responsibilities into consideration. MTA's administrator can have the confidence that its capital program is aligned to the agency's objectives.

RESULTS

When their budget changes unexpectedly, MTA is now able to distribute its resources in an effective and timely manner. MTA is also able to explain why a funded project is more important than an unfunded project. As a result of working with Decision Lens, MTA established a robust, repeatable and efficient decision-making process that is able to adapt to an ever-changing environment.