





TRANSIT RACISM CAN KILL



Cynthia Wiggins, below, died in 1995 when she was hit by a truck while crossing a highway to get from a bus stop to a mall in Cheektowaga, N.Y. Her estate's suit charged that the mall's ban of some buses was racist.

Suit Charging Racism at Suburban Mall Is Settled

By DAVID W. CHEN

A suit accusing a shopping mall in suburban Buffalo of causing a teenager's death through racist transportation practices ended abruptly yesterday with a settlement of \$2.55 million.

The case involved Cynthia N. Wiggins, a 17-year-old black resident of Buffalo, who had taken a city bus to get to her job at the mall's food court in December 1995. Because the mall banned city buses on some routes from dropping passengers on its property, Ms. Wiggins had to cross a seven-lane highway — where she was hit and crushed by a dump truck.

After the accident, the Wiggins family and other members of the African-American community accused the mall, Walden Galleria in Cheektowaga, of trying to use the highway as a racial moat to exclude some city residents from the mall. The high-profile trial, which began Nov. 8, was expected to build into an emotional affair, brimming with images of racism.

But yesterday, lawyers for both sides announced that the mall's owner, Pyramid Companies of Syracuse, would pay \$2 million of the \$2.55 million settlement, over time, to Ms. Wiggins's son, who is now 4. It did not admit any wrongdoing. The Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority, which operates the bus line, agreed to pay \$300,000, and the truck driver,



John P. Busch, agreed to pay \$200,000.

"I think we were winning," said Johnnie L. Cochran Jr., who represented the Wiggins family. "But in the end, I think everyone felt that it was time for a healing process."

"If this trial had gone to a verdict, no side would have won, and it certainly would have gone to an appeal," said Albert J. D'Aquino, a Galleria lawyer. "The judge felt that it would be a divisive issue in the community."

Before the settlement, Mr. Cochran had begun to portray Ms. Wig-

gin's story as one of frustration and discrimination.

On a dismal December day, with snow drifts of up to eight feet, Ms. Wiggins had boarded the Route 4 Metro bus for the ride from Buffalo's predominantly black and low-income east side to the Galleria. Because the mall excluded Route 4 buses from its property, Ms. Wiggins got off at an intersection with no crosswalks or pedestrian signals, seven lanes of highway away from the mall.

She made it past six lanes before she was struck.

Later, officials from the Transportation Authority revealed that they had, over several years, repeatedly asked the mall to allow the bus onto the premises, but that the mall had always refused, fearful of racist reactions. Then, Mr. Cochran and numerous organizations in Buffalo began to question why the Route 4 bus was forbidden while charter buses were not.

In response, defense lawyers said that bus passengers had always had the option to transfer onto a bus that stopped closer to the mall. They said that the Galleria, which is private property, was not required to accommodate public transportation. And they noted that Ms. Wiggins was jaywalking when she was hit.

Shortly after Ms. Wiggins's death, the mall changed its bus policy, following the threat of a boycott by local civil rights groups and the Buffalo teachers' union.

- Transit discrimination killed 17-year old Cynthia Wiggins because Buffalo city buses were not allowed to stop at an upscale suburban mall
- The transit discrimination lawsuit was settled in November, 1999 for \$2.55 million









CONSOLIDATED FUNDING APPLICATION (CFA)

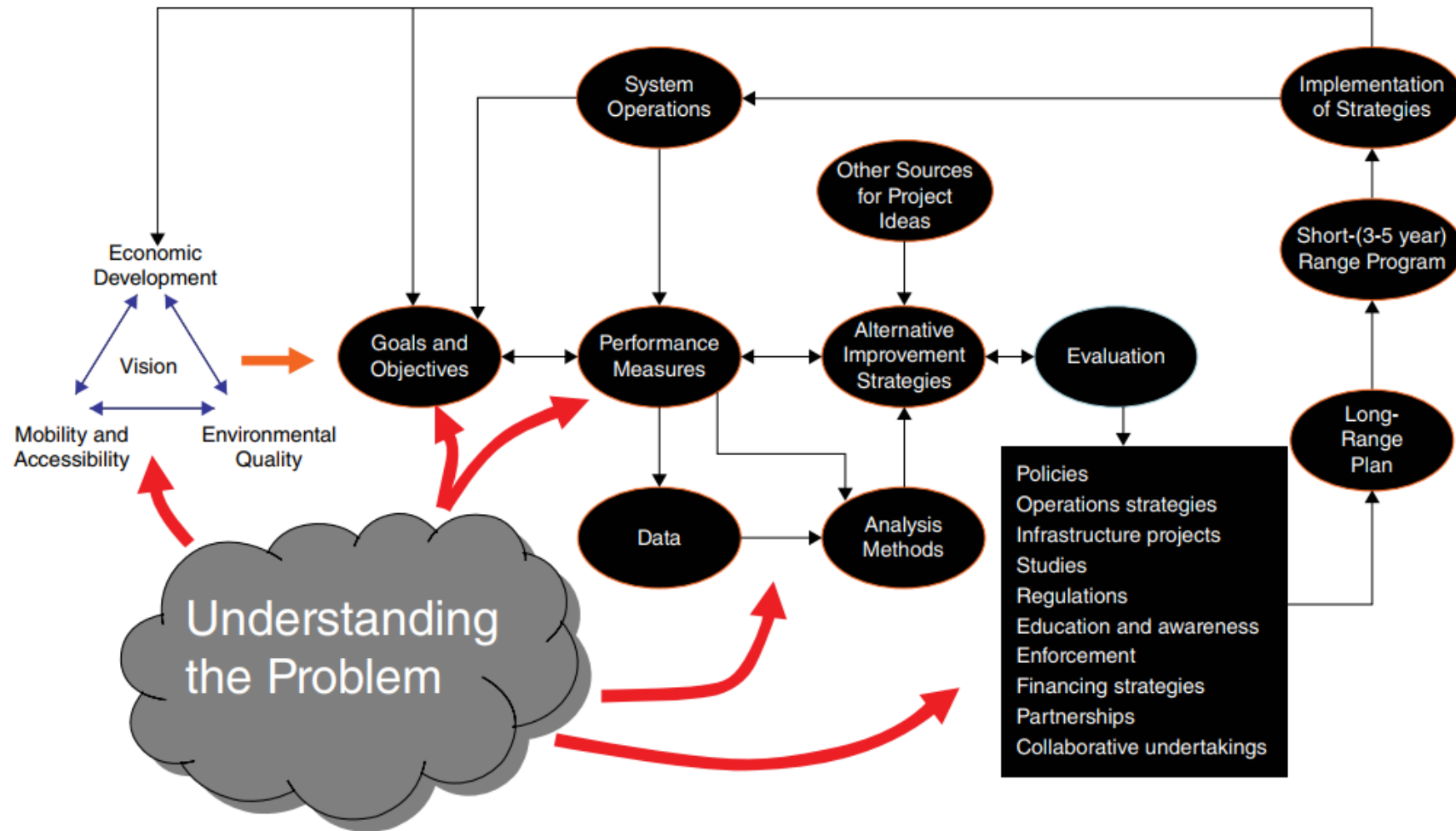
- Run through 7 state agencies (ESD, NYS Canal Corp, Homes and Community Renewal, Parks and Recreation, DOS, etc.)
- Largest opportunity for money
- Complete list at regionalcouncils.ny.gov
- Hunger Games – find what fits
- July 31st (4:00) deadline through the NYS grants portal

Central NY
Transportation



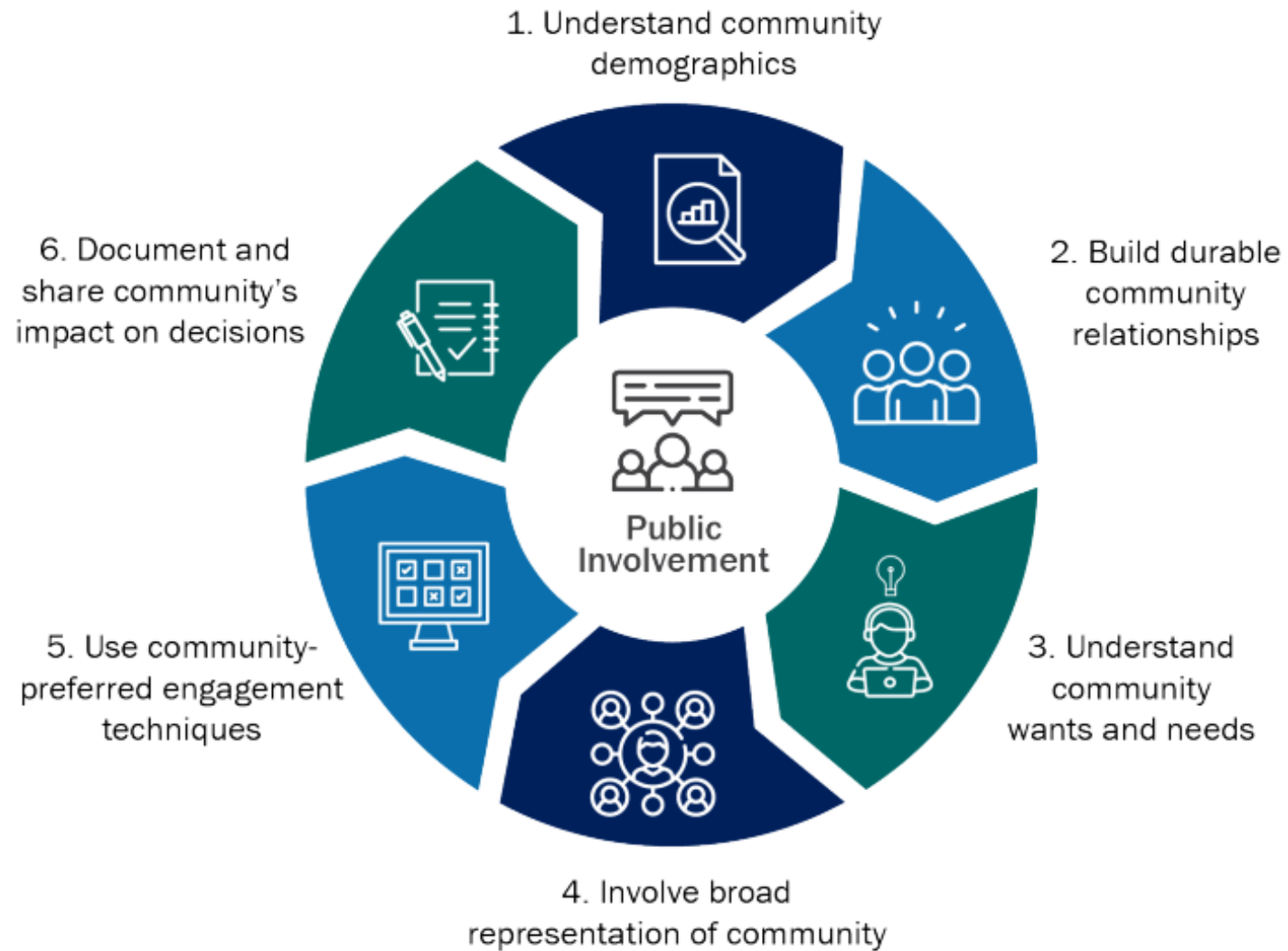
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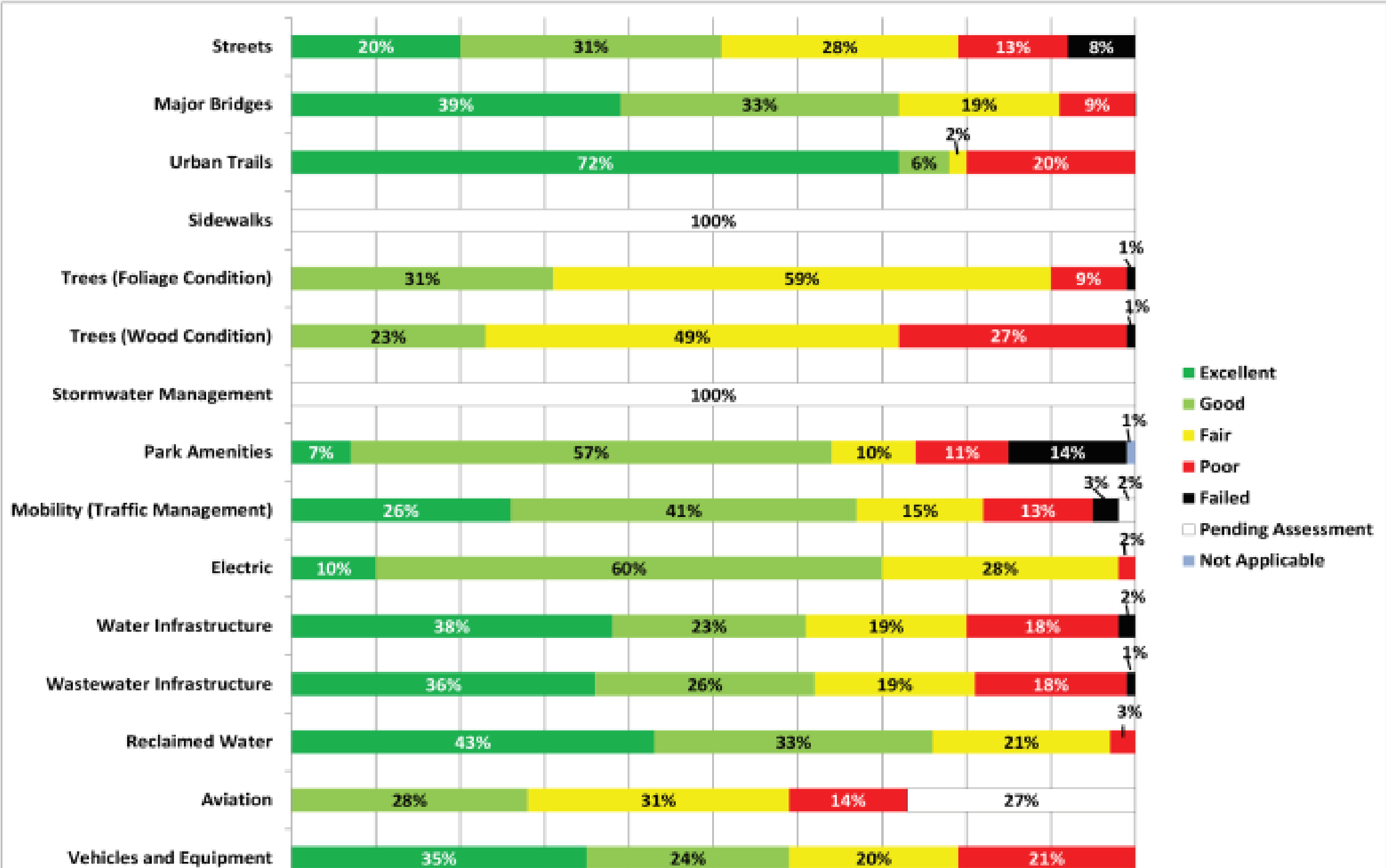
Figure 1-1. Conceptual Framework for Transportation Planning



Source: Adapted from Meyer and Miller, 2014, Reproduced with permission of M. Meyer.

Features of meaningful public involvement





Three Generations of Planning Directors

Three generations of Planning Directors came to Planning Board Chair Fred Wilcox's retirement party. Jonathan Kanter retired in 2010 and was followed by Sue Ritter (2011-2023) and current Director of Planning, C.J. Randall.



From Left to Right C.J. Randall, Jonathan Kanter, Fred Wilcox & Sue Ritter



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