



## The Issue

Many sustainability-related goals, such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions (including carbon) or protecting the natural environment often do not resonate with the general public. As a result, the efforts of public agencies to create more sustainable development based on these goals often fail to garner public support. This has created a situation in which the success of sustainability goals and initiatives is sometimes more dependent on effective communication strategies than on a project's sustainability merits or on an agency's technical capacity.

## The Research

This work seeks to answer how sustainability-focused community development efforts can be communicated in the most effective way to garner public support. Although sustainability and livability are deeply intertwined, the general population often does not perceive them equally. By merging the resources, expertise, and energy of SCI and the School of Journalism and Communication, we are fostering a heightened and engaged understanding of livability, its opportunities for communities, and a lasting cross-disciplinary partnership within the University of Oregon.

## The Questions

- How do agencies, scholars and citizens define livability?
- How do these definitions affect planning, urban design, and transportation project development and communication/outreach?
- How does incorporating livability principles into planning projects affect the outcome and funding of those plans?
- What aspects of livability resonate most with different populations?
- How can this information best inform public agencies for project development and effective communication strategies?

## Our Partners

- National Institute for Transportation and Communities
- Transportation for America
- Natural Resources Defense Council
- School of Journalism and Communication
- University of Oregon Environmental & Natural Resources Law Center
- City of Portland
- Portland METRO
- TriMet
- University of Oregon

# Major Research Theme Activities

**Nico Larco, AIA**  
SCI Co-Director  
nlarco@uoregon.edu

**Rebecca Lewis, Ph.D**  
SCI-Research Director  
rlewis9@uoregon.edu

## Framing Livability: A Strategic Communications Approach to Improving Support for Public Transportation in Oregon

Prof. David Remund, Ph.D, Nico Larco, AIA, Deb Morrison, Ph.D, Kelli Matthews

August 2015 - December 2016

Conducting formative research and developing, testing and refining messaging using the Powell/Division Transportation Corridor in Portland, OR as a case study.

### Audience

City of Portland, Portland METRO, TriMet, Gov. Agencies, Academics

## Effectiveness of Transportation Funding Mechanisms for Achieving National, State, and Metropolitan Economic, Health, and Other Livability Goals

Robert Zako, Ph.D, Prof. Rebecca Lewis, Ph.D

August 2015 - December 2016

This project examines how states and metropolitan planning organizations incorporate livability goals into transportation plans and funding decisions.

### Audience

NGOs, State Transportation Agencies, MPOs, Academics

## Defining Livability

Tyce Hermann, Prof. Rebecca Lewis, Ph.D

August 2015 - December 2016

The examination of academic studies related to definitions of livability, including citizen perceptions as well as the analytical review of state and local policies in Oregon to gain an understanding of how governments describe and define livability.

### Audience

NGOs, State Transportation Agencies, MPOs, Academics

## Successful Transportation Ballot Initiatives

Matthew Bean, Prof. Rebecca Lewis, Ph.D

August 2015 - March 2016

Inventories of transportation ballot initiatives in Oregon to analyze the language and content of successful and failed ballot initiatives in Oregon over the last 20 years.

### Audience

Academics, Local Agencies, NGOs

## Case Studies Development - Livability Communication

Matthew Nicholson, Prof. David Remund, Ph.D

August 2015 - March 2016

Using case studies to identify best practices in strategic communication regarding livability in different cities across the nation, and around the world, as appropriate.

### Audience

Academics, Local Agencies, NGOs

## SCI Research Themes

SCI Research Themes coordinate grant funded research, experts-in-residence, student research, lectures, and public outreach along a timely topic related to sustainability and the built environment. The activities in these themes are meant to bridge the gap that often exists between policymakers, city officials, practitioners, and academics.