

# Pedestrian Bridge

## Mini-Lesson



# Town Hall: Local Tradeoffs

## Building a Bridge in Local Politics

### Mini-Lesson Teacher Materials

#### Grade Level

9-12, U.S. Government and Civics,  
Economics, and World History and  
Geography

#### Standards

*W.80*

*GC.29*

*CI.26*

*E.01*

*APMicro CBA - 1, POL - 3*

#### Objectives

*Students will be able to identify the ways in which economic concerns affect policy decisions in local government.*

*Students will be able to understand the benefits of participating in community events such as town halls and identify the process of making complex decisions for a community.*

#### Time Needed

*55 Minutes*

#### Key Terms and People

Opportunity Costs, Tradeoff, Town Hall, City Revenue, Employment, Business Interests



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#### Lesson Overview

In this lesson, students will be introduced to a recent decision that local officials in Knoxville, TN are facing. A proposal has been put forward to build a pedestrian bridge across the Tennessee River, in a joint effort between the city and the University of Tennessee. This bridge would serve as a link between the university campus on the northern side of the river and the new residential and business district on the southern side. Students will study a position paper from city officials advocating for the bridge, as well as two dissenting perspectives. With this information, they will prepare to participate in a town hall discussion on a key aspect of local economic policy.

<b>Standards and Guidelines Alignment</b>		
<b>Tennessee State Standards</b>		
<b>World History and Geography</b>	<b>W.80</b>	Evaluate the impact of geospatial technologies (such as GPS and GIS) on retail, military, transportation, city planning, and communication)
<b>U.S. Government and Civics</b>	<b>GC.29</b>	Explain the differences among the types of local governments in Tennessee, including county, city, and metro governments, as well as the legal, fiscal, and operational relationships between them and the state government.
<b>Contemporary Issues</b>	<b>CI.26</b>	Identify and explain groups and individuals involved in current U.S. and Tennessee issues.
<b>Economics</b>	<b>E.01</b>	Explain how consumers and producers confront the condition of scarcity by making choices that involve opportunity costs and tradeoffs.
<b>AP Course Alignment</b>		
<b>AP Microeconomics</b>	<b>CBA - 1</b>	Rational economic decisions require the evaluation of costs and benefits.
	<b>POL - 3</b>	Private incentives can fail to account for all socially relevant considerations.
<b>IAC Guidelines</b>		
<b>Topic 6:</b> Tennessee State and Local Government	<b>IAC.T6.7</b>	Contrasting the responsibilities of government at the federal, state, and local levels (e.g., protection of individual rights and the provision of services such as law enforcement, welfare payments, and the building and funding of schools).

	<b>IAC.T6.9</b>	Identifying examples of tax-supported facilities and services provided by the Tennessee state government and by local governments. Explaining the major components of local government in Tennessee as described in Article VII of the state Constitution including, among others, the roles and functions of mayors, city councils, courts, sheriff's departments, and school boards in cities and counties.
<b>Topic 7: News And Media Literacy</b>	<b>IAC.T7.2</b>	Comparing examples of competing information and views about government and politics within a free press.
	<b>IAC.T7.3</b>	Utilizing news articles, editorials, editorial cartoons, and "op-ed" commentaries to research important topics.

**Activating Strategy**  
5 Minutes

*Ask students as a whole group to define the terms “opportunity costs” and “tradeoffs” and explain their relationship to one another.*

***Opportunity cost refers to the value of the next best alternative that is forgone when making a decision. Tradeoffs involve balancing between two or more options, recognizing that choosing one option means giving up the benefits of the others. The relationship between them is that every tradeoff inherently involves an opportunity cost, as choosing one alternative necessitates sacrificing the potential benefits of another.***

*Ask students if they have heard of a town hall. If they have not, define the term. If they have, ask them why some might go to a town hall to voice their opinion about a local policy decision or proposed project.*

***A town hall is a meeting hosted by a politician or public official where they might provide information on a topic or answer questions from constituents about a proposed policy or project.***

*Tell students that they will learn about a proposed project in Knoxville, TN, and that they will then use what they learn to prepare for a town hall where they can share their concerns about the project.*

**Instruction**  
40 Minutes

1. Distribute “**Handout A | City of Knoxville Position Paper,**” “**Handout B | Dissenting Perspectives,**” and “**Figure A | City of Knoxville Map.**” Ask students to read both handouts on their own or as a group. As students read, identify important locations on the map: the proposed bridge location, the University of Tennessee campus, the new residential/business area in South Knoxville, Market Square, and Old City. Make sure to note the relative size of the area.
2. Divide students into five groups and assign each group one of the following economic categories: city revenue, employment, housing, education, or business interests. Give students 10 minutes (provide additional time if students need it) to determine at least three concerns community members might have related to their categories.



3. The Town Hall

- a. Have students arrange their seats so that there is an inner circle of five chairs/desks surrounded by a larger outer circle for all other students.
- b. Each group should have one representative in the center circle at a time. Students not in the inner group should be taking notes on their skill sheet to answer the questions at the end.
- c. Act as the local government and ask students to share their concerns.
  - i. Push back where you can (it is okay if it varies from the information you have, the purpose is the discussion).
  - ii. If students have points that conflict or work together with other students, point that out (e.g. the city revenue group may say that they do not want tax revenue to go to a project that primarily benefits the university, whereas the education or housing group might say it is necessary from their perspective).
  - iii. Students may “tag” into the inner circle if they want to contribute directly. You may choose to move students in or out of the group as the discussion goes on. The goal should be to get each student to the inner circle at least once.

**Closing  
Argument**  
10 minutes

Instruct students to use the notes they took during the town hall to complete the closing argument questions on their skill sheet. Ask students:

- How did your ideas about the topic change during this activity, if at all? What caused your ideas to change, or why do you think your ideas did not change?
- What are the opportunity costs of building the bridge? What are the responsibilities of local government when making decisions based on these tradeoffs?
- What role does local government play in business, housing, and employment?

### KEY TERMS & PEOPLE\*

**Opportunity Costs** - The value of the next best alternative that is forgone when making a decision.

**Tradeoff** - involving the balancing of between two or more options, recognizing that choosing one option means giving up the benefits of the others.

**Town Hall** - a meeting hosted by a politician or public official where they might provide information on a topic or answer questions from the constituents about a proposed policy or project.

**City Revenue** - Money the city government expects to receive during the fiscal year.

**Employment** - A set of statistics, figures, and other considerations that affect public officials' introduction and implementation of public policy.

**Business interests** - A goal that corporations or organizations want to achieve or maintain for the betterment of their service(s).

### Cited Resources

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