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Walrus Research

## **Localism and Morning Edition**

How listeners evaluate local newscasts, breaks and segments within Morning Edition

NPR's Local News Initiative

August 2007

## Introduction

Following on last year's Core Values study – **A Sense of Place: The Value and Values of Localism in Public Radio** – our big research project for 2007 is **Localism and Morning Edition**.

This project was funded by NPR's Local News Initiative, which also provided major funding for last year's Core Values research.

In terms of listening, giving and underwriting, Morning Edition is public radio's most important program. Yet what listeners actually hear varies widely from market to market, as stations insert their local newscasts, breaks and segments.

In consultation with the Morning Edition Grad School, Walrus Research designed a series of program testing sessions to determine how listeners evaluate the local coverage that stations insert into Morning Edition.

Over 300 listeners used electronic response units to enter their moment-to-moment reaction to a variety of airchecks that were carefully selected from NPR stations around the country. They explained their reaction in written verbatims.

The overall goal of this research:

To build audience for Morning Edition and to enhance the value of Morning Edition to listeners, thereby increasing revenue from listeners and underwriters.

### **Credits**

Dana Davis Rehm directs NPR's Local News Initiative, a national effort to increase public radio's listener service by enhancing station capacity to provide quality, in-depth news.

The manager of LNI station projects is Marcia Alvar, who created and realized all of the PRPD Core Values projects.

At the 2006 PRPD conference, Scott Williams, Tim Emmons and Peter Dominowski presented a content analysis of Morning Edition as heard on stations around the country. That content analysis informed the design of this research, in particular the selection of airchecks for testing.

We are grateful to the general managers, program directors and news directors who supplied airchecks for testing from WHRV, KNPR, WABE, WDUQ, WGLT, WAMU, WNIJ, WUWM, KCFR, WBUR, KUT, KUOW and KJZZ.

Respondents for the program testing were recruited from the audiences of WBUR in Boston and KUT in Austin, with help from Sam Fleming, Paul La Camera, Hawk Mendenhall and Stewart Vanderwilt.

We are also grateful for the support of Jackie Nixon and Eric Nuzum at NPR, as well as Tanya Ott, who is working with the Morning Edition Grad School.

Bruce Fohr and his team at FMR Associates provided superior field services including the recruiting, data collection and data processing for this study.

George Bailey, PhD, is president of Walrus Research, an independent research firm with an established record of quantitative and qualitative projects for public radio stations, producers and networks. Non-proprietary publications are posted at [WalrusResearch.com](http://WalrusResearch.com).

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### Executive Summary

In consultation with the Morning Edition Grad School, Walrus Research designed a series of program testing sessions to determine how listeners evaluate the local coverage that stations insert into Morning Edition. We tested local newscasts, breaks and segments including interviews, features and commentaries.

- Morning Edition listeners assigned the highest value score to the Feature Newscast. This type of local newscast concentrates on a single story covered in depth for several minutes, rather than a string of brief news items.
- Among 4 local breaks, the best was presented in a Conversational Style, but traffic reports and underwriting spots drove the value down for local breaks.
- Within local breaks, Morning Edition listeners value local weather checks and forward promotion of upcoming network stories.
- Among 8 local segments, Morning Edition listeners assigned the highest value to a 2-way interview. Production of this aircheck was simple, yet the segment delivered in depth and intelligent information.
- Morning Edition listeners perceive high value in stories that are clearly written and coherently structured. Substance is valued over sophisticated production
- Only 3 local segments scored relatively high levels of value. Most of the local segments we tested were evaluated as falling into the mediocre range.
- We know that personal importance drives giving. If public stations are going to depend upon listener support, local coverage that performs in the mediocre value range is not good enough.
- Local coverage during Morning Edition is valued if it provides a wider context and a global connection. Facts must be interpreted for greater meaning.
- There is little value delivered by a local news story if it was conceived and developed from a merely local perspective. Listeners apply the same standards to local coverage as they do to NPR's network coverage.

### Research Design

The Morning Edition clock gives NPR stations ample opportunity to insert local newscasts, breaks and segments. While the network portions of Morning Edition sound the same wherever they are heard, the local inserts vary widely from market to market. Stations make all kinds of choices in how their local inserts should sound and what topics should be covered.

**Audience 2010** reported that Morning Edition generated 1.9 billion Listener Hours for public stations in 2005. Unfortunately, that listening was somewhat down from 2004 and 2003.

NPR's official figures showed no significant audience growth for Morning Edition over four years, from an AQH of 1,829,700 in Fall 2002 to 1,832,900 in Fall 2006.

In a flat trend, one might expect no growth in listener support. Yet we know that listening is not the only predictor of giving. **Audience 98: Public Service, Public Support** found and **The Public Radio Tracking Study** confirmed that public support is the result of public service. And public service has two components:

*Public support, like public service, is the product of two factors: the value listeners place on the programming, and the amount of listening done to the programming.*

Do public radio listeners stay tuned when NPR stations insert local coverage into Morning Edition? Given the limitations of Arbitron's diary methodology, there is no systematic way that we can obtain audience estimates for local inserts.

The more important question is -- do public radio listeners find significant value when NPR stations insert local coverage into Morning Edition?

## ***The Value of Local Coverage***

We probed the value question last year in our Core Values research study -- **Sense of Place: The Value and Values of Localism**. Our conclusion:

*Public radio listeners would value a station that covers their place with depth, intelligence and a wider perspective, just as NPR covers the nation and the world. But the actual performance of local news and information programming too often fails to deliver on its promise.*

Recall that the local news and talk programming we studied last year consisted of long-form “showcase” programs, such as WUNC’s The State of Things and WUWM’s At Ten. One reason was that local stations were making big investments in staff and resources for those programs. But in terms of listening and giving, Morning Edition is still the most important program on the schedule of NPR stations.

Accordingly, for 2007 we extended the tradition of Core Values research in two ways:

First, we designed this study to zoom in on the local newscasts, breaks and segments that stations insert into Morning Edition.

Second, we used a powerful research method – electronic program testing – which displays moment-to-moment reactions of listeners.

The way we use electronic program testing, the method can deliver both quantitative and qualitative findings.

FMR’s EARS system outputs a video graph of quantitative scores displayed over the audio airchecks that were tested. We have 48 minutes of moment-to-moment video graphs, which illustrate in microformatic detail how target listeners reacted to the Morning Edition airchecks.

We also collected 135 pages of written verbatims, in which our respondents explained in personal terms the qualitative reasons for their evaluations.

Microformatic video graphs along with explanatory written verbatims can provide extremely useful guidance to public radio producers. The results of this research will be integrated into the LNI’s Morning Edition Grad School.

## **Personal Importance**

The concept of personal importance was central to **Audience 98** and **The Public Radio Tracking Study**.

There is no doubt that public radio programming – especially NPR’s in depth news and information – can be important in the lives of our listeners. In this study, early in each session before we got started with the airchecks, we asked respondents in Austin and Boston to consider this statement:

“THE NEWS AND INFORMATION PROGRAMMING ON [KUT 90.5 FM/WBUR 90.9 FM] IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF MY LIFE. IF IT WENT AWAY I WOULD MISS IT.”

82 percent strongly agreed!

Before we played the audio, we gave respondents clear instructions as to how they were to evaluate the airchecks. Here is part of the moderator’s script:

*The scale we are using this evening is personal importance or value to you. Recall the way we defined personal importance just a while ago. The statement was “this programming is an important part of my life. I would miss it if it went away.”*

*Valuable programming is that which is personally important in your life.*

*When you are listening to the program examples, think about value . . .*

We asked our respondents to evaluate the airchecks on a 9-point scale of personal importance or value:

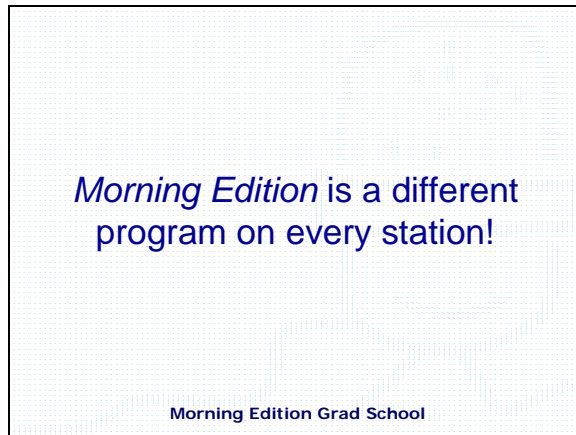
*If I were listening to radio, I would consider this kind of programming to be:*

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>
<i>Not Valuable</i>				<i>Somewhat</i>				<i>Highly</i>
<i>To Me</i>				<i>Valuable</i>				<i>Valuable</i>
								<i>To Me</i>

So long as public radio depends upon listener support, local coverage that falls in the middle of the value scale – somewhat valuable – will not be good enough.

## MEGS Typology

At the 2006 PRPD conference, Scott Williams, Tim Emmons and Peter Dominowski of the Morning Edition Grad School presented a striking content analysis of how various stations deconstruct NPR's Morning Edition. Below are their main points:



<p><b>The Moral of The Story</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Morning Edition is the most important program on your station</li><li>• It's not <i>just</i> a national program. What your station does – how well it executes – greatly influences listening</li><li>• Morning Edition merits considerable attention and resources – probably more than you're devoting to it now!</li></ul> <p>Morning Edition Grad School</p>	<p><b>Excellent Journalism</b></p> <p>Your reporting must be great all the time. Great stories, concisely edited, well produced and presented.</p> <p>Listeners expect NPR quality. When choosing, ALWAYS choose quality over quantity</p> <p>Morning Edition Grad School</p>
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## Localism and Morning Edition

We asked the MEGS faculty to serve as consultants on this research. Their role was to select airchecks that represent the various ways that stations produce local inserts for Morning Edition. We would use those airchecks for program testing.

MEGS came up with a typology – a description of the various approaches to local inserts that are heard around the country. The following is the MEGS typology of local newscasts:

### ***MEGS Types of Local Newscasts***

**Commercial:** This is the newscast we all grew up hearing. It has lots of content, but the stories tend toward crime, scandal and traffic. Audio quality is not a high priority, especially for actualities. Traffic reports are delivered by an external service, which often does not sound like the rest of the station or even the newscast.

**Frantic:** While the subject matter is more aligned with what listeners hear during Morning Edition the presentation is not. It's faster than NPR, and the goal seems to be to pack as much information into the news hole as possible. These newscasts can be well done – the question is whether the type is acceptable to public radio listeners.

**NPR-Style:** The subject matter for this newscast may be much like the “frantic” style but the presentation is much more like what listeners hear from Carl Kassell or Corey Flintoff. A reasonable mix of readers and wraps is typical. There is nothing groundbreaking here, but special attention is paid to style.

**Feature:** Stations in this type place a highly produced feature in the newscast segment at the top of the hour. Construction is Billboard, NPR News I and II, Local Feature, Segment A. Feature may be local or regional.

Keep in mind that the term “feature newscast” does not mean light or fluffy. A better term might be “long-form newscast” or “one story in depth.”

Also note that the aircheck selected by MEGS actually ran at the bottom of the hour.

The following is the MEGS typology of local breaks and segments:

### ***MEGS Types of Local Breaks***

The primary breaks within Morning Edition are at :19 and :49 past the hour.

These breaks often contain traffic, weather and headlines, and typically also include underwriting and promotion. Three styles of delivery are evident:

**Commercial-like:** A delivery similar to all news commercial stations combined with pre-produced underwriting and packaged traffic reports from a service.

**Somewhat Bombastic:** A delivery between commercial and conversational, but not exactly in line with the conversational approach of a Steve Inskeep.

**Conversational:** A style matching the NPR hosts.

### ***MEGS Types of Local Segments***

Public radio stations often cover NPR segments to air local, regional or national features. The C segment is most often covered, and some stations cover the E segment as well.

The local station runs a local feature, commentary or review from 35:30 to 40:00 past the hour. The main distinguishing feature among stations is the level of expertise – especially in editing.

Some stations use the 8-1/2 E segment for local material. While this is a long avail and editing is an issue, there are examples of good, feature-style, NPR quality work as well.

Structurally, local segments may take the form of a scripted commentary, a two-way interview or an in depth feature report.

### ***Design of Program Examples***

In a program testing session, target listeners are exposed to carefully selected program examples. The idea is to simulate radio listening while manipulating types of content.

All of the listeners that we recruited were quite familiar with Morning Edition as heard on either WBUR in Boston or KUT in Austin. 60 percent listened to Morning Edition 4-5 days per week, while 40 percent listened 2-3 days per week.

We designed the program examples according to these principles:

- Each program example would follow the Morning Edition clock, starting out with a newscast. Segments would be separated by a station break.
- The local coverage we were testing would be set in context. That is, we included some of the network feed that would lead into the local material.

The MEGS faculty selected 16 representative airchecks from stations around the country. The airchecks consisted of 4 newscasts, 4 breaks and 8 segments.

We organized those airchecks into 4 program examples, following this outline:

Program Example 1 (12 minutes)  
3 min Newscast  
3 min Segment  
3 min Break  
3 min Segment

And so on for program examples 2, 3 and 4. Of course, we rotated the program examples from session to session, to control for any possible order effect.

### **Controlling for Familiarity**

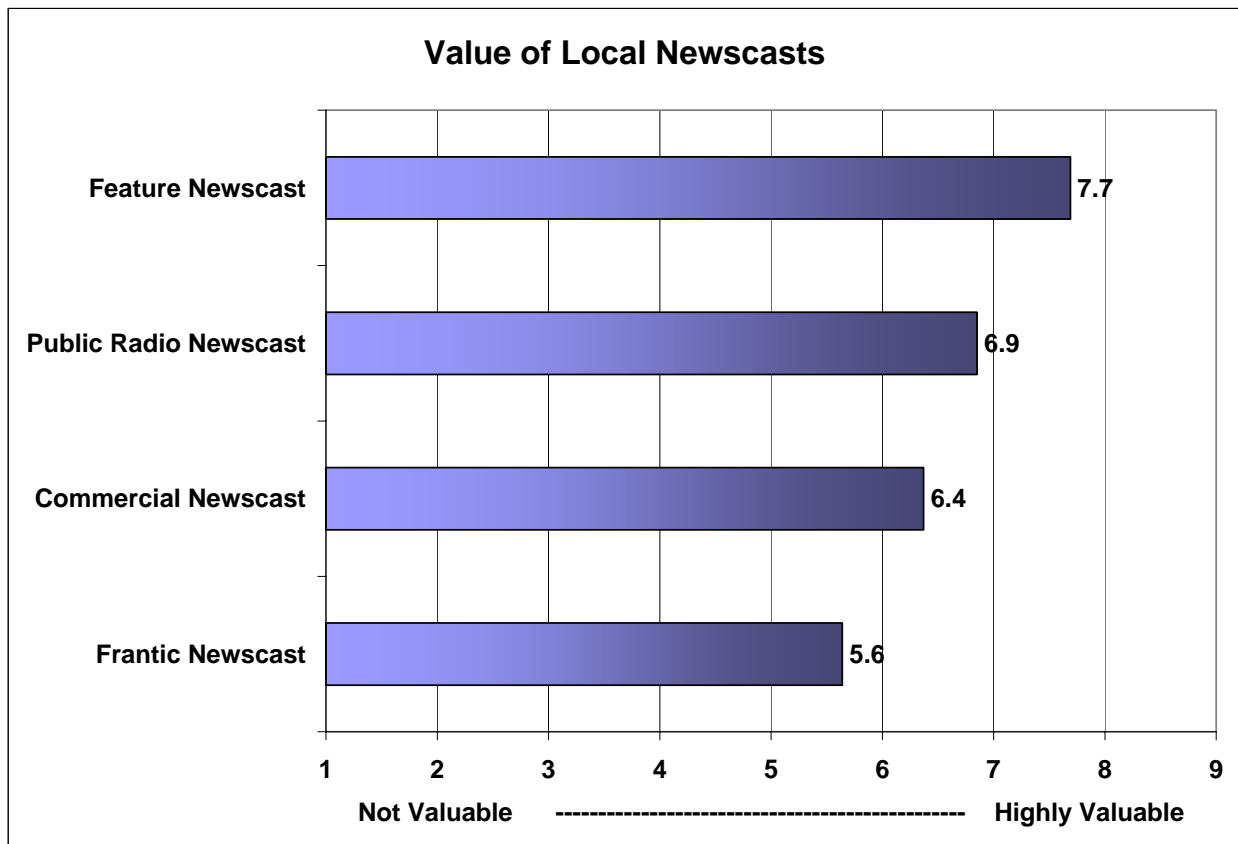
We controlled for familiarity by testing 2 WBUR airchecks and 2 KUT airchecks in both markets. The differences were minimal between Boston and Austin.

12 of the airchecks were unfamiliar to respondents in Boston and Austin. Of those, one aircheck scored the highest of all 16 we tested, and another scored the lowest, so we found that familiarity did not guarantee either tough criticism or an easy pass.

## Value of Local Newscasts

The local newscasts were presented in context, as they are normally heard by Morning Edition listeners. That is, the aircheck opened with about 30 seconds of the wrap up of the NPR network newscast before the local anchor came in.

The chart below shows the average value score across the **critical elements** of the local newscast airchecks. By **critical elements** we mean just the local coverage, not the contextual network feed.



Morning Edition listeners in Austin and Boston assigned the highest value score to the Feature Newscast. This type of local newscast concentrates on a single story covered in depth for several minutes, rather than a string of brief local news items.

7.7 out of 9 possible points is a very high evaluation. In fact, this local newscast in depth achieved the highest value score of all of the 16 local newscasts, breaks and segments that we tested in this study. This aircheck was contributed by WUWM.

## Localism and Morning Edition

Among the local newscasts, the second highest evaluation, 6.9 out of 9 points, went to the Public Radio Newscast. The aircheck we tested consisted of relatively few stories with each covered in moderate depth, perhaps 30 seconds per story. The style of its presentation was similar to an NPR network newscast. This aircheck was contributed by KUOW.

Somewhat lower on the value scale, the Commercial Newscast scored 6.4 out of 9 points. The model for this aircheck seemed to be commercial radio, leading with local weather and traffic before going into the news itself. This aircheck was contributed by WDUQ.

Respondents assigned the lowest value, 5.6 points, to the Frantic Newscast. This type is characterized by a local anchor who speeds through copy at a rate that is faster than the NPR news readers. This aircheck was contributed by WHRV.

### **Microformatics**

We know from the 2006 **Sense of Place** research that public radio listeners evaluate local news programming on a microformatic level.

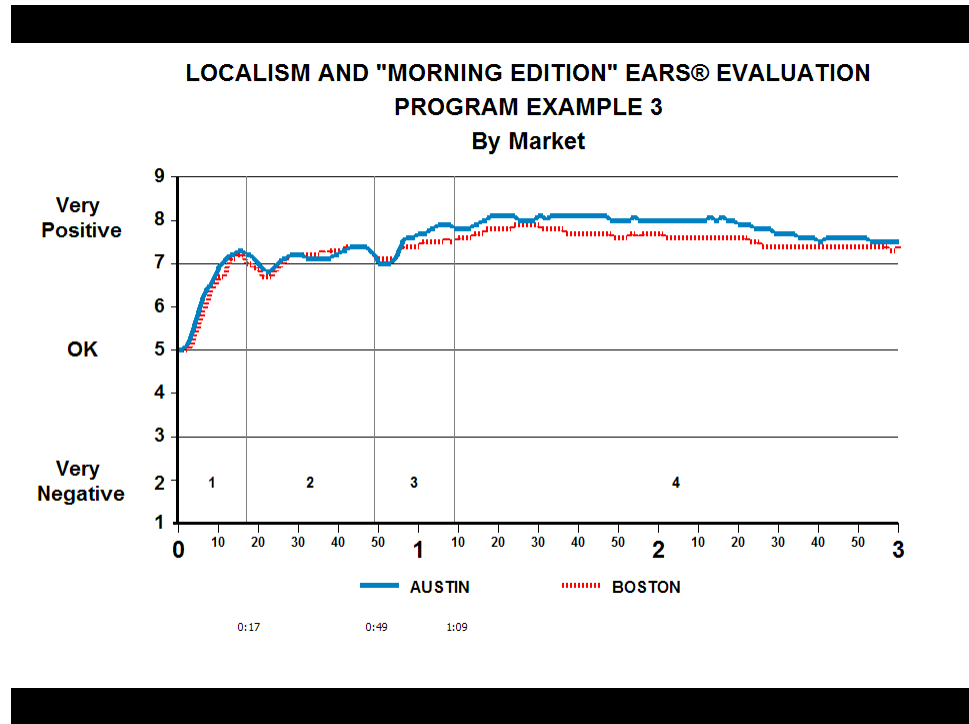
They pay attention to the fine details of composition like word choice, sentence structure, organization, tone of voice, pacing and editing. They value factual information, authoritative sources and balanced perspectives – all of which lead to that most important quality, depth.

You need to listen to the audio that we tested to fully understand the microformatic differences between the four types of local newscasts. Close listening to the airchecks would definitely be helpful for producers who want to learn from this research.

The airchecks may be heard on FMR's video graphs, which display moving scores on a moment-to-moment basis, as the airchecks play on the soundtrack. The FMR video graphs play on computer and are controlled by Windows Media Player.

In this report we printed still snapshots from those video graphs.

**Microformatics: Feature Newscast**



In the chart above, the vertical axis is value on a scale of 1 to 9. Respondents set their units to a neutral 5 score at the start of each programming example.

The horizontal axis is time – the first three minutes of this program example, which included the Feature Newscast.

Elements of programming are numbered – 1, 2, 3, 4. Each element is annotated in the following table. The scores below indicate the ending score for each element.

Element	Time	Total	Market	
			Austin	Boston
<i>WUWM NPR Network</i>				
1. Fade-in NPR News story (North Korea)/Program ID (Jean Cochran)	0:00-0:17	7.1	7.2	7.0
<i>WUWM Local Newscast</i>				
2. Time/Station ID/WUWM news story (political issues ads)/Story forward promote (Bob Bach)	0:17-0:49	7.2	7.2	7.2
3. Feature Newscast intro (universal healthcare plans)(Bach)	0:49-1:09	7.7	7.8	7.5
4. Feature Newscast (Ann-Elise Henzl)	1:09-3:03	7.4	7.4	7.3

### Observations

This aircheck came from the bottom of the hour. Hearing just 17 seconds of an NPR network news story on North Korea, our respondents pushed the value scale up to 7.1. It is not surprising that public radio listeners perceive high value in international and world news as heard on Morning Edition.

What may be surprising is how the value scores rose even higher for a local newscast.

This Feature Newscast was dedicated to in depth coverage of a single important issue in the Wisconsin legislature, state funding for universal healthcare. Element #4 on the graph consisted of the first two minutes of a long-form report. The value scores approached 8 on the 9-point scale and stayed high.

The overall average value score was 7.7, making this aircheck the highest scoring of all of the 16 airchecks that we tested. The verbatims below were written by our respondents to explain their evaluations:

### Verbatims

Aus	KUT-FM	KGSR-FM	F	25-44	The program about universal healthcare in Wisconsin was valuable to me. I found it important to hear details of the Democratic plan (cost, etc.) and to hear the Republican response. This issue seems to be important to a wide range of people.
Aus	KUT-FM	KGSR-FM	F	45-65	Healthcare feature was great. I have experienced difficulty with health insurance and am convinced that universal healthcare is the way to go in our country. I like that they presented both Democratic and Republican view points.
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-AM	M	25-44	The one on the health insurance benefit provided by a state using payroll deductions. Both sides of the aisle were featured, the costs and benefits discussed, but the conclusions were left for the listener to draw.
Aus	KUT-FM	KOKE-AM	F	45-65	The segment on healthcare. Wisconsin is a very progressive state. Their "senior care" program, which my mother has, is wonderful. I want to know the pro/con arguments and political ramifications for the legislative deliberation.
Aus	KUT-FM	KOOP-FM	F	25-44	The most valuable piece was on healthcare for state residents. This explained the different sides of the debate and the issue was happening in the present time so I as a citizen could take action based on the information I received in the story.

## Localism and Morning Edition

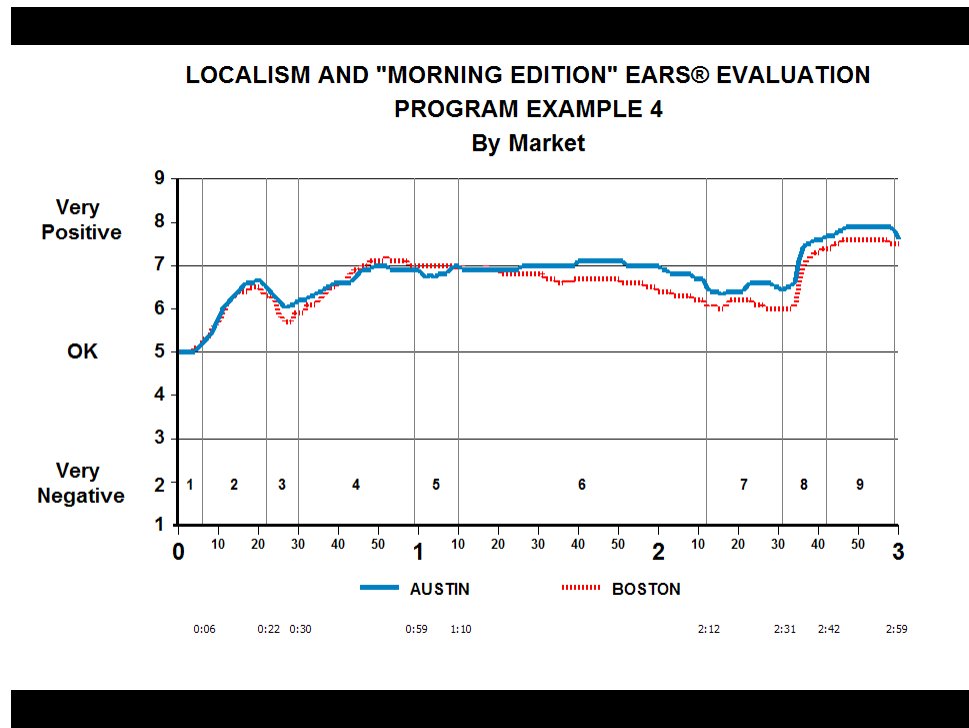
Bos	WBUR-FM	WNYC-AM	M	25-44	The piece on healthcare reform in Wisconsin was superb. It was balanced, clear, detailed, engaging and had a wonderful narrative flow.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	F	25-44	The health insurance example stands out as something valuable. It contained a lot of detail about costs and good interviews from people on each side of the issue explaining their points of view.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	F	25-44	Healthcare story – I liked it because it seemed balanced, with many points of view and opinions. Consider many of the ramifications – conclusions I wouldn't come to on my own, especially without coffee in me.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	F	45-65	The healthcare was great. It presented a solid background so I understood the issue and program and then went to reactions from both sides which was fair.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	F	45-65	Health insurance was very valuable – I'm interested in it and so it really caught my attention. The story reflected both sides of the debate (Democrats and Republicans) and explained the different tiers of insurance that could be purchased.
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-AM	F	45-65	Universal healthcare – needed more reporting about positive impact on WI business. If funds are collected via payroll deduction, what impact might that have on WI businesses ability to compete intra and inter state? Reporting not clear or deep enough.
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-AM	M	45-65	The story about healthcare was not in-depth enough to help form an opinion. It felt rushed and maybe it is too complex of an item for single reporting. Maybe the week-long series is a good place for this story.
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	F	25-44	The Wisconsin healthcare issue was good with its statistics, but it would be nice to hear more about the quality of care for the individuals involved and their opinions about it.
Bos	WBUR-FM	NONE	F	25-44	Universal health care – wanted to know how they are paying for it and how it is universal if it's a payroll deduction.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	F	45-65	The Democratic health insurance bill would have increased value if specifics of the bill were reviewed, and both Democrats and Republicans were interviewed. Also the corporate contribution and how payroll deduction works would be of interest.

## Verbatim Summary

The Feature Newscast was valued for its long-form coverage of an important topic – universal healthcare. The package gave factual information from a variety of voices. Both sides were balanced. It provided a comprehensive analysis of a complex issue without any richly produced audio.

In our 2006 **Sense of Place** research we found that public radio listeners are thinkers, meaning that their minds are working as they follow a story. John Stark called that “story angling.” Their suggested improvement for this Feature Newscast was to add even more depth, such as explaining how the payroll deductions would work.

**Microformatics: Public Radio Newscast**



The chart above shows moment-to-moment evaluation of the aircheck selected to represent a Public Radio Newscast. The **critical elements** begin with element #4, which was a local news item about workers at the Hanford nuclear plant.

Element	Time	Total	Market	
			Austin	Boston
<i>KUOW NPR Network</i>				
1. Fade-in NPR News story (Dakar)	0:00-0:06	5.2	5.2	5.3
2. NPR News story (Nigerian hostages)/Program ID (Paul Brown)	0:06-0:22	6.4	6.5	6.3
<i>KUOW Local Newscast</i>				
3. Station ID/Time (Derrick Long)	0:22-0:30	6.1	6.2	5.9
4. <b>KUOW news story (Hanford Nuclear Reservation workers) (Long)</b>	<b>0:30-0:59</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>7.0</b>
5. <b>KUOW news story intro (damaged park trails) (Long)</b>	<b>0:59-1:10</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>6.9</b>
6. <b>KUOW news story (damaged park trails)(Patricia Murphy)</b>	<b>1:10-2:12</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>6.1</b>
7. <b>KUOW news story (City Council “no” to 5-story waterfront building) (Long)</b>	<b>2:12-2:31</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>6.0</b>
8. <b>KUOW news story intro (Oregon healthcare plans) (Long)</b>	<b>2:31-2:42</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>7.4</b>
9. <b>KUOW news story (Oregon healthcare plans)(Chris Lehman)</b>	<b>2:42-2:59</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>7.5</b>

### Observations

At the start of this aircheck, 22 seconds of NPR news about Africa got the value scale rising up to 6.4. The evaluation improved further up to 7.0 during the first local news story about compensation to workers who may have been injured at a nuke plant.

Elements #6 and #7 were stories about the local environment – damage to trails in a park and a city zoning decision. The value score dropped somewhat to 6.2.

But our respondents pushed the value score up to 7.7 for a story about healthcare in the state of Oregon. KUOW participates in the Northwest Public Affairs Network, a hub of stations that share regional stories.

### Verbatims

Aus	KUT-FM	KERA-FM	F	25-44	The story of Oregon moving toward universal healthcare was such an important issue – must be spoken about in order to gain momentum. Was also legitimized by state representative's sponsorship.
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-AM	F	45-65	Oregon health coverage for uninsured. It's a subject of interest to me professionally, and I am curious about states taking initiative in this previous federal arena. Oregon is a "socialistic" state unlike Texas. Cost to society of uncared for is great.
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-AM	M	45-65	Health insurance story – healthcare costs and the possible changes that could be made. The story about the trails in Washington perked my interest because of my own interest in outdoor activities.
Aus	KUT-FM	KOOP-FM	M	25-44	Story on weather damage to Washington park trails was very interesting. Had no idea it could cost so much to keep a nature trail open. Makes you wonder. I'd enjoy follow-up, is there a volunteer initiative, etc. It was also number heavy, which I like.
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	F	45-65	Universal healthcare in Oregon – this issue for every state and our nation is very important to me. I wanted even more information on how it would work and be paid for. I liked hearing the opinions, figures, and questions compared to California.
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	F	45-65	The piece about restoring damaged nature trails was especially valuable. The country as a whole and Texas in particular has begun to ignore our national resources for recreation and preservation.

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Bos	WBUR-FM	NONE	F	25-44	Oregon universal healthcare piece. Good story because it is such a hot button issue in the presidential race. I found it informative because I did not realize that Oregon was moving that way.
Bos	WBUR-FM	NONE	M	45-65	The segment on Oregon state health insurance hit a chord with me. This is a subject that I feel strongly about (universal health coverage) and so such articles are valuable to me. I'd talk about it in the office.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WBOS-FM	F	45-65	Riveting to hear about weather damage to the hiking trails in the Northwest – amazing cost projected for repairs. Brings up the question of how much we should (or should not) be "managing" the wild.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WBZ-AM	M	25-44	The story from Portland, Oregon about health insurance was valuable because this issue is national in scope and desperately needs to be addressed and resolved.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	M	45-65	Oregon's universal healthcare. It gave the names of state senators who were sponsoring legislation. I like this kind of info about my elected officials – what they are up to.
Aus	KUT-FM	KGSR-FM	M	25-44	Oregonian universal healthcare. The topic is fascinating – a state departing from the norm. Healthcare being so important. There was little depth to this story – I wanted more.
Aus	KUT-FM	KOOP-FM	F	25-44	The piece on Oregon healthcare needed to be more in depth.
Bos	WBUR-FM	NONE	M	25-44	Universal healthcare – needs more detail!
Bos	WBUR-FM	WBZ-AM	M	45-65	The story on wind and rain damage to hiking trails in the Pacific Northwest left more questions than answers. Lots of dry numbers and statistics without any interpretation.
Bos	WGBH-FM	WBUR-FM	F	25-44	The damaged trails by flood – I thought it could have been better analyzed. It was too "this trail," "that trail" are damaged – no real action or response about what would/could/should be done.

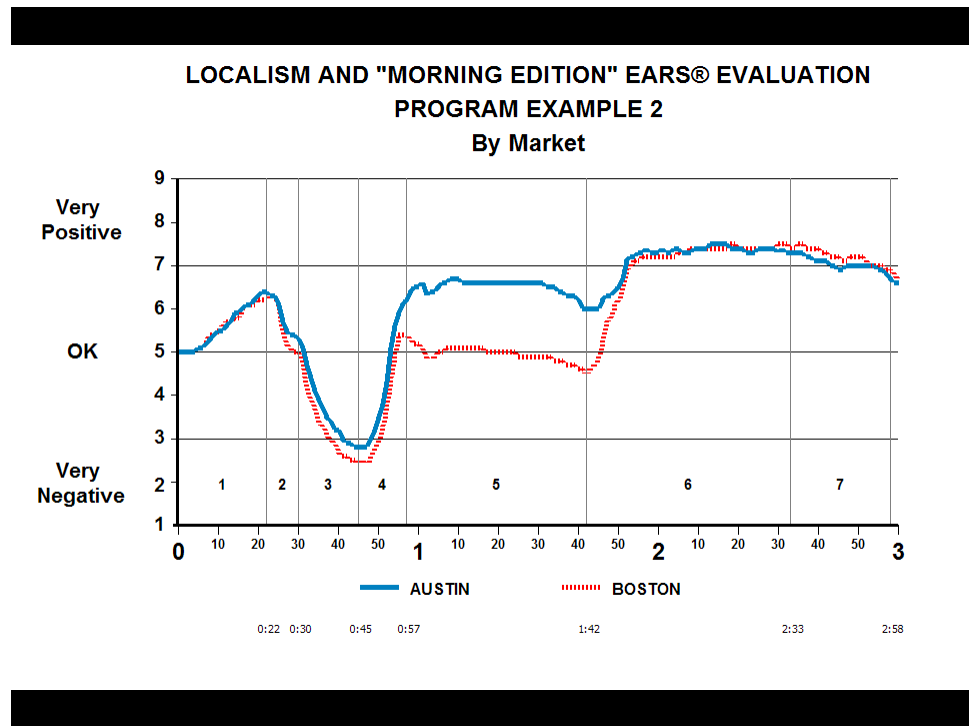
## Verbatim Summary

The topic of universal healthcare is extremely important to our listeners. The Seattle station covered a debate in the Oregon legislature because that is a neighboring state, but the story was highly valued by respondents as far away as Austin and Boston.

Another guaranteed issue for public radio listeners is the environment. They wanted to hear more about the trails and the greater implications of managing nature.

For improvement, our respondents would value even more information and more depth. Just as we found in our 2006 **Sense of Place** research, public radio listeners value facts and data, along with meaningful interpretation of the numbers. They want to learn about the issue so they can take progressive action.

**Microformatics: Commercial Newscast**



Recorded from a public radio station, this type of newscast is called a Commercial Newscast in the MEGS typology. In the table below, note that **critical elements #4-7** lead off with time, weather and traffic, after the Lendingtree underwriting credit.

This aircheck was contributed by WDUQ.

Element	Time	Total	Market	
			Austin	Boston
<i>WDUQ NPR Network</i>				
1. Fade-in NPR News story (special election)/Program ID (Ina Jaffey)	0:00-0:22	6.3	6.4	6.2
2. NPR News market report/Network ID (Carl Kasell)	0:22-0:30	5.2	5.3	5.0
<i>WDUQ Local Newscast</i>				
3. WDUQ underwriting announcement (Lendingtree.com)	0:30-0:45	2.6	2.8	2.4
4. Station ID/Program ID/Time/Weather/Traffic intro (Alexandria)	0:45-0:57	5.8	6.2	5.4
5. Traffic report/Station ID/Program ID (John Fab)	0:57-1:42	5.3	6.0	4.5
6. WDUQ news story (Immigration Reform Bill)(Alexandria)	1:42-2:33	7.4	7.3	7.4
7. WDUQ news story (Immigrant Rights Coalition)(Alexandria)	2:33-2:58	6.8	6.7	6.9

### Observations

Respondents slammed the underwriting credit which was read before the start of this local newscast. After 15 seconds of Lendingtree the value score crashed to a very negative 2.6 out of 9 points.

The station's local traffic report brought the value only up to neutral 5.3.

The real news got started at 1:42 with elements #6 and 7. The value score climbed to 7.4 for the station's local coverage of the national immigration bill. Value faded to 6.8 as the newscast moved on to a story about a local Hispanic organization.

So while this aircheck of a Commercial Newscast earned a 6.4 overall score, the average alone is deceiving. Leading with traffic drove the average down.

### Verbatims

Aus	KUT-FM	BBC	M	25-44	The excerpt from PA on the Immigration Reform Bill in Congress. It was valuable because it is a sensitive topic for myself and the entire nation and is something that will affect all Americans in some way.
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-AM	F	45-65	Living in a state with 800 miles of border shared with another country, immigration reform is of great interest. Family reunification is an issue that is important. I find the split down party lines described unexplainable, except for fiscal reasons.
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-FM	F	25-44	I was interested in the immigration story, but would have liked more details and interviews with lawmakers or those who are affected by immigration. I realized that while weather and traffic are boring, it is an important part of news radio.
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	F	25-44	Passage of immigration bill – I know people who are here illegally and their ability to remain here in the safety (relatively) of our non-violent society is important to me.
Aus	KUT-FM	WNYC-AM	F	25-44	The feature on immigration – timely, obviously a current headline issue, but presented with more depth and time than just a sound bite.
Bos	WBUR-FM	NONE	F	25-44	Immigration bill info – love federal government info. Relevant, talked to senator, gave background. Continued on with local news on same issue. All tied together nicely.
Bos	WBUR-FM	NONE	F	25-44	The story on immigration reform – I liked how it moved from national news regarding the senate bill to the local story about Hispanic faith-based coalition. Added depth to coverage and localized it – made it feel more relevant to my community.

## Localism and Morning Edition

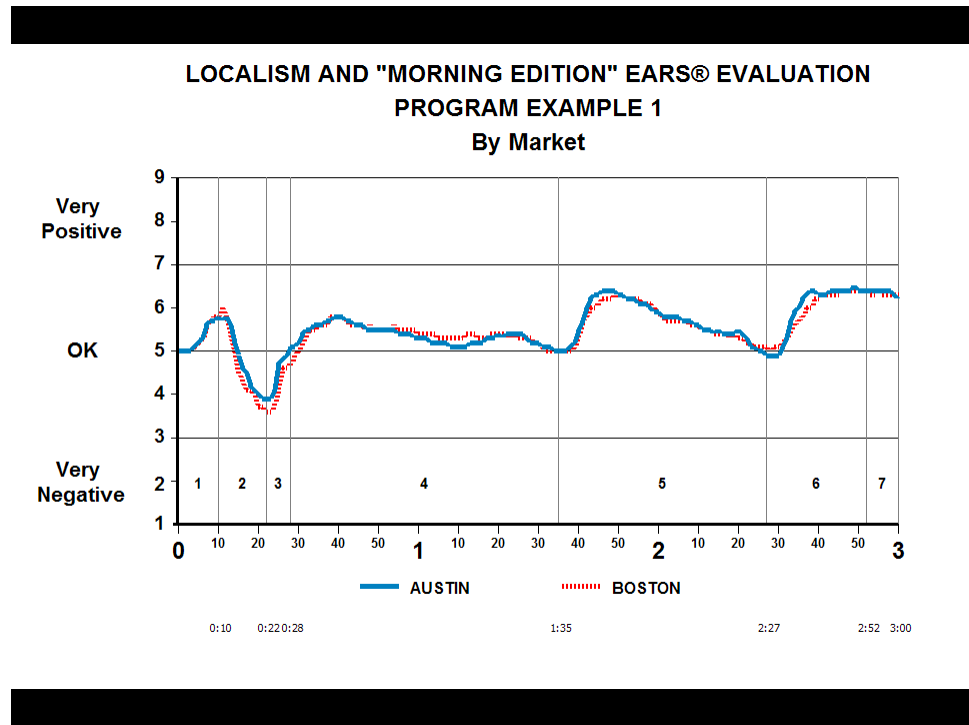
Bos	WBUR-FM	WBZ-AM	F	45-65	Traffic reporting during commuting hours – it's helpful to hear a brief traffic brief.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	F	25-44	The piece about immigration was valuable – fairly densely packed with important information.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	M	25-44	The immigration bill debate – it is an important issue, good quotes/sound bites, relates to whole country and Morning Edition gives me a quick yet reasonably thorough update.
Bos	WGBH-FM	WBUR-FM	M	45-65	Traffic – of all the items talked about, traffic was the most valuable and I don't need as info as I live in the inner city and do not need to commute on highways.
Aus	KOKE-AM	KUT-FM	F	45-65	The update on traffic. Speaking pace too fast. Anxiety producing, adds to annoyance if I were driving and listening to it. Slow down. Use slightly deeper voice. Have an average pace.
Aus	KUT-FM	KGSR-FM	M	45-65	Traffic reports are of little value to me. If you are in your car you are already stuck in traffic, in Austin there are almost no alternative routes. Plus, I mostly work from home.
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	F	25-44	I tend to tune out during traffic reports. Most of my driving is on rural roads and urban traffic isn't all that relevant to me.
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	F	45-65	The features on advertisers throughout the programming was very irritating. This is supposed to be Public Radio. There is no way that the spots can be valuable to me. Advertisements need to be eliminated.
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	M	25-44	Except for the commercials, I thought everything was fine. I would say that as far as the traffic segments are concerned that KUT's problem is that their traffic reports are all irrelevant by the time they get on the air.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WBZ-AM	M	25-44	Traffic reports – like many downtown residents, I don't drive to work. On the rare occasion I do want traffic info, I always miss paying attention to the report and then the report itself is delivered too fast to catch everything you need to know.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	F	25-44	Traffic – not what I tune in to NPR for.

## Verbatim Summary

This local newscast started off with “commercials” and traffic. After it got passed those elements, our respondents did find value in its coverage of a national issue – immigration reform. Listeners appreciated how the two local news stories moved from the debate in Washington to how it affects a local family.

It is apparent that many of our listeners do not need any traffic information. Or if they do, that's not why they value NPR. This finding is not at all new. We have done many surveys and focus groups over the years, consistently finding that traffic is not valued by the majority of NPR listeners.

**Microformatics: Frantic Newscast**



This aircheck was selected by MEGS to represent a Frantic Newscast, a type characterized by a fast pace – reading more words per minute than NPR’s pace.

The first local news story was element #4, about a ceremony that was conducted to honor fallen law enforcement officers.

Element	Time	Total	Market	
			Austin	Boston
<i>WHRV NPR Network</i>				
1. Fade-in NPR News story (Recovered coins from shipwreck)	0:00-0:10	5.8	5.8	5.8
2. NPR underwriting announcement (American Psychological Association)	0:10-0:22	3.8	3.9	3.6
<i>WHRV Local Newscast</i>				
3. Time/Program ID/Station ID	0:22-0:28	4.9	5.1	4.7
<b>4. WHRV news story (fallen law enforcement officers)</b>	<b>0:28-1:35</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>5.0</b>
5. WHRV news story (potential Republican presidential nominees)	1:35-2:27	5.0	4.9	5.1
6. WHRV news story intro	2:27-2:52	6.4	6.4	6.4
7. WHRV news story (School construction financing) (Ann Marie Morgan)	2:52-3:00	6.3	6.2	6.3

### Observations

The NPR underwriting credit before the local ID drove the value score down to 3.8, even though the credit was for the nonprofit American Psychological Association.

At the first local news story about fallen police officers, value started to rise and approached the 6 level but then faded during that story, ending at a neutral 5.0.

The next local story about Republican candidates displayed the same pattern – rising at the start of the story but fading to 5.0 at the end. Expectations were not satisfied.

The **critical elements** of this local newscast averaged only 5.6 on the 9 point scale.

### Verbatims

Aus	KUT-FM	KOKE-AM	M	45-65	Newscast honoring the 10 law enforcement officers – just like the Armed Forces, we need to honor law enforcement officers on the "front lines" of our cities everyday.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	F	45-65	The report on the memorial of the law enforcement officers in Virginia was interesting as a local report.
Bos	WZBC-FM	WBUR-FM	F	25-44	Possible candidates entering the race for the GOP. However, I found the story to be extremely shallow. Expect to learn more about candidate's motivations and details about their points of view and plans for the future.
Aus	KUT-FM	BBC	M	25-44	The one on the memorial service to honor the fallen VA police officers was not especially valuable because I could not relate to it or identify with any part of it. It was interesting emotionally, but I lost interest.
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-AM	M	45-65	Virginia police officer memorial – this and the piece that followed had the aplomb of local TV news. It was little more than a re-hash of the press release put out by the Police Officers' Association. That should have been the starting point.
Aus	KUT-FM	KOOP-FM	F	25-44	The one about police officers didn't grab me. Sure, you care because they gave their lives in public service, but it went on and on without adding any connection (like why are they all dead?) to my interest.
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	F	25-44	The segment on the service honoring police officers wasn't interesting. I don't expect to hear anything new, controversial, insightful at ceremonial events – I tend to just tune them out.
Aus	KUT-FM	KVRX-FM	M	25-44	I don't think a whole lot of local news should be spent on police officers' ceremony. It is feel-good story, but doesn't really constitute important news.

## Localism and Morning Edition

Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	F	45-65	The law enforcement officers memorial. It didn't have any true meaning other than mentioning their passing. Pretty shallow. In the morning leading this type of story needs more "meat" or a valuable lesson.
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	M	45-65	The presentation of the commercials could have been done with some amount of excitement. They bored me. While it is a statement of funding, not commercial, I felt that it left both a waste of time.
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	M	45-65	The blurbs on sponsors. The increasing amount of time dedicated to information about sponsors is eroding the unique role of public broadcasting. Plus, it's boring.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	M	45-65	The story about honoring fallen police officers seemed impersonal and bureaucratic, relying too much on "official" statements instead of something more personal.
Bos	WGBH-FM	WBUR-FM	F	25-44	Police officer deaths – way too much detail and "blah, blah, blah" from the official. It sounded like local talk radio news. How they died, why they were brave, not the detail on bells.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WTKK-FM	M	45-65	I did not find valuable the interview with the Virginia politician who did not know who he was going to endorse. Seemed like a typical response at the time and typified what most politicians would say. Would have preferred to hear from someone who has decided.

## Verbatim Summary

Curiously, the verbatims for this Frantic Newscast did not include direct references to how fast the anchor read her copy. Instead our respondents criticized the journalism:

“Extremely shallow.” “Rehash of the press release.” “Pretty shallow.”

Jay Kernis has circulated a document called **Four Tiers of News Coverage**. At the second (low) tier of coverage he would include:

City council meetings, school board meetings, local government and political pronouncements, news conferences. These are scheduled events, pre-scripted in many cases by communications officers and rehearsed by participants.

The ceremony for fallen police officers was staged. The Republican who was interviewed merely gave his political pronouncements. At the start of these stories there was heightened interest but the value faded in the execution.

The problem was shallow journalism – a lack of depth in how the local stories were conceptualized, organized and edited.

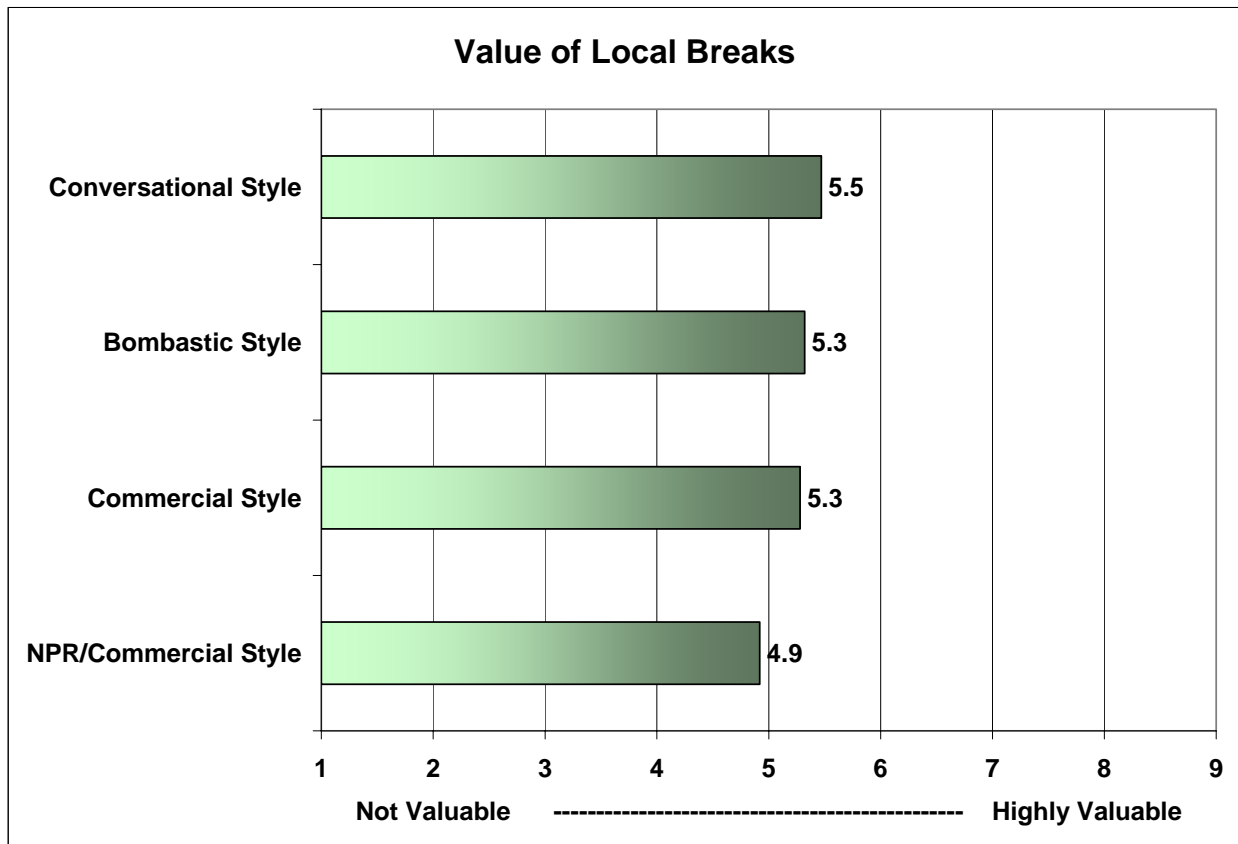
## Value of Local Breaks

The Morning Edition clock encourages stations to take local breaks that typically include underwriting credits, promo announcements and local weather or traffic.

According to the MEGS typology, there are three types of breaks out there:

- Conversational Style (also known as the NPR Style)
- Bombastic Style
- Commercial Style

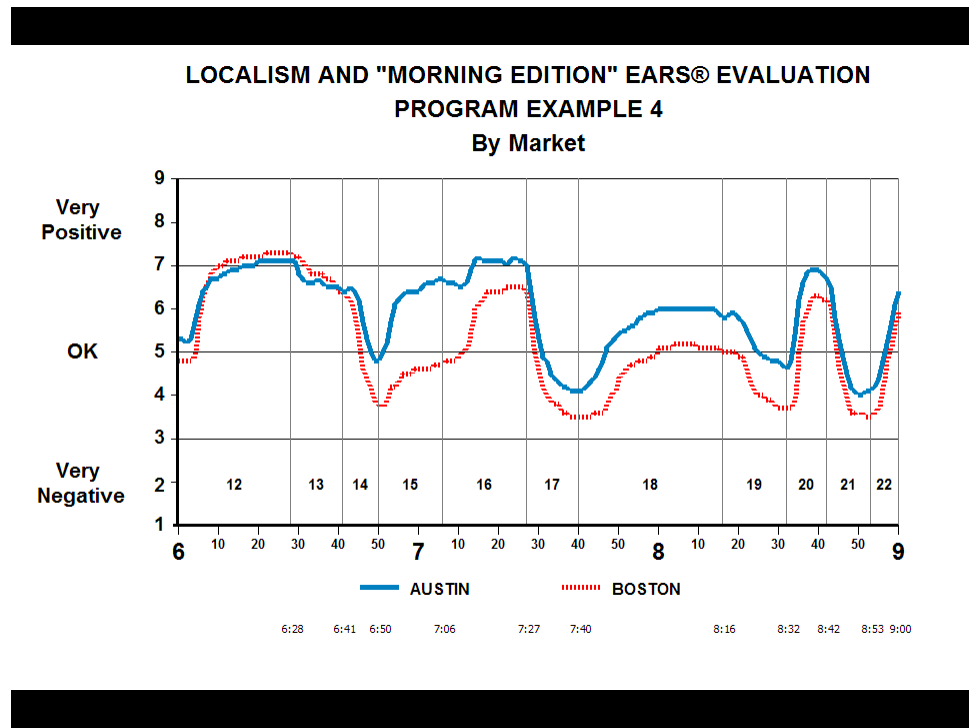
We tested four breaks including one identified as a hybrid NPR/Commercial Style.



None of the breaks we tested delivered high value. The Conversational Style scored only 5.5 on our 9-point value scale. All four of the breaks projected mediocre value.

But these overall average scores hide the wild variation we found within each break.

**Microformatics: Conversational Style Break**



This break included 8 **critical elements** (#13-20) within a little over 2 minutes.

The traffic report was preceded by an underwriting credit. The anchor did a forward promo for Morning Edition, followed by another underwriting credit. The station promoted its outreach project and then its website. The break ended with weather and time checks. This break was contributed by KUT.

Element	Time	Total	Market	
			Austin	Boston
12. Fade-in NPR News story (Fidel Castro)	6:00-6:28	7.2	7.1	7.3
<i>KUT Local Break</i>				
13. Music bridge/Time/Program and Station ID	6:28-6:41	6.4	6.4	6.4
14. KUT traffic report underwriting announcement (Louis Shank's Furniture)	6:41-6:50	4.3	4.8	3.8
15. Traffic report	6:50-7:06	5.7	6.7	4.7
16. "Morning Edition" billboard forward promote	7:06-7:27	6.7	7.0	6.4
17. KUT underwriting announcement (Hyatt Lost Pines Resorts)(music bed near end)	7:27-7:40	3.8	4.1	3.5
18. "Get Involved" KUT project promo volunteer solicit (music bed)	7:40-8:16	5.4	5.8	5.0
19. KUT podcast/website visitation promo (music bed)	8:16-8:32	4.2	4.6	3.7
20. Weather/Time/Temperature (music bed)	8:32-8:42	6.5	6.7	6.2

### Observations

Just 28 seconds of an NPR story about Fidel Castro pushed the value score up to 7.2, another confirmation of the importance of international news to NPR listeners.

Then only 9 seconds of an underwriting credit for local traffic drove the value score down to 4.3. There was some recovery of value during the traffic itself, but only to a mediocre 5.7. Value improved during forward promotion of network stories.

But then a local underwriting credit for Hyatt drove the value score down to 3.8.

The station's promotion of its outreach project and website delivered mediocre value between 5.4 and 4.2 on the 9-point scale.

The red and blue lines on the chart show that this Conversational Style break did score about one point higher in Austin than in Boston. There was a bit of a home town advantage in the traffic report and the station Get Involved outreach project.

But even among KUT's home town fans, the highest score was element #16 – the promo of network stories about Whole Foods and the My Space generation.

### Verbatims

Aus	KOKE-AM	KUT-FM	F	45-65	There was a moment that felt like a tease. They mentioned an upcoming story regarding Whole Foods Market, merging with Wild Oats Market. I like to know of trends with organic/health food markets. And to be honest, I own stock in Whole Foods Market.
Aus	KUT-FM	KGSR-FM	F	45-65	KUT's Get Involved section is inspiring, gives good information and makes it easy to know what you can do in your community if you are aware.
Aus	KUT-FM	KMFA-FM	F	45-65	MySpace generation – was very brief but because I work with students in the age range mentioned (early 20's) I was very interested in the label and will likely use it in the future.
Aus	KUT-FM	KOKE-AM	M	45-65	Fidel Castro report – I follow international news closely.
Aus	KUT-FM	KUT-FM	M	25-44	The Castro piece because of its international import.
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	F	25-44	The world news was especially valuable to me, specifically the part on Castro. I teach world cultures and focus on current events, this news piece would tie in with current events and sanctions.

## Localism and Morning Edition

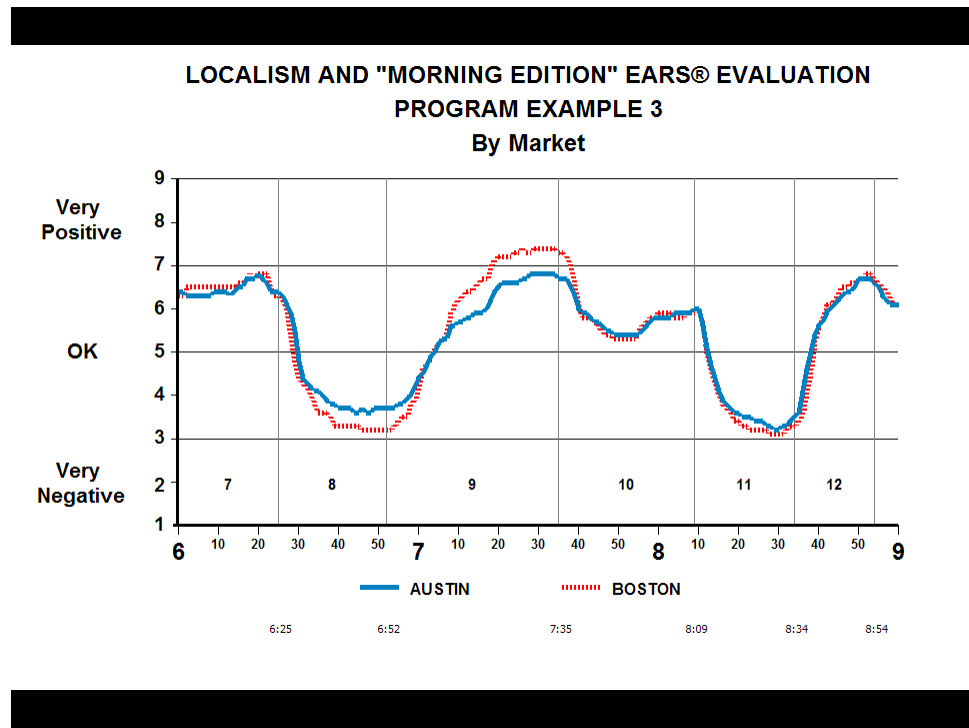
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	M	45-65	Castro – important global news, as his health and future hang in the balance. Local weather and traffic very important in the morning as I get ready for drive to work.
Bos	WBUR-FM	NONE	F	45-65	The Texas ramble had a charm that is good to add to news stations (feature articles, if you will). We all need that aspect of the news, I think, not always the Oxford and Cambridge presentation. The Texas comments were folksy, but charming.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WBZ-AM	M	45-65	While not the reason I listen to NPR, the traffic report is very valuable because it affects when I leave for work and what roads I would take. This would only be valuable in the morning, as any other time I cared I could tune to another station.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WTKK-FM	M	45-65	I was intrigued by the headline of the new "MySpace" employees hitting the employment market. Wanted to hear the entire piece and was disappointed when the "station" changed. Wanted to know how these new employees were different than past generation.
Aus	KUT-FM	BBC	M	25-44	The traffic reports are of no use to me. I work out of the home.
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-AM	F	25-44	KUT's programming was a scattering of morning garbage. Time and weather were useful, but too much underwriting and boring promo for upcoming story on "Morning Edition."
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-AM	M	45-65	Traffic reports are almost always wrong on one local channel in my experience. While some may find this valuable and important as a part of local reporting, I do not.
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	F	45-65	The Austin clip – I hate that announcer's voice, she always sounds like she is smirking. The clip was nothing but ads for sponsors and the station's website. They go on for too long.
Bos	WBUR-FM	NONE	F	25-44	Traffic. Why? Pointless.
Bos	WBUR-FM	OTHER	F	25-44	There was one example where they just listed a series of website references about topics, but gave no real information. Occasionally this is good, but that went on too long.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	F	45-65	Traffic reports have no value to me because I no longer drive to work. But I was a two hour a day commuter back when WBUR dropped routine traffic reports. I didn't miss the reports at all.

## Verbatim Summary

Even when presented in a Conversational Style, traffic has no value for the majority of public radio listeners. Forward promos for upcoming network stories are valued, but they could have been delivered by the network anchor.

Promos for the station's website and outreach project may be perceived as "ads" with value almost as low as the underwriting credits.

**Microformatics: Bombastic Style Break**



This local break, delivered in a Bombastic Style, generated wide swings in value from element to element. The two valleys #8 and #11 were underwriting credits. The peak at element # 9 was driven by the local anchor reading promotion of upcoming network stories about NASA and tuberculosis, followed by the weather.

This break was contributed by WBUR. The closeness of the red and blue lines indicates that there was not a significant home town advantage.

Element	Time	Total	Market	
			Austin	Boston
7. Fade-in NPR News story (radical Islam)/Program ID/Music bridge (Peter Kenyon)	5:54-6:25	6.3	6.4	6.3
<i>WBUR Local Break</i>				
8. WBUR underwriting announcements (Lumber Liquidators, University of South Carolina, Angie's List)	6:25-6:52	3.5	3.7	3.2
9. Station ID/Program Billboard/Weather report	6:52-7:35	7.0	6.7	7.3
10. WBUR business news (China's stock market, Northwest Airlines)/Time	7:35-8:09	6.0	6.0	5.9
11. WBUR underwriting announcement (Eastern Bank)/Music bridge	8:09-8:34	3.4	3.5	3.3

## Localism and Morning Edition

### Observations

While this Bombastic Style break averaged a mediocre 5.3 on the 9-point value scale, the value surged up and crashed down from element to element.

Hearing about 20 seconds of an NPR story about radical Islam, our respondents pushed the score up to 6.3. But when the station played a prerecorded pod of national underwriting credits at element #8 the value crashed to 3.5.

Similar to the Conversational Break, forward promos for upcoming network stories drove the value towards 7.0. Value continued to rise during a local weather check.

WBUR used the break for business news – the anchor reading wire copy about China’s stock market and the Northwest Airlines bankruptcy. Element #10 shows how value dropped a point just on the mention of the words “business news.”

Element #11 may have been the reason for carrying the business news. A local underwriting credit was sold, driving value down to 3.4.

Element #12 was a network story about NASA. The value score shot up to 7.

### Verbatims

Aus	KUT-FM	PODCAST	M	25-44	The NASA segment was the most interesting, it always gave an ear to science-related news.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WBZ-AM	F	45-65	The weather forecast because it affects my day-to-day activities.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WERS-FM	M	45-65	The weather report was one of the more valuable bits of information. It was concrete and relevant to me.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	F	45-65	The story that Northwest Airlines being out of receivership.
Aus	KUT-FM	KKMJ-FM	F	25-44	Would have liked to hear more about the TB segment and NASA's intentions for permanent lunar station.
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-AM	F	45-65	NW Airlines, business news – I'm looking for that from the Nat'l Bureau. If doing a local newscast, do local news. Otherwise, might as well just stay with national. Need competent news gatherers, as well as readers, to make sense to put money into.

## Localism and Morning Edition

Aus	KUT-FM	KMFA-FM	F	45-65	Chinese stock market report – can't figure out how this would be relevant to my daily life. Actually, any stock market report means nothing to me. I rely on a financial advisor to make my own stock/portfolio decisions.
Aus	KUT-FM	KOKE-AM	M	45-65	Chinese stock market report. I do not have, nor will I probably ever hold, stocks in Chinese corporations.
Aus	KUT-FM	KOOP-FM	F	25-44	My only gripe would be the ads. I know they're not very long, but they're still ads and I find them annoying.
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	F	25-44	Business feature wasn't really relevant to me. What would a rise or fall in the market mean for my grocery bill?
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	F	25-44	I think the ones that need improvement may not appeal to me with all of the available information – my brain chooses to ignore story. That Angie's list commercial plays too often. I want to stop listening to the station when I hear it.
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	F	45-65	Chinese stock market. Need more background to understand why it is important to know about Chinese economy.
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	F	45-65	Stock market information is of very little interest to me. It might be of more interest if there was discussion of how it impacts the average person that perhaps doesn't invest in stocks.
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	M	25-44	Boston financial news – The announcer seemed less than sure of his content. His cadence was also awkward, sounds like Paul Harvey. Ick.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WBZ-AM	M	45-65	The business report was of zero interest to me.
Bos	WBZ-AM	WBUR-FM	M	45-65	Ads on WBUR – tune it out.

## Verbatim Summary

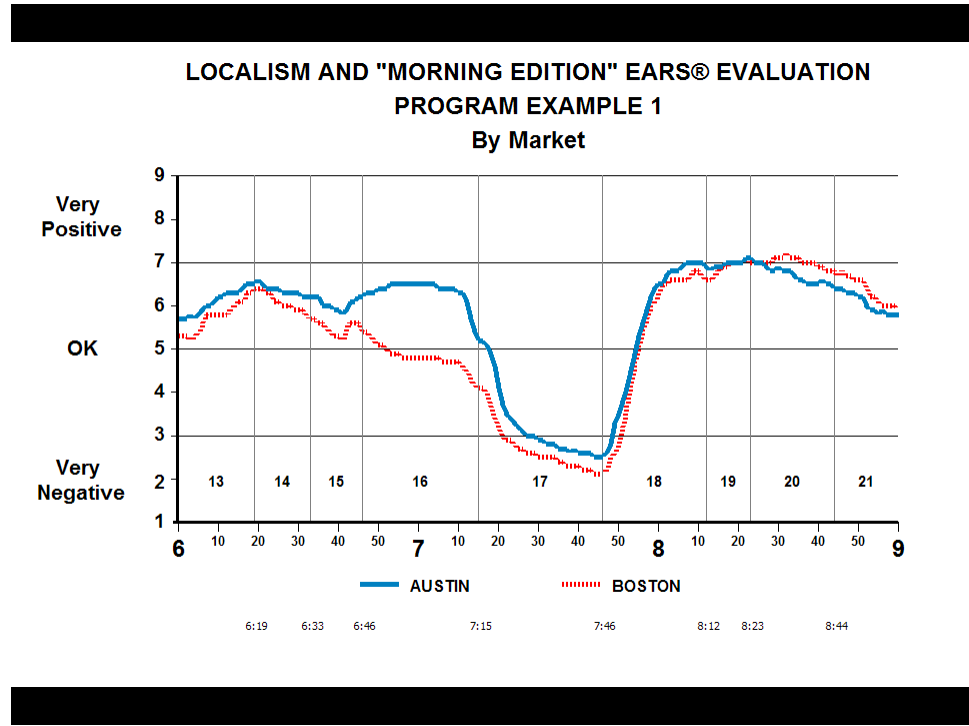
Over 300 respondents wrote verbatims for this study, and only one used the term “underwriting.” Instead they referred to “ads,” “commercials” or “sponsors.”

This local break was characterized as the Bombastic Style, yet there was minimal reference in the verbatims to the anchor’s cadence. Instead our respondents wanted to criticize the content of this break – business news wire copy.

Yes, NPR listeners have a lot of money that is invested in stocks. But simple reading of business news headlines and stock market indexes did not deliver significant value, only 6.0 on the 9-point scale. The underwriting credit worsened things considerably.

Instead of positioning this break as “business news” the station could have done a single story with a title such as “Why the Chinese market matters.” NPR listeners want depth, meaning and analysis in the coverage of money and markets.

**Microformatives: Commercial Style Break**



This local break was characterized as Commercial Style. It opened with traffic, elements # 15-16, followed by a pod of underwriting credits. Underwriting is the valley at element #17. Overall the average value was a mediocre 5.3.

This aircheck was contributed by WABE.

Element	Time	Total	Market	
			Austin	Boston
13. Fade-in NPR News story (Search for lost soldier) in NPR News story (Recovered coins from shipwreck)	6:00-6:19	6.4	6.5	6.4
14. Music bridge	6:19-6:33	5.9	6.2	5.7
<i>WABE Local Break</i>				
15. Program ID/Station ID/Time/Traffic intro (Steve Goss)	6:33-6:46	5.8	6.2	5.4
16. Traffic report (Denise Lenkshaw)	6:46-7:15	4.7	5.2	4.1
17. WABE underwriting announcements (AT&T, Mercedes Benz of South Atlanta)	7:15-7:46	2.3	2.5	2.1
18. Produced forward promote of StoryCorps Griot program (music bed)	7:46-8:12	6.8	6.9	6.6
19. Weather report (Goss)	8:12-8:23	7.0	7.1	7.0
20. Upcoming WABE story promote/Station ID/Program ID/Time (Goss)	8:23-8:44	6.6	6.4	6.8

### **Observations**

This break had no news content, just traffic, weather, promos and underwriting.

As in the two previous local breaks, value peaked for local weather info. In this Commercial Style the weather check earned a score of 7 on the 9-point scale.

In contrast, value crashed down to 2.3 during the pod of underwriting credits.

Traffic is problematic. While the blue line at element #16 indicates more interest in Austin than in Boston, the value scores for traffic eroded to mediocre levels.

This station used its local break to promote Story Corps Griot in Atlanta. During that produced announcement the value score rose sharply up 4 points towards 7.0.

### **Verbatims**

Aus	KUT-FM	KGSR-FM	M	45-65	The weather report allowed me to plan my day.
Aus	KUT-FM	KKMJ-FM	M	45-65	The segment on weather was valuable to me – I always expect to learn what's in store for the day.
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-AM	M	45-65	Traffic report describing accidents that are slowing or blocking traffic – e.g. if I were in my car, I would alter route.
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-FM	F	45-65	Weather, traffic and time of personal use.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WBZ-AM	M	25-44	A tiny thing, WABE at one point when they listed their story teasers also gave the time frame for them "in the next 15 minutes." A great idea.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	F	25-44	Weather – I like to learn each morning what the weather will be for that day and for the next 2 – 3 days as well.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	F	45-65	Advertising, advertising because it seems that because of under-funding the crossover has begun.
Aus	KUT-FM	KGSR-FM	F	45-65	When acknowledging a "sponsor" – do not let it sound like a "commercial" – use their usual slogan.
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-AM	M	45-65	I would like to say that, though it is necessary, I do not find the hidden "commercials" from underwriters to be of value. I find them less valuable than the pledge drives.

## Localism and Morning Edition

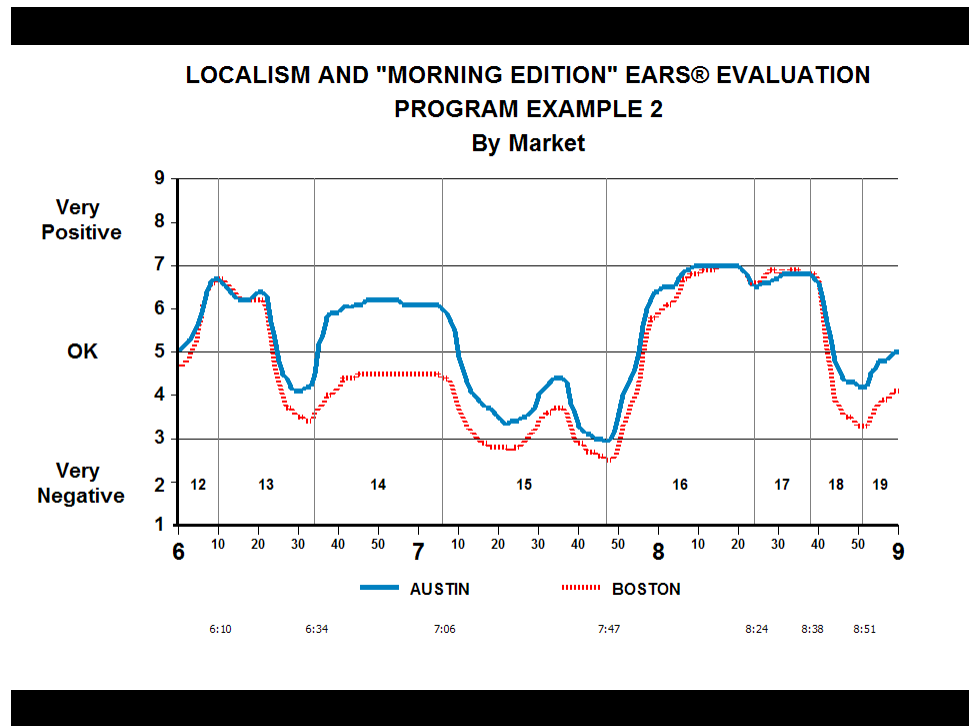
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	F	45-65	Long sponsorship ads – I just ignore them.
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	M	45-65	The presentation of the commercials could have been done with some amount of excitement. They bored me. While it is a statement of funding, not commercial, I felt that it left both a waste of time.
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	M	45-65	The blurbs on sponsors. The increasing amount of time dedicated to information about sponsors is eroding the unique role of public broadcasting. Plus, it's boring.
Bos	WBUR-FM	NONE	F	45-65	The not valuable part is the "advertising" of the sponsors. I never listen to that unless I already do business with one of them.
Bos	WBUR-FM	NONE	F	45-65	The traffic report is not pertinent because I usually am not driving on that route. They almost never talk about my own route.
Bos	WBUR-FM	NONE	M	25-44	Again with the traffic?
Bos	WBUR-FM	OTHER	M	25-44	Traffic reports are of limited to no value to me although I drive 1-2 hours per day. It is not useful to get traffic reports unless emergency or out of the ordinary. There are phone lines for that which are more precise and efficient.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WBZ-AM	F	25-44	There seemed to be a lot of commercials – too many make me tune out.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WBZ-AM	M	25-44	The traffic and funding messages detract from the news content.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WEEI-AM	F	45-65	The sponsorship statements are annoying.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	F	25-44	The WABE excerpt was not useful – it felt like one big ad for itself. I kept waiting for more on the story or on local stories. It just felt like filler before the national news picked up.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	M	45-65	Constant barrage of commercials. It's almost as bad as AM radio.

### Verbatim Summary

This was just a local break, but traffic reports and advertising spots are not the reasons why NPR listeners tune to Morning Edition. “It’s almost as bad as AM radio,” according to one respondent.

Yet weather checks are useful to nearly everyone.

**Microformatics: NPR/Commercial Style Break**



This break was considered to be a hybrid NPR/Commercial Style. Peaks and valleys are evident, as in all three of the previous local breaks. Element #15 consisted of 40 seconds of underwriting credits. This break was contributed by WAMU.

Element	Time	Total	Market	
			Austin	Boston
12. Fade-in NPR News story (Radical Islam)/Program ID (Peter Kenyon)	5:58-6:10	6.7	6.7	6.7
<i>WAMU Local Break</i>				
13. Music bridge/Time/Underwriting Announcement/Traffic intro (Bill Redlin)	6:10-6:34	4.1	4.5	3.6
14. Traffic report/Station ID (Joyce Neilson)	6:34-7:06	5.2	6.0	4.4
15. WAMU Underwriting announcements (Ranstadt, BSO at Strathmore, Nicks & Peabody)	7:06-7:47	2.7	2.9	2.5
16. Air quality/Weather/Time/Music bridge (Redlin)	7:47-8:24	6.5	6.5	6.6
<i>WAMU NPR Network</i>				
17. Fade-in NPR News story (NASA)	8:24-8:38	6.8	6.8	6.8

### Observations

Only 12 seconds of a network story about NASA drove the value score up to 6.7, but then the local anchor came in to give the time and read a funding credit. The credit was actually for a member family – not a corporate underwriter – yet the value score dropped to 4.1.

Element #14 was traffic, and again we saw somewhat more interest in Austin than in Boston. 5.2 is a mediocre value score but the average hides the dispersion between some listeners who find traffic to be valuable and the majority who do not.

Element #15 was interesting in that there was a slight uptick during the otherwise negative value for prerecorded underwriting credits. The uptick was for a BSO cello performance “celebrating women in the arts.” Even with that politically correct nonprofit in the pod, element #15 ended with 2.7 on the value scale.

### Verbatims

Aus	KUT-FM	BBC	M	25-44	It was valuable to me to know that it was an ozone action day. I can plan my day accordingly and try to help the environment.
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-AM	M	25-44	The time, weather and traffic features. They are valuable because I listen to KUT in the morning in the car. I like that the time and weather for the day are thrown in between the major segments. I also like to see how long I am stuck in traffic.
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	M	25-44	Traffic, weather, time. Getting ready for work, it helps to be told the time rather than watching a clock, or I'm still in bed with eyes closed. Need to know if it is worth getting up or if I will just be sitting in traffic.
Bos	WBUR-FM	OTHER	F	25-44	Local weather is always useful to me.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	F	25-44	We were just given a small portion of the story about the head of NASA making plans for the organization. Stories about NASA and science, especially global warming, are very important to me.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	F	25-44	The orange level air quality alert was the most valuable piece in this particular sample. Also, the personal fundraising spot for mom's birthday was nice.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	F	45-65	I like to hear one (but not more than 2) companies that support NPR.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	M	45-65	Brief mention of NASA mission. News about exploration of space is one of my top interests.

## Localism and Morning Edition

Bos	WBUR-FM	WTKK-FM	M	25-44	I thought the NASA story was interesting – would have liked a little more detail, however.
Aus	KUT-FM	KGSR-FM	F	45-65	The D.C. traffic report seemed way too long. I started imagining that a quarter of my morning is traffic reports. I think that's too much.
Aus	KUT-FM	KOOP-FM	F	25-44	NASA – would have been more valuable if more in-depth. The issue itself is of great importance because of the U.S. dollars spent on it and the fact that it is important to understand our universe, yet so little attention is given to the subject.
Aus	KUT-FM	KOOP-FM	M	45-65	To continue my rant about commercials, it's a hell of a note that we can spend billions in ratholes like Iraq, and have to scrape for pennies for NPR and CPB.
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	F	45-65	I really do not care to hear about "our sponsors" – some gave a little too much information about the organization/firm, etc.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WBZ-AM	M	25-44	The traffic reports seem out of place for an in-depth news station. I would turn to another traffic station, if I needed to hear this. Thankfully, I don't commute on major roads.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	F	25-44	The lengthy section of traffic information and ads – it seemed excessively long and none of it was valuable to me. I'm pretty sure I would prefer the ads be broken up more into smaller groups, even though that would mean they happen more often.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	M	45-65	The ads put me to sleep. Traffic stuff is irrelevant to me.
Bos	WBZ-AM	WBUR-FM	M	45-65	Not interested in ads or traffic reports. Listen to NPR at home and office - world's greatest non-sponsorship fan.

## Verbatim Summary

At the end of this aircheck our respondents heard just the beginning of a network story about NASA. In the verbatims, several respondents expressed their interest in NASA and space exploration. They value NPR's in depth coverage of science.

But the local break primarily consisted of traffic, weather and “commercials” or “ads.”

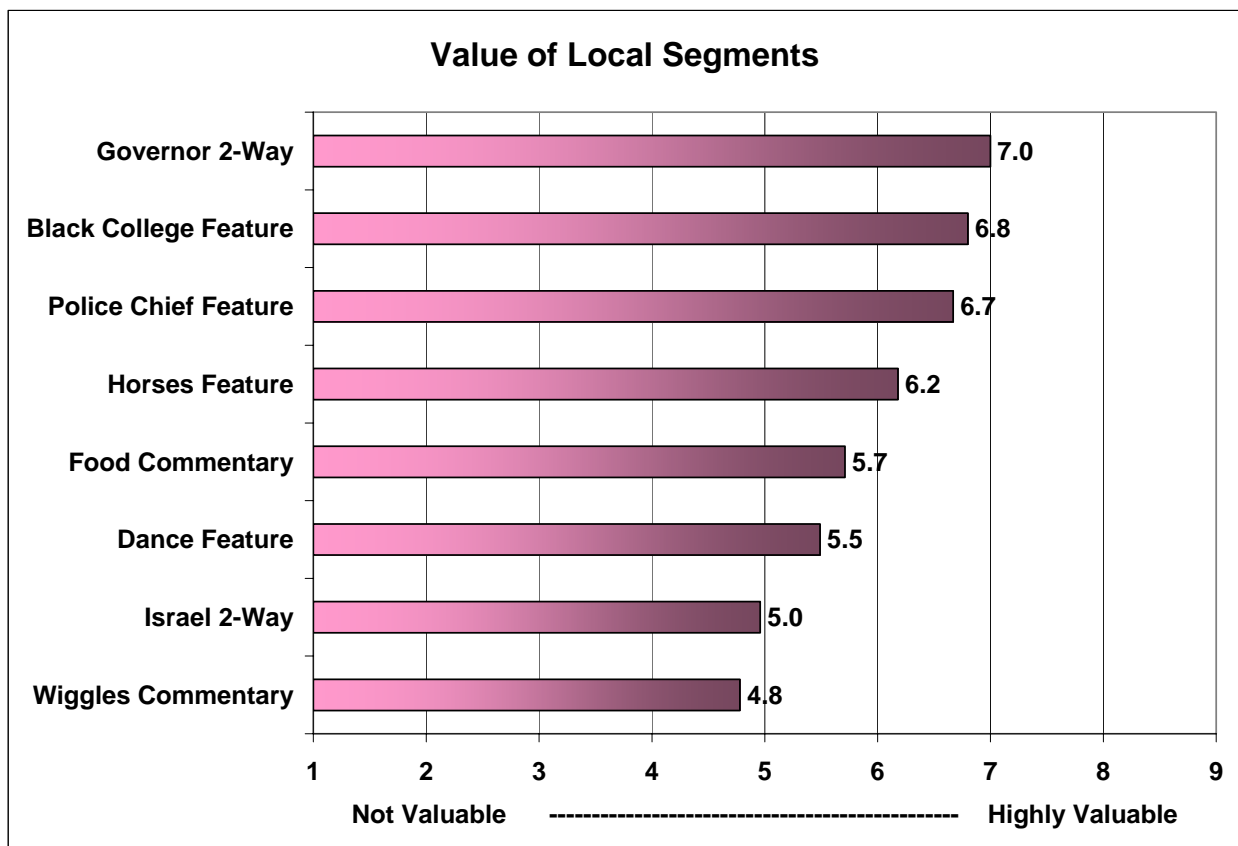
As we have seen, the traffic reports serve only a minority of NPR listeners. The ads have become annoying – even when they promote a classical concert.

Explanation of the ozone action day added value to the weather check.

## Value of Local Segments

The MEGS faculty selected 8 local segments that included 2 commentaries, 2 interviews and 4 feature reports. Stations typically insert these in the Morning Edition clock to cover network segment C or E.

The chart below shows the average value score across the **critical elements** of the local segments. By **critical elements** we mean just the local coverage in the aircheck, not the contextual network feed.

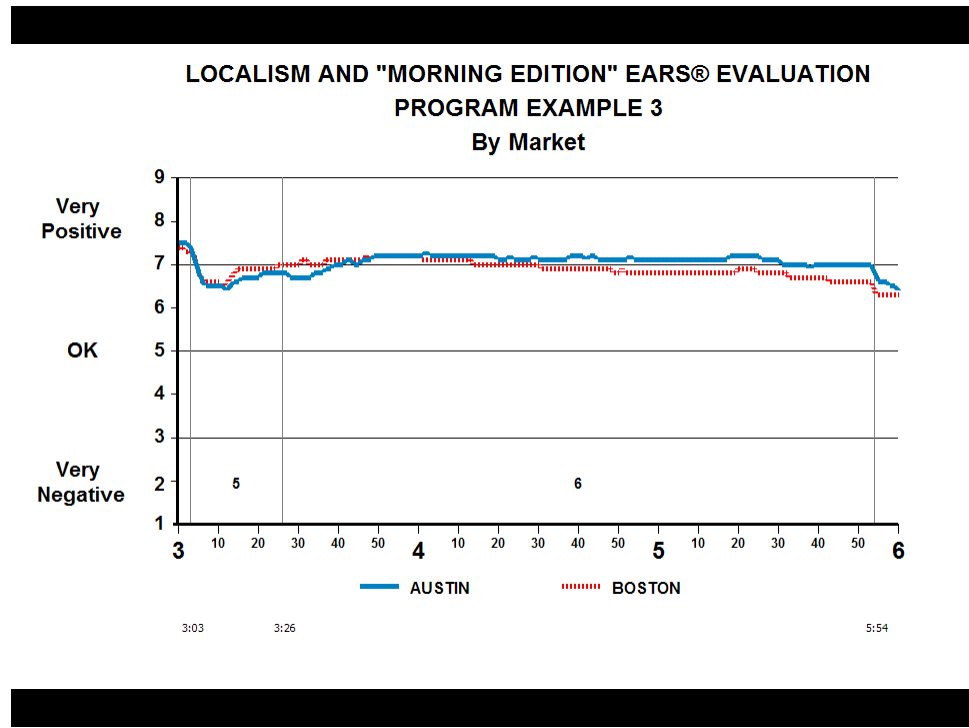


Only 3 of the 8 local segments delivered relatively high levels of value.

The top value segment at 7.0 was a 2-Way interview of Colorado’s governor. Closely following was a feature report on funding for black colleges in Virginia at 6.8 and a feature report on the candidates for police chief in Austin at 6.7.

The bottom 4 segments, scoring around 5 on the scale, delivered mediocre value.

**Microformatics: Governor 2-Way Segment**



The Governor 2-Way interview was the highest scoring local segment. You can see that the value held up at a relatively high level throughout the entire span.

Production for this aircheck was simple. The governor of Colorado sat down with a public radio reporter for his regular monthly interview. The topic was the state’s contentious relationship with the Bush administration over oil shale development.

This aircheck was contributed by KCFR.

Element	Time	Total	Market	
			Austin	Boston
5. Station ID/Governor 2-Way interview set-up (Ryan Warner)	3:03-3:26	6.8	6.8	7.0
6. Governor 2-Way interview with Colorado Governor Bill Ritter (Warner)	3:26-5:54	6.6	6.8	6.4

### Observations

In striking contrast to the ups and downs we saw for local breaks, this interview segment delivered consistent value for its entire duration.

The overall average value was 7.0 on our 9-point scale. The ending score, after 2 ½ minutes of interview, was 6.6.

Keep in mind that this segment consisted of two articulate voices engaged in conversation, with no apparent editing or other production. The topic was oil shale development in Colorado, which is controversial between the state and Washington.

### Verbatims

Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-AM	F	25-44	The feature about developing technology for extracting shale oil because it hit on a couple of topics of concern for me on the local, personal level and air, water and environmental impact. Potential for alternate oil sources was important.
Aus	KOKE-AM	KUT-FM	M	45-65	The environment and its conflict with this administration is the paramount issue of humanity and our lives. The questions and answers on the part of the governor were precise, intelligent.
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-AM	F	45-65	The feature on the environment in Colorado because the same concerns are applicable to Central Texas. The concern for the impact on the air and water through drilling can be applied to strip-mining issues locally.
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-AM	M	45-65	The story about the governor fighting for his state against the feds on environmental regulations is illustrative of a valuable story to me because of the interplay between federal and state governments. It's really the basis of our constitutional government.
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-FM	M	25-44	Interview with local station's governor. Very candid and frank responses solicited by reporter. Fed overpowering the state on environmental issues in the name of higher profits for the oil companies who donate to the Republican party is interesting.
Aus	KUT-FM	KOKE-AM	M	45-65	The piece on the interview with the governor of Colorado was valuable. The degree of opposition he received from the Department of Interior was alarming.
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	F	25-44	I was compelled to hear about the State of Colorado getting stonewalled by Washington DC. It indicates why things are not getting better.
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	F	25-44	The interview with the Colorado governor was interesting. It touched on environmental issues, state vs. federal relations, shortfalls of EPA. I liked the governor's strong and partisan opinions.

## Localism and Morning Edition

Bos	WBUR-FM	NONE	F	25-44	I was impressed with the depth and analysis that the governor of Colorado gave on the effects oil shale processing would have. Very valuable and it highlighted that there might be some hidden agenda.
Bos	WBUR-FM	NONE	F	45-65	Interview with governor on environmental issues – what is happening on the state level to counter-balance problems on federal level is important to me. Environmental issues are also important.
Bos	WBUR-FM	OTHER	M	25-44	Interview with Colorado governor was very informative. One-on-one question of government and business heads provides the most valuable insight into their motives, aspirations and perspectives.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WBZ-AM	F	25-44	Monthly conversation with governor – I would love this kind of program. It would be local and in-depth. It would be one marker of accountability for state government. This is something that would not appear in any other media.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WBZ-AM	F	45-65	The environmental interview with the governor was interesting to me – water issues, shale. I am concerned about environmental issues.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WBZ-AM	M	25-44	The story about energy policy in Colorado and the Bush Administration. Publicly funded news sources have to monitor and report important news like this. Cheney/Bush energy policy has been private policy!
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	F	45-65	The monthly conversation with the governor (on Denver station). Terrific idea – give listeners/citizens idea of interaction between their state and federal government, industry, etc. Very well-done, smart prompts from interviewer.
Bos	WBZ-AM	WBUR-FM	M	25-44	I found very valuable the piece that had the interview with the Colorado governor. I particularly enjoyed the question and answer section with the governor. The interview was a relaxed session in which the governor was able to articulate his point of view.
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-AM	F	25-44	The interview with the governor was great because it is contact with an important public official, but the editing was boring and the interviewer let the governor ramble about technical issues.
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	M	25-44	The interview with the Colorado governor: great idea, but badly realized. Interviewer was very "soft-ball" in his approach. What's the point of having an interview format, just to allow the public official to give his prepared speeches on the issues?
Bos	WBUR-FM	WBZ-AM	M	25-44	The interview with Colorado governor – the interviewer simply led the governor through his own talking points by reading his open letter with him. This is an approach guaranteed to elicit no new information from the governor, explicit or implicit.

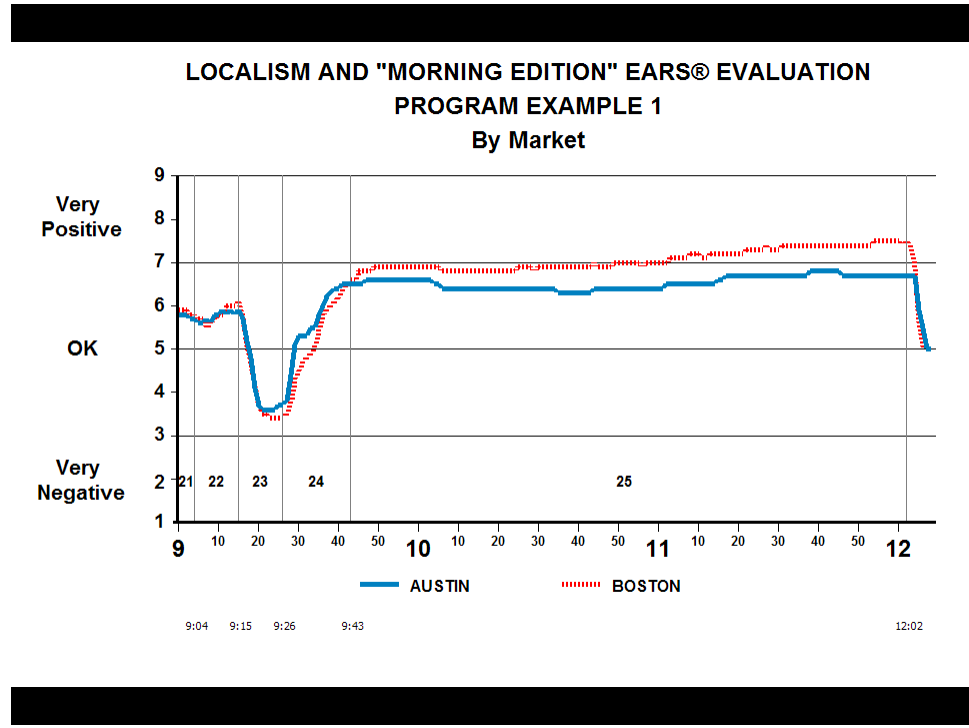
### **Verbatim Summary**

Listeners in Austin and Boston valued this type of segment for several reasons:

- They liked the idea of a monthly sit down with the governor.
- The governor himself was articulate, passionate and spoke clearly.
- For intellectual public radio listeners, the story fit into a much larger context – the constitutional relationship between federal and state.
- The question was how to balance the need for more energy with protection of the natural environment – an ethical conundrum that is just perfect for deep-thinking public radio listeners.
- Finally, the governor was fighting against the “hidden agenda” of the “Cheney/Bush” administration, which is not all that popular among hard core NPR listeners.

Pushing all those buttons, the Governor 2-Way interview did not require any fancy production, although a tougher interviewer would have driven the value even higher.

**Microformatics: Black College Feature Segment**



This feature segment was based on two sources, with more editing than the Colorado Governor interview. The first source was a recent graduate of a black college. She made reference to a TV show that influenced her choice.

The second source spoke longer. Julian Bond advocated funding for black colleges.

The graph shows positive value right at the start that continued to rise as Julian Bond spoke. This aircheck was contributed by WHRV.

Element	Time	Total	Market	
			Austin	Boston
22. Fade-in NPR News story (Fred Thompson)/Program ID (Jean Cochran)	9:04-9:15	6.0	5.9	6.1
23. NPR Underwriting announcement (Sodexo) <i>WHRV Local Feature</i>	9:15-9:26	3.6	3.7	3.4
24. Time/Station ID/Program ID/Feature intro	9:26-9:43	6.6	6.5	6.6
25. <b>Black College Feature (Nancy King)</b>	9:43-12:02	7.1	6.7	7.4

### Observations

Before this local segment, NPR's underwriting credit drove value down to 3.6, even though Sodexo's altruistic message was about "fighting to end hunger in America."

The opening discussion with a black college graduate was spiced up with the musical theme from a TV series, *A Different World*. Her comments had been tightly edited, with interspersed narration by the reporter.

Value scores rose steadily to the 7 range on our 9-point scale as Julian Bond made his passionate case for funding black colleges. The editor let Bond go on at length.

### Verbatims

Aus	KOKE-AM	KUT-FM	M	45-65	The last regarding the under-funding of Black colleges. This is indicative of the under-funding of all infrastructure, including and especially education and shows the obvious racism that is still rampant in the U.S.
Aus	KUT-FM	KGSR-FM	F	25-44	Piece on HBCUs, interview with Julian Bond – race, discrimination and how it is institutionalized is of interest to me and important to the future of this country.
Aus	KUT-FM	KGSR-FM	F	45-65	Black higher education – the Cosby reference for Holman College got my attention and made me more willing to listen. Julian Bond as a professor was an added touch.
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-AM	F	25-44	The segment on Black colleges and universities was valuable because I am interested in social justice issues, public funding of education and minority identity issues. Thought there was an interesting blend of people being quoted.
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-AM	F	45-65	One that was valuable to me was feature about historically Black colleges. I recall watching "A Different World." What I did not know is that program is actually thought to be responsible for a surge in enrollment at HBCU. Heightened my awareness.
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-AM	F	45-65	The feature on historically Black colleges. It presented the value as well as the limitations, compared to UVA for example. Also brought to light the influence that television can have on choices.
Aus	KUT-FM	KMFA-FM	F	45-65	The one about Black colleges. I didn't know that there was discrimination (probably not only in VA) in funding all Black colleges and universities. That's just wrong. Hearing the woman say that the HBCU college she attended raised her self-esteem.

## Localism and Morning Edition

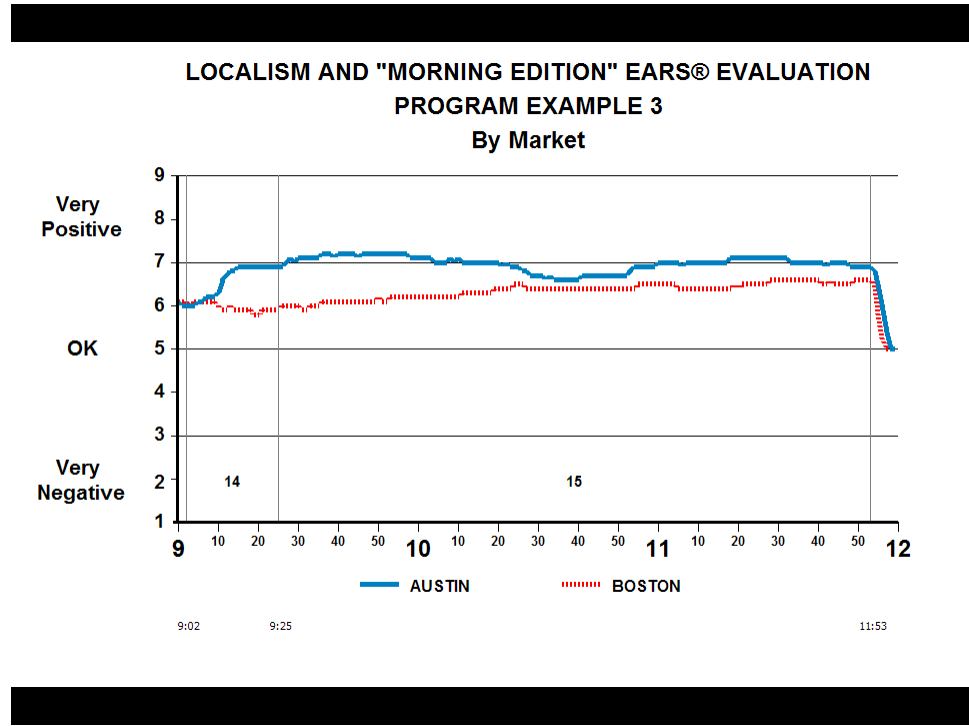
Bos	WBUR-FM	NONE	F	25-44	Historically Black college piece. This appealed to me because I am currently in law school. I find anything pertaining to higher education interesting and I particularly find pieces related to equal protection and equal opportunity interesting.
Bos	WBUR-FM	NONE	F	45-65	The feature on historically Black colleges was fascinating. The comparison between funding of those colleges and other state colleges in Virginia was fascinating. The interview with the female black student made the issue immediate and direct.
Bos	WBUR-FM	NONE	M	25-44	The segment on historically Black colleges was especially valuable to me. This exposure to a world unfamiliar to me is why I listen to NPR. It separates itself from commercial radio by expanding my knowledge base.
Bos	WBUR-FM	OTHER	M	25-44	The discussion of Black colleges – I work at a small liberal arts school (Wellesley) that serves a subset of college attendees and there is continuing debate about the value and merits of this environment. The issues are probably similar amongst these.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WBZ-AM	M	45-65	The story on historic Black colleges was very valuable because I think education, particularly for minorities, is critical in solving the nation's racial divide. Julian Bond's commentary was particularly insightful and he gave a good interview.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	F	25-44	The piece on historically Black colleges was in-depth and well-produced. I liked the firsthand, personal account along with the discussion with a well known player and the presentation of the legislative side of the problem.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	F	25-44	The piece on historically Black colleges was very interesting. It conveyed the importance of the institutions to the African-American community and also informed the listener about how such schools do (or do not, as the case may be) receive funding.
Aus	KUT-FM	KUT2 HD	M	25-44	The story on historically Black colleges while objectively informative seemed to lack substance – did not address specific ways the different schools differed. Would have liked more detail than hearing only from advocates of each political persuasion.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WBZ-AM	F	25-44	I didn't like the story on historically Black colleges. It wasn't balanced. The professor made an assertion that the Black colleges were under-funded, but no info was given on budgets, government funding, etc. This assertion wasn't backed up.

### Verbatim Summary

NPR listeners are predisposed to sympathize with concerns for “social justice” and “equal opportunity” with reference to education. The TV theme music triggered an immediate connection with the recent grad. Julian Bond has a solid reputation.

Like the previous segment about energy development in Colorado, this feature provided intellectual public radio listeners with an opportunity to think about how the story fit into a wider context – in this case “solving the nation’s racial divide.”

**Microformatics: Police Chief Feature Segment**



This feature segment consisted of edited interviews about a candidate for Austin police chief, a black woman. The red and blue lines show a one point hometown advantage, but note that the value score among Boston respondents continued to rise throughout this feature.

The ending score was a positive 6.7 on the 9-point value scale. This aircheck was contributed by KUT.

Element	Time	Total	Market	
			Austin	Boston
13. Music bridge/Program ID/Station ID (Jennifer Staton)	8:54-9:02	6.0	6.0	6.1
14. Police Chief Feature intro (Staton)	9:02-9:25	6.4	6.9	5.9
15. Police Chief Feature (Matt Largey)	9:25-11:53	6.7	6.9	6.6

### Observations

The setup for this feature segment explained that the station was doing a series of interviews with all of the candidates for chief of police. The focus of this particular feature was the current acting chief, a black woman.

The reporter included edited comments on her performance from other community leaders, which helped to further increase the value score towards 7.

While the blue line shows that hometown KUT listeners immediately perceived high value, the red line shows that WBUR listeners warmed to this feature as it proceeded.

### Verbatims

Aus	KUT-FM	KGSR-FM	M	25-44	Interim police chief in Austin. I like the topic of improving fairness of police and community relations. The variety of interviewees was good. The rich and honest perspective on the person and situation was great.
Aus	KUT-FM	KGSR-FM	F	45-65	Discussion about Austin chief of police. It told me where this person came from – her background, education, etc. It also included interviews with some important people in town who have worked with her and know her abilities to do the job.
Aus	KUT-FM	KGSR-FM	M	25-44	Interim police chief in Austin. I like the topic of improving fairness of police and community relations. The variety of interviewees was good. The rich and honest perspective on the person and situation was great.
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-AM	M	45-65	Local police chief – selections of direct quotations were used to support the reporting. The report itself gave concise ideas and images which was supplemented by quotes from a variety of sources.
Aus	KUT-FM	KOOP-FM	F	25-44	The info about interim police chief – I liked the personal info about her career starting the day after police academy. Good depth. Many angles were considered.
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	F	25-44	The Austin police chief story was good. The clips were interesting and each one made a point. The whole story flowed well and was engaging. The segues were very smooth.
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	F	45-65	Feature on the police chief was most valuable to me. It had a good combination of the following: 1) good questions and commentary from the reporter, 2) interview with police officer and others with intelligent questions by reporter. In-depth segment.

## Localism and Morning Edition

Bos	WBUR-FM	NONE	F	25-44	I liked the story about the retiring police chief from Austin. Stories about urban life, law enforcement and minority populations intrigue me as the issues surrounding these topics are complex – troubling at times.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WBOS-FM	F	45-65	Many! Police chief – fascinating, very much in-depth. Loved to hear her interview, her background, response of other politicians, assessing her role and the goodness of fit in the position.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WBZ-AM	F	25-44	Police chief profile – I like when they give an in-depth report on a candidate and feature each candidate each day of the week – helps to form one's opinion on the candidates.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WBZ-AM	M	25-44	The police chief interview – it aggregated a lot of sources including a representative sample of people who were willing to be somewhat judgmental in characterizing the candidate. Helps to create a balanced portrait of the person rather than listing pros.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	F	25-44	Police chief story was good. I liked that it was part of a longer series, which presumably provides more of an opportunity for in-depth reporting. I liked the recorded bits of interviews with the candidates as well as those of other experts on the subject.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	F	25-44	The police chief story was excellent. So often residents don't know enough about important officials such as these. It was an informative well-balanced piece – info about career, track record as police chief.
Bos	WBZ-AM	WBUR-FM	M	45-65	Police chief candidate competition – started slowly, but became interesting because of reality of interviews. Became real with real people.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WBZ-AM	F	45-65	The feature on the police chief in Texas – too long and detailed. It should have been edited. There were too many unnecessary quotes from the candidate for chief.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	F	45-65	The police chief story tried hard to give many opinions and sides but I ended up feeling bounced around rather than being given "objective" view which I think was their objective.

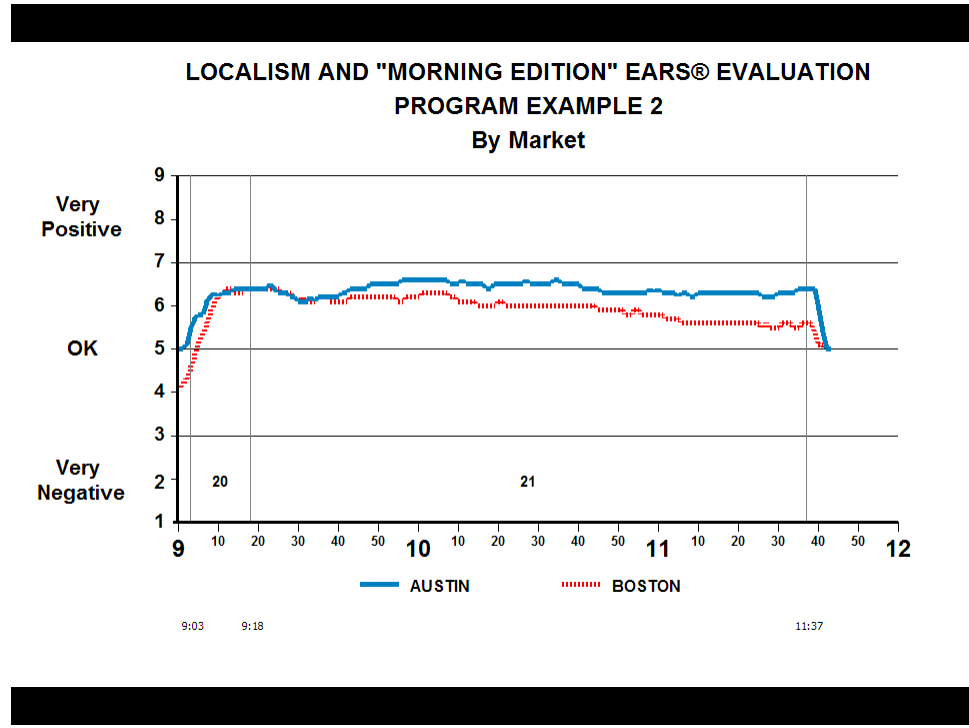
## Verbatim Summary

Respondents who assigned value to this feature liked the way the edited interviews flowed together. It was a “balanced portrait” with “good depth.” They appreciated the “good questions” from the reporter, along with “concise ideas and images.”

It helped that this local story fit into a larger context of law enforcement and race.

Without any music or creative sound, this feature was perceived to be well-written, clearly structured, and carefully put together from multiple sources. Thus it delivered exactly what NPR listeners are seeking – intelligent, in depth coverage.

**Microformatics: Horse Feature Segment**



Out of the 8 local feature segments, this story ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in value. It scored an overall average 6.2 on the scale -- on the borderline between positive and mediocre value.

The story was about legislation in the state of Illinois to ban the slaughter of horses for human consumption. This aircheck was contributed by WNIJ.

Element	Time	Total	Market	
			Austin	Boston
18. NPR underwriting announcement (Annie E. Casey Foundation)	8:38-8:51	3.8	4.2	3.3
<i>WNIJ Local Feature</i>				
19. Music bridge/Program ID/Station ID/Time/Temperature (Dan Klefstad)	8:51-9:03	5.0	5.5	4.6
20. Horses Feature intro (Klefstad)	9:03-9:18	6.4	6.4	6.4
<b>21. Horses Feature (Tony Arnold)</b>	<b>9:18-11:37</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>5.6</b>

### Observations

The legislature was debating a bill to ban the slaughter of horses. The last such plant in the United States was right here in DeKalb. The reporter took a quirky approach to this story, using language and audio clips that added humor to a serious topic.

Were they going to butcher Mr Ed?

In program testing, the direction of the scores is important. The lines on the previous graph show that value gradually eroded during this feature, especially among Boston listeners, ending at a marginal 6.0 value score.

### Verbatims

Aus	KUT-FM	KERA-FM	F	25-44	Horse slaughtering story, especially because of live/recorded testimony of legislator on house/senate floor – also helped that this segment contained humor and wit.
Aus	KUT-FM	KGSR-FM	F	45-65	Slaughtering horses for human consumption? I'm very interested in the way plants are grown and animals are slaughtered. This is an issue I'd like more info on.
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-AM	F	25-44	The horse slaughter story because it addressed the ethics of how animals are treated here, addressed rights of slaughterhouses, what senators opinions and thoughts were, and gave good background info, etc.
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-AM	F	25-44	The piece about horse slaughter was valuable because it was well edited and enlightening to listen to even though the issue was not that important to me.
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-AM	F	45-65	Horse slaughter story was especially valuable. I learned something – initially I was supportive of the ban, but with the additional information, I wasn't sure (less humane treatment if they were exported for slaughter). Both arguments were presented.
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-AM	M	45-65	Horse slaughter. Intelligent, interesting, would be an important issue if it were here in Texas. Dueling viewpoints was dramatic, humor was risky and paid off. Refreshing.
Aus	KUT-FM	KOOP-FM	M	25-44	The feature on horse slaughtering was especially valuable because it was informative, addressing both sides of the debate, as well as entertaining.
Aus	KUT-FM	KOOP-FM	M	25-44	Horse execution in Illinois. The subject is so outlandish and the delivery was comedic that I stayed entertained for duration. The newscaster's dry delivery was funny. The passionate interviewee also provided good fodder for laughs.

## Localism and Morning Edition

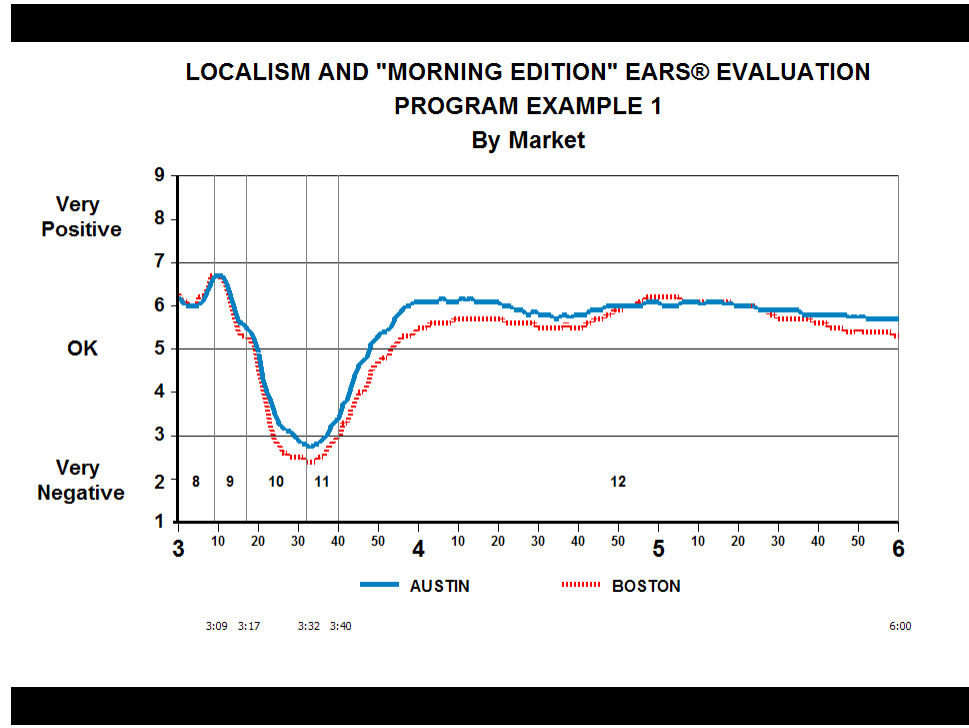
Bos	WBUR-FM	NONE	F	45-65	The story about the horses – I love horses, very gentle animals, get mistreated. I wish horses could roam free in a land inhabited by wild horses. The program was well-balanced, allowing various points of view – very passionate cons and pros.
Bos	WBUR-FM	NONE	M	25-44	Horse slaughtering – interesting issue, both sides of argument well presented, with humor.
Bos	WBUR-FM	OTHER	M	25-44	Slaughtering horses – I do research on animals and the kinds of arguments (logical and not) for and against the use of animals for human consumption and research are fascinating and perhaps quite critical to the kind of world we make for ourselves.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WBZ-AM	M	45-65	Story on horse meat consumption was well-done, with great sound bites from proponents and opponents. I liked the deft way in which the reporter played straight man with a wink in his eye. On a personal note, I've eaten horse meat years ago.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	M	25-44	Horse slaughter – interesting that it is the last one in the U.S. Showed multiple perspectives with a wry (but respectful) sense of humor. Not hard news but still informative.
Aus	KUT-FM	KGSR-FM	F	45-65	The horse story was not valuable to me. I am not an animal lover, so I was immediately turned off. They did pull me briefly in when they used names – such as Mr. Ed. That made me laugh – but it still didn't make it valuable to me.
Aus	KUT-FM	KOKE-AM	F	45-65	The story about eating horse meat could be improved by adding more material on the cultures and uses of the horses for food. There was one small mention, but I think it would be improved by having an overseas person who eats horse meat talk about it.
Bos	WBUR-FM	OTHER	F	25-44	The horse slaughter example – the quotes were idiotic. The presenter also did not sound serious, so why should I care?
Bos	WBUR-FM	WBZ-AM	F	45-65	The story about slaughtering horses was fairly irrelevant to my life, though humorous. For whom is this an issue?
Bos	WBUR-FM	WBZ-AM	M	45-65	Horse story went on way too long and almost seemed like it was a satire of an absurd bill. Reminded me of fake stories on "Wait, Wait, Don't Tell Me."

## Verbatim Summary

The reporter took a risky approach – jokes about the slaughter of horses. But the humor worked for many of our respondents who praised his “wit” and “wink in his eye.” The comedy in this story helped to hold interest while the background and arguments of the legislative debate were explained.

Beyond the humor, there was substance. The story was “well-balanced, allowing various points of view.” Not a major issue, but “informative.”

**Microformatics: Food Commentary Segment**



This station inserted a local commentary into Morning Edition, right after an NPR underwriting credit for Lendingtree – an abysmal 2.6 on the value scale.

The commentary was about dining alone. This aircheck was contributed by KNPR.

Element	Time	Total	Market	
			Austin	Boston
8. Fade-in NPR News story (House of Representatives) (Larry Abrahamson)	3:00-3:09	6.7	6.7	6.7
9. NPR News market report/Program ID	3:09-3:17	5.4	5.5	5.3
<i>KNPR Local Commentary</i>				
10. NPR underwriting announcement (Lendingtree.com)	3:17-3:32	2.6	2.8	2.4
11. Food Commentary intro	3:32-3:40	3.2	3.4	3.0
12. Food Commentary (John Curtis) (music at beginning)	3:40-6:00	5.5	5.7	5.3

### Observations

The only production in this commentary was to record a script. The theme of this essay was the positive aspects of dining alone in a restaurant. The writing was intended to be light and clever, including a funny anecdote from classical Rome.

The value score hovered between 5 and 6, but interest faded as the commentary went beyond 2 minutes. The value score ended at a mediocre 5.5 on our 9-point scale.

### Verbatims

Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-AM	M	45-65	The segment on dining along was a human interest story with broad-reaching capability. Something I would recite or repeat to my friends.
Aus	KUT-FM	KOKE-AM	M	45-65	The story about dining along struck a chord. I usually don't eat out, but when I do, I could empathize with most of what he said. It was humorous, light and not draining of emotions. Pleasant.
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	F	25-44	Eating alone. I love witty commentaries like this one that are randomly broadcast. I could relate to it because I used to travel for work and frequently ate alone. This kind of format is light-hearted and fun. Radio should have a sense of humor.
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	F	45-65	Roman food segment – interesting because it was a bit of trivia. I'm interested in Roman history, so it was a fun segment.
Bos	WBUR-FM	NONE	F	25-44	I'm very interested in food writing and dining experiences, so the piece on dining alone amused me. I like hearing about food history and the culture surrounding the table, both present and past. Bringing the bit about Luculus into the story was fabulous.
Bos	WBUR-FM	NONE	M	25-44	Dining alone was entertaining and I especially liked the historical perspective leading the story. I might just consider trying that someday.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WBZ-AM	F	25-44	Dining alone story – opinion stories are nice in the morning. A good way to adjust to being awake and a nice break from the war news.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	F	25-44	I thought the commentary about eating out alone was the best. It is important to have a laugh and keep it light a little bit in the morning, but with intelligence.
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-AM	F	45-65	The feature on eating alone became tiresome. At first it was interesting, but was not "news" and of little interest to me. The humor was a bit lame and overdone (sort of silly).
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-AM	M	25-44	Eating alone – not news. Seemed to be stretching to fit in reference to Roman general.

## Localism and Morning Edition

Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-FM	M	25-44	The "Dining Alone" was actually full of good little pieces or moments, but much of its potential was lost due to bad timing or too much depth on tangents. The Roman history bit was way too long.
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	F	25-44	The food for thought segment – no value whatsoever and I am someone who dines alone, so it should be of some interest. Too home-spun, intro took too long to get to the point. I would have turned the dial.
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	F	45-65	The dining piece was just not important – info on nutrition, food sourcing, effects on community/neighborhoods – that would have been more important.
Aus	KUT-FM	XM	F	25-44	Dining alone – The piece lacked substance. It was humorous, but superficial.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WBZ-AM	F	25-44	Dining along – the intro droned on and then the feature gave me nothing to celebrate as a diner. Celebrate eating chips with salsa, drink three gimlets – this had poor depth and little intelligence.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	F	25-44	The piece on dining alone – silly and pretentious. I thought the reporter was annoying. This is the kind of thing that turns people off NPR, makes it seem irrelevant to many.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	M	45-65	Commentary on dining alone was not witty, funny or entertaining. Delivery was poor. Timing and overall tone was dull. Topic could have been a good one. Strictly filler.

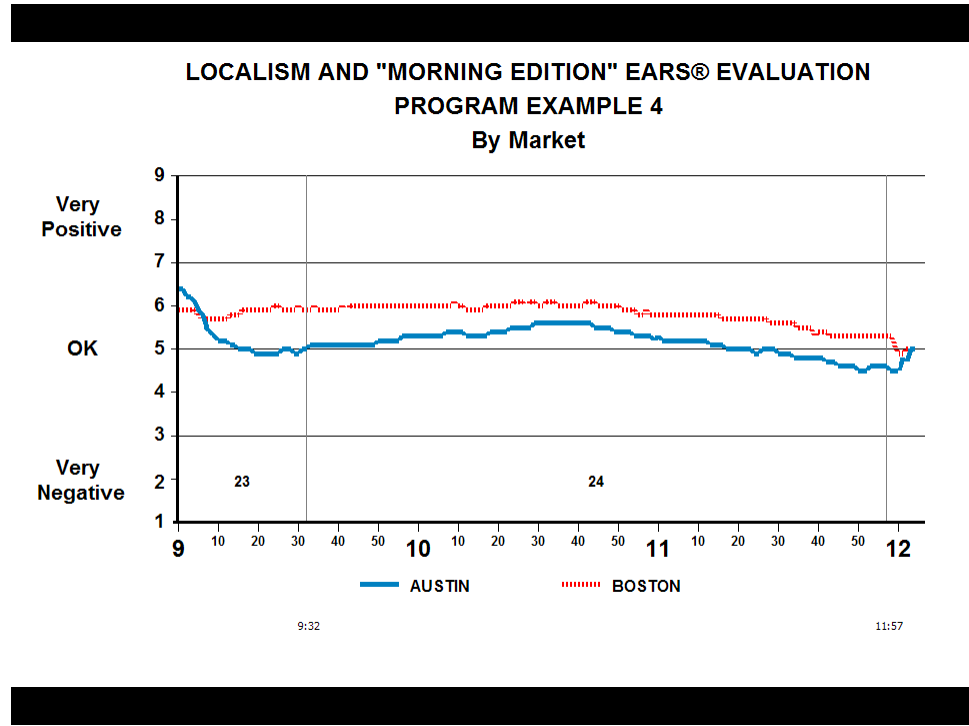
### Verbatim Summary

Where else would an ancient Roman get a punch line, except for public radio? The reference to Luculus saved this commentary for a while.

Some of our respondents enjoyed parts of this commentary for its light humor, but in contrast to the feature about horse slaughtering this “piece lacked substance.”

Early on this commentary had some potential, but going into its 3<sup>rd</sup> minute it became “tiresome” to respondents. “Strictly filler” is a deadly criticism. They said it was “just not important.” “Humorous but superficial.” “No value whatsoever.”

**Microformatics: Dance Feature Segment**



The MEGS faculty selected this feature segment as a highly edited package about a difficult topic – modern dance. The audio mix included multiple sources of sound.

The red line shows a one point hometown advantage in Boston, but the longer this feature ran there was more erosion in value, in both markets. It ended at 4.9.

This feature segment was contributed by WBUR.

Element	Time	Total	Market	
			Austin	Boston
23. Dance Feature intro (Bob Oakes)	9:00-9:32	5.5	5.0	5.9
24. Dance Feature (Andrea Shay)	9:32-11:57	4.9	4.6	5.3

### Observations

This was an arts feature about a Boston modern dance company rehearsing new choreography that included computer screens and laser beams. The audio mix was complex – voices, music, background sounds. The reporter used imagery to try to explain what the dance looked like.

The MEGS faculty agreed that this feature segment represented a high level of craft.

The value scores started out at a mediocre 5 in Austin and 6 in Boston, but value for listeners deteriorated the longer this aircheck ran.

### Verbatims

- |     |         |         |   |       |  |
|-----|---------|---------|---|-------|--|
| Aus | KUT-FM  | KGSR-FM | M | 25-44 | The dancers with projected dancers. Initially turned off by "dancing," I was brought back in by the use of technology and unusual art display. I've seen and read of shows like this. Graphic detail of the display/show was terrific – easy to visualize. |
| Aus | KUT-FM  | KLBJ-FM | M | 45-65 | The dance and technical interactive story really hit home as I'm an actor/artist and I feel that stories about the arts are very important to the community at large.  |
| Aus | KUT-FM  | KOOP-FM | F | 25-44 | I really liked the "scribbler" contemporary dance interview. I was amazing how the artistic director was able to describe the show in a way that made me want to go see it!  |
| Bos | WBUR-FM | NONE    | F | 25-44 | Dance segment – I enjoy attending dance shows, but as a new mother I rarely see them live at this stage of my life. I enjoyed the description of the scribbler and efforts to portray our human connection through art.                                    |
| Bos | WBUR-FM | SIRIUS  | M | 45-65 | Modern dance needs more exposure. The length of the Snappy/Boston dance group was worth the time it took to explain the visual.  |
| Bos | WBUR-FM | WBZ-AM  | F | 45-65 | I really liked the piece about the modern dance using computer visuals. They did a really good job of describing something visual with just words. I could imagine what the dancers looked like.   |
| Aus | KLBJ-AM | KUT-FM  | M | 45-65 | Clearly the story about modern dance coupled with digital technology needed serious editing or even not being aired. Here is a medium so visual in nature any effort describing it comes off as lame at best and flaky at worst.                           |

## Localism and Morning Edition

Aus	KUT-FM	KERA-FM	F	25-44	Story on modern dance was not valuable because it was hard to visualize the virtual scribbles that the dancers were supposedly dancing with – plus the choreographer just sounded like a nut job.
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-AM	M	25-44	Dance story – the reporter did a good job describing what it was and how it looked. But they lost me a minute or so in. Too long! The initial description was enough. It might be because I'm not into dance.
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-FM	F	25-44	The dance story lasted way too long. Maybe it is interesting to people involved in dance, but I couldn't follow what they were describing, nor was I interested.
Aus	KUT-FM	KOKE-AM	F	25-44	I could do without the dance story entirely. It was not valuable, uninteresting and low on intelligence. I enjoy pieces about art or interviews with artists, but the interviewee had nothing interesting to offer.
Aus	KUT-FM	KUT-FM	M	25-44	Although there was music and an attempt to make visual, the modern dance segment is one I would have turned off. Too long, I doubt many listeners wanted to hear it. I would have cut the segment.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WBZ-AM	F	25-44	The story about dance needed a lot of improvement. The music in the background was extremely distracting and I could not get a visual picture of what they were talking about. I do enjoy stories about the arts, but this one just missed.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WBZ-AM	F	25-44	I didn't like the music segment; often, the description of dance is so abstract it becomes boring. If I was home, I would have shut it off. It's just not that interesting for radio.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	F	45-65	The dance troupe story was too out there for me – I couldn't imagine the illusions the reporter (and owner) were describing.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	M	45-65	Snappy dance – actually a pretty intelligent, well-done piece – but describing dance, especially weird dance, is tough. Too long maybe on visual description we couldn't see.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WTKK-FM	M	45-65	I did not find valuable or interesting the piece on the scribbler program which projects dancer's images on a screen. A long piece which rambled/lost focus. A bit boring. I'm not sure any improvement would help make this piece more compelling.

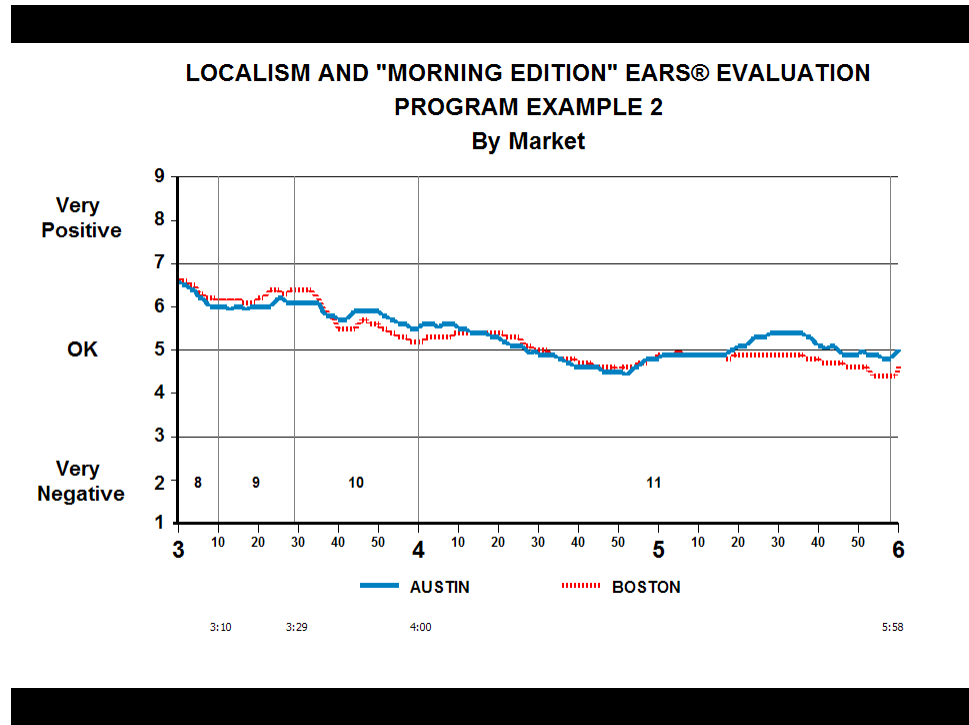
### Verbatim Summary

A high level of craft did not rescue this story about modern dance – on the radio.

Despite the complex editing of music, background sound, interviews and narration, most of our respondents found it “hard to visualize” the “weird dance.” “They lost me in a minute or so. Too long!” “Not valuable . . . low on intelligence.”

Unlike Julian Bond or the Governor of Colorado, the choreographer who was interviewed “sounded like a nut job” who “had nothing to offer.”

**Microformatics: Israel 2-Way Segment**



Like the Colorado Governor 2-Way, this segment consisted mainly of an unedited conversation between two people. The interviewee was a local Jewish woman who was taking her teenage daughters to Israel for the summer to teach Palestinians.

During the interview the value scores kept dropping lower and lower, ending 4.6.

This aircheck was contributed by WGLT.

Element	Time	Total	Market	
			Austin	Boston
8. Fade-in WGLT news story (ratings labels)	2:58-3:10	6.1	6.0	6.1
9. WGLT news story (Illinois Census data)/Program ID/Station ID/Time	3:10-3:29	6.2	6.1	6.4
10. Israel 2-Way feature intro	3:29-4:00	5.4	5.5	5.2
11. Israel 2-Way feature	4:00-5:58	4.6	4.8	4.4

### Observations

There was minimal production in this segment, just the recording of a conversation between the reporter and a local woman who was headed for Israel. She talked about her goal – to teach English to Arabs. There were some light personal moments about her teenage daughters who were coming along.

Value scores dropped to 5.4 in the setup for this story -- before the interview even got started. Value scores dropped further during the interview itself, down into the negative range.

### Verbatims

Aus	KUT-FM	KGSR-FM	F	25-44	I enjoyed the story about the woman taking her children with her and teaching English. It is always good to hear of people doing good things all over the world. I enjoyed the cultural aspect of this segment.
Aus	KUT-FM	KGSR-FM	F	45-65	The trip to Israel – discovered something new about fostering good relationships. Although the reporting was pretty amateur, I liked the story idea.
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-AM	F	45-65	The English Camp story was the most interesting. Young people going to the Middle East as good will ambassadors is a good thing.
Aus	KUT-FM	KMFA-FM	M	45-65	The woman and her two daughters going to Nazareth and speaking English with Palestinian kids at English camp. This story would not make it onto TV or other radio news and shows an important human aspect of life unreported elsewhere.
Bos	WBUR-FM	NONE	F	25-44	The story on people-to-people diplomacy caught my interest. The concept of teaching English to Arab children in a camp setting seemed fun and politically loaded with a lot of potential for greater peace and understanding between USA and Middle East.
Bos	WBUR-FM	NONE	M	25-44	The English Camp segment was somewhat moving and seemed nice that it is putting a face to the American in Muslim countries, however more than one interviewee would have improved this.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WBZ-AM	F	45-65	The story about the diplomatic trip to Israel. I think the potential for direct bridge-building between Americans and Arabs is extremely important in light of the hatred currently existing on both sides. I wish they had done more with the story.

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Bos	WBUR-FM	WBZ-AM	M	45-65	Story on family traveling to Ramallah was valuable. I would have also liked to have heard more context. How many folks travel there a year and hear from someone from Ramallah. I did like how the interviewer bucked the speaker up.
Aus	KUT-FM	KERA-FM	F	25-44	Story about the woman taking her children to English camp. Needed fewer references to the details about her particular children – it is not valuable to me to know whether or not her daughter thinks going to the camp will be a valuable experience.
Aus	KUT-FM	KGSR-FM	F	25-44	Family going to Bethlehem/English camp was interesting, but somewhat superficial. I wanted to know the big picture, less about this woman's children. It did give the human angle, though.
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-AM	F	45-65	Fairly valuable info of daughter's going to foreign country, but needed less "personal" accounts and more global connections – what actually was going to be studied, how it was going to be used back home etc. – didn't need to hear personal things.
Aus	KUT-FM	KLBJ-AM	F	45-65	I would want to know more about how the kids attending English camps are chosen – what cost, if any, the "campers" (and visitors) pay, what activities are featured, the history of the camps. It was a beginning, but not detailed enough for me.
Aus	KUT-FM	KMFA-FM	F	25-44	The one about the woman going to Nazareth because she and the interviewer were a little too Katie Couric, chummy, light – could have been discussed in a more intelligent way – if he had raised interesting questions or discussed the big picture.
Bos	WBUR-FM	NONE	F	45-65	The interview with the woman traveling to English camp could have been much better. The interviewer's questions were vapid and the woman's responses were inane. It made her look like an ignorant American and the interviewer didn't look too sharp either.
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	M	45-65	The mother and the daughter going to camps to spread English language. I thought the depth was poor. The questions were fair, but the mission the lady had was so poorly framed I was disappointed to learn little from it.

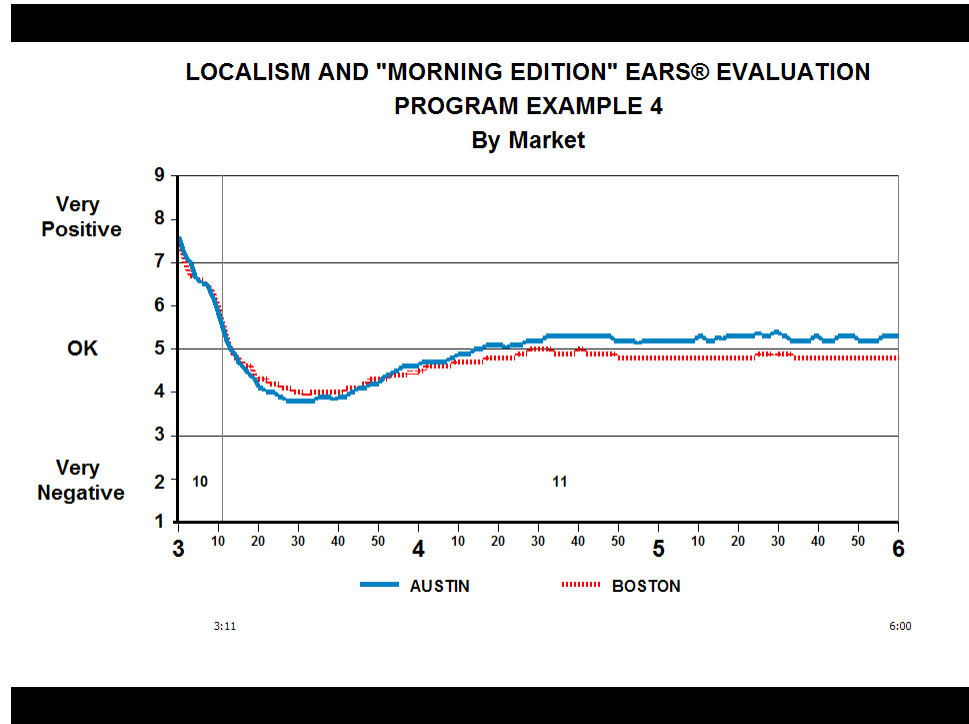
### Verbatim Summary

NPR listeners were attracted to the interviewee's motivation, which was peace in the Middle East through personal relationships. That sounded like a good idea. But the way the story was covered needed much improvement. It needed depth, context and reference to global connections. It ended up as merely local.

"I wish they had done more with the story." "Liked to have heard more context."

"The depth was poor." "Fewer references to her particular children." "I wanted to know the big picture." More "global connections." Less "Katie Couric."

**Microformatics: Wiggles Commentary Feature**



The MEGS faculty agreed that this commentary represented a high level of craft.

The Wiggles are a musical group popular among very young children. The guest commentator was a dad. The mix included music.

This was the lowest scoring aircheck of all the local newscasts, breaks and segments we tested. Its overall average value score was 5.0.

This aircheck was contributed by KJZZ.

Element	Time	Total	Market	
			Austin	Boston
10. Station and Program ID/Wiggles Commentary intro (Dennis Lambert)	2:59-3:11	5.5	5.5	5.6
11. Wiggles Commentary (with Wiggles music)(Troy Pocken)	3:11-6:00	5.0	5.3	4.8

### Observations

A dad told his story – how he was stuck and then got out of taking his little girl to a Wiggles concert. His script had been polished. His delivery was animated. Music was deftly cut and mixed throughout his commentary, exhibiting a high level of craft.

The graph shows that value dropped at the start of this commentary, down to 4 in the first 30 seconds. Then there was some recovery. The value ended at a mediocre 5.

What the graph does not show is the wide dispersion of scores. Actually, few of our respondents gave this commentary a mediocre score of 5. Instead, the Wiggles commentary divided respondents to both ends of the scale – loving it or hating it.

### Verbatims

Bos	WBUR-FM	WBZ-AM	M	45-65	Not interested in stories about little overindulged kids and "hapless" parents who were pampered and who today are self-absorbed dimwits who think they can write an essay. Recite something that was written by somebody whose tales are good.
Aus	KUT-FM	KGSR-FM	F	25-44	I felt that the Wiggles story was entertaining, funny and down to earth. It is nice to hear light-hearted humorous stories such as this sometimes – to break away from the "mainstream" radio news and just have a laugh.
Aus	KUT-FM	KGSR-FM	F	45-65	The Wiggles was vaguely valuable only because I am a mom. The way it was presented, the ba-dahs, figuring out a way not to go, etc., made me chuckle fondly – I could relate. It also kept me in touch with the kids culture – I can talk with other moms.
Aus	KUT-FM	KKMJ-FM	F	25-44	Wiggles segment – I have children who like the Wiggles – humorous. As a parent, I can relate to the father's frustration of having to listen to songs repeatedly.
Aus	KUT-FM	KOKE-AM	M	25-44	I liked the color piece about the Wiggles. It made me laugh and relax. I could relate to the commentator and I liked the way the music was mixed.
Aus	KUT-FM	KOOP-FM	M	25-44	Wiggles. I don't have kids, so I was initially turned off to the subject; however, the way the story unfolded grabbed my attention and was entertaining. I could identify based on the story delivery, it ended up being very funny.
Aus	KUT-FM	NONE	F	25-44	I loved the feature on The Wiggles. The dad's commentary was delightful and funny and easy to relate to (even for someone who doesn't yet have kids). It was light-hearted and offers needed comic relief to the more serious news of the day.
Bos	WBUR-FM	NONE	F	25-44	I liked The Wiggles because I was not expecting to. I could care less, but I still wound up interested.

## Localism and Morning Edition

Bos	WBUR-FM	NONE	F	25-44	I liked the segment on The Wiggles tickets because I have a four-year-old and I can relate to some of the things he was discussing. I like segments that can make me laugh, as opposed to news only.
Bos	WBUR-FM	NONE	F	45-65	The Wiggles piece because it related to personal experience. As a parent of children who liked programs like the Wiggles, I could relate to the father's desire to please his daughter, as well as his distress at having to endure the music.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	F	45-65	The Wiggles – I love the humorous opinion pieces that are based on real life experiences. I'm about ten years removed from having a toddler, even so, I found the piece very entertaining and enriching. It celebrated life.
Aus	KUT-FM	KGSR-FM	F	45-65	The story about the Wiggles was a total waste of my listening time.
Aus	KUT-FM	KOKE-AM	M	45-65	The Wiggles concert piece – parts of it were engaging, but it was sometimes overly cute and went on too long. Too much middle story and not enough end story.
Aus	KUT-FM	NPR ST	F	45-65	The Wiggles – was not valuable at all. It was almost entertaining, but it went on way too long and ceased to be funny.
Aus	KUT-FM	PODCAST	M	25-44	The Wiggles. This was an essay piece. Furthermore, the content of the essay had no relevance to me. I learned nothing.
Bos	WBUR-FM	OTHER	F	45-65	The children's song group with the dad who didn't want to go to the concert – just more inane blah, blah, blah. Needed to have some info about kids groups, who they are now and how popular. I changed the station a long time ago.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WBZ-AM	F	45-65	Children's song – too long, not at all relevant to me. I was sick of ba-da bah bah after one repetition.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WERS-FM	M	45-65	The commentary on buying tickets to the Wiggles concert, while containing some humor, pushed too far into an overly sarcastic and self-aggrandizing style.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	F	25-44	The bit on the Wiggles sucked. I think the caring audience of listeners is likely to be small. Besides, the narrator sounded smug and elitist. Not valuable news – just popular opinion/interest. Definitely too "niche."
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	F	45-65	The commentary on the Wiggles. Exists only to be a supposedly clever sound off by a smart aleck dad. Who cares? Why is what he has to do to please his child more interesting than what any American parent anywhere, anytime does for his kids?
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	M	45-65	The program with the father discussing the silly song his daughter loves was inane and unimportant. Had the story developed more quickly into a thoughtful discussion in gender roles and parenting men's contrasted with women's views on family, it would have been valuable.
Bos	WBUR-FM	WGBH-FM	M	45-65	Another "homey" commentary about the Wiggles – people making fun of children's entertainment is a tired subject – much overdone – get a life!
Bos	WBUR-FM	WNYC-AM	M	25-44	The Wiggles story was just stupid. I guess it could have been amusing if it had been much shorter.

## **Verbatim Summary**

Public radio listeners are supposed to value civility, but the negative verbatims about the Wiggles commentary are mean. “The bit on the Wiggles sucked.”

The narrator was talking about himself, his wife and his child. To some respondents, he came off as a “smart aleck,” “self-aggrandizing” and a “self-absorbed dimwit.” He sounded “smug and elitist.”

“A total waste of time.” “I turned off the radio.”

But there were other respondents who could relate because they had children. Others appreciated a bit of comic relief to the serious news. “It made me laugh and relax.”

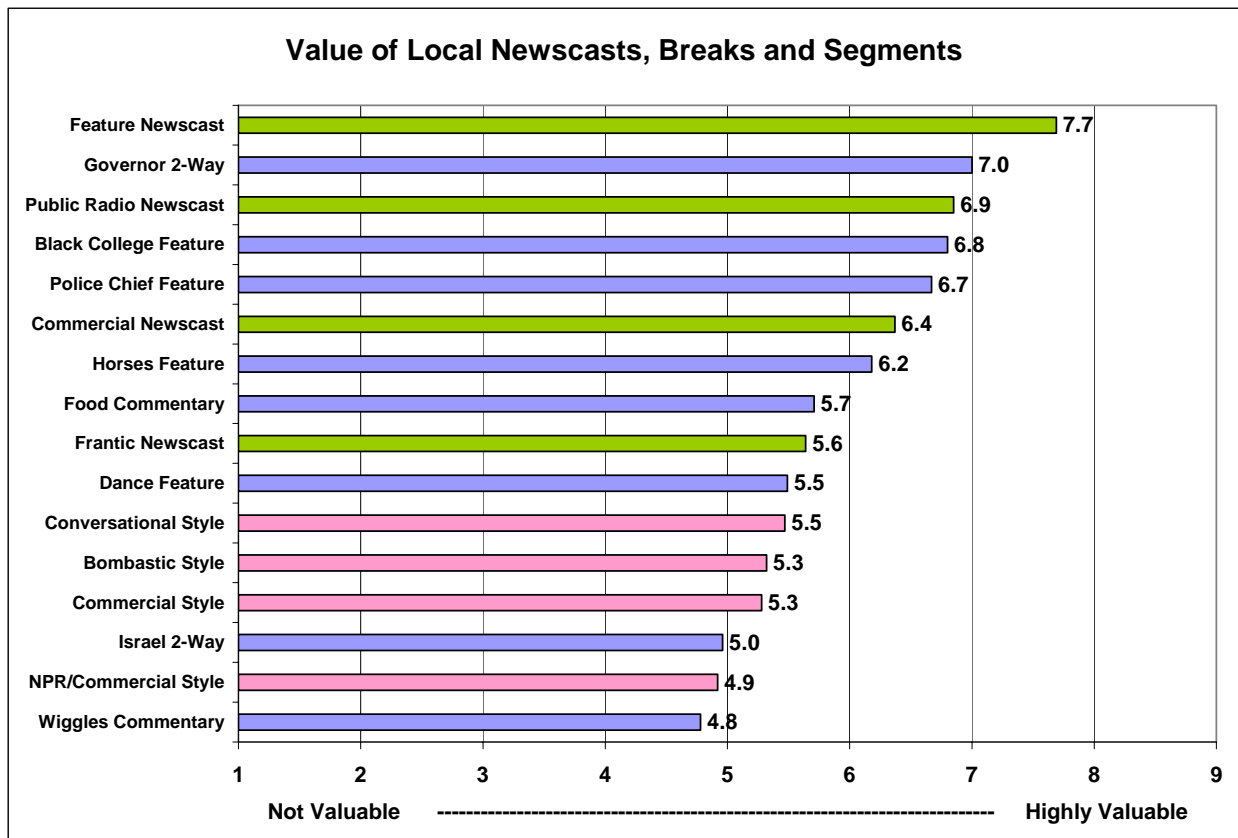
## Conclusions

The results of this program testing research are completely consistent with what we learned in last year’s Sense of Place focus groups.

*Public radio listeners would value a station that covers their place with depth, intelligence and a wider perspective, just as NPR covers the nation and the world. But the actual performance of local news and information programming too often fails to deliver on its promise.*

Morning Edition listeners evaluate local newscasts, breaks and segments by the same high standards that they expect from NPR.

Of the 16 airchecks we tested only one approached a very high value score. 9 of the airchecks fell into the mediocre range on our value scale. That middle range of value is not good enough when stations depend on contributions from listeners.



In the chart, the green bars are newscasts. The pink are breaks. Segments are blue.

## ***Improving the Depth and Intelligence of Local Coverage***

We accomplished an important goal for this research – to provide NPR stations with audiovisual documentation of how listeners react on a microformatic level to various types of local newscasts, breaks and segments.

The moving video graphs generated by FMR Associates are extremely useful in the training of local producers.

The written verbatims explain what NPR listeners expect from Morning Edition, in particular what they mean when they keep telling us that they value coverage that is intelligent and in depth.

## **Context and Connection**

We found that there is little value delivered by a local newscast, break or segment if it is conceived and developed as merely local.

In Marcia Alvar's 2006 **Sense of Place** presentation, she explained how news and information programming is processed in the minds of NPR listeners. Marcia described "an extraordinary audience with a vigilant curiosity about a world that it sees as an interconnected web of causal relationships."

She advised that "in order to frame our local news programming to appeal to these listeners we need to ask questions that emphasize context and connection."

Consider two airchecks that we tested -- the Governor 2-Way and the Israel 2-Way.

Our "vigilantly curious" respondents thought about Colorado's oil shale in a greater context -- the need for energy vs concern for the environment. They also connected this particular dispute to philosophical issues of federalism.

In contrast, the interview with a local woman going to Israel was more about herself and her daughters, rather than greater issues of religious, ethnic and economic struggle in the Middle East. In that sense, the Israel 2-Way interview was perceived to be merely local.

Keep in mind that the production values of both interviews were the same.

### Learning -- Facts and Data

At the original Core Values Summit, Fresh Air producer Danny Miller described the standard his show sets for content:

“Listeners trust us to respect their intelligence and curiosity and make interesting choices on their behalf. They depend on us to not waste their time, but to enrich it while they’re listening “

After the 2006 **Sense of Place** research Marcia Alvar observed:

“Too often in this study, we heard listeners say they didn’t learn anything from the local program examples we played. They want programming rich in facts and data not conjecture opinion or pitches to our emotions.”

One respondent in this year’s research wrote: “NPR = facts plus authority.”

Several airchecks that we tested illustrate this point. The Frantic Newscast coverage of a ceremony to honor fallen police officers told listeners nothing that they did not already know. But they had plenty of questions that could have been answered, such as what percentages are killed in duty? How does that compare to other occupations?

Both the Wiggles Commentary and the Food Commentary were attacked for being superficial, fluffy and lacking content. Aside from the mildly entertaining personal opinions, there was not much to learn in either commentary.

On the flip side, our respondents criticized the NPR/Commercial Style station break because the anchor simply read business news headlines. Stock market numbers and bankruptcy filings have no value, unless they are explained, analyzed and interpreted.

### Depth and More Depth

The top-scoring aircheck of all was the Feature Newscast, achieving a very high 7.7 average value on our 9-point scale. A better term for this type of local newscast might be Long-Form or In Depth Newscast.

The station that produced this newscast had participated in last year's **Sense of Place** research. Based on those focus groups the program director resolved to scrap the traditional format of a radio newscast. Instead the station would use Morning Edition's local newscast window to cover one important story in depth.

For this research, the MEGS faculty selected a great example. The topic was a proposal for universal healthcare in Wisconsin. The newscast consisted of a package of interviews and narration, with plenty of factual information. There was plenty of time for a balanced perspective from all sides.

Another strong aircheck was a Public Radio Newscast, so titled because it matched NPR's newscasts in structure and delivery. A story about workers at a nuke plant ran for 30 seconds, while a story about hiking trails ran about a minute. A story about healthcare reform in Oregon was just getting started when we faded the aircheck.

The written verbatims suggested how this newscast could be further improved:

“I wanted even more information.”

“I'd like a follow up.”

“Little depth – I wanted more.”

Depth does not simply mean fewer, longer stories. But NPR listeners value depth above all else – depth of factual information, depth of analysis and depth of perspective, even in a local newscast.

### **Substance and Craft**

PRPD's Core Values define Craft to include:

Uniquely human voice – conversational, authentic, intimate  
Pacing – deliberate, thoughtful, appropriate to the substance of the content  
Attention to detail – music, sound elements, language

Before we went into the field, we asked the MEGS faculty to rate each local newscast, break and segment on its level of Craft. After the results came in, we looked for any relationship between those craft ratings and the value scores from NPR listeners.

We found no relationship.

For example, the Wiggles Commentary was rated as high in craft but perceived as the lowest value by listeners. The Dance Feature was high craft and mediocre value.

Yet the reverse was true for the Black College Feature – higher value than craft.

One of the PDs involved with this study gave his interpretation of the findings:

*I think that what needs to be explained to people is that substance triumphs over craft.*

*We learned from Sense of Place that good writing is king, not ambient on-location sound or snappy production techniques. That may win contests, but not listeners.*

To be fair, the PRPD's definition of Craft might be interpreted to include "good writing." Yet we found that relatively simple audio production, such as the Feature Newscast or the Colorado Governor 2-Way, could deliver high value. What matters to listeners is substance – solid information, presented with intelligence and depth.

### ***The Problem of Traffic***

Several of the local newscasts and breaks that we tested included traffic. The style of presentation ranged from laid back conversational to breathless energetic.

We found that the problem with traffic is that regardless of how it is produced, traffic is simply not useful to the majority of Morning Edition listeners.

The verbatims are clear:

Morning Edition listeners might work at home, or live downtown, or drive on rural routes, or take mass transit, or otherwise have no need for traffic info.

If they do drive on busy highways, they may find that the traffic is “always wrong,” or too late, or not pertinent to their own route.

Yes, we found that some Morning Edition listeners value traffic reports. But even for that minority, traffic is not the reason why they tune to the NPR station.

### ***The Problem of Underwriting***

In 2007 NPR conducted a comprehensive study of underwriting. Our own research was not designed to answer questions about underwriting.

But every underwriting spot that appeared in our airchecks was slammed by Morning Edition listeners. That happened regardless of who the underwriter was or how the message was written. The verbatims were highly critical.

Consistent with last year’s **Sense of Place** research, we found that station promo announcements (such as for the station’s website) and even acknowledgements of membership gifts could be lumped into offensive “ads” or “commercials.”

When a public radio station uses its Morning Edition inserts primarily for traffic and spots, the value to listeners can plummet to the level of commercial radio.

## Detailed Methodology

Walrus Research designed the program testing sessions including the moderator's script, the printed instrumentation, the wording of questions and the presentation of aircheck examples. FMR Associates provided the fieldwork, conducting the sessions according to our specifications.

The following is FMR's documentation of the EARS sessions:

**The Sessions** – A total of eight sessions, each lasting approximately two hours, were held on July 18-19 and 24-25, 2007 (two groups each night). Four sessions were held in Austin (July 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>) and four in Boston (July 24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>).

A total of 306 respondents participated in the sessions, representing a balanced sample of the target audience.

Testing included the use of FMR's exclusive EARS<sup>®</sup> (Electronic Attitude Research System) hand-held response units by participants in each session. This allowed respondents to simulate "actual" radio listening behavior in a relaxed setting while listening to the "test" material in a way that closely approximates actual listening behavior. Respondents listened to MP3 segments under the simulated condition that they were listening to radio. During the simulation of radio listening, respondents recorded their attitudes on a moment-to-moment basis. Both "instantaneous" and "cross-check" (follow-up) questions were incorporated specifically to evaluate the value of the individual program segments, elements, etc.

**Moment-to-Moment Programming Evaluations** – Respondents were instructed to record their attitudes on their hand-held EARS<sup>®</sup> units, as the program segments played, entering a level of response which reflected their attitude (as if they were actually "tuned" to the station as it was broadcast). Respondents were told they could change their attitude toward the program – instantly, and for any reason – to one of the nine ("1"-to-"9") possible value response categories outlined below. The hand-held EARS<sup>®</sup> response units were pre-programmed to take readings every second while the program segments were played.

## Localism and Morning Edition

The response scale, displayed on a multimedia projector during the playing of each radio MP3 segment, was as follows:

If I were listening to radio, I would consider this kind of programming to be:

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>
<u>Not Valuable</u>				<u>Somewhat</u>				<u>Highly</u>
To Me				Valuable				Valuable
								To Me

**Follow-Up Responses to Programming Examples** – In addition to the moment-to-moment responses, follow-up questions were asked after each program segment to cross-check the “instant” listenership responses. After each of the four examples were played in each session, specific questions were asked regarding its Intelligence and Depth; along with written questions to probe for specific areas of value and suggestions for improvement.

**Controlling for Possible Response Bias** – In order to eliminate or neutralize possible bias toward specific test elements, steps were taken to ensure that there was a balance of respondents in each sub-group (based on sex and age). Respondents were recruited primarily from database lists provided by the local Public Radio station in each test market (KUT-FM in Austin and WBUR-FM in Boston), along with supplemental random recruiting (based on a “hot zip” analysis of the station lists).

## Respondents

Walrus Research designed the sampling for this study, including quotas for sex, age demo, giving to public radio, and listening to Morning Edition. We wrote the telephone screeners, processed membership lists from KUT and WBUR, and supervised FMR Associates who recruited the respondents to our specifications.

The item below, taken from our screening questionnaire, constitutes the operational definition of member vs non-member:

7. Public radio stations often ask listeners for financial support. Think about whether you or anyone in your household ever gave money as a contribution to support KUT 90.5 FM.

Which of the following statements best represents your household's most recent contribution to KUT? (READ)

- We contributed money to KUT in year 2007..... 1 (CURRENT)
- We most recently contributed in year 2006 ..... 2 (CURRENT)
- We most recently contributed in year 2005 or an earlier year..... 3 (NOT-CURRENT)
- We have never contributed money to KUT ..... 4 (NOT-CURRENT)

The item below, also from the screener, defined listening to Morning Edition:

6. On weekday mornings, from 5am to 9am, KUT carries NPR's Morning Edition. Think about how often you listen to Morning Edition on KUT in a typical week. Do you listen . . . (READ)

- 4 or 5 days per week .....1 (REGULAR LISTENER)
- 2 or 3 days per week .....2 (OCCASIONAL LISTENER)
- 0 or 1 day per week.....3 (TERMINATE)

The following is FMR's description of our in-tab sample:

### **Respondent Characteristics**

**Respondent Characteristics** – All 25 to 65 year-old male and female group members were primary or secondary news and information fans of the Public Radio station in their market who listen to radio for at least thirty minutes on a typical weekday and tune-in at least two days a week to the “Morning Edition” news magazine. The demographic composition of EARS<sup>®</sup> session participants is summarized in Tables I-1 to I-5.

**Market, Gender, Age, Education and Ethnicity of Session Participants** – As summarized in Table I-1, of the 306-respondent final in-tab sample, there were 157 in Austin (51%) and 149 in Boston (49%). Also per the sampling quotas, there was a near 50/50 mix of men (46%) and women (54%) (Table I-2), as well as younger (25 to 44) (47%) and older (45 to 65) (53%) participants (Table I-3). This was the case regardless of test market. The vast majority had a college degree or better (86%), including 52% with an advanced degree (Table I-4) – especially Boston participants (66% versus 38% in Austin) and Public Radio members (58% versus 42% of non-members). With respect to perceived ethnicity, 85% (regardless of test market) considered themselves to be non-Hispanic White/Caucasian (Table I-5). Most of the rest were Hispanic/Latino (5%), Black/African-American (3%), dual/multiple ethnicity (2%) or Asian/Pacific Islander (1%).

## Localism and Morning Edition

Table I-1 Market of Respondents

	Total	Morning Edition Listenership		Public Radio Membership	
		Regular	Occasional	Members	Non-Members
Austin	51%	52%	51%	49%	56%
Boston	49%	48%	49%	51%	44%
	<b>N=306</b>	N=184	N=122	N=191	N=115

Table I-2 Sex of Respondents

	Total	Market		Morning Edition Listenership		Public Radio Membership	
		Austin	Boston	Regular	Occasional	Members	Non-Members
Men	46%	45%	46%	44%	49%	44%	49%
Women	54%	55%	54%	56%	51%	56%	51%
	<b>N=306</b>	N=157	N=149	N=184	N=122	N=191	N=115

Table I-3 Age of Respondents

	Total	Market		Morning Edition Listenership		Public Radio Membership	
		Austin	Boston	Regular	Occasional	Members	Non-Members
25 to 44	47%	49%	45%	46%	48%	45%	50%
45 to 65	53%	51%	55%	54%	52%	55%	50%
	<b>N=306</b>	N=157	N=149	N=184	N=122	N=191	N=115

## Localism and Morning Edition

**Table I-4** Education Level of Respondents

	Total	Market		Morning Edition Listenership		Public Radio Membership	
		Austin	Boston	Regular	Occasional	Members	Non-Members
High school or less	3%	3%	2%	2%	3%	1%	6%
One to three years of college	12%	16%	8%	9%	17%	9%	16%
Four year college degree	20%	26%	14%	21%	18%	19%	21%
Some graduate credits	14%	17%	10%	14%	13%	13%	15%
Advanced degree such as MA, MBA or PhD	52%	38%	66%	54%	48%	58%	42%
	<b>N=306</b>	N=157	N=149	N=184	N=122	N=191	N=115

**Table I-5** Ethnicity of Respondents

	Total	Market		Morning Edition Listenership		Public Radio Membership	
		Austin	Boston	Regular	Occasional	Members	Non-Members
Non-Hispanic White/ Caucasian	85%	85%	85%	86%	83%	87%	82%
Hispanic/Latino of any race	5%	7%	2%	4%	5%	5%	4%
Non-Hispanic Black/ African-American	3%	1%	5%	1%	5%	2%	4%
Dual or multiple race/ Ethnicity	2%	3%	1%	2%	2%	2%	3%
Non-Hispanic Asian/ Pacific Islander	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%
Refuse/No answer	4%	2%	7%	4%	5%	3%	7%
	<b>N=306</b>	N=157	N=149	N=184	N=122	N=191	N=115

**Details of the Findings**

**Station Preferences and Listenership**

**Time-Spent-Listening to Radio on a Typical Weekday** – In line with the screening criteria, all session participants said that they listen to radio (including on a computer) for at least 30 minutes on a typical weekday. As summarized in Table 1, six of ten reported listening to two or more hours per weekday, including 28% who tune-in for four or more hours. “Heavy” (4+ hour) weekday listening was consistent regardless of market, gender, age or “Morning Edition” listenership. Among the rest, 28% indicated listening 1 to 2 hours on a typical weekday, while only 14% were “light” (30 minutes to one hour) listeners.

Table 1                      Time-Spent-Listening to Radio on a Typical Weekday

	Total	Market		Morning Edition Listenership		Public Radio Membership	
		Austin	Boston	Regular	Occasional	Members	Non-Members
4 or more hours	28%	28%	28%	27%	30%	25%	34%
2 to 3 hours	31%	30%	32%	36%	23%	32%	28%
1 to 2 hours	28%	26%	29%	26%	30%	30%	24%
30 minutes to 1 hour	14%	16%	11%	11%	18%	13%	15%
	<b>N=306</b>	N=157	N=149	N=184	N=122	N=191	N=115

**Public Radio  
Listenership  
and Support**

**Agreement That NPR News and Information Is Important**

– More than eight of ten participants said they “strongly agree” that “the news and information programming on KUT/WBUR is an important part of my life...if it went away, I would miss it” (82%). Most all the rest (15%) agreed “moderately” (13%) or “weakly” (2%), and just 3% disagreed to any extent. Strong agreement was consistent regardless of age or education level, and even higher among Austin participants (85% versus 79% in Boston), women (85% versus 79% of men), Public Radio members (87% versus 75% of non-members) and regular “Morning Edition” listeners (89% versus 72% of occasional samplers).

Table 4 Agreement That NPR News and Information is Important to Respondent

	Total	Market		Morning Edition Listenership		Public Radio Membership	
		Austin	Boston	Regular	Occasional	Members	Non-Members
Strongly agree	82%	85%	79%	89%	72%	87%	75%
Moderately agree	13%	11%	15%	9%	20%	10%	18%
Weakly agree	2%	2%	3%	2%	3%	2%	3%
Weakly disagree	1%	1%	1%	0%	2%	1%	1%
Moderately disagree	2%	1%	2%	1%	3%	0%	4%
Strongly disagree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	<b>N=306</b>	N=157	N=149	N=184	N=122	N=191	N=115

## Localism and Morning Edition

**Listenership to “Morning Edition”** – All participants were “Morning Edition” listeners, including six of ten who indicated tuning in four or five days during a typical week. Regular (4-5 days per week) “Morning Edition” listenership was generally consistent regardless of market, gender, age or education level – and higher among members (74%) as compared to non-members (36%). Instead, most non-members (63%) said they listen two or three days per week to “Morning Edition” (40% overall).

Table 5 Listenership to Morning Edition

	Total	Market		Public Radio Membership	
		Austin	Boston	Members	Non-Members
4 or 5 days per week	60%	60%	60%	74%	36%
2 or 3 days per week	40%	40%	40%	26%	64%
	N=306	N=157	N=149	N=191	N=115

**Most Recent Contribution to Public Radio** – Six of ten participants were Public Radio members (62%) who most recently contributed to their local station in 2007 (51%) or 2006 (11%). Members tended to be Boston participants (66% versus 59% in Austin) and regular “Morning Edition” listeners (77% versus 40% of occasional samplers), skewing female, older and more highly educated. The remaining 37% were non-members, who most recently contributed prior to 2006 (21%) or never contributed money (16%). Six of ten occasional “Morning Edition” listeners were non-members.

Table 6 Most Recent Financial Contribution to Public Radio

	Total	Market		Morning Edition Listenership		Public Radio Membership	
		Austin	Boston	Regular	Occas	Members	Non-Members
Contributed money in 2007	51%	46%	56%	66%	28%	82%	0%
Most recently contributed in 2006	11%	13%	10%	11%	12%	18%	0%
Most recently contributed in 2005 or earlier	21%	26%	17%	16%	30%	0%	56%
Never contributed money	16%	15%	17%	7%	30%	0%	44%
	<b>N=306</b>	N=157	N=149	N=184	N=122	N=191	N=115