
APPENDIX H - TRANSPORTATION EQUITY

Since 2018, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) has aimed to better understand how the transportation system, services and decision-making processes help or hinder the lives of people in underserved and underrepresented communities in Minnesota through the [Advancing Transportation Equity Initiative](#). The initiative took a high-level look at transportation equity from a statewide perspective. Work completed since 2018 has ranged from equity-focused conversations with stakeholders in Greater Minnesota, policy and program equity reviews, research and more. Insights include the:

- Lack of an agency-wide transportation equity definition or specific target populations is a challenge.
- Equitable engagement is necessary but not sufficient.
- Statewide solutions to advance equity can help address broader transportation challenges and vice versa.
- Need to move beyond research to implementation.

The 2022 Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan (SMTP) process included several activities to embed transportation equity in the planning approach to address these and other lessons from the Advancing Transportation Equity Initiative. The sections below share examples of transportation inequities in Minnesota, what transportation equity means to MnDOT and MnDOT's commitment to transportation equity. Additionally, the Transportation Equity in the SMTP section provides information on how equity was included in the plan process and the sample transportation equity strategies and actions section offers equity-related policy direction from Chapter 5. More information about the engagement process around transportation equity is available in the Transportation Equity Engagement Summary.

TRANSPORTATION EQUITY IN MINNESOTA

Policy, design and operations in housing and transportation have led to inequities. For example, construction of the interstate system in the 1950s displaced homes, businesses, places of faith and more. This mostly took place in communities where loans were denied or housing was restricted by deed, which led to much lower property values. Highway development was favored over investment in public transit for decades. As a result, housing development has been happening farther from key destinations further compounding issues of equity and access to jobs and essential services. These and other practices have exacerbated segregation and income inequity over generations, creating a harmful legacy of past decisions. These inequities combined with the killing of George Floyd in 2020 and Daunte Wright in 2021 have highlighted the need to focus on racial and social justice. This legacy has strengthened Minnesota's commitment to advance transportation equity today.

In 2021, staff started an effort to define what transportation equity means to MnDOT. The need for a unified definition for transportation equity emerged from community and stakeholder feedback from the Advancing Transportation Equity Initiative. There is a wide variety of perspectives and definitions of transportation equity, and it was clear that MnDOT's ongoing efforts needed a common understanding of its meaning and implications.

MnDOT staff worked with the members of the State Transportation Plans Equity Work Group to draft a definition of transportation equity. Staff engaged with over 1,000 people both within MnDOT and with community members and representatives of community-based organizations to provide feedback on the draft definition. This engagement process took over three months. People commented it is important for MnDOT to acknowledge historic harms of transportation while also taking steps to address historic injustices and affectively working towards making an equitable transportation future.

Some of the key takeaways from the conversations and feedback include:

- Be bold and provide strong support for Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities getting a seat at the decision-making table.
- Keep the acknowledgement of historic harms in the final definition.
- Emphasize the active work needed for specific outcomes that repair the past.
- Replace or define the word fair.
- Address urban vs. rural resource needs and distribution.
- Include people with disabilities and people with low incomes.

Based on that feedback, the Equity Work Group recommended a revised definition for MnDOT leadership to consider. MnDOT leadership built on that recommendation to clarify what transportation equity means to the agency resulting in a statement of commitment to transportation equity.

TRANSPORTATION EQUITY STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF PAST HARMS

MnDOT acknowledges the transportation system and agency decisions have underserved, excluded, harmed and overburdened some communities. We understand some of our past decisions denied Black and Indigenous communities as well as people with disabilities the full participation of transportation benefits. These and other underserved communities have historically carried disproportionate burdens of transportation decisions.

WHAT TRANSPORTATION EQUITY MEANS TO MNDOT

MnDOT is committed to creating an equitable transportation system.

Transportation equity means the benefits and burdens of transportation systems, services and spending are fair and just, which historically has not been the case. Transportation equity requires ensuring underserved communities, especially Black, Indigenous and People of Color, share in the power of decision making.

We will not transform our transportation systems, services and decision-making processes overnight, nor will we always get it right on the first try. Transportation equity is an ongoing journey of listening, learning, changing, implementing and adapting.

Everyone in our agency regardless of position or work assignment has a role to advance transportation equity. We will partner with community members, community-based organizations, transportation service providers, Tribal Nations and government institutions to evolve our work and to change outcomes for our communities.

TRANSPORTATION EQUITY KEY TERMS

What transportation equity means to MnDOT includes many complementary terms and statements including:

BENEFITS

Transportation benefits are positive impacts of all modes of transportation, including access to affordable, reliable and safe transportation options. Other benefits of transportation include access to affordable housing, employment opportunities, healthy food, clean air and clean water. Transportation benefits are best defined by impacted communities.

BURDENS

Transportation burdens are negative impacts of all modes of transportation including lack of or limited access to affordable, reliable and safe transportation options. Other transportation burdens include exposure to air pollution and related poor health outcomes as well as lack of or limited access to affordable housing and employment opportunities. Transportation burdens are best defined by impacted communities.

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS, SERVICES AND SPENDING

Transportation systems, services and spending refer to different transportation funding and decision making processes that impact people. Transportation systems refer to the various elements and networks that constitute the overall state transportation system such as state and local road networks, sidewalks and trails, transit systems, rail networks, ports and airports, etc. Transportation services refer to various programs that transportation agencies manage. Transportation spending refers to the decisions that lead to the allocation of funds for specific activities like snow removal and projects such as spending of capital projects to construct interchanges or spending for maintenance on state highways.

FAIR

Fairness in transportation means everyone has access to transportation outcomes that are free from bias and discrimination. Fairness in transportation requires a proportionate distribution of transportation benefits and burdens.

JUST

Justice in transportation means taking proactive measures to ensure transportation benefits are adequately accessible to underserved communities especially Black, Indigenous and People of Color, who often bear disproportionate transportation burdens. Justice in transportation requires transforming current inequitable systems so no person is denied accessing the transportation opportunities they need to lead a dignified life.

UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

Underserved communities refer to populations that share a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied through public and private discriminatory practices and neglect the full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social and civic life. This includes Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality. These characteristics can and do overlap, which can magnify and increase the impact experienced.

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BLACK, INDIGENOUS AND PEOPLE OF COLOR (BIPOC)

Transportation equity requires acknowledging past harms by intentionally naming and centering the experiences of communities that faced the most profound transportation harms and racism. While BIPOC includes all people of color, it leads with Black and Indigenous identities to counter anti-Black racism and erasure of Native communities.

SHARING POWER

Sharing power means creating opportunities for underserved communities to access decision making power. This includes institutional and structural power. Institutional power is the ability to create or greatly influence and shape the rules, policies and actions of an institution. Structural power is the ability to create or greatly influence and shape the rules, policies and actions that govern multiple and intersecting institutions or an industry. Sharing power requires engaging early and often with underserved communities to better understand community needs and incorporating those needs to transportation initiatives that lead to real, measurable change in the lives of community members. Shared power framework recognizes and addresses the power imbalance that often leads to poor and uninformed decisions that perpetuate harms on underserved communities especially Black, Indigenous and People of Color.

Examples of sharing power include:

- Prioritizing solutions that combat the most pressing issues of our time that have disproportionate impact on underserved communities. Rethinking I-94 is a new model of corridor planning to prioritize community needs and co-create solutions to meet the challenges of the transportation system.
- Meaningfully engaging those communities most impacted by structural racism in the creation and implementation of the programs and projects that impact their daily lives. MnDOT recently created and posted a community ambassador

position to build better relationships with BIPOC communities.

- Collaborating with partners on projects that meet social and economic priorities for communities. MnDOT regularly partners with jurisdictions on locally initiated and led projects such as transit and interchanges.
- Reforming programs, policies and procedures to deconstruct institutional and structural barriers. The Office of Transportation System Management's Transportation Equity Labs explore programs, policies and procedures with a commitment to advancing transportation equity. Participants can include external partners depending on the focus of the lab.
- Creating a workforce at all levels that is representative of the communities we serve. MnDOT has been expanding partnerships with education partners (e.g., MnDOT's CAV Career Pathways Camp) to ensure our future transportation workforce is representative and capable of meeting the challenges arising.

Ultimately, MnDOT cannot share decision-making power in all instances, as other agencies also have authority to make key transportation decisions. For example, sovereign Tribal Nations hold authority to make transportation decisions for programs, projects, studies and other efforts for tribal lands. Metropolitan planning organizations, federal and state regulatory agencies, and local units of government all have clear legal charges to make key decisions. Also, the Minnesota Legislature sets spending levels and allowable uses of funds.

TRANSPORTATION EQUITY IN THE SMTP

The 2022 SMTP process included several activities to embed transportation equity in the planning approach. First, staff collaborated with the Minnesota Department of Health to complete a Health in All Policies review of the 2017 SMTP. Several recommendations from the analysis have been included in the policy direction found in Chapter 5. Additionally, equity was one of six focus areas, which resulted in the Equity Work Group that advised the process and draft policy direction.

HEALTH IN ALL POLICIES REVIEW

The 2017 SMTP was cross-referenced with the corresponding [2016 Health Impact Assessment \(HIA\)](#). The review focused on confirming areas where the SMTP included health recommendations and identifying opportunities for greater inclusion in the SMTP update process. Equity was a key theme resulting from the review and included the following recommendations:

- Define what equity means in transportation, and include transportation equity in the Minnesota GO Vision.
- Study, document and report on inequities in Minnesota’s transportation system and define MnDOT’s role in reducing those inequities.
- Prioritize investments in communities that have faced historical disinvestment.

The summary of the Health in All Policies review is in Appendix D – Planning Reviews.

EQUITY FOCUS AREA & WORK GROUP

Equity was one of six focus areas, which resulted in the Equity Work Group that advised the process and draft policy direction. The scope of the Equity Work Group was bigger than the other five work groups. The Equity Work Group guided planning considerations for two statewide transportation plans—the SMTP and the 20-year State Highway Investment Plan (MnSHIP). In addition to helping draft policy direction like the other work groups, the Equity Work Group also provided oversight on planning considerations and processes beyond the SMTP. This work group helped develop:

- A list of resources available at the end of this appendix.
- What transportation equity means to MnDOT and list of terms.
- Updates to the Plan Development Guidelines that document requirements and expectations for MnDOT’s Family of Plans.
- An equity review process applied to the SMTP draft policy direction.
- A list of equity impacts of MnSHIP investment scenarios.
- An accountability plan for implementing transportation equity after the adoption of the SMTP.

POLICY DIRECTION EQUITY REVIEW

The Equity Work Group coordinated an equity review of the draft strategies that are emerging from the other five work groups advising the SMTP. The review was completed in three parts—initial evaluation, equity workshop and staff review of strategies. The review process was guided by discussions and input with the Equity Work Group.

During the initial evaluation, each of the six work groups prioritized which of the draft strategies would go through the equity review. Work groups then evaluated their prioritized strategies using the following questions:

- Who are the intended beneficiaries of the strategy?
- Does the strategy include an intentional focus on increasing transportation equity? If so, explain.
- Who is potentially burdened, or excluded, from this strategy?
- Who has been burdened by past decisions related to this strategy? How and why?
- What are some ways that this strategy could be changed so that it increases transportation equity?

Comments were consistent across work groups and included changes to strategies that focused on:

- Prioritizing people (specifically BIPOC), historically excluded communities and people disadvantaged in transportation decision making.
- Acknowledging who has been harmed by past decisions.
- Reducing barriers to participation and decision making.
- Calling out vulnerable users of the transportation system.

During the equity workshop, participants discussed a mix of strategies from the equity review and some flagged for further review. In the first breakout discussion, people shared feedback on how the strategies advanced transportation equity and how the strategies fell short from an equity perspective. In the second breakout discussion, participants shared feedback on actions to reduce racial disparities, to build capacity to advance transportation equity and to make actions more equitable.

Following the workshop, staff completed a thorough review of draft strategies and actions to amend language to advance transportation equity. Feedback from the equity review was shared with the TAC and PAC, and both committees completed further review of the language.

SAMPLE TRANSPORTATION EQUITY STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

The 2022 SMTP includes strategies and actions that will help advance transportation equity throughout Minnesota. See the policy direction in Chapter 5 for the complete list of objectives, performance measures, strategies and actions, many of which aim to advance transportation equity. The following Open Decision Making and Healthy Equitable Communities strategies and actions are reiterated below as they most directly relate to transportation equity.

OPEN DECISION MAKING

STRATEGY: ENSURE PEOPLE HAVE OPPORTUNITIES TO PLAY AN ACTIVE AND DIRECT ROLE IN TRANSPORTATION DECISION MAKING.

Related actions:

- Start transportation processes by working with communities to identify strategies that support people’s vision, priorities and needs.
- Determine community demographics for plans, programs and projects and tailor public engagement approach to increase broad community participation and input.
- Create public engagement plans that clearly articulate decision points, who will be involved at each step of the process and who has authority over each decision.
- Include those impacted by transportation decisions as members of decision-making teams.
- Actively engage in community-centered conversations and use community wisdom to inform decision making.
- Create and implement processes and systems to monitor and evaluate effectiveness in achieving shared outcomes.

STRATEGY: BUILD AND STRENGTHEN LASTING RELATIONSHIPS TO ENSURE THAT PEOPLE ARE ENGAGED IN TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES ESPECIALLY WITH UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES.

Related actions:

- Commit to regular two-way communication with partners, stakeholders and the public to continuously gather feedback.
- Hire and involve community-based organizations to conduct and lead engagement activities with underserved populations.
- Identify and connect with Tribal Governments, local elected officials and community leaders through project scoping and delivery.
- Collaborate with partners to include transportation-related questions in their surveys and other data collection efforts with underserved communities.
- Coordinate with partners to ensure people’s priorities and needs are considered including for those without reliable transportation choices.
- Provide education opportunities and programs for community members and transportation partners to understand each other on how to participate in transportation decision making together.

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STRATEGY: PROVIDE CONSISTENT, TRANSPARENT, FAIR, JUST AND EQUITABLE COMMUNICATION.

Related actions:

- Partner with the public and stakeholders to identify, develop and implement communication and engagement approaches.
- Use culturally appropriate communication and engagement methods and techniques.
- Set plain language and accessibility standards for agency and contractor deliverables and provide training for staff.
- Provide training for different communication methods including storytelling.
- Increase staff ability and provide resources to improve engagement for people with disabilities and limited English proficiency.

STRATEGY: UNDERSTAND AND LEARN FROM PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES ON HOW THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM CAN NEGATIVELY AND POSITIVELY AFFECT COMMUNITIES.

Related actions:

- Co-create and share narratives about transportation in collaboration with communities that have been harmed by decisions related to the transportation system and built environment.
- Use the wisdom from community narratives to inform plans, manuals, training content, etc.
- Provide training and resources to build staff capacity to understand cumulative historical impacts of transportation decision making.

STRATEGY: USE RESEARCH AND DATA TO DRIVE DECISION MAKING IN PURSUIT OF LOCAL, REGIONAL, TRIBAL, STATEWIDE AND NATIONAL GOALS.

Related actions:

- Ensure key transportation data is kept up-to-date, usable and easily accessible to transportation partners and the public.
- Track and share information about transportation needs and system performance to inform decision making.
- Increase use of accessible mapping tools and data visualization in communications with the public.
- Analyze and present data broken out by community and demographic segments to allow for meaningful analysis.
- Use qualitative data to advance transportation equity.

HEALTHY EQUITABLE COMMUNITIES

STRATEGY: ELIMINATE BURDENS AND REDUCE STRUCTURAL INEQUITIES FOR PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES DISPROPORTIONATELY IMPACTED BY TRANSPORTATION.

Related actions:

- Work with community partners to identify and remove barriers to participating in transportation planning and decision making.
- Identify disparities in mobility and access and develop plans to reverse or eliminate these impacts through multimodal transportation solutions.
- Implement equity reviews for transportation or land use policies, planning, programs and projects.
- Develop and support community resources to reduce inequities in transportation.
- Accelerate technology solutions for accessible and reliable transportation.
- Pursue strategies to mitigate past effects of transportation construction.

STRATEGY: REDUCE COMBINED HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION COSTS FOR COST-BURDENED HOUSEHOLDS.

Related actions:

- Improve first- and last-mile connections in neighborhoods and job centers.
- Support the construction of complete streets and a connected network to accommodate walking, rolling, bicycling and transit.
- Educate people on the impacts transportation decisions have on housing costs.
- Expand and enhance public transportation to improve access across the state.
- Promote infill development and land use practices that support walkable and bikeable communities.

STRATEGY: LEVERAGE TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS TO IMPROVE PUBLIC HEALTH.

Related actions:

- Integrate health and equity considerations in transportation planning, programming and project delivery using a Health in All Policies approach.
- Support opportunities for physical activity through walking, rolling and bicycling.
- Implement programs and investments that improve air quality and reduce noise especially for people experiencing the greatest impacts.
- Ensure convenient multimodal access to open space, parks and recreation areas.
- Increase equitable access to healthy, culturally appropriate and sustainable food through transportation options.
- Align transportation assets and services with community needs during public health emergencies.

RESOURCES

This is a short list of resources about intersectionality and transportation equity. More information is being created and released regularly. Consider exploring each topic more deeply to build an understanding about transportation equity in your community.

RACE & TRANSPORTATION

Before Minnesota was settled, extensive trade and travel routes were established by Dakota and Ojibwe people. [Why Treaties Matter](#) explains the history of these routes and how transportation was a key interest for U.S. signers of treaties.

Historically, transportation in Minnesota played a role in denying opportunities to Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC). The transportation system was a tool used by institutions to uphold racist systems. An often-cited event in Minnesota is when I-94 displaced the residents of [Saint Paul's Rondo neighborhood](#), a prospering African American community. Similarly, the construction of [I-35W disrupted an African American neighborhood](#) in South Minneapolis.

Today, the harms of transportation infrastructure continue to disproportionately harm BIPOC. For example, the siting of interstates through BIPOC neighborhoods has led to high rates of asthma and other issues discussed in [The Air We Breathe: The State of Minnesota's Air Quality](#) from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

TRANSPORTATION & INCOME

For many, transportation takes up a large share of their household's budget. Owning a car is often a necessity but can be an expensive burden, especially for low-income people. [Growth and Justice](#) explains that when households have good access to transit, the share of the average budget drops from about 20% to 10%. Additionally, access to transportation can increase a person's access to job opportunities.

GENDER & TRANSPORTATION

Research has demonstrated that there are gender differences in how people use transportation. Women typically take on more care-related travel tasks leading to ["trip chaining"](#). Trip chaining is the idea where instead of traveling to one place and then back home, a person stops at many places before going home. Those who visit several destinations in one trip, like running errands for example, have different transportation needs.

Further, there are gender disparities related to transportation. Ania McDonnell explains [three issues that disproportionately face women](#). The first issue is safety concerns such as how women are vulnerable when using public transit. Second is women's economic opportunity. Specifically, McDonnell explains how trip chaining for women who rely on public transit takes up a significant portion of the day and prohibits other activities. Finally, there is a lack of diverse data to inform initiatives that address specific gender issues in transportation especially when considering gender diversity beyond the male-female binary.

AGE & TRANSPORTATION

Age plays a factor in how people use transportation and how the transportation system affects them. Youth (people age 17 and younger) and older adults (people age 65 and older) are vulnerable populations in the transportation system. For youth, transportation is key for getting to and from school, jobs and other opportunities. [Minnesota Alliance with Youth](#) explains that inequities in access to transportation play a large role in gaps in achievement, school completion and postsecondary success between student groups.

For older adults, access to transportation greatly influences quality of life. [The National Center for Mobility Management](#) explains older adults may experience many significant life changes at once such as retirement, death of a spouse or important friends and family and changes in health. Not having access to reliable and affordable transportation makes it harder for older adults who may be struggling to reach the community and services they need.

DISABILITY & TRANSPORTATION

Access to good, reliable and accessible transportation is important for persons with disabilities to live independently. [“Exploring Public and Private Transportation Accessibility in the Twin Cities Area”](#) explains that while there are legal protections such as the American Disability Act (ADA), access remains an issue for those who have physical disabilities.

Other challenges exist as well for those who have developmental disabilities. [Wasfi, Levinson & El-Genaidy](#) studied the transportation behaviors and needs of people with developmental disabilities in Hennepin County. Participants in their study noted that there were barriers to owning cars due to their condition as well as barriers to using public transit such as access, safety and reliability.

