Pursuing Data-Driven and Equity-Centric Transportation Projects: Challenges and Opportunities for Local Actors

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Shifting transportation investments away from personal vehicles has important racial equity implications

- People of color are underrepresented as vehicle owners, even though they bear the brunt of pollution from vehicle emissions and injuries and fatalities from vehicle collisions.

- White, highly educated, and high-income residents have greater access to public transit in many cities.

- Low-income Americans walk and bike more than higher-income Americans, and cycling is growing fastest among people of color.
Competitive federal grants are increasingly calling for data- and equity-driven applications
Lessons from interviews with local leaders

- **20 interviews** with experts working in **transportation** and **brownfields revitalization**
- Local and regional government agency representatives, community based organizations, and consultants
- We asked questions about **data-related challenges**, **embedding equity** into the application cycle, and **lessons learned** throughout the process
Key takeaways

- Applicants struggle to **quantify racial equity and environmental justice** metrics, especially given lack of clarity from federal agencies.
- Applicants had difficulties in **accessing and analyzing necessary data sources**.
- How, when, and for whom **community engagement** is done varied widely.
Data guide for local actors applying for federal funding for public transit, bicycle, and pedestrian projects

- Intended for local governments or organizations who are interested in advancing racial equity through federally-funded public transit, bicycle, and pedestrian projects
- Features data sources that can help local applicants make evidence-informed project selection decisions and answer key equity-centric questions
- Does not serve as an application guide or step-by-step process on pursuing IIJA or other federal grants
Six categories of data

**Demographic**
Race, sex, income, among other demographics, and socioeconomic indicators such as poverty rates

**Mobility & Connectivity**
Vehicle ownership, commuting time and means of transportation, transit access, walkability, infrastructure

**Health & Safety**
Pollution and air quality, life expectancy, access to health services, pedestrian- and cyclist-involved vehicle crashes

**Economic**
Income, employment rates, and business trends

**Environmental**
Emissions and pollution, tree cover and green space, natural hazard risk, water quality

**Housing**
Housing costs and quality, dimensions of housing instability such as eviction, neighborhood change and gentrification
Common priorities in Notices of Funding Opportunities for IIJA programs

- Identifying disadvantaged communities to prioritize for investments
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transportation
- Reducing transportation and housing cost burdens
- Increasing mobility, connectivity, and accessibility, particularly for non-motorized travelers
- Creating and accessing good-paying jobs
Example: Indicators for increasing mobility, connectivity, and accessibility, particularly for non-motorized travelers

**Demographic**
- Poverty rates, racial demographics, demographics on people with disabilities (ACS)

**Mobility & Connectivity**
- Number of vehicles per household (Federal Highway Administration) and walkability (National Walkability Index)

**Health & Safety**
- Crashes involving pedestrians and cyclists (DOT FARS)

**Economic**
- Jobs within a half-mile of a transit stop (AllTransit)

**Environmental**
- Tree cover along walkable roads (EnviroAtlas)

**Housing**
- Residential segregation by dissimilarity and exposure indices by race and ethnicity (Decennial Census)
Panelists

- **Kirsten Mote**, AVP and Director of Smart Mobility Planning, Modern Mobility Partners
- **Maria Schaper**, Associate Director of Transportation Planning, Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission
- **Vineet Gupta**, Director of Policy and Planning, Boston Transportation Department
Q&A